

ORONO SCHOOLS

TODAY



April 2026

Serving Learners Across a Lifetime

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Orono Community,

In Orono Schools, we believe learning is not limited to a single stage of life, it is a shared, ongoing experience that strengthens our entire community.

In this newsletter, you'll see that commitment in action. From Community Education opportunities that bring people of all ages together, to high school students earning college credit, to the achievements of our alumni, and the many points of pride so far this school year—each story reflects the breadth of learning, connection, and success that define our community.

This work is grounded in our strategic goal of **Scholarship: Desirable end results for students, staff, and the community.**

Through rigorous teaching across all grades and disciplines, we strive to ensure that every learner develops the knowledge, skills, and character needed to thrive in whatever path they choose. Importantly, that vision extends beyond our students to include families and community members as lifelong learners.

Adults, I encourage you to explore the many ways to be engaged in our community: take a class, mentor or tutor a student, volunteer your time and talents, teach a class, or attend an event. There truly is something for every age and stage of life! Each opportunity strengthens the shared commitment and sense of purpose that makes our community so special.

Together, we can continue to build a vibrant learning community that serves and connects us all.

With gratitude,



Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.

2026-27 ENROLLMENT

We are pleased to report that enrollment in Orono Schools continues to be strong for the 2026-27 school year.

If you have recently relocated within district boundaries, please reach out so we may welcome you and begin the resident enrollment process.

Open enrollment applications are accepted and placed on a waiting list. Students will be invited to enroll on a space-available basis. Thank you!

Please learn more:
www.oronoschools.org/enroll

Contact us:
enrollment@orono.k12.mn.us
telephone: 952-449-8312

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Orono students go “all in” on their future dreams and plans

COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAYS

At Orono High School (OHS), students have a variety of opportunities to earn college credit before graduation. Through a robust choice of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, students can engage in rigorous, college-level learning across a range of subjects. Students can also earn dual credit through courses connected to college and career pathways, including Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and other advanced offerings that blend academic learning with real-world application.

98%

In the Class of 2025, 98% of students took college-credit-earning courses while at OHS.

In addition, Orono High School partners with Hennepin Technical College to provide hands-on experiences in fields such as automotive technology, healthcare, culinary arts, and more. These courses allow students to earn both high school and college credit. Together, these options ensure students are well prepared for whatever path they choose next.

Enriched Courses

Enriched English I
Honors Biology
Honors Chemistry
Honors Physics
Honors Algebra II
Honors Functions & Trigonometry
Honors Spanish IV
Honors German IV
Honors Chinese IV

Dual Enrollment

College Accounting
Computer Applications for College
Project Lead the Way (PLTW)
PLTW Intro to Engineering Design
PLTW Principles of Engineering
PLTW Computer Integrated Mfg.
PLTW Engineering Design & Devel

Capstone Experiences

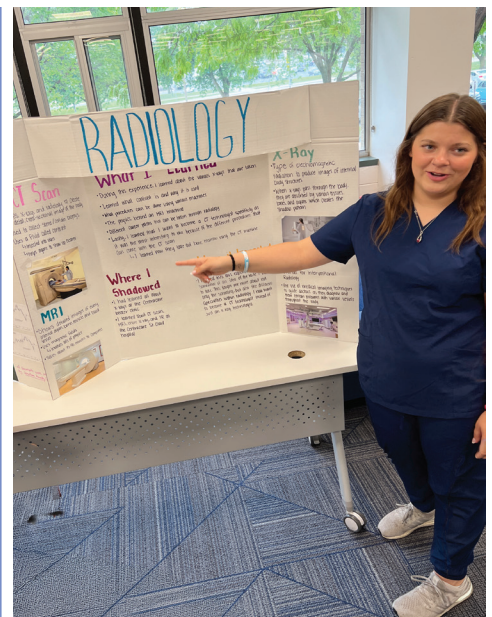
Advanced Topics in Math
AP Capstone Diploma
Minnesota Bilingual Seal
Marketing Seminar
Minnesota Scholars of Distinction
Senior Spartan Experience (applied professional studies)

