

Update from the Superintendent
Dr. Kristine Flesher

March 20, 2026

Dear Families and Staff,

With spring break at our doorstep, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has certainly been a rollercoaster of a winter. From shifting temperatures to changing conditions, jackets to shirt sleeves, this season has kept us all on our toes. As we look ahead, the forecast for spring break is promising... an encouraging sign as we enjoy a well-deserved pause.

When we return on March 30, I encourage you to continue leaning into the strong sense of connection that makes our district so special. As you read through the newsletter, you will see a special section titled, "**Opportunities for Community Connection**." Please plan to join us! There are also outstanding opportunities ahead for all ages through our Community Education spring and summer programming. Registration is open now.

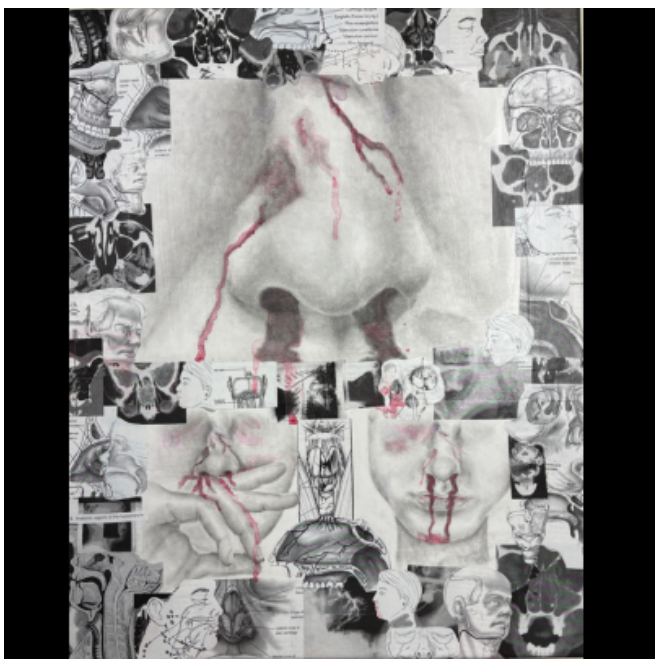
Spring also brings our annual standardized assessments, giving students an opportunity to "show what they know" while providing valuable insights that help guide instruction across our district. We encourage families to support their students in approaching these assessments with confidence, knowing they are well-prepared. While these assessments are just one part of our evaluation of students' academic growth, **full participation is important**, and we appreciate your partnership in ensuring your student is present, prepared, and ready to do their best.

I wish you a safe, restful, and enjoyable spring break, and we look forward to welcoming everyone back refreshed and ready for the final stretch of the school year.

Sincerely,
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Spartan Soirée

Friday, May 1, 2026
Wayzata Country Club



Metro West Merit Award in Art

Congratulations to junior **Lydia Richardson** who earned a Merit Award at the Metro West Art Show. Her piece, "Free Nose Job," was recognized for strong manipulation of form and thought-provoking content.

In all, 10 student pieces were selected for the art show. We are so proud of our students who continue to explore important topics and express their ideas through mixed media in their art classes.

Thank you to Dr. Shelagh Gamble for inspiring our artists and coordinating entries this year.

Spartobots Show Gracious Professionalism

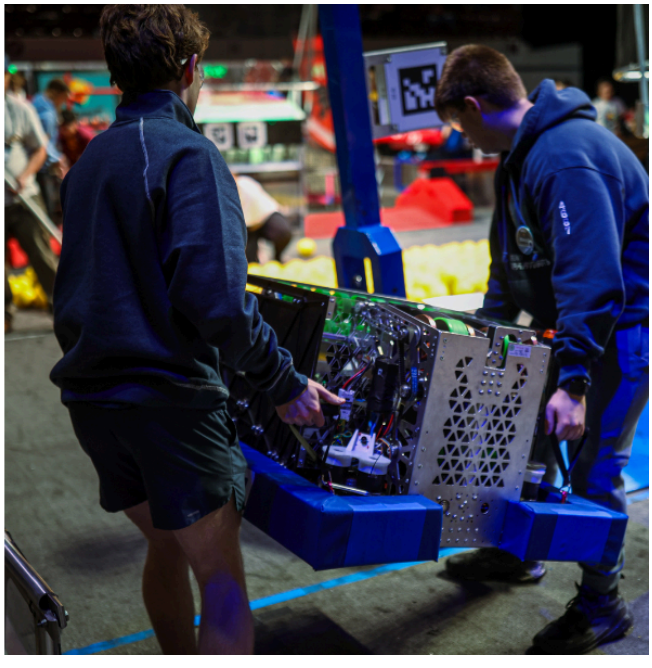
The Orono Schools Robotics Team, Spartobots, recently competed at the FIRST Robotics Northern Lights Regional Competition in Duluth alongside 42 other teams. After a strong set of qualifying matches, the Spartobots ranked #7, earning the honor of becoming an *Alliance Captain*—a distinction awarded to the top eight teams.

