

Welcome from the Superintendent
Dr. Kristine Flesher

September 24, 2026

Dear Orono Families and Staff,

It is hard to believe it is the beginning of fall. The school year is well underway, and there is a lot happening across Orono Public Schools. Take a look at our Athletic highlights, below, and join us for one (or several!) competitions **this evening at home**!

Next week is **Homecoming Week**, which is always a meaningful time of connection in our schools and community. We believe Homecoming is a shared community tradition that gives our children and visitors memorable experiences and helps them feel like valued members of our community. *Traditions* are an important part of the Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) we've been studying as part of our connectedness goal and the work of the Orono Coalition. We hope you'll join us for the many events, activities, and athletic competitions planned throughout the week. We look forward to seeing you there!

View the full Homecoming events and athletics calendar for schedules and details.

Whether you are attending a game, watching the parade, or taking part in another Homecoming week activity, we hope you enjoy the week with us. I will be wishing for some beautiful fall weather for our Friday, October 2 annual parade (2 p.m.) and football game (7 p.m.) vs. Zimmerman.

A reminder that Monday, September 28, is a Professional Development Day, so there will be **no school for E-12 students**. Our teachers and staff will spend the day working on our Continuous Improvement initiatives. They will look closely at student data and use what they learn to plan for the learning ahead. This time gives our staff an opportunity to think carefully about individual student needs, what is working, where we can improve, and how we can continue to strengthen the academic experience for every learner.

Thank you for your continued support of our students and schools. We are looking forward to a great Homecoming week and to all that fall will bring for our Orono community.

Go Spartans!
Kristine Flesher, Ed.D., Superintendent



National Merit Scholars

We are so proud to recognize our Class of 2027 National Merit Semifinalist and Commended Students. More than 1.3 million students entered the 2027 National Merit Scholarship competition, with approximately 16,000 students named Semifinalists and 34,000 recognized as Commended Students nationwide. This achievement represents an exceptional level of academic accomplishment and opens doors to post-high-school opportunities. Students enter the National Merit Scholarship competition by taking the PSAT/NMSQT exam in fall of junior year. Current Orono juniors will be taking the exam in late October.



Congratulations to our National Merit students! Front row (L-R): Ezra Cowden, Dylan Rutherford, Carly Rausch, and Ella Palm. Back row (L-R): Adam Haislet, Liam Barkley, Ethan Weiss, Sophie Middleton, Cora Palm, and (inset photo) Zack Rothe. Ethan Weiss was named a National Merit Semifinalist and will continue on in the competition. All others are National Merit Commended Students.

Introducing *NextPath* for Access to Student Success Data

The district is excited to introduce **NextPath**, a new platform for sharing student success. This will be the primary way families access their child's standardized test data. It will also enhance our work in supporting student success in academics, behavior, and attendance. (NextPath replaces a tool called Proliftic that integrated with ParentVUE to provide standardized data.) NOTE: For now, NextPath is available through a desktop computer; in the coming days, it will be available via mobile devices.

Getting Started with NextPath

We encourage you to open the family guide and follow the step-by-step instructions to download the NextPath application, log in, and add your child(ren) to your account.

DOWNLOAD THE FAMILY GUIDE

Thank you for your partnership and patience as we introduce NextPath. If you have questions, please contact Orono Technology Support at support@orono.k12.mn.us.

NEXTPATH EDUCATION

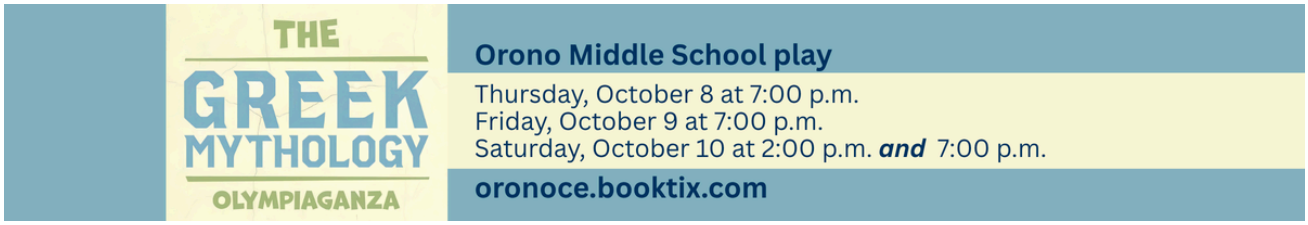
Excellence in Financial Reporting



Once again, Orono Schools has received the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for the FY 2025 *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report* (ACFR). This award represents a significant achievement and reflects our commitment to transparency and high-quality financial reporting.