Blended & Online Courses

AP Human Geography
AP Physics
AP Research
Astronomy
Composition & Public Discourse
Creative Writing
Director's Workshop (theater)
Humanities
Language & Comp in Leadership
Leadership in Action
Literature in Film
Mythology
Physical Education
Spanish III
World Literature & Composition
Writer's Workshop

“The difficult and engaging courses at Orono set me up for success in building study habits and time-management skills to balance all of the extracurriculars with school. Having those habits already built before starting my first year of college was essential to staying on top of my rigorous course load and work without needing to completely start from scratch.”

— Ashley Ishaug '25
Boston College freshman,
studying Neuroscience & Hispanic Studies



“The wide breadth of classes at Orono helped me discover my interests. By offering and encouraging a variety of classes, students also grow in their worldview and become more curious, empathetic people, which is the greatest benefit of education.”

Joey Mariani '24 – Harvard College sophomore, studying Economics & English

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses

AP Research
AP Seminar
AP Business with Personal Finance
AP Macroeconomics
AP Music Theory
AP English Language & Composition
AP English Literature & Composition
AP Human Geography
AP Psychology
AP European History
AP U.S. History
AP World History
AP Precalculus
AP Calculus AB
AP Calculus BC
AP Computer Science A
AP Computer Science Principles
AP Statistics
AP Biology
AP Chemistry
AP Environmental Science
AP Physics C
AP Chinese Language & Culture
AP German Language & Culture
AP Spanish Language & Culture
AP 2-D Art & Design
AP 3-D Art & Design



AP School Honor Roll

2025



Schools earning the **AP School Honor Roll Platinum** recognition—the highest level—expand AP access, help students earn college credit, and build a future-ready culture. The honor reflects both broad AP enrollment (including multiple courses and strong AP exam performance.

Through a partnership with **Hennepin Technical College**, students can explore hands-on career pathways while earning college credit. Most options allow students to earn both high school and college credit at little to no cost, giving them a valuable head start on their future.

Hennepin Technical College Pathways Eden Prairie Campus

Automotive

Auto Body Repair 1
Auto Body Repair 2
Advanced Auto Body 3
Auto Technology 1
Auto Technology 2
Marine, Motorsport & Outdoor
Power Equipment Technology
Advanced Outdoor Power Sports 3

Computer

Computer Repair 1
Computer Repair 2
Cybersecurity
Networking Systems

Culinary Arts

Culinary Arts 1
Culinary Arts 2

Graphic Design

Visual Communication
Software Applications

Medicine

Nursing Assistant
CPR, First Aid, Emergency Response

Video Production

Videography
Editing Techniques

A COMMUNITY OF LIFELONG LEARNERS

MISSION: To support, strengthen and connect our community by enriching lives through engaging, inclusive and lifelong learning opportunities that inspire and empower all community members.

VISION: A connected and engaged community where learning is lifelong, every person is valued, and our programs inspire people to make a positive impact.

In Orono, Community Education is often where a connection begins—whether that’s a child’s first class, a new family getting to know the area, a neighbor trying something new, or a retiree mentoring a student. While some people think of childcare or summer camps when they think of Community Ed, Director Tiffany Clifton hopes residents see something bigger—an entry point into lifelong connection.

“I want Community Ed to be the place people think of when they’re looking to connect,” Director Tiffany Clifton says. “There really is something for everyone.”

Orono Community Education oversees year-round programming for children, families, and adults, along with the Orono Coalition, the Orono Activities Center, and annual events including Art in the Park and the Wellness Expo (Thursday, April 30). Through partnerships with agencies across the area, Community Ed helps ensure families are connected to the resources they need. Together, this broad array of offerings creates meaningful opportunities for people of all ages to learn, engage, and connect.

What makes Community Ed unique is how it grows with individuals and families at every age and stage.

