

Update from the Superintendent
Dr. Kristine Flesher

May 15, 2026

Dear Families and Staff,

As we enter the final weeks of the year, our schools are filled with energy, creativity, and reflection. The month of May brings so many opportunities to celebrate not only how much our students have learned, but the many ways they have grown as thinkers, creators, leaders, and citizens. This update highlights *only a few* of those experiences.

Across the district, students are participating in capstone experiences, performances, presentations, and experiential learning opportunities that showcase the depth of their learning and the strength of our school community. These culminating experiences represent the very best of teaching and learning in Orono. Together, we create opportunities for students to discover their passions, challenge themselves, and prepare for what comes next.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of this school year, we also look ahead to one of our most meaningful traditions — ***Commencement***. We warmly invite our community to join us on Thursday, June 4 at 7 p.m. in Pesonen Stadium as we celebrate the Orono High School Class of 2026. Our graduates are one of the greatest measure of our success. They reflect years of learning, support, encouragement, and opportunity. While Commencement marks the completion of one chapter, it represents the beginning of many new journeys. We are proud of the Class of 2026 and excited for the impact they will make in the future.

Sincerely,
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Thank you to the Orono Foundation for Education

Special thanks to the Orono Foundation for Education, its sponsors, and our generous community for the ***extraordinary*** fundraising through the Spartan Soirée and silent auction. The Soirée was a huge hit with 272 attendees and 491 auction bidders. Together, our community raised more than $250,000 in addition to an anonymous gift of $100,000 for campus safety and security. The Spartan Soirée will be back in the same casual style next year on Friday, April 23, 2027. Please mark your calendars!



Senior Scholarships

Last month, nearly $90,000 in locally raised scholarship dollars were awarded to 95 different seniors. Each organization or donor sets clear criteria by which to select the award recipients. A special thank you to the individuals, families and organizations who sponsor these scholarships. Your efforts reinforce the value the Orono community has placed on post-high-school education!

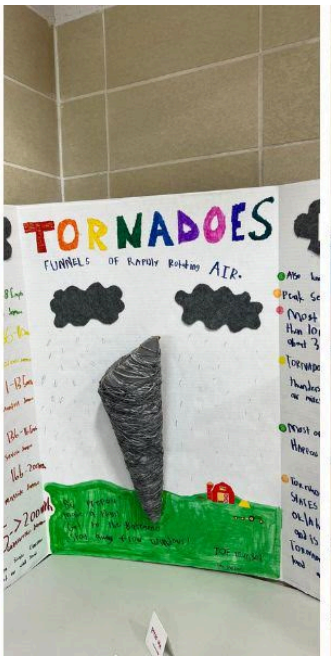
ACADEMICS

Schumann Elementary

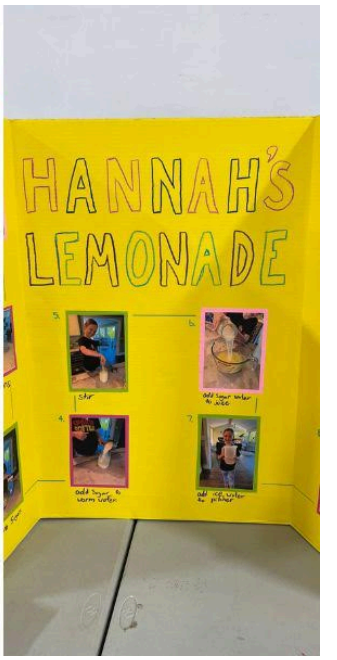
Nearly **200** second-graders' put their interests on display at the annual **Imagination Fair**. From science and art, animals to travel, students showcased their curiosity and passions through an impressive variety of projects. Well done!

A special thank you to parent coordinators Katie Phillips and Jamie Jeska for their years of dedication to this event, and to Jane Smith, our K–5 Challenge Coordinator, for her leadership and passion in making the Imagination Fair such a special tradition.







