



# Orono Schools

Where Excellence is a Tradition and a Goal

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## From the Superintendent

As we embark on a well-deserved winter break, I want to take a moment to express my pride in the generosity and kindness displayed in our learning community. **The spirit of giving in Orono is truly inspiring!** Whether it's supporting one another during difficult times or coming together to celebrate successes, you contribute to the warm and welcoming environment that makes our community truly special.

I encourage everyone to rest and rejuvenate! May your days be filled with moments of joy in the company of those who matter most to you.

Thank you for your dedication, collaboration, and the positive energy you bring to our community. I am excited about the possibilities and opportunities that the new year holds. Let's approach it with optimism and a shared commitment to making our community even stronger. Here's to a New Year filled with peace, health, and happiness!

Gratefully,  
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.

## Spirit of Giving

I am so grateful for our students, staff and community members who give *so generously* to help individuals and families in need of support. Here are just a few examples of outstanding efforts in December 2023.



This holiday season, more than \$4,000 was collected from Orono staff—with an additional donation from Orono PTO—to purchase food for 70 families. Each holiday meal box contained a full-size turkey, 10 pounds of potatoes, gravy, corn, green beans, stuffing, rolls, butter, pie and whipped topping. In addition, [Orono Cares](#) was able to purchase more than \$18,000 in Target gift cards for these same families thanks to generous community donations. It's heartwarming to know that 100% of all donations through these efforts went directly to our local families. Thank you to Ms. Julie Jurek for coordinating this effort once again and to volunteers from the Orono buildings and grounds staff, Orono PTO, and Orono Foundation for Education who packed 70 food boxes (in 30 minutes!) to support Orono families this holiday season. We appreciate you!

## You Matter Week at OHS

The second annual You Matter Week was December 11-15 at OHS. The purpose is to support our district goals of community and belonging, and focus on mental health. The OHS Student Senate partnered with the Wellbeing Club, Youth in Action, Letters of Love, and other students to plan and coordinate the week. Some highlights were senior/freshman mentoring, a Change to Chill speaker on the topic of *stress*, cozy dress-up days, hot cocoa before school, positive post-it notes, and the You Matter mailbox where students submitted notes to teachers and friends.

In the spirit of giving, OHS students contributed to a gift drive for the National Alliance on Mental Illness ([NAMI Minnesota](#)), an organization that helps Minnesotans struggling with mental health challenges. The gifts will be given to individuals living with a mental illness who are hospitalized over the holidays. Student Senate sold "You Matter" sweatshirts and will donate all proceeds to mental health initiatives at OHS and to NAMI Minnesota. Nice work, OHS students and staff!







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## Clothing Drive & Connectedness

This month, the Orono Middle School Unified program, in conjunction with Where Everyone Belongs (WEB), promoted a whole-school hat, mitten, glove, and coat drive to help local families in need.

Twice in December, a group of students visited the Stonebay of Orono Senior Living facility to connect with residents through games and musical performances.

Thank you to Orono Middle School!



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## WeCAN Appreciation Award

This week, [WeCAN](#)—Western Communities Action Network—presented [Orono Community Education](#) with an Appreciation Award for their support in helping WeCAN serve those in need in our local community. Orono staff not only connect Orono families to WeCAN's services, but sponsor the annual fall "We Scare Hunger" food drive with donations given directly to WeCAN.

WeCAN provides families with basic needs and food support. Accepting the award (at right) is Genna Torney, Orono Schools' Youth Development Coordinator. We also thank WeCAN for their continued partnership and outreach efforts in our community!



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## Award for Outstanding Outcomes

Orono Schools was recently selected to receive an award for outstanding [EmpowerU](#) student outcomes and exemplary implementation and best practices. EmpowerU programming is part of Orono's multi-tiered system of support. It is a personalized program designed to help students overcome stressful challenges that interfere with learning. Thank you to our counseling staff for their tremendous support of our students' well being!

Congratulations to (l-r) Lauren Handrick, OHS School Counselor; Katie Dorn, EmpowerU Co-founder; Shana Borgen, OHS School Counselor; Kayte Haagenson, OHS School Counselor; and Jennifer Lubke, OMS School Counselor.

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## Hennepin Theatre Trust Spotlight Awards

The OHS Theater program participates in the Hennepin Theater Trust Spotlight Education program, which provides evaluation, feedback and encouragement to our actors and backstage crews. This year's fall musical was "Bright Star." The following students received top honors from evaluators:

- For Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role, **Lily Quale** in the role of Alice Murphy
- Outstanding in Technical Leadership:
  - **Lucy Keating**, as Costume Crew Head
  - **Klaire Hillman**, for Stage Design
  - **Adam Charrier**, for Sound Design

The overall production received an Honorable Mention award, as well as students Henry Shafer, Axel Duke, Julie Metcalf, Great Rolfzen, Noah Feldman, Mara Newcomer, and Maisie Wellman. Congratulations to all!



