



Orono Schools

Where Excellence is a Tradition and a Goal

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District News • October 18, 2023



From the Superintendent

Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.

Dear Families and staff,

I wanted to send an update and message to our learning community before we depart for the MEA weekend. Orono Schools' long tradition of focus on excellence in scholarship, character and relationships is grounded in research on critical protective factors in child development. We focus on the Character Counts! Pillars and on building positive relationships, in addition to intensive work on academics. Across all learning spaces we share a common language of respect, caring and trustworthiness. We want to highlight some of our work this fall, our celebration of Character Counts week, and resources developed for families.

I also want to highlight the important role activities and school staff play in developing belonging in the lives of children. I am very excited to share some of the recent "great news" regarding activities. Success in Orono Schools athletics is grounded in community, character, competition and classroom. We are very proud of the success across all of these dimensions for all of our students. Thank you to our many staff and families who support students in activities.

In addition to the positive outcomes for our athletes and performers in the last few weeks, staff data teams are reflecting on data regarding academic success and protective factors of caring and connectedness in school. I am very happy to share a few data points from spring: **90% of Orono High School students reported care from teachers** and **97% of Orono Middle School students reported a feeling of belonging**. These are critical measures of success and reflective of all of the incredible work from Orono staff. We are

implementing strategies to ensure that every child feels a sense of belonging and care at school.

As part of being a caring and inclusive school community, we must also confront when we are challenged by events that do not align with our values. As we continue to mourn the horrific Hamas attack on Israel, and the ongoing loss of innocent life in Israel and Gaza, I would like to express our commitment to supporting our families and students. We know there are students and families impacted by these horrible events. Please know that Orono staff are here to support and provide resources to students and families across all buildings. In Orono Schools, we are committed to providing a welcoming, learning environment where everyone feels a sense of respect, care, and genuine belonging.

Wishing you a restful long weekend with family and friends. I hope you all enjoy the beautiful fall weather and colors. Don't hesitate to reach out if we can provide support to your child or family.



Orono's Character Program

Orono implemented the formal Character Counts! program more than two decades ago. The Character Counts! E-12 curriculum provides resources for district educators to focus on teaching the six pillars of character—Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship.

New this year, our **Early Childhood Family Education** (ECFE) program is introducing the pillars to students in an age-appropriate way, in relation to animal friends. Through posters, stickers, and stories, the vocabulary and lessons come alive for our youngest learners.

In addition to the schoolwide character lesson every Tuesday, students at **Orono Schumann Elementary** are recognized for modeling good character all year long. Every Friday, classrooms join a Google Meet to hear Dr. Lamparske announce the "Pillar Power" honorees—one per classroom! Recess Rockstars are rewarded for respect and citizenship on the playground and the "Beautiful bRoom" award goes to students in one classroom each week who model responsibility by keeping their room neat and welcoming. Character stickers are in high demand as our K-2 students are always ready to put their good character on display.

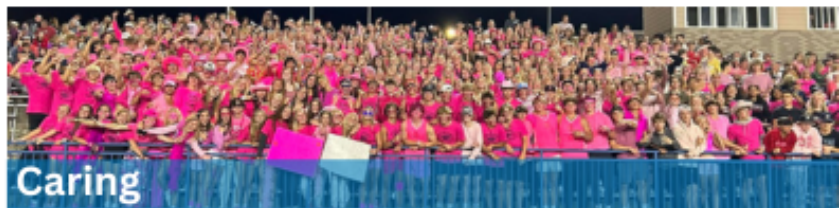
At **Orono Intermediate School**, teachers plan community- and character-building activities and lead daily conversations about the pillars during morning meeting. There is a specific character lesson every Tuesday, all year. The IS staff Character Committee works together to create flexible lessons that respond to current needs in the building. IS is focused this year on "connected communities" where each classroom is paired with a buddy classroom from a different grade level.

At **Orono Middle School**, it's Respect month in Extended Learning with students engaging in activities that support the Respect pillar. Bullying prevention presentations are being delivered to all grade levels. This week is especially exciting with "Unite in Kindness" activities culminating in a whole-school walk for kindness during Extended Learning.

As our students enter **Orono High School**, lessons in character are often delivered through guest speakers and student-led activities and presentations. Next week, OHS freshmen will participate in the annual Cashin Symposium for Leadership featuring nationally recognized Minnesota speaker, Joe Beckman. His message is one of creating a positive culture and promoting confidence, resilience, and connection. We are excited for Joe's visit, and are grateful to the Cashin family for continuing this tradition in building strong leaders!

