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Update from the Superintendent
Dr. Kristine Flesher

December 19, 2025

Dear Families and Staff,

Winter break is here, and I want to extend my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones! I hope that, like me, you are looking forward to the coming days to rest, recharge, and enjoy those important connections with family, friends, and neighbors.

This week, our students have taken part in some fun and engaging activities, and it has been wonderful to see the joy and sense of community across our schools. We are grateful for the energy and planning that make these moments possible.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back with renewed focus on January 5 as we move toward the close of first semester. Until then, I wish you a peaceful, healthy, and joyful winter break.

Sincerely,
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Turning Dreams Into Plans: The Orono High School College & Career Center

Orono Schools faculty, students, and guests recently gathered to celebrate the official dedication of the new Orono High School (OHS) College & Career Center. This transformative space was made possible through the generosity of the **Richard & Jennie Goelz family**, whose support has provided our students, staff, and guests with a flexible space for future planning. By providing a space to explore everything from college and career to military service and gap-year opportunities, we are sending a clear message to our students: your dreams matter, and this community is behind you.

The Center, adjacent to the Counseling office, was designed to suit multiple uses. This fall, it was a hub of activity when 90 representatives from colleges and universities across the country met with more than 250 OHS students exploring post-secondary options. Since its opening in September, the site has also hosted numerous information meetings to provide students with details on the future-planning process, scholarship opportunities, PreACT scores, and more.

At the dedication, Principal Dr. Amy Steiner thanked the donors and emphasized the impact of having a dedicated environment for students. “It is wonderful to have a space that students feel is updated, new, professional, and welcoming. This fall, I was really pleased with the wide variety of schools that visited our campus because we know our kids have a wide variety of experiences, dreams, hopes, and passions.”

School Counselor Kayte Haagenson shared how the Center has exceeded all expectations. "This space is like nothing I could have imagined... it has become so collaborative, so welcoming. This space has allowed us to take a deep breath knowing that we are completely resourced here in terms of space and opportunities for students. We as counselors can spend more meaningful time with college/career representatives who used to meet with students down the hall in the Media Center. Now, we can introduce ourselves, learn more about their school and admission priorities, which then allows us to make sure we're finding the right fit for students.” Ms. Haagenson highlighted that the center is more than just a place for college and career planning; it is a "hub" where students practice essential life skills like networking, receiving feedback, and developing a growth mindset.

We are deeply grateful to the Goelz and Nickerson families and Orono staff for making this vision a reality. This center will serve generations of Spartans, helping them see what is possible and equipping them with the tools to get there.









Above: Students gather for counseling sessions in the new College & Career Center. Below: Students, staff, administrators, and School Board members gathered for the College & Career Center dedication. From center left (green vest): Richard Goelz, Tom Nickerson, and Katie Nickerson. Not pictured: Jennie Goelz.



Winter Connectedness Activities

Connectedness is a strategic goal in Orono Schools! During December, students and staff led activities to bring our students together in fun and meaningful ways. We are so proud of our students and their passion for staying connected with our learning community!





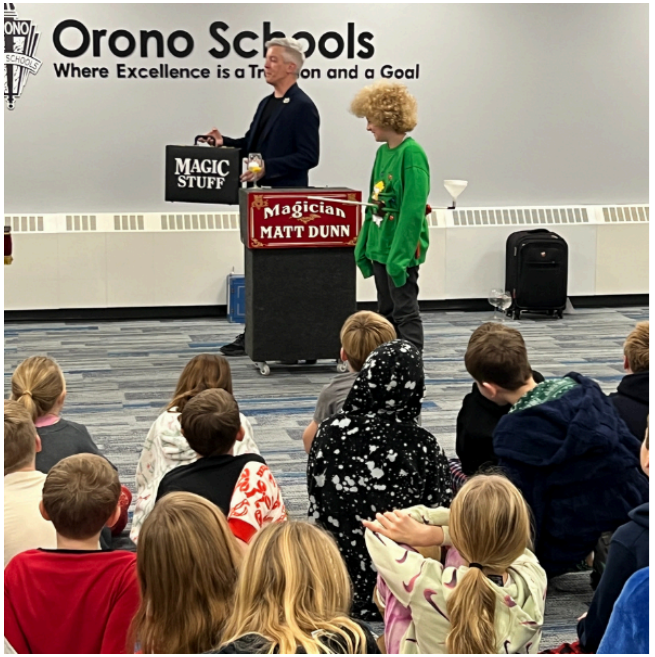


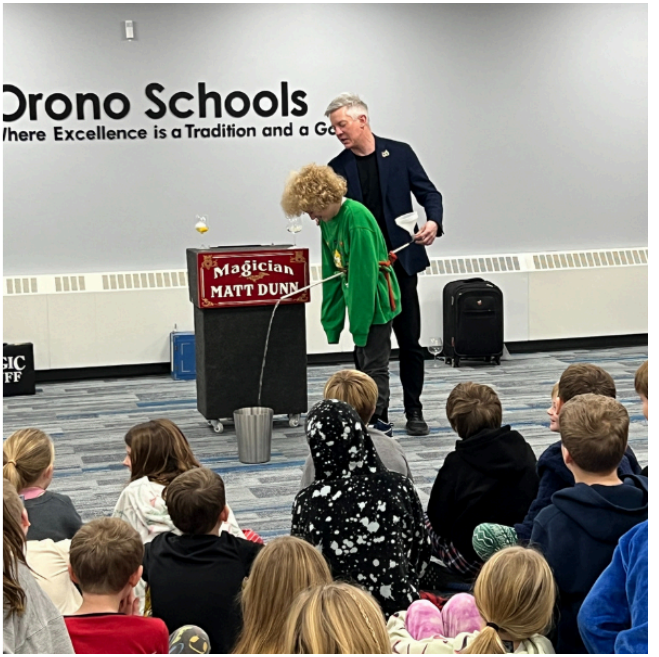
On winter activities day at Orono Middle School, students had a choice of fun activities, including sledding and "driving" handmade robots through the halls.





