

# Welcome from the Superintendent
# Dr. Kristine Flesher

August 31, 2026

Dear Orono Families,

Welcome back to a wonderful new school year! As Superintendent, it is my pleasure to greet both our returning families and those who are joining the Orono Schools community for the first time.

Orono is a deeply connected, vibrant community where every family matters. We want all parents and guardians to feel truly welcome, knowing there is a place for you to belong, connect, and contribute your unique talents and perspectives. Our schools thrive because of the strong partnership between our educators, families, and community members.

To help you get connected right from the start, we warmly encourage *new* families to participate in the **New Parent Social** September 10 hosted by the Orono Foundation for Education. This gathering at Carbone's in Long Lake will be a fantastic opportunity to meet school leaders, connect with other families, and discover how you can get involved in supporting our students and schools.

For a complete schedule of upcoming events with direct links to more information, please visit the new **Arts & Community Events** webpage. This page will be continuously updated throughout the year so you never miss an opportunity to engage with our learning community.

Our vibrant parent organizations will be looking for volunteers and leaders to enhance our student and staff experiences all year. Be sure to connect with the Orono Foundation for Education; K-5 PTO; 6-8 OMSPA; and 9-12 SPA organizations this year!

Fall sports are underway and our high school students will have the opportunity to explore a myriad of clubs and activities at their Activities Fair on Friday, September 4 during 5th period. Community Education is also sponsoring exciting fall clubs at Orono Middle School. Be sure to encourage your child to explore an enrichment activity this fall.

Thank you for partnering with us to make this school year an extraordinary experience for every child.

Warm regards,
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D., Superintendent




## Buildings & Grounds: Summer Construction Update

As our community returns to campus, we are proud to share the many improvements that have taken place across Orono Schools throughout the summer.

Since June, our staff, contractors, and vendors have worked diligently to restore, refresh, and improve our buildings, grounds, and athletic spaces. These projects reflect our ongoing commitment to providing safe, welcoming, and well-maintained facilities for our community. Here are just a few of this summer's improvements:

- Parking lot resurfacing and directional striping at nearly every building
- A resurfaced playground at Schumann Elementary
- Refreshed painting, including student lockers, throughout our buildings
- Resurfaced tennis courts at Orono High School
- Newly paved pathways to connect and improve accessibility to athletic fields and parking lots
- Permanent flooring, HVAC, and classroom restoration at Schumann Elementary following the December flood
- Refreshed gym floors at Orono High School and Orono Schumann Elementary
- Improvements to the varsity baseball field, including new fencing and painting
- New doors and windows at the Discovery Center in Maple Plain

And we hope to break ground on our middle school tennis courts yet this month!

I would like to extend special thanks to Mr. Nick Taintor, Director of Business Services and Mr. Chad Eischens, Buildings & Grounds Coordinator for their leadership in planning and managing these projects. To our entire custodial and buildings and grounds staff: thank you for your collaboration with our onsite partners. These improvements represent a tremendous amount of work, and we appreciate everyone who helped make them possible.



Schumann Elementary Cafeteria




Orono High School Gym



Middle School Pathways



Intermediate School Lockers

## Technology with Purpose

As we begin a new school year, I want to highlight some of the important technology work that took place behind the scenes this summer.

At Orono, we have never pursued technology for technology's sake. Our approach has always been strategic and thoughtful: technology should amplify learning, support educators, and create opportunities for students—not replace the important work of thinking, creating, struggling, collaborating, and learning how to learn. That philosophy is especially important as technology continues to evolve at a remarkable pace.

This summer, our Technology Department spent considerable time strengthening the systems and safeguards that support our schools. Working with FRSecure, the district tested our comprehensive Incident Response Plan through a tabletop exercise simulating a cybersecurity incident. The exercise allowed district leaders to review and practice decision-making, communication, and continuity of operations in a realistic scenario—before we ever need to respond to an actual incident.

But readiness also impacts the decisions we make when technology enters the learning environment. We want our students to grow up prepared for a future filled with extraordinary technological opportunities—and real technological challenges. That means giving them meaningful opportunities to use technology while also protecting their privacy, preserving age-appropriate learning experiences, and allowing them to experience the productive struggle that is essential to learning.

This long-held philosophy establishes clear expectations around human oversight, productive struggle, vetted technology tools, student privacy, age-appropriate use, and transparency. In other words, we are not asking, "How quickly can we implement this technology?" We are asking, "Is this the right technology, for the right purpose, at the right time, and in the right way for our students?"

That has been our strategy for years, and it has served our students and our district well. We intend to carry that same thoughtful approach forward.

## Excited to Celebrate Orono Schools History

This year, we'll be taking a walk through the history of Orono Schools—and having a little fun along the way! Throughout the year, we'll share stories, memories, and historical photos from our schools, including some from the not-so-distant past. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

While researching some of our early history and exploring our archives, we made an exciting discovery: a **time capsule** that we believe dates back to the formation of our school district. What's inside? We plan to open it and share the discoveries this fall!

Our history is rich with the commitment of families to unite several neighborhood schools in 1949 and create a unique learning environment for generations of Orono students. That spirit of collaboration and connection continues to shape who we are today.

We look forward to taking you on this journey through our past—and celebrating the people, places, and moments that have made Orono Schools a great place to learn!



Early leaders and Orono Board of Education members (l-r): Karl Gardner, Graydon McCulley, Carlton Lytle, John S. Pillsbury Jr., Catherine Piper Pierson, E.F. Neddermeyer, and Walter Pattison.

## A Big Thank You to Orono Community Education

Thank you to Orono Special Education and Community Education staff for their creative care of our students this summer. I also applaud the team's flexibility as they worked around construction projects and shifted their program locations… sometimes with only short notice.

- Community Education reported more than **7,500 summer enrollments** in 532 camps and classes, serving preschool students through adults. The number of enrollments averaged 600 each week!

- **120** of our incoming Kindergarten students completed “Ready Set Kindergarten” in preparation for this big change. Students had the opportunity to meet fellow students, learn the daily routine at Schumann Elementary, and review the rules of the school bus.
- We also continued to provide engaging programming for **55** students in Discovery Kids and **146** students in Spartan Kids this summer.
- Community Ed welcomed nearly **100** participants in this year’s Family Color Dash on August 6.

Just ahead...

- The Discovery Center is hosting their annual **Open House and Vehicle Fair** on September 3 for our youngest learners and their families.
- And of course, please save the date for the popular **Art in the Park** event on September 22 at Veterans Memorial Park in Maple Plain.
- Community Education is also leading a number of **fall activities for our middle school and high school students**: Fall Dance Team, 6th Grade Spartan Running, middle school Girls Tennis, middle school Girls Volleyball, and the middle school fall play, "Greek Mythology Olympiaganza."

Thank you to the entire Community Education team, and the expanded summer staff, for their outstanding efforts!









## Orono School Board Highlights

August 17, 2026 Regular Meeting | Agenda

- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | Watch the Presentation
- Board Members' Questions and Comments | Watch the Presentation
- Summer Campus Construction Update | Watch the Presentation
- Summer Technology Update | Watch the Presentation

The next meeting of the Orono School Board is scheduled for Monday, September 14, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. A Public Comment session will precede the Board meeting.

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## District Calendars

Please see the Calendars webpage for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 academic calendars.

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