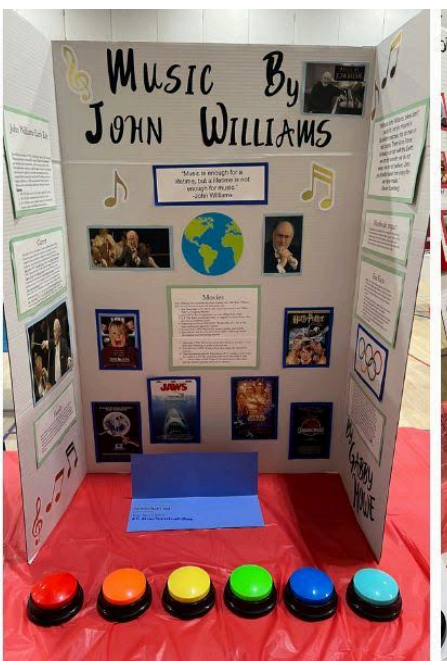


Intermediate School

World's Fair Showcase

Last week, 62 fifth-graders brought their curiosity to life at the first-ever Intermediate School (IS) “World’s Fair” showcase. This was an optional capstone experience for our students. They were invited to dive deep into a passion project related to sports, art, music, language, or culture. They created display boards showing their research and many augmented their displays with Lego creations, original art, origami, and more. Thank you to our IS specialist teachers who developed this year’s theme, “Curiosity Unites Us,” and mentored students through the process. Thank you to the many family members in attendance to celebrate our children's' work.







Math Masters

Last month, 37 fifth-graders attended the **Math Masters** competition. Orono had a great showing among the 122 mathematicians competing. Congratulations to Orono students who placed in the Fast Fact round:

- JJ Beeler, 9th
- Tommy Longbella, 9th
- Lennon Harden, 15th, and
- Eton Hansen, 15th

Placing in the Individual Round were:

- Xander Raja, 4th
- Shridharan Kandanchatha, 13th
- Griffin Schoen, 14th, and
- Landon Van Camp, 15th

In the Team Round, shout-out to:

- the Orono Yellow team that earned **2nd place**: Andrew Haagenson, Griffin Schoen, Tommy Crane, Landon VanCamp, and Charlie Kurth and
- The Orono Purple team that **placed 7th**: Shridharan Kandanchatha, Tommy Longbella, Flynn Engler, Ben Schimpke, and Koda Servais

Special thanks to our Math Masters coaches, Angie Kalthoff and Gayle McDonald-Jonassen.



Orono Middle School

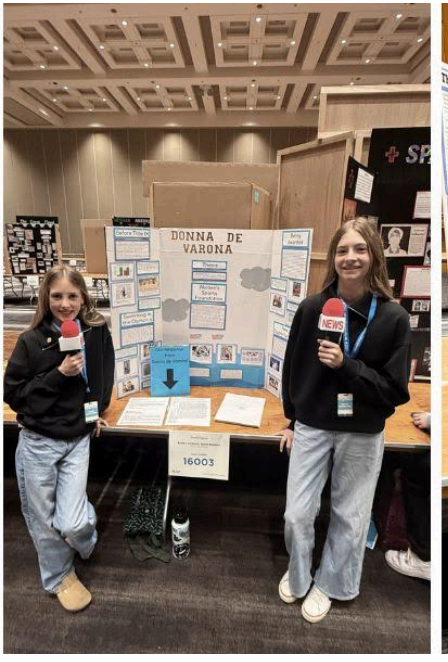
We have some exciting results from the 7th-grade History Day **state competition**. Congratulations to **Nathan Baird** for earning 4th place in the Junior Paper Category for "The Harlem Hellfighters." Great work! The following students earned Honorable Mention:

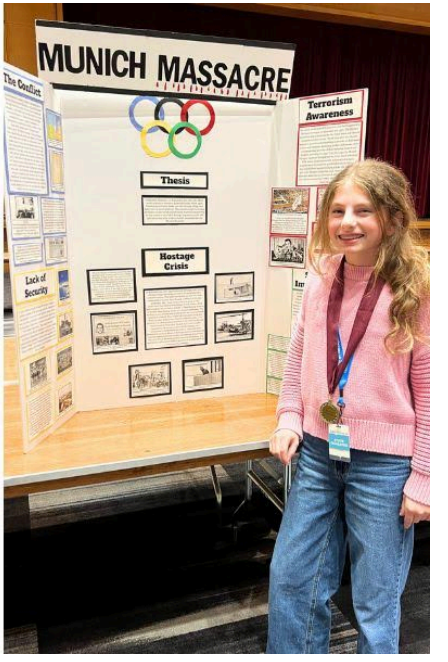
- In the Junior Paper category: "Alice Paul and Her Revolutionary Fight for Equal Rights," by Freya Blessing
- For his Junior Individual Performance: "Muhammad Ali: Civil Rights," congratulations to Harold Campbell
- In the Junior Individual Exhibit category, congratulations to Lissie Toppin for "Munich Massacre"
- and congratulations to Evelyn Verplank & Quinn Rodgers for their Junior Group Exhibit: "Donna de Varona."

