

ORONO FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION

IMPACT REPORT

2023



ORONO Foundation
FOR EDUCATION

"It is time that we thank and recognize our amazing community for uniting behind Orono Schools in their continuous quest for excellence in education. Through your incredibly generous donations of time, talent, and financial support to the Orono Foundation for Education, you have allowed for more than \$8.5 million to be invested into the District for the sole purpose of the advancement and enrichment of our children. Your impactful support, along with the partnership we share with our fantastic educators and administrators, makes Orono the perfect place to learn!"

With gratitude,
Paul Springmeyer
OFE Board Chair 2023-2024

GIFTING EXCELLENCE

Thanks to your generous contributions, the Foundation provided

\$464,530

in grants to the Orono School District in 2022-2023!

Grants included:

- \$200,000 Annual Fund Grant
- \$100,000 Educator Excellence Fund Grant
- \$100,000 Technology Grant
- \$50,000 K-5 Literacy Grant
- \$6,000 Student Scholarship Grants
- \$5,530 Leadership & Ethics Grants
- \$3,000 District Retirement/Appreciation Grant

"My child developed the skill of being able to sound out words and gained a lot of reading confidence."

Orono Parent

1,200

students in K-5 have received individualized support since the Literacy Specialist Position was funded in 2012. Another 150 students in grades 6-8 have also been supported through this position.

"Kitty Crosby's passion and support for literacy development helped us build a sustaining and effective reading intervention program in Orono Schools. This program changes learning trajectories for students and impacts their success in the classroom and beyond. We are grateful that her legacy will continue to impact Orono students for years to come."

Beth Pearson
Literacy Specialist

Building Literacy Through Reading Intervention

The Orono Literacy Curriculum's implementation and sustainability, along with funding for a full-time Literacy Specialist position, are a direct result of the generosity and commitment of late Orono alumna Kitty Crosby. A teacher at Orono Schools, former school board member, parent and grandparent, Kitty, along with her husband David and their family and friends, have contributed over **\$720,000 to the OFE K-5 Literacy Excellence Fund** since its inception in 2012, supporting literacy and reading intervention in Orono Schools.

The Orono Literacy Curriculum enables teachers to customize learning experiences, incorporating assessments across grades K-12. These assessments serve as valuable tools, aiding teachers in identifying students facing challenges in reading. Subsequently, teachers can strategically plan instruction tailored to individual needs, closely monitor progress, and assess the efficacy of intervention strategies. The overarching goal of the Orono literacy program remains steadfast: guiding every student to attain grade-level outcomes by the conclusion of each academic year while striving to maximize and accelerate their overall growth.

Beth Pearson is the full-time Literacy Specialist and has been with the Orono School District for 25 years. Her previous roles include classroom teacher and reading specialist. As the Literacy Specialist, she coordinates curriculum and reading interventions, focusing on K-5 professional development coaching and classroom support. Beth and her team are currently engaged in their first full-curriculum review since 2012. In the past 11 years, the current curriculum has positively impacted nearly 1,200 K-5 students and 150 students in grades 6-8. A survey sent to parents of K-1 students revealed that **95% expressed high satisfaction with the reading support provided at Orono.**

Jamie Bishop, a Kindergarten teacher at Schumann Elementary, collaborates closely with Beth Pearson, considering her a colleague, mentor, and friend. In a coaching session, Jamie asked about the key elements of effective literacy instruction for cultivating strong independent readers. Beth emphasized "shared reading." This is a whole-class approach using large text in guided group lessons to engage students with more challenging material than they could tackle individually. **Jamie, supported by funding from the OFE Educator Excellence Fund, attended a shared reading-focused conference last summer.** She has since acquired skills to enhance reading comprehension and reinforce phonics, vocabulary, and fluency in her classroom. Jamie shares these skills and resources within her Professional Learning Community, facilitating their integration into all Kindergarten classrooms at Orono.



*Beth Pearson (left) and
Jamie Bishop (right)*

Instilling a *Sense of Belonging* During a Year of Transition @ OMS



Students at 2023 Middle School Orientation

Middle school years can be challenging. Navigating those challenges involves adapting to the new school, increased academic demands, physiological changes, and social pressures. To ensure a smooth transition, Jennifer Lubke, OMS School Counselor, and Sara Hunstiger, Planning and Invention Specialist, are dedicated to supporting incoming students to Orono Middle School.

