



HIGHLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

PARENT NOTE – October 6, 2025

“Scripture Follower”

II Timothy 3:16-17

FROM THE DESK OF DR. WEENER:

HCS Families,

This time of year is always special. Within just two weeks, we have the joy of welcoming both our pastors and grandparents to HCS. Beginning the school year with these two events beautifully emphasizes the partnership between **home, school, and church**—three strands that strengthen one another. As Ecclesiastes 4:12 reminds us, *“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”* We are deeply grateful for the pastors and grandparents who play such meaningful roles in the lives of our students and families.

When writing each monthly update, I often reflect on the previous year. This month, I was reminded of our work around *The Anxious Generation* book study. Interestingly, a staff member recently shared that a [new edition designed for kids](#) that will be released in December—it could make a thoughtful Christmas gift. As I’ve shared before, social media and smartphones remain among the greatest challenges our students face. **HCS continues to strongly recommend that children do not have personal phones or social media access until high school.**

If you need more convincing, please reference these very alarming facts from 2024:

- 45% of teenagers report that they are online constantly
- The average age where students are first exposed to pornography is 12 years old. This does not differ significantly between girls and boys.
- The FBI estimates there are 500,000 predators (at all times) that are actively engaged in communicating, manipulating, and pretending to be children online.
- Every month, 23.2% of teenagers are bullied on social media platforms
- 40% of teenagers have sent sexually explicit photos, videos, or content.
- Data indicates that individuals that use technology an hour before going to bed results in sleep disruptions.

Just last week, I met with Indiana’s Secretary of Education, Dr. Katie Jenner, in a small group meeting in Indianapolis, where she discussed the state’s plans to **ban phones in schools and restrict social media access for younger students**. As we gain more understanding, we are called to higher standards. Let’s stand together in protecting and supporting the healthy development of our children.

Lastly, as the HCS administrative team and board continue to listen to our community, we regularly evaluate how to best meet the needs of our students and families. We are grateful for April VanderMeyden, HCS’ School Security Officer, who provides an armed presence on campus, updates safety protocols, partners with local emergency agencies, and completes regular threat assessments. She is a tremendous asset to HCS.

In response to feedback from our recent *Listening Sessions*—particularly regarding the large number of visitors expected for **Grandparents’ Day**—we have arranged for **two additional uniformed police officers** to be present on campus for the duration of the event. This added layer of security complements our existing safety measures. This decision reflects our ongoing commitment to actively listening, responding, and working together to make HCS a better and safer place every day.

Dr. Kyle Weener - Head of School

SCHOOL NEWS:

- **Grandparents' Day: This Friday, Oct. 10 is Grandparents' Day at HCS!** If your child's grandparents did not receive an invitation, please extend one to them. We encourage only grandparents to attend. If your child doesn't have a grandparent who is able to attend, they may have one special friend come in their place. Please make sure the grandparents know who their grandchildren's teachers are. Door F (gym door) and Door K (southwest door by the ramp) will open at 10:15 a.m. and the program will be from 11:00-12:15. K-8 classroom visits will be 12:30-1:30. **URGENT NEED:** The K-8 Grandparents' Day team **NEEDS TWO MORE** volunteers to help with parking lot duty from 9:45 - 11:15am. If you'd like to help, please contact Gail Achterhof at gachterhof@highlandchristian.org Thank you!

Important Parent Information for Grandparents' Day:

- **Early Release:** Students will be dismissed at **1:45 pm.**
 - **There is no hot lunch on this day** – students **MUST** bring their lunch from home.
 - If you are picking up your child via the pick-up line, please arrive **after** 1:45 pm. This allows for grandparents to leave safely.
 - If your child is going home with a grandparent, please notify the teacher and bus driver by **Thursday, October 9.**
 - Students are asked to **wear a nice outfit** for both Grandparents' Day and Monday's Parent Performance.
 - There **will be** after-care on this day.
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- **Parent Performance Schedule Clarification:**
Monday, October 13 will have the Parent Performance of the Grandparents Day program. This is a required event for all students in K-5. The schedule for the evening is as follows:
6:10 ~ K-2 Students Arrive and Gym Doors Open
6:30 ~ K-2 Performance
6:55 ~ *3-5 Students Arrive
7:15 ~ 3-5 Performance
**Teachers will not be in their classrooms before 6:55, so please keep your children with you until then. Please disregard any previous schedules you may have received.*
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- **Castillo/ Cole Family:** Late this summer, Esolina Castillo (mom at HCS) received the news that she was diagnosed with Stage 4 stomach cancer. Her children, Ace (3rd Grade) and Akala (2nd Grade) are enrolled at HCS. We turn to you, the HCS community, to come together and support this incredible family. Until Friday, October 10, the office will be collecting cash, checks (made payable to Highland Christian), and gift cards. All proceeds will be given to Esolina and her family. Most importantly, please pray. We know that God works through the prayers of His people.
 - **New Mom Meet Up:** Is this your first year at HCS? Join us in the gym foyer on **Tuesday, October 7th** after you drop off your kids! Take a pause and enjoy the company of other first year moms at HCS. [RSVP Here!](#)
 - **Donut Day:** Donut Day is this **Wednesday, October 8.** Donuts will be \$2.50 each and we will have chocolate, strawberry, vanilla and glazed donuts. All proceeds will go to the 8th grade class trip.
 - **Building Christian Men Group:** Our first Building Christian Men (7th and 8th grade boys) activity will be held on Saturday, October 11. Detailed information will be emailed to parents in the coming weeks, but we will be off campus and likely leave HCS at 8:00 am and return before or at 2:00 pm.
 - **October Saturday Serve:** Come join us as we bless our Highland Christian neighbors by raking leaves. Groups will be sent to different areas near HCS to rake leaves from the front lawn to the parkway. We will walk from house to house asking if we can bless them by raking the leaves.