But that was just the beginning. When another team arrived at the tournament with a basic robot that had broken and missing components and no working code, the Spartobots stepped in to help repair and finish programming so the team could compete. We're incredibly proud of the Spartobots for their show of character and connection to peers from other schools. For this effort the team was honored with the **Gracious Professionalism Award**, one of the most meaningful honors in FIRST Robotics.

Congratulations to the Spartobots for representing Orono with skill, teamwork, and heart! And special thanks to Mr. Haislet, Mr. Kruse, and all the mentors for supporting our team!







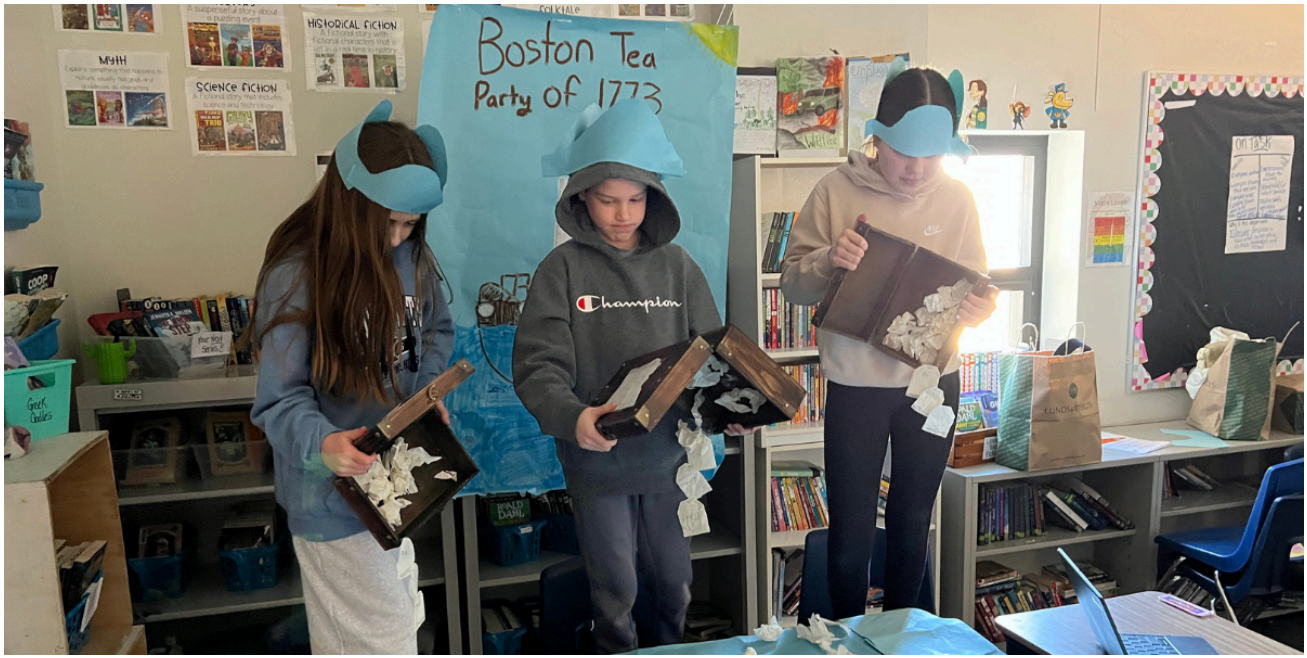
History Comes to Life at Orono Intermediate School

Fifth-grade historians in Ms. Buchner's classroom proved that history can come to life—even while standing perfectly still.