We encourage you to review the family guides courtesy of Character Counts!:

- [K-5 Six Pillar Family Guide](#)
- [Grades 6-8 Family Guide](#)
- [Grades 9-12 Family Guide](#)



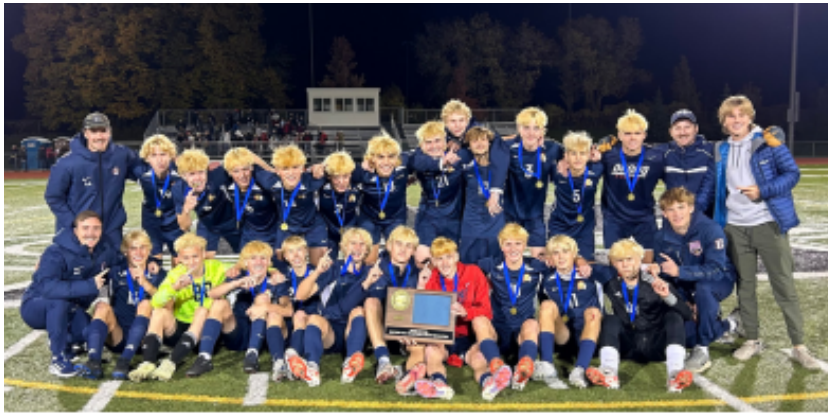
As we celebrate character this week, we recognize the important role that activities and athletics plays in developing students who realize that—as a team—we are all better when we work together.

Fall Athletics Updates

As the fall regular season winds down, the most challenging competitions wind up! Congratulations to all our teams who have made us proud all season!

- **Boys and Girls Cross Country** - Metro West Conference Championships
 - Boys team places 2nd with Gabe Hallen finishing 4th and Owen Hirt finishing 6th
 - Girls team finishes 6th with Delaney Stephens a top finisher in 14th place
- **Boys Soccer** - The guys received the #1 seed in the Section tournament defeated Monticello (4-1) to win the 6AA Section Championship! The team advances to the State Tournament later this month.
- **Girls Soccer** - Girls Soccer ended their season last week after the first round of the 5AA Section Tournament.
- **Football** - The Spartans remain unbeaten on the season and move to 7-0 overall. They will close out the regular season **tonight** at Rocori.
- **Girls Swim & Dive** - True Team Section Champions and Metro West Conference Champs! With their win over Chanhassen (100-86), Orono secured a conference championship and went undefeated all season in Metro West meets. The girls will swim again this Saturday at the True Team State Tournament.
- **Volleyball** - Volleyball ended their regular season and received the #6 seed in the 6AAA Section Tournament. They will play at #3 seed Holy Angels next Wednesday in the first round.
- **Girls Tennis** - The Girls Tennis regular season has ended. Six student-athletes played in the 5AA Individual Section Tournament on Monday at InnerCity Tennis.

For more photos and updates, [follow the Orono Spartans on Facebook!](#)



Orono Spartans shine in Boys Soccer, Football and Volleyball.



Boys Cross Country, Girls Swimming & Diving, and Girls Cross Country give it their all.



Students explore their passions in band, choir, tennis and soccer. More than 85% of OHS students are involved in at least one activity or sport. All are welcome!

Join our Substitute Pool! Learn More Nov. 2

Would you like to learn more about becoming a substitute in Orono Schools? Dr. Scott Alger, Executive Director of Human Resources, is hosting a meeting on Thursday, November 2, at 1 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. He'll discuss opportunities, requirements, and district needs. Please RSVP to humanresources@orono.k12.mn.us. See you there!

Orono School Board Meeting Highlights

Monday, October 9, 2023 | [Agenda](#)

- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Board Member Reports | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Policy Action (506) | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Policy Review (516.5, 534, 724, 806) | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Orono Educator Excellence Presentation | [Watch the Presentation](#)

The next meeting of the [Orono School Board](#) is scheduled for Monday, October 23, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. The public is invited to join members of the Board and the Superintendent during the **Coffee & Conversation** period beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room.



Friday, November 3 ● No School K-12
Professional Day for Orono Teachers & Staff

Upcoming Events

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

- **October 19-20**, State Teacher Convention, No School K-12

- **October 23**, School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
 - **October 30**, OHS Fall Choir Concert, Wayzata Community Church, 7:00 p.m.
 - **November 3**, Professional Day, No School K-12
 - **November 20**, Parent-Teacher Conferences (afternoon/evening)
 - **November 21**, Parent-Teacher Conferences, No School K-12
 - **November 22-24**, Thanksgiving Break, No School K-12
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