We would also like to recognize the 7th-grade social studies and English teachers who are dedicated to making this project meaningful for all our 7th-grade students:

- Kirsten Huppler, English
- Brian Kafura, social studies
- Jared Shogren, social studies and
- Katherine Stanley, English









Orono High School

Advanced Placement Testing Concludes Today

Our commitment to college-level learning at the high school and our focus on "**AP for all**" is producing clear, measurable results, with more students stepping into advanced coursework and following through with AP exams.

In 2025, a record 562 students took 1,020 exams, and this spring that momentum continues to build, with **620** students set to take **1,150** exams concluding May 15. This steady growth reflects both increased access in grades 9-12 and a strong culture of academic challenge, as more students embrace the opportunity to reach higher and prepare for the future.

Last year, 91% of exams resulted in a score of 3 or higher, considered "passing."

Senior Showcase

Seniors enrolled in Senior Spartan Experience, AP Research, and fine arts courses will showcase their work and experiential learning at the annual Senior Showcase. Community members are invited to explore student display boards and speak with students about their projects and experiences during this open-house-style event on **June 2 from 2–3 p.m.** in the Orono High School Media Center. Interested in mentoring a senior student in your workplace (up to 20 hours) in May 2027? Please reach out to ohscounseling@orono.k12.mn.us and we'll connect with you in the coming months.

ARTS

Orono High School Choir

Boston Trip

Members of the **Orono High School Chamber and Treble Choirs** traveled to Boston last month, where they performed at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Faneuil Hall, and Plimoth Patuxet Museums. Students also visited Harvard University for a performance and clinic with Dr. Andrew Crane.

The trip included visits to historic sites and museums throughout the region, a tour of Boston by duck boat, and a performance of "The Outsiders" at the Citizens Opera House.

Solo/Ensemble Results
Last month, members of the OHS Chamber and Treble Choirs participated in the state Solo and Ensemble Contest. Students performed solos, duets, and small group pieces, earning an impressive 16 Superior ratings and 6 Excellent ratings. We are also thrilled to announce **five Best-in-Site awards** to:

- Gabriella Quiroz, for "Per la gloria d'adorarvi" and
- Drew Gronholz, Cooper Jonas, Alex Knorp, and Alex Peterson for "A Night Ride"

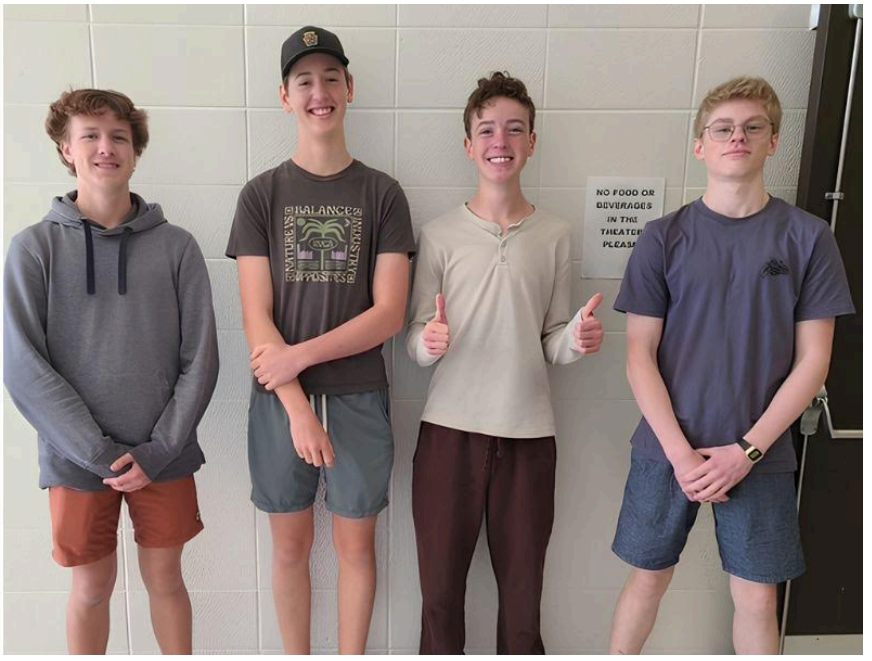
Congratulations to sophomore Gabriella Daly, who successfully auditioned and was accepted into the 2026–27 All-State Soprano-Alto Choir, an outstanding honor.