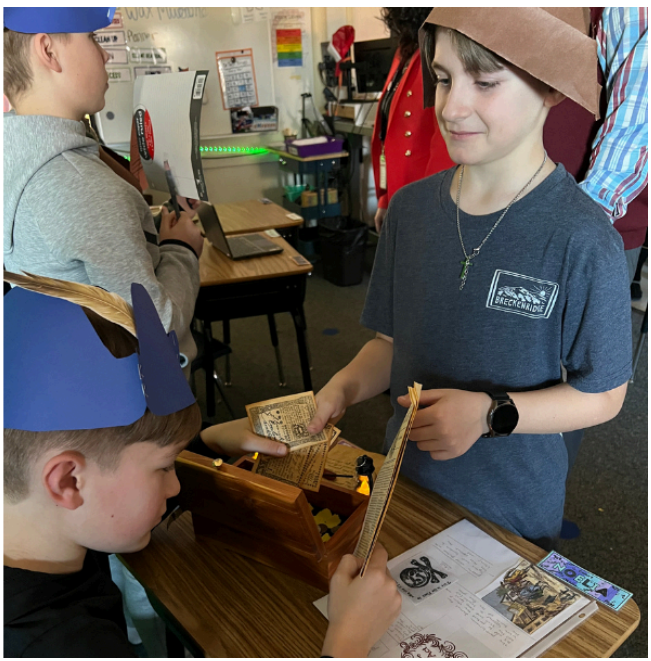
Through an interactive Wax Museum experience, students remained frozen in character for two 15-minute "openings," bringing the American Revolution to life in a uniquely engaging way. Working in timeline teams, they explored the rising tensions of the 1760s and 1770s, portraying pivotal moments such as the Boston Tea Party, the Stamp Act, and the Boston Massacre.

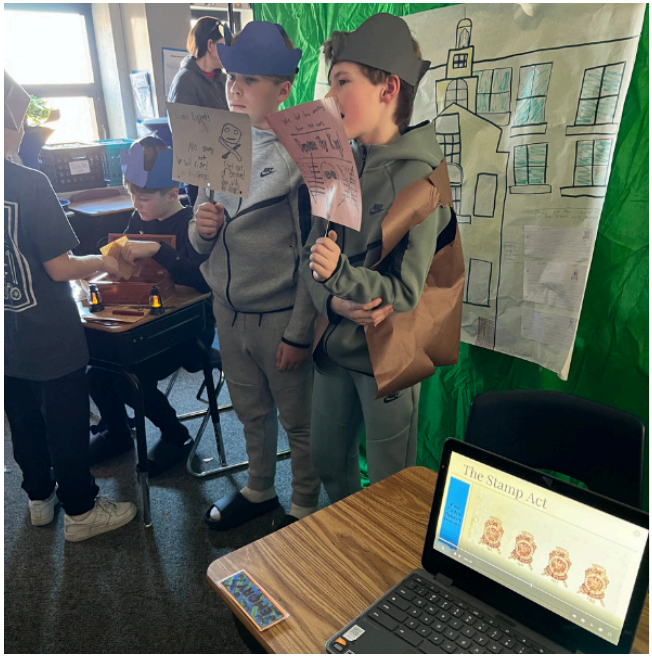
Each group designed a detailed scene and costumes and created a recorded audio presentation for each station. Visitors could press the play button to activate each exhibit—hearing students' voices explain the who, what, and why while the "wax figures" stayed impressively still. This was an amazing

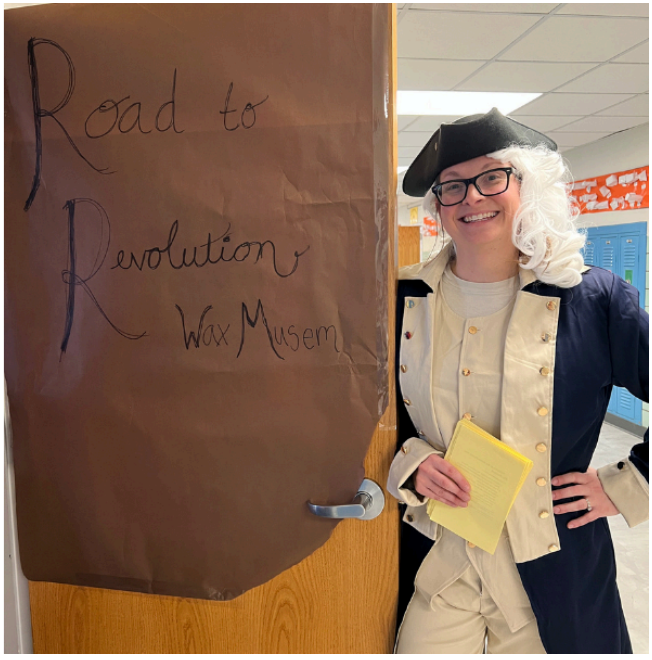
approach to learning, with students transforming their classroom into a living (and very still!) timeline of early American history.











