



Orono Schools

Where Excellence is a Tradition and a Goal

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District News • January 17, 2025



From the Superintendent

This week, as I watched our Orono Unified Basketball team compete in the Regional Tournament, I was reminded of one of our core district values: *inclusion*. In Orono, inclusion is a commitment to ensuring that every student feels seen, heard, and valued as an integral member of our community.

The efforts of our Unified Clubs exemplify this commitment. This week at Orono High School was “Live Unified Week,” organized by OHS students to foster connection and understanding among the entire student body. You may remember that last year, Orono High School received national recognition as a Special Olympics North America National Banner School. Being part of the Unified program underscores our commitment to celebrating the unique strengths of every student.

The Orono Middle School Unified Breakfast Club brings together more than 75 students each month. This Club is a great example of how shared experiences build bonds and encourage connectedness. The next OMS Unified Breakfast Club is the morning of January 30. I encourage all OMS students to participate.

Inclusion enriches us all. It teaches us empathy, broadens our perspectives, and strengthens our sense of community. As we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday, January 20, I take to heart his quote, “No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to making inclusion a cornerstone of our district’s identity. Together, we are building a future where every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Warm regards,
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.



Orono Unified Basketball players and partners participate in the Special Olympics Regional Tournament.



Bundle Up and Be Safe!

The [National Weather Service](#) has issued a Cold Weather Advisory in effect from 9:00 p.m. Saturday, January 18 through 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Tuesday, January 21. Based on predicted air temperatures and wind chills, we are planning to hold school (reminder: no school Jan. 20). Please dress in layers and add a hat, face mask, and gloves to protect from the cold. Orono Schools supports family decisions regarding attendance during inclement weather.

**No Preschool
No School K-12**

Jan. 20 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan. 27 | Professional Day

YMCA Youth in Government 2025 Conference

Forty Orono students in grades 8-12 recently attended the YMCA's Youth in Government 2025 Conference. Students debated bills, passed proposals, and presented their court cases. Several students served as officers and in appointed positions. Eshaan Ambrose (12) served in the Governor's Cabinet, McKenna Monger (11) served as a Committee Leader, Ella Palm (10) served as a Secretary of Spear Center, Jane Stavitzski served as a Committee Leader, and Simon Forbes (10) and Peter Gagne (10) were Media Reporters.

Special thanks to Genna Torney, Orono Community Education Youth Development Coordinator and Orono Delegation Director; Orono parents Stephanie Klaers, Kelley Kell, and Kimberly Foss; Nick Oak, AmeriCorps Promise Fellow; and Sierra Myers, Community Education Marketing and Community Engagement Coordinator.





Keagan Klaers Wins Outstanding Jurist Award

At the Youth in Government 2025 Conference, Orono junior Keagan Klaers was presented with the C. Donald Peterson Outstanding Jurist award. This honor was not through an application process; rather, appointed officials, peers, and advisors at the YIG conference took notice of Keagan's "unwavering confidence, professionalism, and poise in the courtroom." They noted his meticulous preparation, compelling arguments, and his ability to address questions with respect and clarity. Keagan "showcased a maturity beyond his years." The award includes a full scholarship to the 2025 YMCA National Judicial Competition in Saint Paul. Congratulations, Keagan!

Keagan has also been accepted into the Minnesota House of Representatives Page program for high school juniors. Next month, he will spend a week observing and paging in the Minnesota House chamber, meeting legislative leaders, and connecting with others visiting the Capitol complex. Enjoy your time in St. Paul, Keagan!



The Brothers Grimm
Spectaculathon
ONE ACT

Orono High School Theater
January 17, 2025
6 p.m. | OHS Auditorium
Free Performance!



Woody Field Brings Student Perspective to MSBA and MASSP

Congratulations to senior **Woody Field** who is serving as President of the Minnesota Association of Honor Societies. Today, Woody was part of a panel presentation, "Student Voice in Schools," at the Minnesota School Board Association leadership conference.

Later this month, Woody will have the opportunity to emcee a portion of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) Winter Conference. At that event, he will also be presented with the MASSP President's Scholarship. We are so proud of you, Woody!