Beyond competitions and travel, OHS students continue to give back to the community through music. Members of Tri-M music honor society recently visited Valora Senior Living in Orono, where they performed solos and small ensemble pieces, bringing joy to residents through their music.









MSHSL Art Show

Orono was well represented at this year's MSHSL Art Show! Congratulations to the following students for earning recognition for their creative works. **Superior awards** to:

- Grace Loehmann (Viper Guards his Tower),
- Charlett Winkler (Melancholy and Madness),
- Aya Hanson (Little Treasures; In the Sea),
- Lila D'Alessandro (Hot water, please),
- Daria Mayo (Standing Curiosity), and
- Annalisa Tedlund (Carousel; Chamonix and I are going to go far), along with

Excellence awards earned by:

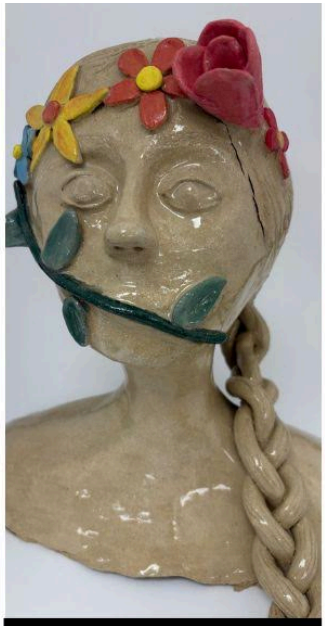
- Layla Nick (Fragile Words),
- Lydia Richardson (What's your Name?),
- Anya Muhonen (Blue Night),
- Jordan Flesher (Hear My Roar), and
- Evelyn Schwarzkopf (Horse with No Name).

Participation awards went to:
What a great reflection of the creativity and dedication of these students and the way they continue to represent Orono at such a high level!

- Lillian Bleeker, "The Fate of Ophelia", Sculpture
- Addison Mushitz, "Find the Good", Sculpture
- Lydia Richardson, "Keep your Wings Down", Drawing



