

2023-24

ORONO FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION IMPACT REPORT



BEYOND THE BRIDGE

Community donations help bridge the gap between state funded standards that provide an adequate education, and the Orono tradition of ensuring an excellent education for our students. Your contributions do more than just build a bridge. They **increase student confidence** in reading, math, science and foreign language proficiency. They **build character and social skills** improving mental health. They **foster creativity and access** to technology and the Arts. They **increase academic rigor** to better **prepare students for college**. They **develop our teachers** to **improve classroom instruction** and promote teacher satisfaction. And so much more!

Thanks to our generous community, the Foundation provided

 **\$489,285** 

in grants to the Orono School District in 2023-2024!

GRANTS INCLUDED:

- \$200,000 Annual Fund Grant
- \$177,790 Educator Excellence Fund Grant
- \$50,000 K-5 Literacy Grant
- \$40,000 Technology/Robotics Grant
- \$10,000 Student Scholarship Grant
- \$6,495 Leadership & Ethics Grant
- \$3,000 District Retirement/Appreciation Grant
- \$2,000 Alumni Wall of Fame Grant

Dollar by dollar, donors to the Foundation help build the bridge and countless pathways to **provide positive experiences and a brighter future for Orono students**. Thank you to everyone who supports Orono Schools with their time, talents and resources.


ORONO Foundation
FOR EDUCATION

97%

of parents say that character education is an important part of their child's experience at Orono.

*Peter Leatherman Study,
January 2024*

"I am excited to be implementing Character Strong into our daily kindergarten routine. We start our day with connection and have daily conversations about what it means to show great character. I feel this program does a great job of forming the building blocks for kids to deeply understand and model kindness and the character traits represented."

Hannah Stolhammer
Kindergarten Teacher

CHARACTER IS

STRONG

@ ORONO

Kindergarten teachers Jennifer Drake and Hannah Stolhammer embarked on a journey to the Pacific Northwest during the 2024 summer to learn about a program called **Character Strong**. Using dollars provided by the Orono Foundation for Education's Educator Excellence Fund, the three-day conference in Seattle was described as "electric" by those who attended.

Character Strong is a **curriculum and training program that improves behavior, increases safety, and supports mental health** that aligns well with the District's current CHARACTER COUNTS! program. The kindergarten teachers are currently implementing this daily program as part of their morning meetings to **supplement the CHARACTER COUNTS! curriculum**. They believe that teaching character daily is just as important as teaching any other subject.

The pillars of the Character Strong program are **Well-Being, Belonging, and Engagement**; all of which align with the District's goals. The program enhances the CHARACTER COUNTS! program by giving our students even more tools and language to use to verbalize their feelings and behavior.

Drake and Stolhammer spent time over the summer mapping out the two programs so **all of Schumann Elementary can teach similar lessons on character**. These lessons include songs, games and picture books that connect to each lesson. The teachers appreciate that these daily **lessons have given students tools to help manage their emotions and build their character**.

"Kindergarten teachers are the beginning of each child's educational journey and we believe that connection and connectiveness is so important," Jennifer Drake explains. By using both the Character Strong and CHARACTER COUNTS! programs, our youngest learners are off to a fantastic start!

Photo below: Ms. Stolhammer's Kindergarten class during a Character Strong lesson.





LEADING BY EXAMPLE

In 2023-2024, Orono School District received the **Exemplary School District Award from CHARACTER COUNTS!** Orono is one of only three districts in the U.S. to be honored with this award. The Exemplary School District award recognizes the District’s dedication to intentional character education for over 20 years.

Dr. Gary Smit, Trainer and Consultant for CHARACTER COUNTS!, presented the award to Orono administration and teachers during a Professional Day in February, 2024. “Orono has previously been recognized at both the national and state level,” Dr. Smit said. “But beyond the awards, it is evident that **CHARACTER COUNTS! is an integral part of how Orono puts their core values into action.**”

The character education program at Orono evolved from a Personal Academics Program initiated by dedicated donors in the community in 2005. Victoria Aberg and her brother, Jerry Brost, were motivated to develop a personal character program with an initial emphasis on an anti-bullying education. Today, all training, curriculum, and resources for the CHARACTER COUNTS! program continues to be **100% funded by private donations through the Foundation.** The annual cost of character education across Pre-K to 12th grade is roughly \$20,000.



Photo Credit: Orono Schools. Top left: Teachers and administration accepting the Exemplary School District Award. Top right: Orono Middle School Mezzanine with character flags.

