

Update from the Superintendent
Dr. Kristine Flesher

January 9, 2026

Dear Families and Staff,

Welcome back, and happy new year! I hope you were able to enjoy a restful winter break and meaningful time with loved ones. As we begin this next chapter of the school year, I want to thank you for your part in making our learning community a strong and supportive place.

As we settle back into our school routines, we also recognize that current events in our state have increased tensions and prompted a range of emotional responses. We are available to respond to student needs whenever they arise. Our staff are dedicated to ensuring that every member of our learning community feels safe, supported, and valued. Please don't hesitate to reach out to a teacher, counselor, or principal if your child needs assistance. Open communication between home and school is one of the most important ways we can work together to support the welfare of all of our students.

We are also focused on the academic routines and experiences that sustain our children. In this update, we are sharing some recent student-centered news. Once again, we are grateful to our dedicated team who ensured that classrooms and spaces at Schumann Elementary were ready to welcome students on January 5.

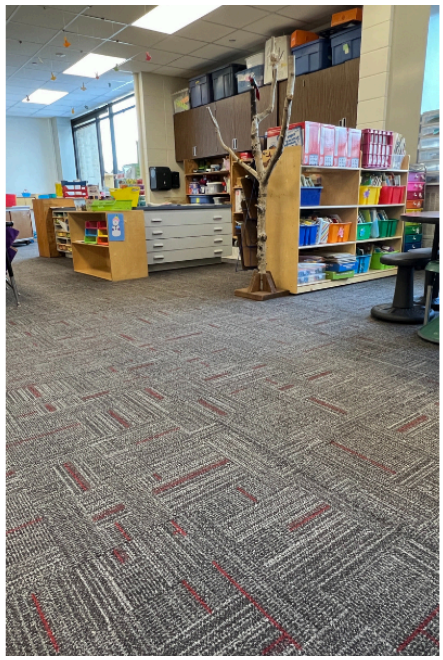
Thank you for your continued trust and collaboration. We look forward to a positive and productive start to 2026.

Sincerely,
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.
Superintendent

A Community Effort

Following the flooding in some classrooms Schumann Elementary on December 21, we were pleased—truthfully, overjoyed—to welcome students back this week with refreshed learning spaces, including new carpet and paint and a few necessary furniture adjustments. We extend **sincere thanks** to our buildings and grounds staff, custodial team, technology staff, and contract partners whose coordinated efforts made a smooth return possible. We are also grateful to Principal Dr. Adam Lamparske and our Schumann Elementary teachers for managing the restoration and inconvenience with patience, flexibility, and professionalism. Everyone involved has prioritized health, safety, and continuity of student learning from day one. While additional restoration work is planned through summer 2026, we are thankful our students have been able to return to school without interruption.






Dawn Fjosne's Kindergarten students said "I love it!" when asked about the new carpet installed over winter break as part of the flood restoration. Due to the quick work of onsite teams, most books and materials were safe from the flood and were moved back into classrooms before January 5. Thank you to everyone for making the student transition back to school a smooth one!



Sienna Sether: Leadership Recognition

Senior and Student Body President Sienna Sether continues to make an impact beyond her school this month through her leadership at the state level. As President of the Minnesota Association of Student Leaders (MASL), Sienna is participating in several high-profile events alongside Minnesota's school board members and principals.

On Thursday, January 15, Sienna and fellow MASL student board members will present a student panel session at the 2026 Minnesota School Board Association Leadership Conference. Their session, "The Student Voice: A Conversation with Tomorrow's Leaders," will highlight student perspectives and the importance of student leadership in

education.

Sienna's leadership will also be recognized at the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) Conference. On Wednesday, January 28, she will be one of two students receiving the MASSP President's Scholarship. The following day, Sienna will serve as a co-emcee for a portion of the MASSP Winter Conference.

We are grateful that student leaders like Sienna are able to connect with principals and school board members from across Minnesota. Through these events, Sienna continues to amplify student voice and exemplify leadership at the highest level.

Excellence in Financial Reporting

Orono Schools is proud to once again receive a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International. This honor recognizes districts that produce comprehensive annual financial reports that meet rigorous professional standards for accuracy, clarity, and fiscal integrity. The goal of the program is to promote best practices in financial management, ensuring resources are effectively used to support education. Orono has earned this award for many consecutive years.