DECA State Conference Results

Orono DECA sent 86 students to compete last week at the Minnesota State Career Development Conference. Typically about 15-20% of participants advance to state finals, and Orono was proud to send 37% (or 32 students) to State. Of those students, the following 19 qualified to compete at the International Competition in Atlanta next month. Congratulations to all our state qualifiers and to Mr. Joe Huber, our DECA advisor.

Earning Gold Certification
Avery Bohlinger - School-Based Enterprise - Retail
Gretchen Fandel Thompson - School-Based Enterprise - Food
Gideon Fish - School-Based Enterprise - Food
Olive Gladney - School-Based Enterprise - Retail

Earning 1st Place
Sarah Henkelman - Career Development Project
Carlisle McNae - Career Development Project
Carly Rausch - Principles of Hospitality and Tourism

Earning 4th Place
Eli Fish - Community Giving Project
Olive Gladney - Marketing Communications Series
Gabe Hallen - Retail Merchandising Series
Carly Olson - Community Giving Project
Gianna Parrish - Community Giving Project

Earning 5th place
Evalyn Rosha - Principles of Entrepreneurship

Earning 7th Place
Matt Blue - Gold Chapter Campaigns
Morgan Larson - Gold Chapter Campaigns

And the group earning a **Thrive Certification** for Chapter Campaigns will attend the Aspire academy focused on developing leadership and life skills:

- Andy Blue
- Quinn Brassington
- Mollie Hollerman
- Owen Schaber





(L-R) DECA State Qualifiers; Sydney, Carley, Mr. Huber, Taylor, and Alex.







(L-R) Gretchen & Gideon; Oliver & Tyler; Sarah & Coco

OMS Students Qualify for State History Day

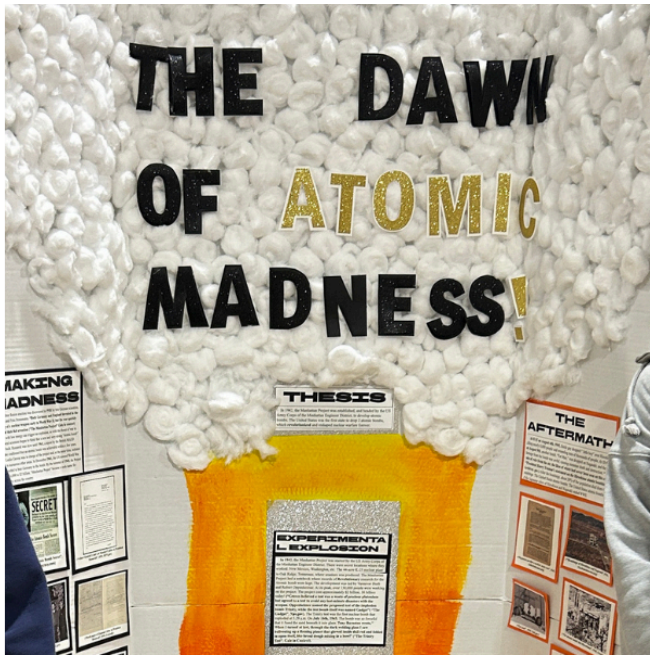
We are proud to recognize our students who have advanced to the Minnesota State History Day competition! History Day is a statewide academic program that challenges students to think like historians—conducting in-depth research, analyzing primary and secondary sources, and presenting their learning through exhibits, documentaries, performances, websites, or research papers.

This year's theme, "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History," invited students to explore moments of change and consider how individuals and societies have responded, adapted, and grown over time.