Because it is such an integrated part of the district, longtime staff have watched participants move through every phase of life—starting in early childhood programs, exploring activities and athletics during their school years, experiencing a first job through Community Ed, and later returning as a volunteer, participant, parent, instructor, tutor, or mentor. This continuum creates a powerful sense of connection that extends across generations.

Those intergenerational connections are part of what makes the program so impactful. For those looking to give back, volunteer opportunities offer a meaningful way to support students while also finding personal enrichment and purpose.

That same spirit of connection is reflected in programming, which continues to evolve based on the interests and needs of the community.

Adult offerings include a wide range of enrichment opportunities—from pickleball and chair yoga to sourdough baking, trout fishing, and iPhone photography. Community Education also provides practical learning and support, with workshops like Medicare 101, grief support groups, and assistance with devices through the “Tech Buddies” program.



Participants themselves play an important role in shaping what's offered, by requesting new courses or proposing to teach a class to share a favorite skill, hobby, or passion. Community Education is always looking for new instructors and fresh ideas to keep programming responsive and engaging. As a significant local employer, it also offers flexible opportunities for coaches, before- and after-school childcare providers, and others looking to be involved.

The staff at Orono Community Education are guided by a commitment to high-quality programming, meaningful relationships, strong partnerships, and a deep sense of care for the community they serve.

NEW! MEET THE TEAM
LEARN MORE | REGISTER FOR A CLASS
ce.oronoschools.org | phone 952-449-8350

COMMUNITY ED SURVEY: AT A GLANCE

Recent survey results highlight the impact of Orono Community Education across the community. With 29% of households participating in its offerings, Orono ranks among the top-performing suburban programs.

93.1%

Community Education **programs** received a 93.1% positive rating from participants.

100%

Survey respondents who rated **staff courtesy** positively

98.0%

Families that rated **school readiness** programs positively

98.0%

Families that rated **Spartan Kids** child care positively

94.0%

Participants who rated **Adult Fitness** positively



UPCOMING EVENTS

May 21 - Tech Buddies, 8:45-9:30 a.m.
Orono Activities Center, FREE 1:1 assistance with tech-related questions

June 24, July 8, Aug. 5 - Pop In & Read, 10-11 a.m., Orono Discovery Center. Reading, art project, and free book!

Aug. 6 - Family Color Dash, 6-8 p.m.



FALL & WINTER

POINTS *of* PRIDE

Orono Schools is proud to celebrate fall and winter seasons of exceptional student achievement September 2025 through March 2026. This list only begins to honor the collective dedication and Spartan spirit that define our vibrant school community.

ACADEMICS

Orono High School earned the highest (Platinum) level on the [Advanced Placement \(AP\) School Honor Roll](#), recognizing strong student participation and performance in AP coursework and exams

Evelyn Miller and Parker Stephens are [National Merit](#) Finalists; Kaia Erickson, Cannon Lewis, and Kiara Vaughan are Commended Scholars

For [History Day](#) (grade 7), 14 Orono students presented 9 projects advanced to the state competition; two students were selected in the Paper category which includes only 12 students statewide

OMS sixth-grade students took their annual trip to [Biztown](#) to apply “real-world” knowledge and skills in financial literacy and civic responsibility

IS fifth-graders participated in an immersive activity to conclude their [Arts & Letters](#) study of “All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys’ Soccer Team,” applying critical thinking in a simulated cave setting

Fifth-grade historians portrayed pivotal moments during the [American Revolution](#) in an interactive “wax museum” setting, complete with a recorded audio-visual presentation at each station.

ARTS

Ten students were selected for the [Metro West Conference Visual Arts Exhibition](#) where Lydia Richardson received a Merit Award for her mixed-media piece.

Five students earned [Scholastic Art Awards](#), including Gold and Silver Keys for Ava Dahl and a Silver Key for Lydia Richardson.

Orono High School staged the [fall musical](#) “Tuck Everlasting” and the [One Act play](#) “The Scarlet Letter,” which placed 3rd at the subsection competition

Orono Middle School produced the [comedy](#) “Too Many Ghosts” in partnership with 4 Community Theater.



