



Orono Schools

Where Excellence is a Tradition and a Goal

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District News • September 22, 2023



From the Superintendent

Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.

Dear Orono families and staff,

I hope this message finds you well and your children have had a great start to the 2023-24 school year! We were thrilled to welcome them back to campus!

This week, our districtwide **Continuous Improvement** leaders and administrators met to evaluate spring testing data, share best practices, develop strategies, and identify areas where we can make positive changes for our students. This work will be shared with teaching teams during our upcoming Professional Day on Monday, September 25 (reminder: no school that day). The September Professional Day gives staff the opportunity to meet early in the year, discuss student needs, and collectively chart a course for further improvement and growth. We greatly value this focused time with colleagues!

Our journey toward continuous improvement is a shared one, and it relies on the dedication and expertise of every member of our learning community. We thank you for your partnership as you encourage your students to do their best every day. If you have questions about the school year so far, do not hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher(s) as a first step.

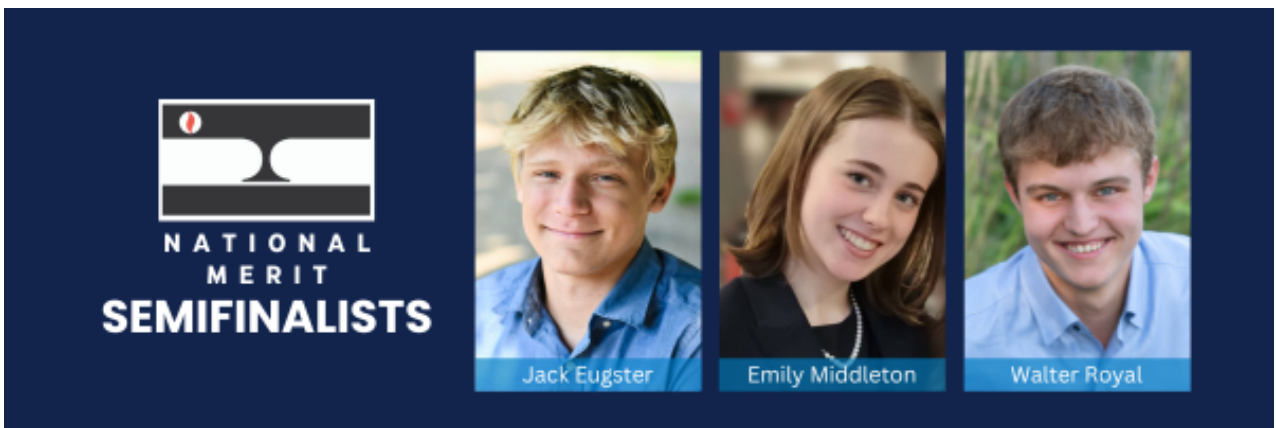
Thank you and enjoy the weekend!




Monday, September 25 ● No School K-12
Professional Day for Orono Teachers & Staff

CONGRATULATIONS to OHS seniors Jack Eugster, Emily Middleton, and Walter Royal for being named 2024 National Merit Semifinalists!

More than 1.3 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered the 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2022 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in October 2022. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists represents less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors and includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. To be considered this spring for National Merit Scholarships, our Semifinalists must advance to the Finalist level by submitting a detailed scholarship application that details their academic record, participation in school and community activities, leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. Just this week, we received word that OHS has five National Merit *Commended Scholars*. Please look for an announcement soon with their names!



NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS

Jack Eugster Emily Middleton Walter Royal

Congratulations to the Orono High School Unified Club, leaders, and participants for being named a Special Olympics Unified Champion School! This is a ***national*** award shared by only [four other middle/high schools in Minnesota](#). Through an extensive application, Unified Advisor Michelle Swenson demonstrated that the OHS program met [10 qualifying standards](#), including whole-school engagement and inclusive youth leadership. For 10 years, Orono's Unified leaders have worked hard to build a sustainable program that impacts students across all ages and grades.

Seniors Victor Ruhland, Carys Summers, and Brooks Fegers stand on the shoulders of other outstanding leaders, passionately advocating for their club, its activities, and the students—with and without intellectual disabilities—who participate with heart and soul. Victor, who is also president of the Student Board of Directors in Minnesota, says that Unified feels like a second family and, for Unified athletes, the excitement around Special Olympics competition is comparable to a state tournament. Carys believes that Unified is uniquely able to provide a sense of fulfillment and joy through relationships with students she would likely not meet any other way. After his sophomore experience in Unified basketball, Brooks says he was “all-in from there” and has joined multiple sports, assisted Ms. Swenson with planning, and now holds a place on the state Student Board of Directors. Brooks, Victor, and Carys have all built trusting relationships with students that extend far beyond club meetings and events. You can, too!

Meetings are just getting underway! All students are welcome.

- September 26: Orono High School Unified Club meeting, Spartan Hour, OHS gym
- September 28: Orono Middle School Unified Breakfast Club meeting at 7:30 a.m. on the OMS patio ([Sara Hunstiger](#), Advisor)
- October 18: Unity Day. All staff and students, all grades, encouraged to wear orange or a BE KIND t-shirt
- October 18: Unity parade at Orono Middle School



Top (l-r): The Unified Flag Football teams dominated the regional tournament on Saturday, September 16, with first- and third-place finishes; Victor Ruhland, Carys Summers, Michelle Swenson (OHS Unified Advisor), and Brooks Fegers will lead the Club this year. Bottom: The Unified Club enjoys an outing to an apple orchard on Sunday, September 17.

Are You Following the Orono Spartans on Facebook?

If you are on Facebook, don't forget to follow the new [Orono Spartans Facebook page](#). AD Paul Brunner will help you stay up-to-date with fun game-day announcements, results and more! The full calendar of athletic events can be found at spartans.oronoschools.org/athletics. Come root on the Spartans!



Makena Prevost Instrumental in Pushing for Caretaker Law

Orono High School freshman Makena Prevost has been receiving a lot of positive attention in the news lately for her role in pushing for a new state **Caretaker Law** to help protect individuals with special needs. The law, passed August 1, allows drivers to declare they are a caregiver and have that information added to their driving records. Then, in case of an accident, first responders are alerted that a crash victim is a caregiver, and that there may be individuals with special needs in the car or home alone. **We are exceedingly proud of Makena for her empathy, insight and perseverance.**

I encourage you to read the Driver and Vehicle Services blog post that highlights [Makena's Girl Scout Silver Award effort](#) and partnership with Corcoran Police Sgt. Pete Ekenberg and Representative Kristin Robbins.

Makena is interviewed by reporter Susan-Elizabeth Littlefield for a story airing this Sunday morning, September 24, between 7 and 8 a.m. on WCCO-TV.

Orono School Board Meeting Highlights

Monday, September 11, 2023 | [Agenda](#)

- Pledge of Allegiance and Recognition of Patriot Day 9/11 | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Board Member Reports | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Technology Update with Sean Beaverson | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Community Education Update with Tiffany Clifton | [Watch the Presentation](#)

The next meeting of the [Orono School Board](#) is scheduled for Monday, September 25, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. Join us for Coffee & Conversation at 6:30 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room with representatives from the School Board and Administration.

Upcoming Events

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

- **September 25**, Professional Day, No School
- **September 25**, School Board meeting 7 p.m. with 6:30 p.m. Coffee & Conversation period
- **September 28**, Art in the Park at Veterans Memorial Park, 5-7 p.m.
- **October 9**, School Board Meeting 7 p.m.
- **October 19-20**, State Teacher Convention, No School
- **October 23**, School Board Meeting, 7 p.m



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