“The character program at Orono was one of the things that stood out before our kids even started Kindergarten. When we were making our decision between school districts and toured Orono, **we loved the community feel and emphasis not only on academics, but on becoming a good person.** With kids in elementary and the intermediate school now, it has been heart warming to see how the character program has impacted conversations at the dinner table with visiting family and in our community. For us, the pillars of this program overlap with our family values and what it means to be a good human. We’re grateful the Foundation continues to support this program.”

Sonja & Mikael Moseley
Orono Parents

FULL S.T.E.A.M AHEAD

Orono Schools is **actively advancing student education and access to state-of-the-art technology** to develop their skills for the future. Over the last few years, our community has provided \$88,540 in funding to acquire new technology equipment for middle and high school S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) classes.

New OMS Technology Education teacher Doug Jetton is thrilled that Orono students have access to this kind of hands-on learning. "Students don't have to experience these things virtually or on paper," he says, "**they get to build and code and measure and use tools that stretches their minds and instills in them the confidence to know that they can learn how to do seemingly difficult things.**"

BATTLE BOTS

With the support of Foundation dollars, OMS purchased 30 VEX Robotics Kits for middle school Technology classes this fall. In Mr. Jetton's class, students learn building mechanics and programming to build, code and customize VEX Robots for battle. Working in pairs and small groups, they develop basebots and compete in games of freeze tag. **Through trial and error, students learn how to test, record results, improve their design and rewrite code to meet requirements.**

During competitions, Jetton emphasizes what he calls "**gracious professionalism,**" and states "students run into many road blocks during this process, but through a positive environment where failure is accepted and encouraged, and community is built through common understanding, **we help each other improve and succeed.**"

This investment in robotics at the middle school hopes to increase interest at a younger age and engage future members of the new OHS Robotics Team started this fall.

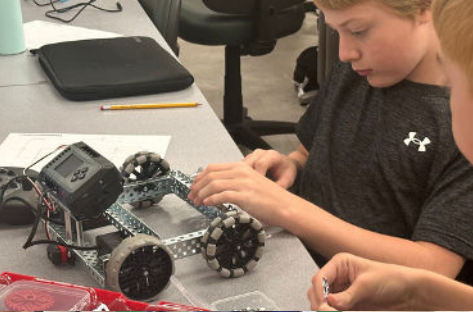
SOLAR POWERED LEARNING

Orono Schools has **partnered with an organization called We Share Solar**, an international non-profit that began as a resource to light women's clinics in sub-Saharan Africa, helping to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. The organization donated Solar Suitcase kits, enabling students to **learn how to build stand-alone solar power systems that can power 12-volt DC devices.** Through this hands-on experience, students develop skills in mechanics, use tools, and learn the basics of electricity, solar energy, and quality control. The Solar Suitcases will be assembled and disassembled each quarter as students rotate through their exploratory classes.

Donations through the Foundation funded the purchase of one of these suitcases, which will be deployed to a school or community center in Bidi Bidi refugee camp in western Uganda. Middle school students will volunteer during WIN (What I Need) time in December to build the suitcase and will present their project to the 6th grade class before sending the suitcase overseas.

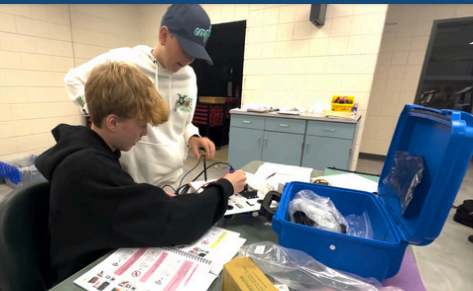
Throughout these educational experiences, students are not only learning about circuitry and renewable energy, but are also gaining awareness of global issues, engaging in service learning and developing cross-cultural competency. We are excited to hear about the impact that their Solar Suitcase will have on the community that receives it!

Photos top to bottom: Middle school students building a VEX Robot. Student teams pairing off against each other in a robot freeze-tag competition. 8th Grade students working in pairs and groups to build circuits for the Solar Suitcases.