Orono Girls Swimming & Diving: True Team State Champions!



Ava Dahl, Good Morning New York, Scholastic Gold Key Award

The Orono Chamber Choir, Treble Choir, Wind Ensemble, and Symphonic Band all received [Superior ratings](#) at the MSHSL Large Group Contest.

Students selected for [All-State Band](#) are: Ezra Cowden, Trumpet; Kaia Erickson, Clarinet; Ellis Howe, Euphonium; Davis Kelly, Percussion; Jack Munsch, Baritone Sax; and Alivia Uselding, Trombone

ATHLETICS

Both the [Boys and Girls Cross Country](#) teams reached the State meet, with the boys finishing 3rd and the girls 5th. All-State performances by Gabe Hallen (2nd place) and Cooper Munsch (13th place).

The **Football** team won the Class AAAA State Tournament, the first football state title in school history. The team also earned the Academic All-State GOLD Award for earning an average GPA above 3.75. Senior Adrian Licursi was honored for his athletic, academic, and community service accomplishments with a National Football Foundation Honorable Mention Scholar Athlete award.

Boys Soccer were the 2025 Section 6AA Runners-Up

Girls Soccer had a great season, competing in the Section 5AA Semifinal

The **Girls Swim & Dive team** captured their third consecutive True Team State Championship and Section 3A Championship; they placed third at State

In **Girls Tennis**, the doubles team of Cece Sorenson and Mollie Hollerman earned an opening round win at State

Girls Volleyball competed in the Section quarterfinals.

In **Alpine Ski**, Danny Kinzer finished 4th at the State meet

Boys Basketball was the Section 6AAA Runner-Up

Girls Basketball finished a dominant season with a 24-4 record and Section Runner-Up

Alivia Uselding and Dane Kanwischer as our 2025-26 MSHSL **Triple 'A' Award** recipients

Mya Moore is the **Athena Award** winner for 2026; she set a new girls basketball single-game school record with 52 points

In **Dance**, both the Jazz and Kick teams reached the Class AA State finals, finishing 3rd and 4th, respectively

Boys Hockey was the Section 2A Runner-Up; Jackson Knight became Orono's all-time leading goal scorer with 91 career goals

Girls Hockey was the Metro West Conference co-champions

Boys Nordic Ski Racing earned 2nd place at the State Championship in the program's first-ever team trip to State. Brian 'Speedy' McCollor was named Boys Nordic Coach of the Year

Boys Swim & Dive captured 5th place at State, with Gideon Fish crowned the Diving State Champion.

In **Wrestling**, Brett Kiecker won the Section 2AA Individual Title and advanced to the State semifinals

ACTIVITIES

Orono **DECA** earned the Thrive Level Chapter Campaign recognition, earned by 6% of chapters nationwide. 86 students competed at State; of those, 18 qualified for the International Career Development Conference.

47 students participated in the YMCA **Youth in Government** program, with Ella Palm elected President of the Knutson Senate for the 2027 session

The **Speech team** is having a record-breaking season, now with enough participation to compete in the Large Team division. Simon Forbes has already qualified for the NSDA National tournament and Owen Marks and McKenna Monger earned the National Speech & Debate Association's Academic All-American Award, given to fewer than 2% of members nationwide.

Orono's **Spartobots robotics** team has earned recognition in FIRST Robotics events this season, receiving the Gracious Professionalism Award and the Safety Award—honors that highlight the team's commitment to teamwork, integrity, and a culture of respect.

Sophie Middleton and Gideon Fish are the 2025-26 MSHSL **ExCEL Award** recipients

The "**We Scare Hunger**" food drive collected more than 3,100 pounds of food, doubling the previous year's total



Orono Football 2025 Class AAAA State Champions—First time in school history!