To be considered for the award, districts must submit an ACFR that has been independently audited (usually resulting in an unmodified/clean opinion). ASBO International evaluates the final published ACFR for quality, completeness, and GAAP compliance.

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.



Gratitude to the Orono Foundation for Education

On behalf of students and staff in Orono Schools, we would like to thank our deeply generous community and the Orono Foundation for Education (OFE) for their tireless fundraising efforts that help the Orono Schools year after year. Because of these funds, we do not have to choose between program options for our students. Rather, we are able to enhance our student experiences E-12. At the September 14 School Board Meeting, the OFE presented an amazing gift of $700,711 to Orono Schools. We welcomed former Foundation Chair Ms. Katie Hollerman and OHS senior Molly Hollerman who presented the check to the Board.

Ms. Katie Hollerman shared that this year's funding includes annual commitments for the $200,000 grant that directly supports class sizes, our 6-8 team model, and the highest level of AP courses at OHS; $150,000 for Educator Excellence staff development training; and $50,000 for Literacy intervention efforts. OFE also granted $3,000 for Class of 2026 alumni scholarships and $3,000 for Orono Foundation scholarships. In addition, OFE also provided $260,000 for safety and security enhancements, $10,000 for Character Education, $20,000 for the College and Career Center, and $1,211 earned by the Student Senate for their work last year.

"Together," Ms. Hollerman said, "these investments support so many aspects of the Orono Schools experience. None of this would be possible without the generosity of this community. To everyone who attends the Soirée, sponsors an event, donates, volunteers, or supports OFE in any way, ***thank you***. This $700,711 is a reflection of a community that believes deeply in its schools and continues to invest in its students and educators."

Watch the Presentation to the Orono School Board



Fall Athletic Teams Continue to Impress

Our fall teams continue their impressive seasons, with most programs currently ranked in the Top 10 statewide. Congratulations to our student-athletes and coaches for their hard work. Please visit the Activities & Athletics webpage for more information.

Cross Country boys and girls teams will compete this Saturday in Eden Prairie (Flying Cloud Fields) for the "Under the Lights Metro Invitational" from 5-10 p.m. Bes of luck!

Football holds an overall 3-0 record on the season. The varsity team plays Westonka this Friday, September 25, at Westonka High School. Kick-off is 7 p.m.

Boys Soccer has a 5-1-1 record. They play Chaska ***tonight*** at Pesonen Stadium beginning at 7 p.m. Come out and support our soccer teams tonight!

Girls Soccer currently ranked #6 in Class 2A with a 5-3-1 record. They play Chaska ***tonight*** at Pesonen Stadium beginning at at 5 p.m.

Girls Swim & Dive had a decisive win over Benilde-St. Margaret's on September 17 with a final score of 100 to 65. The girls are back in the pool ***tonight*** vs. Chaska beginning at 6 p.m. here at home in the Link. Good luck, girls!. Congratulations to Audrey Crawford, who was recently named a Player of the Week in the 100 Free after posting an impressive time of 54.2 seconds.

Girls Tennis is carrying an eight-match winning streak! The next match has been postponed to tomorrow, September 25, at the OHS tennis courts vs. Chaska. On October 1, the girls face Benilde-St. Margaret's at home.

Girls Volleyball is off to a great start with an overall record of 7-4. They will face Chaska at home ***tonight*** at 7 p.m. in the Orono High School gym.







Coach Murray: 300 Wins!

In case you missed it, Coach Erin Murray clocked her 300th win as Head Soccer Coach for Orono on September 8. Congratulations, Coach! She is only the third soccer coach to earn this accomplishment in Minnesota. Year after year, Coach Murray consistently prioritizes growth, strong relationships, and character development. Learn more about Coach Murray in our Facebook post.





Orono School Board Highlights

September 14, 2026 Regular Meeting | Agenda

- Superintendent's Report on Excellence | Watch the Presentation
- Board Members' Questions and Comments | Watch the Presentation
- Presentation of check from Orono Foundation for Education | Watch the Presentation
- Approval of Bid for Discovery Center Kitchen Remodel Project | Watch the Presentation
- Approval of MSHSL Cooperative Sponsorship Agreement for Nordic Ski with Delano Schools and Rockford Area Schools | Watch the Presentation
- Orono Community Education Update | Watch the Presentation

The next meeting of the Orono School Board is scheduled for Monday, September 28, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the District Office Assembly Room. A Coffee & Conversation Session will precede the Board meeting at 6:30 p.m. No advance reservation is required.

District Calendars

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