Grace Loehmann



Lillian Bleeker



Aya Hanson



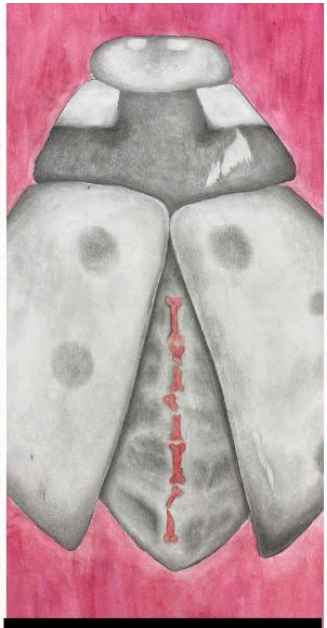
Layla Nick



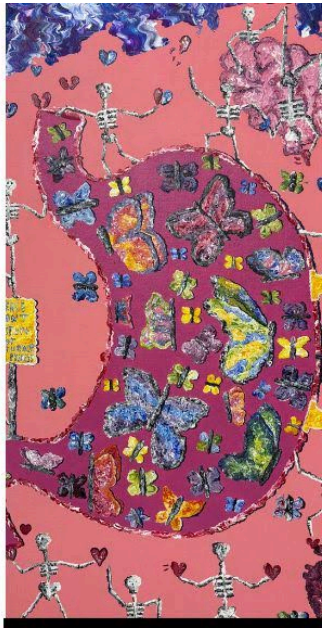
Anya Muhonen



Annalisa Tedlund



Lydia Richardson

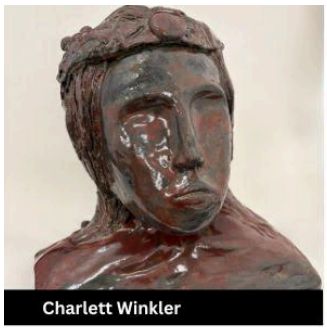


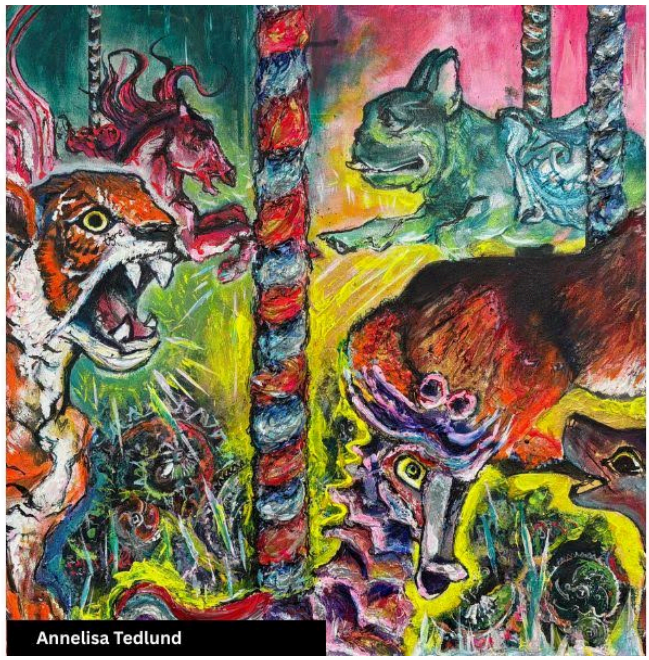
Lydia Richardson


Addison Mushitz

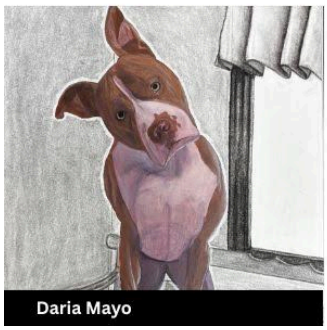

Evelyn Schwarzkopf

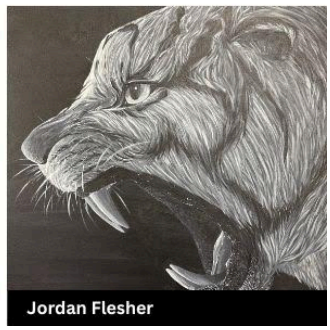

Lila D'Alessandro


Charlett Winkler


Annelisa Tedlund


Aya Hanson


Daria Mayo


Jordan Flesher

ACTIVITIES

DECA International Results

Orono High School sent 17 students to the DECA International Conference in Atlanta. The students competed in events, attended leadership workshops, and networked with more than 20,000 future business professionals.

- Congratulations to **junior Carly Rausch** for working her way to a finalist position at the conference. She competed in the Principles of Hospitality and Tourism event and placed in the **top 20** out of 160 state champions.
- Our DECA chapter received recognition for completing all five Chapter campaigns and earning Gold Chapter certification.

Thank you to Mr. Joe Huber for leading our DECA chapter again this year!





Speech - National Individual Events Tournament of Champions

Earlier this month, 11 speakers competed at the NIETOC tournament, along with approximately 2,000 speakers from across the country. The team was grateful that the competition was held in Shakopee this year! Orono/Delano team speakers competed against up to 200 speakers per category and in up to 8 rounds over a two-day period. To compete at this tournament, you must qualify throughout the regular season.

- Oliver Berg and Jane Stavitzski, DUO
- Harrison Stenback and Ari Langdon, DUO
- Ruby Gehrman and Sophie Middleton, DUO
- Simon Forbes, US Extemporaneous Speaking
- Owen Marks, International Extemporaneous Speaking and Impromptu
- Alexa Huotari, Impromptu
- Gabriella Daly, Informative
- Rose Lahti, Prose
- Ruby Gehrman, Drama

Advancing to OctaFinals were:

- Harrison Stenback and Ari Langdon, DUO
- Ruby Gehrman and Sophie Middleton, DUO
- Ruby Gehrman, Drama

Advancing to **finals** and **Placing 6th in the NATION** was **Simon Forbes** in US Extemporaneous Speaking. For Orono, Simon is the first speaker to advance to finals at NIETOC since 2014!

Congratulations to ALL Competitors! To qualify to and compete at a National Tournament is remarkable and a testament to your hard work and dedication.







Student Senate Defines Leadership

Huge congratulations to the student leaders of Orono Student Senate on their recent outstanding achievements!