Gideon Fish, Class A 1-meter Diving Champion

ALUMNI *of* DISTINCTION

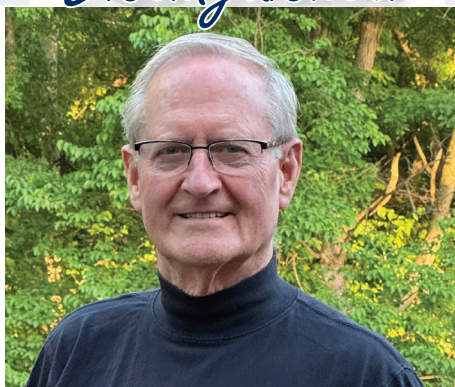
Each year, the Orono Alumni Association conducts a call for nominations, interviews nominees, and selects recipient(s) of the **Orono Distinguished and Promising Alumni awards**. Honorees are individuals who have demonstrated excellence in their chosen field or occupation, exhibited leadership and character, and/or made a lasting contribution in their community. An annual part of this recognition is the awarding of scholarships based on criteria set by the honoree. *Congratulations to our Alumni Award winners!*

Distinguished



DR. ROBBY SIKKA
Class of 2000

Distinguished



ART (ARTHUR) KENYON
Class of 1962

Promising



JENNA PERKINS
Class of 2022

DR. ROBBY SIKKA *Class of 2000*

Dr. Robby Sikka has built a career defined by innovation, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to helping others. From his work in medicine and professional sports to his continued involvement in the Orono community, Sikka's journey reflects both exceptional achievement and a deep sense of purpose.

After graduating, Sikka attended the University of Pennsylvania before earning his medical degree from USC. He returned to Minnesota for residency at the U of M and has since developed a distinguished career in anesthesiology and sports medicine. Today, he teaches at Syracuse University, practices clinically in the western suburbs, and serves as a team physician for the New York Yankees and medical director for the professional tennis tour. His

professional experience also includes leadership roles with organizations such as the Minnesota Vikings and Minnesota Timberwolves, where he contributed to advancing athlete health and performance.

While his résumé is impressive, Sikka defines success more simply. "The thing that I enjoy the most is helping people," he said. Whether working with elite athletes, guiding organizations on major decisions, or supporting patients through life-threatening conditions, his focus remains on solving complex problems and making a meaningful difference. Yet, among all his accomplishments, one experience stands above the rest: coaching his daughter's youth basketball team in Orono. Watching the players grow in confidence, support one another, and take pride in their development, he says, has been one of the most rewarding moments of his career.

Sikka is also the founder of SMART, an AI-powered health platform designed to make healthcare more personalized, proactive, and accessible. The platform emphasizes connection over commercialization, using data responsibly to help individuals better understand and manage their health. Through this work, he collaborates with healthcare systems, technology partners, and professional athletes who share a vision of using innovation to improve lives.

Despite his global impact, Sikka remains deeply connected to Orono. He credits the school's educators and programs with shaping his mindset and values. Teachers like Dave Herring, Keith Jurek, and Doug Erickson instilled lessons in leadership, confidence, and integrity that he still applies daily. "Orono gave me a foundation," he said, "but also taught me to push myself and to do the right thing every time."

That commitment to doing the right thing continues to guide his life and work. Sikka regularly mentors students, guest lectures at Orono High School, coaches youth sports, and has supported the district through initiatives such as COVID response efforts and strategic planning. For him, community is about relationships—building connections, asking questions, and working together to make things better for everyone. His long-held belief in leaving a place better than you found it began during his time as OHS student body vice president, and remains central to his approach today.

Dr. Robby Sikka's story is a testament to what can happen when curiosity, integrity, and service come together—creating a life and career dedicated not just to success, but to making a lasting impact on others.

ART (ARTHUR) KENYON
Class of 1962

Art has lived a life defined by creativity, leadership, and a deep commitment to community. From a successful career in global business to a second chapter as a celebrated artist, his journey reflects both professional excellence and a passion for giving back.

After graduating from Orono, Art attended the University of Minnesota, earning a degree in journalism and fine arts. He later served as a 2nd

Lieutenant in the U.S. Army before beginning a career that would span more than three decades with the Red Wing Shoe Company. He held several leadership roles, including Advertising Manager, Brand Manager for the Vasque hiking boot division, and ultimately Vice President of the Red Wing brand. His work took him across the U.S. and around the world, helping grow the company's presence in domestic and international markets.