Speech Team Voices Soar

The Orono Speech Team participated in its first tournament on January 11. Ten competitors advanced to the final round with outstanding results. Earning second place in the Novice category: Maggie Kubista, Prose Reading; and Harrison Stenback, Humorous Interpretation. Earning third place in the varsity category: Oliver Berg, Creative Expression; and Sydney Sloneker, Great Speeches. Earning fourth place varsity: Maya Haugen, Storytelling. Earning 5th place varsity: Ruby Gehrman, Dramatic Interpretation; and Sebastian Pikula, Discussion with 5th place novice, Britta Olson, Extemporaneous Reading. Placing 7th were Anna D'Alessandro, Poetry Reading (varsity); and Meg Arneson, Storytelling (novice). Congratulations to all!

"We had a great tournament," said Speech Coach Barb Shofner. "We were so happy to see so many of our new speakers coming along to observe and learn more about how a tournament works."



Activities

Come on out and cheer on our Spartans! Here are just a few highlights this week. Be sure to follow AD Paul Brunner's updates on social media ([Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)).

One Act Play - "Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon" - January 17 & 18

Free performance tonight at Orono High School at 6 p.m. The first competitive performance is at the One Act Play Festival in New Prague January 18 at 9:30 a.m. Good luck to our cast & crew!

Boys' Basketball - next appearance January 17

Boys Basketball is currently ranked 2nd! They will play New Prague tonight (Jan. 17) here at home.

Girls' Basketball - next appearance January 21

Girls Basketball just extended their winning streak to 10 games! The team is ranked #4 with their next appearance Jan. 21 at home vs. Chaska.

Dance - next appearance January 18

Varsity Jazz & Kick took second place at the Metro West Conference Championships. The Totino-Grace Invitational is Saturday, Jan. 18 at Totino-Grace. Orono performances begin at 9:48 a.m.

Boys' Hockey - next appearance January 17

The boys are 9-6-2 on the season with their next appearance tonight (Jan. 17) at home with puck drop 7:00 p.m. vs. Cloquet.

Girls Hockey - next appearance January 18

Girls Hockey is 11-5-3 for the season. Their next appearance is January 18 at 3 p.m. here at home vs. Moorhead.

Boys' Swim and Dive - True Team State Meet January 18

Orono Boys' Swimming & Diving, currently ranked 5th, placed second at True Team sections and earned a wild card bid to True Team State tomorrow, January 18 at the U of MN Aquatic Center.

Nordic Ski - next race January 18

The Boys team is currently ranked 5th. The boys placed 4th at the Mesabi East Invite, the highest ever finish in program history. Boys and Girls will compete January 22 at Hyland Park.

Alpine Ski - next race January 17

The Boys' Alpine Ski team took 1st place at both of the Metro West Conference races of the season. Boys and Girls will race January 17 at Buck Hill. Go, Spartans!

Wrestling - next match January 18

Brett Kiecker is the #6 state-ranked boys wrestler in the 114 lb. division. Emery Soukop (7th grade) is the #1 state-ranked girls wrestler in the 100 lb. division. Wrestlers will compete at Park Center High School in Osseo on January 18.

Visit the [Athletics website](#) for a complete calendar of events.

Orono School Board Meeting Highlights

Monday, January 13, 2025 | [Agenda](#)

- Oath of Office for newly elected and re-elected Board members | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Election of School Board Officers | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Board Reports & Comments | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Action: Operating Levy Renewal | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Annual Renewals | [Watch the Presentation](#)
- Board Member Committee Assignments | [View the Assignments](#)

The next meeting of the Orono School Board is scheduled for Monday, January 27, 2025, at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. There will be a Coffee & Conversation session preceding the Board meeting at 6:30 p.m.



The Orono School Board had its organizational meeting on January 13, 2025. back row (l-r): Todd Madson, Vice-Chair; Sarah Borchers, Chair; and Timothy Usset, Director. Front row (l-r): Wendy Lundsgaard, Treasurer; Gavin Tempero,

Important Dates

- January 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No School E-12)
- January 24 - End of Semester 1
- January 27 - Professional Day (No School E-12)
- February 17 - Professional Day (No School E-12)
- March 7 - Parent-teacher Conferences (No School K-8)
- March 24-28 - Spring Break (No School K-12)

Please see the [Calendars page](#) on the Orono Schools website for more information.



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