Thank you to Nick Taintor, Director of Business Services; Rachel McQuiston, Controller; and the Orono Schools Facilities & Finance Committee for carefully managing and reporting district finances.



Activities Update: Come Out and Support Our Spartans!

Follow "Orono Spartans" on Instagram or Facebook!

Orono Spartans social media managed by AD Paul Brunner

Basketball - Girls

Girls Basketball has a 10-2 record and defeated No. 1 state-ranked Benilde-St. Margaret's January 6. Congratulations Mya Moore, who scored 51 points, which set a new single-game girls basketball school scoring record. The team hosts Mahtomedi tonight (January 9) at 7 p.m.

Basketball - Boys
Boys Basketball continues their successful season with a current record of 6-3. Good luck as the team travels to Belle Plaine tonight (January 9) for their next match up.

Swim & Dive - Boys
Boys Swim & Dive continued their impressive start to the season by winning the Bloomington Jefferson Jaguar Invitational on December 20. Congratulations to Gideon Fish on setting a new school diving record of 533.80! There is one more meet before True Team Sections on Saturday, January 17.

Wrestling
Wrestling earned five wins on December 20 to finish a perfect 5-0 at the Teddie Duals! Brett Kiecker finished first at the Rogers Holiday Tournament on January 2-3. The Spartans return to action this weekend in the Stewartville Invitational.

Hockey - Boys
The Spartans are currently sitting at a 3-7-3 record. The boys head to cross-town rival Westonka/Watertown-Mayer at Westonka High School on January 10 at 3 p.m.

Hockey - Girls
Come support the Spartans during a conference match-up at home versus New Prague on January 10. The girls are currently 8-9-1 on the season.

Alpine Ski
Alpine Ski has been busy in the new year, racing on January 2 at Wild Mountain and January 5 at Buck Hill. The team races again at Buck Hill on January 9 and January 12.

Nordic Ski
Nordic is hard at work preparing for their next race on January 13 at Theodore Wirth Park. At the Metro West Lake races this week, Connor Loop finished 4th in the varsity race and Ben Van de Ven finished 4th in JV. Congratulations!

Dance Team
The Dance Team closed out 2025 as the Metro West Conference Runner Up! Varsity Jazz and Varsity Kick placed second at the Conference Championships on December 19.

Go, Spartans!



Nominations Now Open for the 2026 Orono Alumni Association "Distinguished" and "Promising" Awards

Do you know Orono alumni who are making a meaningful impact in their career or community? The Orono Foundation for Education invites you to nominate them for a 2026 Orono Alumni Award!

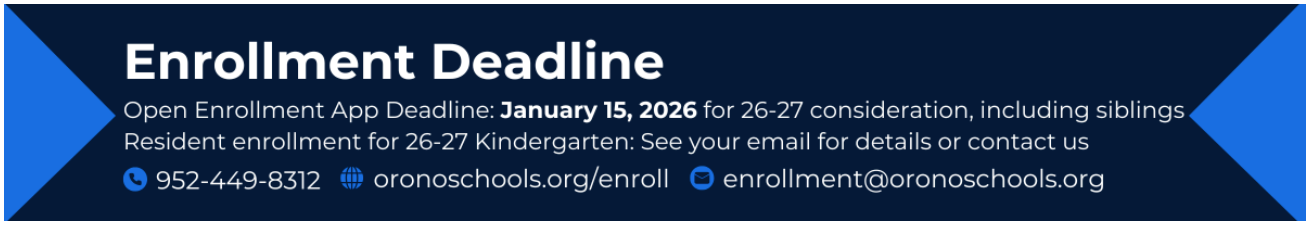
2026 ORONO Alumni Awards

Orono Foundation For Education

NOMINATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 1

Since 1997, Orono Schools and the Orono Foundation for Education have partnered to honor 42 graduates as either **Promising Alumni** (graduates from the past 15 years) or **Distinguished Alumni** (graduates of more than 15 years).

The nomination deadline is **February 1, 2026**. Learn more or submit a nomination at [www.oronofoundation.org/alumni.](www.oronofoundation.org/alumni)



Important Dates

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 Date Change

Due to scheduling conflicts, the next meeting of the Orono School Board is Wednesday, January 14, 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 Wednesday, January 14 at 12 p.m. (noon).

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