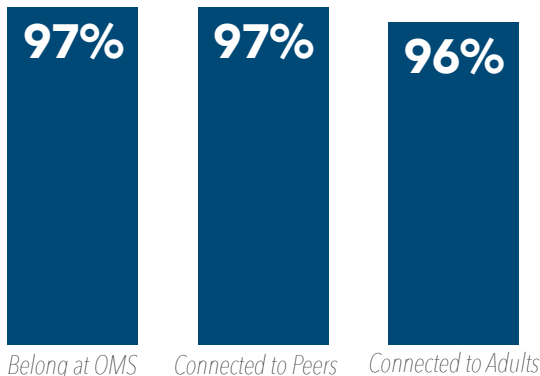
The **“Where Everyone Belongs” (WEB) program** is a middle school orientation and transition initiative. It trains 8th-grade mentors to serve as positive role models for new 6th- and 7th-grade students. With 80 trained 8th-grade WEB leaders, the program provides ongoing support. This begins with Middle School Orientation in August which was attended by over 200 6th-grade students and 25 new students in other grades.

WEB Leaders continue to volunteer throughout the year as morning greeters, offering academic support, organizing social events, facilitating new student groups, serving as lunch buddies, and leading family tours. They are also trained to identify and address bullying issues, fostering a safer community for all students.

Nationally, the WEB program has demonstrated improved student attendance, academic success, and test scores, along with reduced behavioral issues and referrals. Research indicates that a positive first-year experience in middle school significantly increases students’ chances of success. A survey conducted by Principal Van Eyll in the spring revealed that **97% of OMS students feel a sense of belonging and connection to their peers.**

Supported by donations to the Educator Excellence Fund, Jennifer and Sara were able to attend a three-day WEB training over the summer. Collaborating with WEB facilitators nationwide, they acquired new materials and a year-long curriculum to enhance the program. As a result of the training, academic tutors and lunch buddies were integrated into the OMS WEB program.

Percentage of Students Reporting Positive Relationships at OMS



“The WEB program at Orono Middle School focuses on connections, community, and support as students transition into middle school. Throughout the year-long program, 8th-grade WEB leaders provide mentorship and leadership as new students become a part of our school community.”

Kimberly Van Eyll
Principal, Orono Middle School

NEW AV AMPLIFIES OHS THEATER EXPERIENCE

The fall Bright Star musical marked the inaugural use of the upgraded AV system in the OHS Auditorium. OFE and Orono Schools are incredibly grateful for the generous support from the community that made the new AV system a reality.

Beyond improving the performance quality, **this cutting-edge technology provides opportunities for students to develop skills they can use in professional theater settings.** It also allows students to explore possibilities for furthering their education in the arts. Lily Quale, an OHS senior and Drama Club Student Executive, who played the lead role of Alice Murphy in the production, noted that the new system played a pivotal role in solidifying her plans for pursuing music in her post-secondary education.



Photo by: Camille Bianham, BTE Media

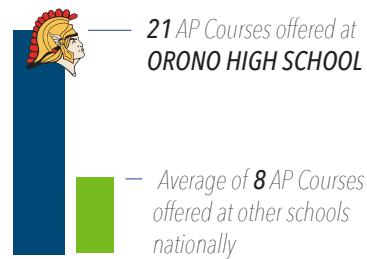
"I've wanted to go into music for a long time, and the new equipment helped me solidify my decision. Hearing the harmonies on stage and getting to experience the power of music and theater makes me want to share that with others."

Lily Quale

IMPACT on Grades 9-12

Advancing College & Career Readiness

Donations to OFE play a crucial role in supporting the training and annual resources that contribute to the availability of Advanced Placement (AP) courses at Orono High School. These courses enable students to engage in more challenging academics and offer the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school. OHS currently provides 21 out of the 38 AP courses and exams offered by the College Board, well surpassing the national average of eight courses taught in other high schools. As a result, in 2023, **86% of Orono students completed at least one AP course**, a significant contrast to the national average of 35%.



Percent of OHS Students Completing AP Courses in 2023



Contributions to the Foundation also support trips for high school counselors, allowing them to visit colleges and universities nationwide, and broadening opportunities for Orono students. These counselor college visits serve multiple purposes:

- **Learn:** Participate in formal sessions to gain insights into specific nuances of admissions practices, including updates, trends, and future projections. Counselors also learn about unique programs offered by each school.
- **Experience:** Develop an authentic feel for each campus and understand its amenities, enabling counselors to provide relevant perspectives to students.
- **Share:** Meet with admissions officers to share the OHS profile, emphasizing Orono's commitment to academic excellence, character, and relationships.
- **Suggest:** Offer meaningful feedback to students, recommending suitable schools considering significant variabilities among seemingly similar institutions.

2022-2023 Orono Counselor College Visits:

- American University
- Baylor
- Beacon College
- College of the Holy Cross
- Connecticut College
- Elon
- Fairfield University
- George Washington University
- Georgetown University
- Luther College
- Macalester
- Quinnipiac
- Rice
- SMU
- TCU
- Texas A & M
- UMass Amherst
- UNC-Chapel Hill
- University of Connecticut
- University of Tampa
- UT Austin
- UT Dallas
- UW Madison
- Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- Yale

**Some visits were sponsored by colleges as an invitation-only opportunity and others were funded through the OFE Educator Excellence Fund.*

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*Gift total includes monetary and/or in-kind donations

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