For this Saturday Serve, we will work outside raking. Please bring rakes, leaf blowers, brooms, gloves, etc. Please dress for the weather. We welcome any age to help with the clean-up. Since we need leaves to fall before we can rake, we have two possible dates. Sign up for the date(s) that work best for you. The first choice date is **Saturday, October 11** and an alternate date would be **Saturday, November 1**.

*If we need to change the date, I will send out an email on Friday to those who have signed up to serve.

Date: Saturday, October 11 or Saturday, November 1

Time: 9 am - 11 am

Place: HCS parking lot

Sign-up here: [October Saturday Serve](#)

- **Hammond Riverside Christian School:** We are excited to share that the next work day at Hammond Riverside Christian School is Saturday, October 18 from 8:30am - Noon. State and local leaders plan to visit us as we continue demolition, debris removal, and outdoor improvements. All participants should sign up [HERE](#). We would welcome you, your family, and family friends to help us reach our goal of 200 volunteers. A free lunch will be provided to all participants. Your participation is greatly appreciated!
- **HCS Listening Groups:** Our 2nd and 3rd grade listening sessions will be held on Monday, October 20 from 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM & Thursday, October 30 from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM and are open to families of 2nd and 3rd grade students. Space is limited to 12 parents in each session. If both sessions fill up, we will provide additional opportunities. As the year progresses, families from other grades will also have the opportunity to participate later in the school year. We are looking forward to hearing your valued and important feedback! To sign up, please complete the following [Sign-Up Genius Form](#).
- **Veteran's Day Chapel:** On Tuesday, November 11, at 8:45 am, we will honor our veterans in our Veterans Day Assembly. Our speaker will be Mr. Brandon Hiatt, a U.S. Navy veteran and HCS parent. An email will be going out this week with more information about how veterans in our HCS community can participate. We look forward to this event to honor our veterans! To sign up, please click [HERE](#). If you need additional information, please email Rick VanderWoude at veterans@highlandchristian.org.
- **Employment Opportunities:** **We're Hiring!** HCS has an immediate need for a substitute Night Custodian, Before/After Care worker, and Wrestling Coach. For more information or to see a list of all of our current openings, please visit our [website](#).
- **FUSION: SAVE THE DATE!** Fusion is beyond excited to host nationally acclaimed speaker and #1 bestselling author **John O'Leary** for a special in-person event on **Friday, February 6th**. John's incredible journey—from being given just a 1% chance to survive a childhood fire to now inspiring millions around the world—is a powerful testimony of hope, faith, and living with purpose. His story is the focus of the upcoming film [Soul on Fire](#). This **family-friendly** event is open to the entire community. We encourage you to mark your calendars and invite others to join you for what will surely be an unforgettable night. **More details to come.**

ATHLETIC NEWS:

🎉 **Congrats to our 7th grade girls volleyball team for winning the league tournament!** 🎉

Coach Maddie Schaaf and the 7th grade girls beat Tinley Park in the first round, Calvary Academy in the semifinals, and Crown Point Christian in the championship game. Awesome job girls! 🏐

Boys Basketball Tryouts: 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Boys Basketball Tryouts are next week. **The two days of tryouts are**

Tuesday, October 14th and Wednesday, October 15th. All students participating in sports must have an active physical on file. Please turn those into the office or into Mr. Hillegonds.

Time slots are as follows:

6th grade - 3:15-4:30

8th grade - 4:30-5:45

7th grade - 5:45-7:00

Upcoming Games:

- **Monday, October 6:**
Cross Country Meet @ Chicago Christian- 4:00 pm
- **Friday, October 10:**
A Soccer Semi-Finals @ Paarlberg Park- 4:00pm
- **Saturday, October 11:**
A Soccer Tournament @ Paarlberg Park
8th grade Volleyball Tournament @ Chicago Christian - 9:00 am

FAITH CORNER:

How do we model following Jesus? How can we help our children know and follow Jesus? These are two big questions that need to be in the forefront of our thinking as we disciple our kids.