The OHS Wellbeing Club and Student Senate partnered in planning the annual "You Matter Week" focused on kindness, connection, and education on mental health.





Today, Magician Matt Dunn entertained Orono fourth-graders with amazing tricks and jokes.



The OMS choir shared their talents with residents at Stonebay of Orono Senior Living.



Fifth graders in Ms. Mieras' and Ms. McDonald-Jonassen's Spanish classes recently completed a meaningful service-learning project in partnership with the Pulsera Project. Through their studies, students learned about the Spanish-speaking countries of Nicaragua and Guatemala while building understanding of poverty and its impact—both globally and within our own community. The project culminated in a pulsera (bracelet) sale held this week. This year's sale raised $5,950, bringing the total raised through this project over four non-consecutive years to more than $20,000! Proceeds support the Pulsera Project's mission to empower local artisans.

Congratulations to Orono's ExCEL & Triple 'A' Award Winners

We are so excited to share our 2025-26 MSHSL ExCEL and Triple 'A' Award recipients. The ExCEL Awards this year go to **Gideon Fish** and **Sophie Middleton**. The ExCEL award honors high school juniors throughout the state who demonstrate excellence in community, education, and leadership. Orono's MSHSL 2025-26 Triple 'A' Award winners are seniors **Dane Kanwischer** and **Alivia Uselding**. They were honored for demonstrating excellence in academics, athletics, and fine arts. Congratulations to all four!



Sports Update | Follow "Orono Spartans" on Instagram or Facebook!

Orono Spartans social media managed by AD Paul Brunner

Alpine Ski

The Alpine Ski Team competed in their first race of the season on December 15 at Buck Hill. Good luck to the team as they head to Wild Mountain on January 2.

Boys Basketball

The Boys Basketball team opened their season on December 2 with a win against Minnehaha Academy. Their current record is 3-2. The team hosts Delano tonight at 7 p.m. in the Competition Gym. After tonight's homestand, the team hits the road for a stint of away games. They return home again on January 20, hosting Chaska.

Girls Basketball

Girls Basketball has had an impressive start to their season with a current 5-2 record. Their next competition is away on December 26 versus Anoka. Come see the Spartans play their next home game on January 3 at 2 p.m. versus Alexandria!

Dance Team

The Dance Team season began with a Metro West Conference Meet at Orono on November 25 with Varsity Kick and Jazz both finishing second. Since then, the team has competed at Chaska, Chanhassen and Eastview, with strong finishes at each meet. Best of luck to the Dance Team tonight as they compete at the Metro West Conference Championships at Chanhassen High School! Mark your calendars for the Section Meet on February 7 at Westonka.

Boys Hockey

Boys Hockey has a 2-4-2 record going into tonight's game at St. Cloud Cathedral. Good luck, boys!

Girls Hockey

Girls Hockey has a 7-5-1 record and goes on the road tomorrow to compete against Moorhead. Wishing you the best, girls!

Nordic Ski

Congratulations to the Boys Nordic team that finished in first place at the opening conference skate race at Hyland. Spartans claimed the top two individual spots (Huotari, 1st; Loop, 2nd) and placed five skiers in the top 12 overall. Orono currently sits as the No. 8 state-ranked team in Boys Nordic. Shout-out to freshman Elise Binder who won the girls JV race at Hyland! Skiers will meet again at Hyland on January 6, 2026.

Boys Swimming & Diving

Boys Swimming & DIving beat New Prague 98-80 in their December 11 meet.
The boys will compete again December 20 with Diving at Oak Grove Middle School (Bloomington) at 10 a.m. and Swimming at Olson Middle School at 1 p.m. Best of luck to our swimmers and divers!

Wrestling

Congrats to Wrestling on winning today's Minneapolis Edison Tournament, the first individual tournament the team has won since 1973! Top Individual Finishers: 1st place, Brett Kiecker and Tate Kracht; 2nd place, Tae Reidy; 3rd place, Sam Hultmann, Nash Erstad, Solomon Rothbauer, Alec Peterson, and Bennett Williams. Wrestling will participate in a Dual Meet December 20 at Minneapolis Roosevelt High School and an Invitational at Rogers High School on January 2.

Go, Spartans!






ORONO
SPARTANS




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Enrollment Deadline

Open Enrollment App Deadline: **January 15, 2026** for 26-27 consideration, including siblings
Resident enrollment for 26-27 Kindergarten: See your email for details or contact us

952-449-8312 oronoschools.org/enroll enrollment@oronoschools.org

Important Dates

December 22 - Winter Break Begins
January 5 - Classes Resume
January 10 - Orono Activities Center Open House from 9-11 a.m.
January 19 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No School E-12)
January 23 - End of Semester 1
February 16 - Presidents Day/E-12 Professional Day (No School E-12)

Please see the Calendars webpage for more information including the 2025-26 and 2026-27* academic calendars.
*Note that school begins before Labor Day in fall 2026.

Orono School Board Meeting Highlights

Monday, December 8, 2025 | Agenda

- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | Watch the Presentation
- Board Members Questions & Comments | Watch the Presentation
- Facilities Update | Watch the Presentation
- Truth in Taxation Hearing | Watch the Presentation

The next meeting of the Orono School Board is scheduled for Monday, January 12, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. Registration for the public comment portion of the meeting is open Friday, January 9 through Monday, January 12 at 12 p.m. (noon).