- **Student Senate** earned a National Gold Council of Excellence Certification, a prestigious honor recognizing the highest standards of leadership, innovation, service, and community engagement. This is the first time Student Senate has received this award and one of only four schools in Minnesota to do so.
- **Ella Palm** has been elected President of the Minnesota Association of Honor Societies for the 2026–2027 school year. Even more special, the gavel was passed to her by current president Sienna Sether, also from Orono!
- **Cora Palm** has been elected Vice President of Service for the National Association of Student Councils, making history as the first student from Minnesota ever elected to the national board!
- **Simon Forbes** has been elected President of the Hennepin Division of MASL and will serve as our region's representative to the MASL board.

Many thanks to Ms. Grace Nohner and Mr. Jarrett Lundquist for leading our students in these efforts!



Ella Palm & Sienna Sether



Cora Palm



Simon Forbes



ATHLETICS

Our spring athletic teams continue to shine! Here are just a few updates and upcoming competitions:

- **Baseball** is 13-3 on the season, highlighted by two wins over teams ranked No. 1 in the state. Their next game is May 18 at 3:30 p.m. in Victoria vs. Holy Family
- **Boys Golf** has continued its hot start, winning each of its last four events and climbing to the No. 1 ranking in the state. At a recent meet at Braemar Golf Course, the Spartans put together an historic performance, firing a new school-record 284. They then matched that school record two days later in the very next event by shooting another 284 on day-one of the Northern Invitational at Giants Ridge. The Boys will be competing again at 7 am. at Braemar on Monday, May 18.
- **Girls Golf** turns its attention to next Monday's Metro West Conference Championship Meet at Braemar Golf Course. Good luck, girls!
- **Boys Lacrosse** is 5-6 on the season. The Spartans return to action May 19, 2026 at 7 p.m. at Benilde-St. Margaret's.
- **Girls Lacrosse** is 9-1 on the season and are ranked 3rd in the state as they continue an impressive spring campaign. They play again tonight at Shakopee West at 7 p.m.
- **Softball** received the No. 2 seed in the Section 6AAA Tournament! Spartans will host an opening round game on Tuesday, May 19, against Blake at 4:30 p.m.
- **Boys Tennis** capped off another incredible regular season by going undefeated in Metro West Conference play to earn the conference championship. The Spartans now turn their attention to the postseason, where they earned the No. 2 seed.
- **Track & Field** continues an impressive season, highlighted by recent True Team Section Championships for **both** the girls and boys teams. Both squads will compete at the True Team State Meet this Saturday at Eden Prairie High School.
- Congrats to the following student-athletes on recently setting new school records:

- Gabe Hallen in the 1600M with a time of 4 minutes, 14 seconds at the Hamline Elite Meet
- Jocie Hallen in the 3200M with a time of 11 minutes, 32 seconds at the U of M Invitational
- Alivia Uselding in the 100m hurdles with a time of 14.96 seconds at the Hamline Elite Meet

Congratulations to all our spring athletes on their dedication, teamwork, and incredible results.

CALENDAR

- May 18 - Orono High School Choir Pops Concert, 7 p.m., Wayzata Community Church
- May 19 - 5th and 6th grade band concerts, 6th grade, 5:30 p.m.; 5th grade, 6:30 p.m., Intermediate School Gym
- May 22 - Orono High School Prom Grand March, 6-7 p.m.
- May 25 - Memorial Day, No School K-12
- May 28 - 5th Grade and OMS Choir Concerts, 5th grade, 6:00 p.m.; 6th-8th grade, 6:30 p.m., OHS Fenholt Auditorium
- June 1 and 2 - Kindergarten Graduation
- June 2 - Senior Showcase (Senior Spartan Experience, AP Research), 2-3 p.m., OHS Media Center
- June 4 - Commencement, 7 p.m., Pesonen Stadium

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

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, April 27, 2026 | Agenda

- Superintendent's "Report on Excellence" | Watch the Presentation
- Board Members' Questions and Comments | Watch the Presentation
- Financial Mid-Year Update | Watch the Presentation

Monday, May 11, 2026 | Agenda

- Superintendent's "Report on Excellence" | Watch the Presentation
- Board Members' Questions and Comments | Watch the Presentation
- Three Rivers Park District Update with Commissioner Marge Beard, District 1 | Watch the Presentation
- Long Term Facilities Maintenance Plan Approval for Orono Schools | Watch the Presentation
- Long Term Facilities Maintenance Plan Approval for ISD 287 | Watch the Presentation
- Adopt Resolution Awarding Sale of Lease | Watch the Presentation

The next meeting of the Orono School Board is scheduled for Monday, June 8, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. A Public Comment session precedes the Board meeting.

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