One of Art's proudest professional moments came in the early 1980s, when he was asked to lead a struggling hiking boot division. Within three years, he and his team revitalized the business, exceeding past performance and meeting ambitious sales goals. "To experience the rebirth and regrowth was really gratifying," he reflected. That same drive and creativity would later fuel an entirely new chapter in his life.

In 2001, Kenyon retired from Red Wing Shoe Company and turned his focus fully to the arts, launching Art Kenyon Fine Arts Originals. What began as a small studio space evolved into a thriving 25-year artistic career. Working out of his studio at the Anderson Center in Red Wing, he has explored drawing, painting, and printmaking, illustrated books of poetry, authored his own collection, and exhibited work in galleries, public spaces, and private collections.

Art's artistic impact is visible throughout the Red Wing community. His work includes large-scale murals, a veterans sculpture in Levee Park, mosaic benches placed across downtown, and a painted city entrance sign created in collaboration with Prairie Island Tribal members. He also helped launch the city's Sculpture Walk, contributed to public art installations, and donated numerous pieces to support local fundraisers. His work consistently reflects his belief in sharing beauty, telling stories, and bringing people together.

For Art, giving back is “almost everything,” he said. Influenced by a culture of service during his time at Red Wing Shoe Company, he has dedicated much of his retirement to strengthening his community through the arts. In addition to his creative work, he has served on multiple boards, mentored aspiring artists, and remained actively involved in civic and cultural initiatives. His contributions have earned

INVESTING IN OUR CAMPUS

As the school year winds down, we are preparing for a busy **summer of campus improvements**. These projects, part of the district's ongoing maintenance and improvement plan, are designed to ensure a safe, high-quality environment for our students, staff, and the community.

Following multiple competitive bid processes, the Orono School Board has approved several projects slated for this summer.

Parking Lot & Pathway Restoration

One of the most visible projects this summer will be the revitalization of campus parking areas and pathways (see the yellow shading and red arrows in the map, at right). This work is essential for maintaining the long-term integrity of our infrastructure. Work is planned for June 8–August 17.

Middle School Tennis Court Re-Construction

The Board approved plans for four tennis courts to be re-built next to Orono Middle School on the former Student Center site (near parking lot M). These modern courts will create a high-quality space for student-athletes and the broader community. The tennis courts near the District Office (adjacent to parking lot F) have reached the end of their useful life and will be replaced with a grass field.

Essential Building Repairs As part of ongoing maintenance, the district will complete *tuckpointing*—repairing mortar joints between bricks—to safeguard against water infiltration and preserve the integrity of our school buildings. Exterior doors and windows will also be replaced at the Discovery Center, Schumann Elementary, Intermediate School, and Orono Middle School.

Also, following the December 2025 Schumann Elementary water main flood, temporary HVAC systems were put in place to keep our students and staff comfortable through the end of the school year. This summer, the permanent HVAC and electrical systems will be replaced in addition to gym and cafeteria flooring, fresh paint, etc.

Responsible Funding These improvements reflect the district's

commitment to thoughtful planning and responsible management of community resources.

We appreciate the community's patience as we continue investing in our schools. While some areas of campus may have limited access during construction, we look forward to welcoming everyone back this fall to improved and refreshed spaces and grounds.





Orono Public Schools, ISD #278
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In Orono Schools, our goal is to ensure every graduate is truly prepared for life beyond high school, and that means looking at more than a single test score. Because of a high percentage of students who choose not to participate in statewide assessments, and our strong belief in accountability, we developed a system of multiple measures to evaluate student proficiency. These include performance on statewide assessments, results from the ACT, and consistent success in coursework. Together, these indicators provide a more complete and accurate picture of what our students know and can do. By considering a range of evidence, we can better recognize student growth, strengths, and readiness for college, career, and beyond.

