



Orono Schools

Where Excellence is a Tradition and a Goal

District 278
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District News • March 22, 2024



From the Superintendent

Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.

Happy Spring Break! I want to commend and thank our staff, families, and community for pouring their heart and soul into our students and district efforts in academics, arts, athletics, and activities. To our students: Your hard work has truly made this a remarkable year so far. You make each day count!

Our community has been buzzing with excitement and support—from strategic planning to winter sports, clubs and activities. And the momentum isn't slowing down. Be sure to enjoy spring performing arts events that are open to the public ([see our website for more details](#)). There's something for everyone to enjoy.

Now, as we approach our well-deserved spring break, I encourage you to make the most of every moment (this includes rest!). Whether you're staying close to home or departing for a new adventure, embrace the opportunity to recharge and return with even more vigor to finish the year strong. Remember to prioritize your safety and well-being, stay connected, and take care of yourselves and each other.

Enjoy spring break, Spartans!

Warm regards,
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Strategic Planning - Phase 3

Strategic planning moves ahead in Orono Schools as the Core Planning Team met for two days in March to review stakeholder input from Phase 2, achievement and demographic data, and current initiatives. The Team provided input on the strategic direction of the district that will be synthesized, presented again to the Core Planning Team, and then to the Orono School Board for approval in June 2024. The strategic planning process gives us a structured way to ensure that we are addressing needs and providing opportunities for our students to achieve personal excellence. Many thanks to our Core Planning Team members; facilitator Dr. Mark Wolak; and guest speakers Ali Chorley, Sean Beaverson, Bailey Nett, Jennifer Ivers, Dr. Leslie Locke and Dani Putra. You can learn more about the Strategic Planning process, Core Planning Team members, and key findings from the Stakeholder Input Phase on the [Strategic Planning webpage](#).



District Honors Ms. Michele Kunz

At the March 11 School Board meeting, the Orono School Board and district administration honored Ms. Michele Kunz in recognition of her 25 years of service to Orono Schools. Michele served on both the Orono Schools Board and as the School Board representative for Intermediate District 287 for more than two decades. IDS 287 is a consortium of schools districts in the west metro. Its mission is to be the premier provider of innovative, specialized services to ensure that each member district can meet the unique learning needs of its students. Michele helped Orono Schools ensure that every student was served with high quality instruction. Her leadership was selfless and outstanding. She led the entire 287 district as aging facilities were replaced, building quality infrastructure across the western twin cities. She attended many, many meetings long into the evenings and during the day, advocating with legislators and Hennepin County leadership for additional mental health services. Michele Kunz is a champion of children. Thank you, Ms. Kunz, for your time and selfless efforts over these 25 years!



Front row: Martha Van de Ven, Michele Kunz, Dr. Karen Orcutt, Wendy Lundsgaard, Laura Wallander; back row: Ali Howe, Mike Bash, Sarah Borchers, Dr. Kristine Flesher, Todd Madson

Upcoming **SPRING**
PERFORMANCES
[HTTPS://BIT.LY/PERFORM24](https://bit.ly/perform24)





Speech & Debate Achievements

Two Spartans have qualified for the National Speech and Debate Association National Tournament! Congratulations to McKenna Monger (drama) and Maddie Dore (humor). Minnesota Speech and Debate is one of the most competitive charters in the nation. McKenna and Maddie are at the top of their game and we are so proud!

Participation in Speech and Debate hones lifelong skills of writing, organization, presentation, public speaking and so much more.

Thanks to Head Speech Coach Barb Shofner for her expertise and dedication to our students.

Excellence in Fine Art

On March 13, nine students from Orono High School were individually recognized in front of a large audience of students, parents, and administrators for their outstanding artwork at the 2024 Metro West Conference Visual Arts Exhibition Awards Program and Reception hosted by Normandale Community College. All students received the Metro West Conference Visual Arts Exhibition Certificate for their exceptional efforts.