It is fall. The leaves are changing colors. The nights come more quickly and bring cooler temperatures. Harvest is happening around us. How can we use the events of nature to learn to know and follow Jesus more intentionally? Here are some ideas of how to incorporate the BIG picture of following Jesus into everyday living and celebrations:

- **Contemplate transformation.**
As autumn leaves change color and fall, reflect on your spiritual transformation in Christ. Use the changing landscape as a reminder that God makes all things new and beautiful, even in seasons of transition.
- **Practice intentional gratitude.**
Autumn is a natural time for thanksgiving. Start a "thankful tree" with your family, or create a gratitude wall where everyone can write what they are thankful for. You can use leaves or pumpkins and write praises to God on them as a family activity.
- **Focus on God's provision.**
Harvest festivals remind us to thank God for the food he provides. Read Psalm 100 as a family. Consider that our attitude to God's provision needs to be thanksgiving and worship.

Some great activities include:

- **Nature walks and hikes.**
Take a walk to appreciate God's creation, focusing on the beauty of the changing season. You can collect leaves and other natural items to use for crafts. While walking, reflect on Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*
- **Donating to a food drive.**
Buy extra canned goods - canned vegetables, mashed potatoes, gravy, sweet potatoes (the fixings for a Thanksgiving meal). Next month, HCS will be collecting these items to share with people impacted by Roseland Christian Ministries in Chicago and Beacon Light CRC in Gary.
- **The Pumpkin Prayer.**
Use a pumpkin to teach children about the gospel. As you carve it, talk about how God cleans the "icky" stuff out of our hearts, fills us with his light, and makes us new.

Remember discipling our children means we show them daily what it means to know and follow Jesus. The words of Deuteronomy 6:7, *“Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”* give us a great picture of how to do this well.

Prayer:

We pray for our families, Lord.

Help us to be diligent in teaching Your ways to our children.

Give us opportunities every day to talk about Your commands when we are at home, traveling, or any time we are together, so they might know and love You.

Amen.

T.R.I.P NEWS:

- **Bonus Fest:** Take advantage of new online bonuses each weekend in the month of October! Vendors will be announced each Friday on the Raiseright Facebook page and through email. For every gift card purchased (from featured vendors) you will be automatically entered into a drawing for a \$100 gift card. Orders must be placed online during promotion. If you are not receiving emails from Raiseright.com and would like to, email Sherry Hiatt at trip@highlandchristian.org.
- **Cash & Carry:** Take advantage of purchasing gift cards from a select list of vendors without the wait! These cards are available for purchase during TRIP Office hours (Thursdays 7:30 to 10:30am). Limited quantities are available. Call/email ahead of time to secure your order! Available Vendors: Amazon (\$25), Aurelios (\$20), Beggars (\$10 & \$20), Chick-fil-a (\$10), Culver's (\$10), Dunkin Donuts (\$10), Edwardo's (\$10), Hohman Hallmark (\$25), Miner Dunn (\$5), Starbucks (\$10 & \$25), Strack & Van Til (\$50 & \$100), Teibel's (\$25). You must be registered to receive earnings or **NEW!** no registration is necessary if you want to allocate your earnings towards HCS Tuition Assistance.
- **TRIP Schedule:** Next order for physical cards is due on Wednesday, 8 at 3:30pm and available for pick up on Tuesday, Oct. 14 after 2:45pm. Online ordering is available 24/7 on raiseright.com. Future Order Dates: October 15, 29 and Nov. 5.
- **TRIP Volunteer Schedule:** Oct. 14-Team D, Oct. 21-Team A, Nov. 4-Team B.

COMMUNITY NEWS:

- **Lake County Parks Department Survey:** The Lake County Parks & Recreation Department is starting work on their next 5-year master plan. As part of their community outreach campaign, "Let's Talk Parks," they are seeking feedback from residents to help them understand their priorities for Lake County parks and recreational facilities. They believe that by partnering with you, they can gather the comprehensive feedback needed to create a master plan that truly reflects the needs and desires of our community. Attached you will find a [PDF](#) with the linked survey; all survey participants are entered in a prize drawing.
- **Golden Hope Ministries** is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing a safe, compassionate space for peer-to-peer grief support for children, teens, and adults in the Northwest Indiana area. Our mission is to equip individuals and families with the tools and resources they need to acknowledge, adapt, and heal after the death of a loved one in a healthy way. You don't have to grieve alone. We would love for you to join us as we walk our grief journeys together.
Groups meet on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays of each month at 909 E. Greenwood Ave, Crown Point, IN (Crown Point CRC) from 6:00-7:30pm (Dinner provided). Registration is required. Please visit www.goldenhopemin.org or email Ashley Krygsheld at info@goldenhopemin.org for more information.
- **EPIC Volleyball:** If you have a 3rd-8th grade GIRL or BOY interested in playing on a local volleyball team for 3 or 6 months during the winter, please reach out to Tracy Summers at epicunitedvbc@gmail.com or 708-703-1266. There are also weekly camps available. Learning the skills can really go a long way when playing volleyball and make it a LOT more fun! Practice locations offered in Lansing, Dyer, Crown Point, or St. John. Camp location offered in Highland, Lansing, and Crown Point.