"I have never, in my 18 years of teaching, had as much engagement where **students are truly driving their learning** as I have using the VEX Robotics curriculum and the We Share Solar Program. The students in Orono are bright, motivated and respond to quality instruction. **These resources are giving our middle school students a unique experience that they deserve to have.**"

Doug Jetton
OMS Technology
Education Teacher





"We are incredibly grateful to the Orono Foundation for supporting **leading edge classroom technology** for our students. Through the generosity of our community, our students experience highly engaging curricular opportunities with computer science, 3D printing, robotics, drones, and solar energy **that will prepare them for innovative post-secondary education and career opportunities.**"

Dr. Aaron Ruhland
OSD Executive Director of
Learning & Accountability

BRINGING IDEAS TO LIFE

After several years of hoping for an upgrade to expose students to leading technologies in 3D printing and manufacturing, the high school engineering classroom recently received a new state-of-the-art Stratasys 3D printer. In Introduction to Engineering Design (IED) taught by Mark Vonder Haar, **students design and create parts that have possibly never been created before**, redesign existing parts for improvement, or build replacement parts that are out of manufacturing.

Students in IED learn how to use a 3D CAD software called Inventor which is commonly used in various professional industries. They **work in teams through activity-, project-, and problem based-learning** to develop skills in spatial awareness, proper measuring, and problem solving to ensure that parts fit together and work when assembled.

"The 3D printer allows students to become better Design Thinkers" Mr. Vonder Haar said. "Students can easily create complex parts with more innovative ideas and techniques that force them to be accurate with their measuring for the parts to interact with each other properly."

The new 3D printer integrates with modern technology, provides capacity for larger project builds, and allows students to produce items more quickly and accurately to provide sufficient time for students to test, problem solve and redesign if necessary.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

In the spring of 2024, the Orono School Board approved plans for the high school to offer a **new, two-level engineering class - Drone Technology and Science Fundamentals**. In these classes, students not only learn how to build and program drones, they gain an understanding of the importance of drones in today's society and potential career paths in this expanding and growing industry.

"I am excited to **expose students to an industry that has limitless possibilities,**" said Mr. Vonder Haar. In addition to uses in photography and videography, drones are now implemented into fields related to mapping and surveying, city planning, building and bridge inspections, agriculture, emergency services, military operations and more. Students learn about the impacts of and parallel careers in weather and safety. This new course would not have been possible without funding from the community to provide 16 drone prototype kits for student learning.

Photos top to bottom: Teacher Mark Vonder Haar with large and small drone prototypes for the new engineering class. New 3D printer in the high school. Mr. Vonder Haar working with a student to develop a 3D CAD design in Inventor.



BUSINESS SPONSORS

(Bash & Parent Directory)

\$2,500 +

Dan Hollerman - Lake Minnetonka Compass

\$1,000 - \$2,499

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Ecker Dermatology
Littler Mendelson P.C.
Prosperwell Financial
Steve Albers - RE/MAX Avenues & Acres Team
Stickney Real Estate
Whitney Sleep Center

\$500 - \$999

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Marie Suchy - Edina Realty
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\$250 - \$499

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Catherine Wersal - Coldwell Banker
Dan Kokesh - Keller Williams Realty
DOJO Karate
Medina Entertainment Center

EMPLOYER MATCHES

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DONOR LIST

\$100,000+

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\$50,000 +

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Kent & Heather Pilakowski*
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Taryn & Vanessa Reuter
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Gavin & Trisha Tempero
Eric & Heather Thoerner
Nick & Shadia Tobkin
Bob & Kathi Tunheim

Gifts In Memory

Kitty Crosby
Dr. Thomas Mich

THANK YOU!

*Gift total includes monetary and in-kind donations

FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024: 7/1/2023 - 6/30/2024



DONATION TOTALS:

\$539,145

**Total
Contributions**

\$59,816

**In-Kind
Contributions**

\$15,000

**Business
Sponsorships**

\$15,853

**Employer
Matching
Gifts**

\$46,862

**Auction
Proceeds**

1,550

Total Gifts

233

New Donors

82

**New In-Kind
Donors**

**EVERY
DONOR,
EVERY
DOLLAR
COUNTS!**

\$1 - \$499

Anonymous
Jon & Lauren Adsem
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Dan Vacek
James & Kim Van Eyll
Michael & Kathleen Vossen
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Jim Westrum
Ross & Natalie Williams
Katie Yandell
John & Laura Young
Evy Zacher

***Donor List does not include
Parent Directory purchases.*

IN-KIND DONATIONS

\$2,000 +

FitHaus
Rockvram Boat Yards

\$1,000 - \$1,999

Boake Munsch
Cityview Plumbing, Heating & Air
Conditioning
Elevate Med Spa
Lunderby Photography

\$500 - \$999

Blizzard Ski School
Club Pilates (Minnetonka West)
Dale Studios
Lake Minnetonka Chiropractic
Lakeside Fine Wines + Spirits
Lisa Buck Photography
Orono Schools Activities and
Athletics
Orono Youth Football Association
Total Wine
Vi Beauty Labs