Special congratulations to junior Andrew Carlson (pictured), who was honored with a blue ribbon, Award of Excellence for his piece entitled "A Pair of Pears." And a rousing shout-out to our other outstanding Spartan participants: Alexis Arnold (12), Kaelin Carpenter (12), Noah Feldmann (12), Leyla Lyu (10), Olivia Monger (12), Andrew Nishida (9), Tiegan Swanson (9) and Maya Vanyo (11).



And now... for Athletics

Please see photos, below!

It has been so exciting to see such high levels of engagement, teamwork, community spirit and positivity in our athletic endeavors this entire year! And the close of winter sports has repeatedly kept us on the edge of our seats!

Boys Swimming and Diving

Congratulations to Orono Boys Swimming and Diving team that finished the Section 2A Meet in 2nd place overall. We were proud to cheer several boys who qualified for state competition and placed in the Top 10: Justin Barry, Eli Fish, Owen Gagne, Ben Mitchell, Stewart Royal, Walter Royal, Mitch Volk and Bjorn Jaenchen (Diving). All of our swimmers placed in the top 10: 200 Medley Relay - 3rd place; 200 Free - Walter Royal, 7th place; 200 IM - Eli Fish, 8th place; 100 Fly - Walter Royal, 4th place; 500 Free - Eli Fish, 7th place; 200 Free Relay - 4th place; 100 Breast - Owen Gagne, 7th place; Bjorn Jaenchen took 6th place in diving. Wow!

Girls Hockey

Orono hockey fans had a lot to cheer about AGAIN this year, with another state appearance! Congratulations to our girls for ending a remarkable season as the 2024 MSHSL Class A Girls Hockey State Tournament Third Place Winner. OGH Assistant Coach Claire Bjerke was named the Class A coach of the year. Congratulations!

Boys Hockey were Section Champions and secured another state appearance at the MSHSL Class A State Tournament as the #5 seed. They fell to Mahtomedi in the quarterfinals but went on to beat Alexandria Area (8-1) and Northfield (1-0) to take the State Tournament Consolation Championship. Outstanding effort by our boys and coaches this year. Congratulations!

Boys Basketball

By now you've probably seen a clip of the Boys Basketball Section Championship double overtime thriller against Benilde-St. Margaret's. After winning Sections, the team received the #4 seed in the 2024 MSHSL Class AAA State Tournament. This was a second consecutive state tournament appearance for the boys team. Our Spartans fell to DeLaSalle in the state quarterfinals, 70-64 and fell to Stewartville in overtime, 72-69 to end the season. But what an impressive season it was! Congratulations and thank you to Coach Barry Wohler who was named Section Coach of the Year. Spartan Pride!

Wrestling

In wrestling, Brady McPherson made it to the mat in the 2024 MSHSL Wrestling State Tournament at the Xcel Energy Center. Brady is an outstanding athlete and gave his all this year. We are so proud of your achievement!

Grace Bickett is our 2024 Athena Award winner. This award is given annually to one senior female who has distinguished herself in athletics and academics. Grace, congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

Be sure to follow AD Brunner's updates on the [Orono Spartans](#) Facebook page!





**2024 MSHSL Class A Boys Hockey
State Tournament Consolation Champions**



**Boys Basketball
Second consecutive State Tournament
appearance and an outstanding 2024 season**



Brady McPherson, Wrestling State Qualifier



Orono School Board Meeting Highlights

Monday, February 26, 2024 | [Agenda](#)

- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Board Reports & Comments | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Policy Action - Policies from the 700 Series | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Presentation of the Character Award | [Watch the Presentation](#)

Monday, March 11, 2024 | [Agenda](#)

- Recognition of Michele Kunz | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Board Reports & Comments | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- AIPAC Compliance | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- K-8 Principals' Report | [Watch the Presentation](#)

The next meeting of the [Orono School Board](#) is scheduled for Monday, April 8, 2024 at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room with an opportunity for [Public Comment](#) at 7 p.m.

No School K-12

SPRING BREAK | MARCH 25-29, 2024
PROFESSIONAL DAY | APRIL 5, 2024

Calendars & Announcements

- See the [Calendars page](#) on the Orono Schools website for more information.
 - Highway 12 Road Construction is upcoming this spring and summer. More to come on this! Just a heads-up that there will be preparations starting this April.
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