## Stock Market Game

Orono High School Business Teacher Leslie O'Meara incorporated the [Stock Market Game](#) in her ninth-grade Intro to Business class. The game introduces students to saving and investing through a simulation of the stock market and bond market. Students get to trade and manage their own virtual \$100,000 investment portfolio. They develop skills in math, economics, and personal finance while gaining a greater awareness of current events and global news. One of the Orono teams came in 4th out of 836 teams! Congratulations to:

- Hayley Aseltine
- Dominic Roux
- Jackson Von Kaenel and
- Ethan Weber

Ms. O'Meara and the students were invited to a recognition lunch at RBC Wealth Management in downtown Minneapolis. **Congratulations! Well done!**

## Winter Sports Update

- **Dance**: Won the Metro West Conference Dance Championship on December 16!
- **Boys Basketball**: Currently 4-1 overall and ranked 4th in state. Defeated Richfield last night (12/18), 93-91 on a Brady Wooley put back slam dunk as the buzzer sounded.
- **Girls Basketball**: Currently 3-3 overall. Have three more road games in December before opening the new year with three consecutive home games (including a double header with the boys team on January 6) .
- **Boys Hockey**: Currently 6-2 overall and ranked 4th in state. Travel to #2 ranked St. Cloud Cathedral tonight (12/19).
- **Girls Hockey**: Currently 9-2 overall and ranked 1st in state. Congratulations to Macy Rasmussen on hitting 100 career points. Congratulations to Grace Bickett who reached the 100 career assist milestone.
- **Wrestling**: Participating in a holiday invitational tournament on December 29-30 at La Crosse Civic Center in Wisconsin.

- **Boys Swim and Dive:** Have taken first place in their first two meets. Congratulations to Gideon Fish for setting a new team diving record with his 294.55 score in the season opening meet against New Prague.
- **Nordic Ski:** First race of the season is today (12/19) at Elm Creek Park Reserve!
- **Alpine Ski:** Working hard in preparation for their first race on January 3 at Powder Ridge Ski Resort.

Go, Spartans! For updates on winter sports and activities, [follow the Orono Spartans on Facebook!](#)

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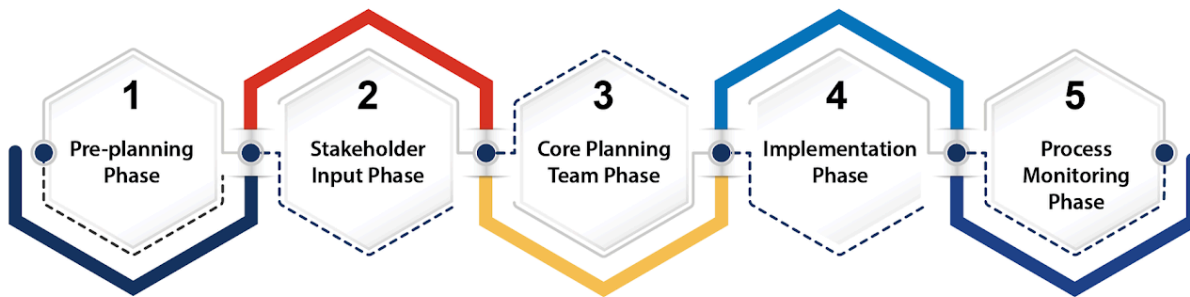
**Congratulations** to three student-athletes who have been honored with MSHSL awards:

- **Lila James '24.** [Triple A Award Winner.](#) Lila is an outstanding student and AP Scholar who is on Student Senate, participates in band, is the Tri-M president, and competes on the Orono Girls Swimming and Diving and Lacrosse teams. She was named captain for both teams this year.
  - **Victor Ruhland '24.** [Triple A Award Winner.](#) Victor is a driven student and AP Scholar who has a passion for choir, participating all four years of high school. He is a two-sport athlete, competing in football and track and field. In addition, Victor is Chair of the Orono Unified Club and has been dedicated to sustaining the environment of inclusion at OHS.
  - **Ashley Ishaug '25.** [MSHSL ExCEL Award Winner.](#) Ashley has played varsity softball since 8th grade and is a captain on the team this year. She moved up to varsity volleyball in the fall after two years on the JV team. Ashley also holds leadership roles in Student Senate and has contributed hundreds of hours to Letters of Love. She is currently the varsity Girls Hockey team manager.
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## Final Call: Please Complete the Strategic Planning Community Survey

This is a [strategic planning year](#) for Orono Schools. Over the summer and early fall, we completed the Pre-planning Phase and are now in Phase 2: Stakeholder Input. The strategic-planning process gives us one more opportunity to involve our community in setting the direction for the district. Your input will be invaluable in shaping our priorities and making decisions that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of our district. If you haven't already, please complete the Strategic Planning community survey by December 31, 2023. Thank you!

Complete the Strategic Planning Survey



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## Orono School Board Meeting Highlights

Monday, December 11, 2023 | Agenda

- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Board Member Reports | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Policy Action (707-710) | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Policy Review (711-717) | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Resolution Establishing Combined Polling Places | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Truth in Taxation Hearing and 2023 Pay 2024 School Property Tax Levy for Fiscal 2024-2025 | [Watch the Presentation](#)

The next meeting of the [Orono School Board](#) is scheduled for Monday, January 8, 2024 at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. The public is invited to register to participate in a [Public Comment Session](#) beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. The [registration form](#) will be open from Friday, January 5 at 9 a.m. through 12:00 p.m. (noon) on January 8, 2024.



**Dec. 20-Jan. 1 ● No School K-12, Winter Break**  
**January 15 ● Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

## Upcoming Events

See the [Calendars page](#) on the Orono Schools website for more.

- **December 20, 2023 through January 1, 2024**, No School K-12, Winter Break
- **January 8, 2024** | School Board meeting with opportunity for Public Comment at 7 p.m.
- **January 15, 2024** | Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No School K-12
- **January 22, 2024** | School Board meeting at 7 p.m. with opportunity for Coffee & Conversation at 6:30 p.m.
- **January 29, 2024** | Professional Day, No School K-12



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