Through this process, students built valuable skills in research, critical thinking, and communication—and we are excited to see their hard work represented at the state level. Congratulations to all our students on a job well done and to our state qualifiers:

- Reagan L. - Hindenburg
- Nathan R. and Tommy M. - How Chernobyl Revolutionized Nuclear Safety
- Lissie T. - Munich Massacre
- Violet W. and Peighton H. - Simone de Beauvoir
- Everette A. and Libby L. - The Great Religious Schism
- Harold C. - Muhammad Ali: Civil Rights
- Emma B. and Eve H. - The Matchgirls Strike
- Quinn R. and Evelyn V. - Donna de Varona
- Madhavan Kandanchatha - Edward Jenner and the Invention of Vaccination









Athletics and Activities News

Our Spartan students and staff continue to exceed expectations in activities and athletics. We are so proud of our teams and individuals who demonstrate Spartan pride and character in all they do.









(L-R) **Simon Forbes** is the first Orono student to qualify for the NSDA National Tournament in Extemporaneous Speaking (the Central Minnesota Region is known for having some of the top extemporaneous speakers in the country). Senior **Mia Moore** has earned the Athena Award for exceptional athletic achievement in basketball. Mia has broken scoring records all season. Junior **Gideon Fish** is the 2026 MSHSL State Champion in Diving and set a new all-time Minnesota state record! Gideon was honored at a recent school board meeting. Orono Nordic Ski Head Coach Brian **'Speedy' McCollor** was named the Boys Nordic Coach of the Year by the Minnesota High School Nordic Ski Coaches Assn. Congratulations to all!

Closing Out Winter Sports

Winter sports wrapped up with standout performances across the board, highlighted by strong seasons from **Boys Swimming and Diving** (team finish 5th in State) and both basketball programs making deep postseason runs. The **Girls Basketball** team capped a dominant 24–4 campaign—ranked No. 1 all season—with a Section Runner-Up finish. The **Boys Basketball** team battled to an 18–11 record and a Section Runner-Up finish of their own. We are proud of all players and coaches on *memorable* winter sports seasons.



Boys Swim & Dive Team - State 5th Place

Boys Swimming & Diving State medalists: Ethan Weiss (200 Medley Relay); Eli Fish (200 Medley Relay, 200 IM, 100 Back); Ben Mitchell (200 Medley Relay, 200 IM, 100 Breast); Gideon Fish (200 Medley Relay, 1M Diving); Bjorn Jaenchen (1M Diving)



Girls Basketball - Section 6AAA Runner-Up



Boys Basketball - Section 6AAA Runner-Up

Opportunities for Community Connection

April 12 - **Puzzle Palooza** from 1-3 p.m. hosted by Orono Community Education | Register today
April 23-25 - OHS Spring Play "**Blithe Spirit**" | tickets on sale today https://oronohs.booktix.com
April 30 - Annual **Community Wellness Expo** from 5-7 p.m. at the Orono Activities Center
May 1 - **Spartan Soiree** hosted by the Orono Foundation for Education | Tickets on sale April 1
May 4 - **OHS Band Concert**, 7 p.m., Wayzata Community Church
May 7-9 - OMS Production, "**Madagascar Jr.**" | tickets on sale at https://oronoce.booktix.com

For sports competitions, please visit our Athletics and Activities calendar.

School Calendar

March 23-27 - Spring Break (No School E-12)
April 3 - 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, March 9, 2026 | Agenda

- Schumann Elementary Flood Response Team Recognition | Watch the Presentation
- Superintendent's "Report on Excellence" | Watch the Presentation
- Board Members' Questions and Comments | Watch the Presentation
- Schumann Elementary Flood Update | Watch the Presentation
- Federal Single Audit Reports | Watch the Presentation
- AIPAC Compliance | Watch the Presentation

Monday, February 23, 2026 | Agenda

- Student Recognition, Gideon Fish, MSHSL 2026 State Champion, Diving
- Superintendent's "Report on Excellence" | Watch the Presentation
- Board Members' Questions and Comments | Watch the Presentation
- Approve Construction Bid for Tennis Courts Project | Watch the Presentation
- K-8 Principal's Report | Watch the Presentation

The next meeting of the Orono School Board is scheduled for Monday, April 13, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. Registration for the public comment portion of the meeting is open Friday, April 10 through Monday, April 13 at 12 p.m. (noon).