\$10 - \$499

24/7 Active
6 Smith
American Outdoor Services and
Stump Grinding
Artistry
Back Channel Brewing Co.
Bark Box
Barry's Boot Camp
Bartel Tutoring and ACT Preparation
Bell Museum
Benedict's
Beth Kellogg Interiors
Breadsmith
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Chick-fil-A
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Culver's Restaurant
Dick Blick
Esteem Dance
Face Foundrie Wayzata
Foss Swim School
Fresh Acres Farm
General Store of Minnetonka
Goldfish Swim School - Minnetonka
Hamel Nordic Sauna
Holiday Station Stores

IV Minnesota
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Lexus of Wayzata
Luce Line Brewing
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MN Orchestra
Morrison Ice Arena
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Moxx Cycle Studio
Northern Taphouse
Orono Community Education
Orono Orchards Golf Course
Orono Police Department
Orono Public Works
Orono Youth Football Association
Plymouth Community Center
Punch Neopolitan Pizza
R.F. Moeller Jeweler
Red Cow Wayzata
Rick Bronson's House of Comedy
Royal Princess Party MN
Skin Savvy
Spring Park Pharmacy
Stages Theatre Co.
The Bakken Museum
The Barre Studio
The Grocer's Table
The Thinking Spot
The Wine Shop
Three Rivers Park District
Triple Espresso - A Highly
Caffeinated Comedy
Twin City Model Railroad Museum
Urban Air Trampoline Park
Deb Van de Ven
Varsity Painters
Victoria Burrows
Wayzata Bar & Grill
Wayzata Bay Car Wash
Wayzata Home & Laundry
Westwood Hills Nature Center

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The Orono Foundation for Education has a Finance Committee that meets monthly to review financial statements and evaluate investment strategies. The committee consists of five community volunteers, four OFE board members, OFE staff and a contract accountant.

This process, in addition to completing an annual audit, ensures fiscal responsibility for the Foundation. In addition, we continue to actively make changes to reduce operating expenses while maintaining our ability to sufficiently serve the Orono School District community.

REVENUE:

Contributions: \$539,145 (excludes final installment of \$1M Educator Excellence Fund gift/pledge from 2020)

Annual Fund Contributions: \$346,452

Restricted Fund Contributions: \$132,877

In-Kind Contributions: \$59,816

EXPENSES:

Grants to Orono School District: \$494,785 (includes \$5,500 in grants to cover 2022-23 requests after July 2023)

Annual Fund Grants: \$208,500

Restricted Fund Grants: \$286,285

Operating Expenses:

Direct to Mission/Program: \$52,505

Management & General: \$101,546

Fundraising: \$10,951

Special Events: \$62,324

Cost of Goods Sold: \$5,727

With an **operating expense ratio of 22.7%**, OFE **exceeds the gold standard** of 1:4 ratio (25%) for non-profits. In addition, the 2024 Bash had an expense ratio of 25%, beating the industry guideline of 35% for fundraising events.

"The Foundation's annual support has allowed us to cultivate a community where educational excellence is a shared priority. Thank you for investing in our students and educators and helping to build a learning community of which we can all be proud."

Dr. Kristine Flesher
OSD Superintendent



Photo credit: Frank Landis

THE GREAT GASTBY

The 2024 Red & Blue Bash was an incredible success with **gross profits of \$250,373** (including in-kind donations). Thank you to everyone who attended and participated in the auction, and to our many parent and student volunteers who helped make it all happen!

Save the date for the **2025 Bash on Saturday, April 26th**. For our 25th Anniversary event, the theme will be 'The Silver Screen'. Start planning your favorite on screen character costume today!

SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE FUTURE

When the Foundation first started, there was a strong focus on establishing and growing an Endowment Fund. **The purpose of the Endowment is to provide a steady, consistent source of income for the Orono School District in perpetuity.** We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to build the Endowment to its current level. As of June 30, 2024, the **Endowment amount stands at \$1,629,349.**

The Foundation's Strategic Plan for 2025 - 2028 includes a goal to grow the Endowment to \$2M. Annual interest on this amount could ensure roughly **\$100,000 in additional support for Orono Schools annually, FOREVER!**

Platinum
Transparency
2024

Candid.

We are proud to have earned the **Platinum Seal of Transparency** from Candid! Check out our nonprofit profile at [guidestar.org](https://www.guidestar.org). Form 990 available upon request.