

Cougar Connect

December 20, 2023



Jingle Bell Assembly



Winter Celebrations



Staff Scavenger Hunt

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A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear families,

Our Cougar family had a great end to the first semester of the 2023-2024 school year. Our team is tremendously grateful for your partnership in learning. We also appreciate the endless measures taken to grace our staff with kind words, delectable meals, classroom support, and much more! At OTE, the team acknowledges the tremendous effort made by our families to support our work, and we cannot be more grateful.

OTE staff wishes you a great winter break with those most dear to you--Happy Holidays! ❄️

Sincerely,
Erica McDonald
Principal



Save-the-Date

January

- Monday, January 1-Tuesday, January 2:** No School | Winter Break
- Wednesday, January 3:** No School | Professional Learning
- Wednesday, January 10:** PTO Restaurant Night | Bibibob, 10:30 AM-9:30 PM
- Friday, January 12:** Cougar All School Assembly; 9:00 AM
- Monday, January 15:** No School | Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Friday, January 19: PTO Family Fun Night Glow Party 6:30-8:30 PM

Friday, January 26: Skate Party at Skate City; 5:00 PM-7:00 PM



PTO Calendar of Events

For a complete list of all upcoming PTO events, visit [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Upcoming Events \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org).



Get Pre-Registered for Trivia Night

The PTO is putting on OTE's first annual Trivia Night & Auction this spring. This will be one of the biggest fundraising events of the year, and its sure to be a fun one! Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 6th, 2024. ***This event is anticipated to sell out, so we are offering a pre-registration option starting NOW for Team and Individual registration.*** Pre-registering simply puts you first in line to secure a spot when registration opens in January. Need more info? We've got you covered! Click below to get all the

details and to lock in your pre-registration. [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Trivia Night \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org).



Volunteers Needed – Hearing & Vision Rescreening – January 12th

There will be a hearing/vision re-screening on Friday, January 12th. This will be for students who weren't screened at the previous screening or did not pass the first screening. We need a few

volunteers to ensure the screenings run smoothly. Volunteers will be provided instructions upon arrival, but the primary role of volunteers will be to help funnel kids through the screenings efficiently. Click this [link](#) for more information and to sign up!



Staff Favorites

In this season of giving, we wanted to make things easier for you. Our amazing staff at OTE has their favorites lists featured on our PTO website. If you were looking to provide gifts to any staff this holiday season, simply click to explore their favs for some inspiration! [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Staff Favorites \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org).

★ DEI Spotlight

For December, various holidays are celebrated worldwide, and many are observed among our families here at Overland Trail Elementary. Seeing how the staff has planned to engage with students to embrace and honor our cultural differences is fun. We welcome families to share how they plan to celebrate this December-January with the team. If you would like to send pictures, food, artifacts, etc., we would love to allow students to share more about themselves.



Games on District Devices

In an effort to reduce distractions in the learning environment for all of our students, beginning on January 4, 2024, all students will have general gaming websites blocked on district devices



(examples include: Fortnite, crazygames.com, recreational games, arcade-like games, etc.). Educational games will still be allowed.

New Assessment Tool Replaces Longtime MAP Tests

A new assessment taking the place of MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) testing has made evaluating data easier for teachers and decreased testing time for students, allowing for more focused instruction time.

The district's goal for the school year is to have 84% of students who take the assessment score in the low-risk or college-ready category – or the 40th percentile.

To learn more about Fastbridge, read [this Learning Connection story](#).



End-of-Quarter Information

End of Quarter Information - Viewing Canvas Courses and Second Quarter Grades

At the end of each quarter, courses in Canvas will conclude and will no longer be visible on the Canvas app and website. Courses for this year's second quarter will conclude on December 20th.

Report cards will be generated and families will be able to view second-quarter grades on ParentVUE at the end of the day on January 12th.

How do I view my child's report card?

- Log in on [ParentVue](#)
- Select your elementary student's name
- In the left navigation bar, choose REPORT CARD

If you have questions about Standards Based Grading as you view your child's report card, please review the information found on the [Elementary Report Card resource page](#).

Each new quarter, classroom teachers will publish their next quarter's Canvas course. As courses are published, students and families will again be able to see current courses on the Canvas app and Canvas website. For Canvas parent resources, visit www.bluevalleyk12.org/canvas.



Classroom Winter Celebrations

Dear families,

Please look forward to information from room parents regarding volunteers. Similar to the Halloween Celebration, participation on this day will only be open to room parents and the assigned

volunteers. Per guidelines, younger and older siblings are not permitted to attend OTE's classroom celebrations.

Jingle Bell Assembly: 10:15-10:45 (Staff and Students)

Winter Parties: 10:45-11:25 (Staff, Students, Room Parents, and Volunteers)

Half Day Dismissal Preparation and Dismissal: 11:25-11:45

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Erica McDonald
Principal

Crosswalk Changes for the AM and PM

Dear families,

Last week, I sent an email informing you that the crossing guard will now be standing at the roundabout morning and afternoon. The guard will no longer be at the tennis court crosswalk due to All City Management Services policy. Pedestrians are encouraged to now go to the roundabout crosswalk and not use the former crosswalk by the tennis court.

I have shared many of your concerns regarding this change with the Overland Park Police Department; however, upon their review, this is the plan that will remain in place.

If your child is used to crossing at the tennis court crosswalk, please prepare them for this change.

Thank you,

Erica McDonald

Out of the Country Information

☰ ➔ This important message is for any family or staff that will **travel out of the United States** during school breaks. [Click here](#) to read the restrictions and recommendations for out of the country travel. Canvas, Classlink, and email are not accessible out of the country unless you have a **personal device** with a VPN on it.



We do not recommend BV Devices leave the country.



Community Celebrations and Observances - to promote awareness and appreciation of our Blue Valley families.

Some December Celebrations & Observances:

- Universal Human Rights Month - people all across the globe are encouraged to come together and stand up for equality, justice, and the dignity of all humans.
- **International Day of People with Disabilities** - December 3 - a day to celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with disabilities, promote an understanding of disability issues, and mobilize support for the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of people with disabilities

- **Hanukkah** - evening of December 7 - evening of December 15 - an eight-day Jewish festival of lights. Some Jewish families will celebrate by lighting a Menorah and eating foods cooked in oil.
- **Christmas** - December 25- a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Some Christian families will celebrate by attending church services and exchanging gifts
- **Kwanzaa** - December 26 - January 1 - a seven-day African-American holiday celebrating culture, family, and community. For some, celebrations may include song, dance, storytelling, and a large traditional meal.

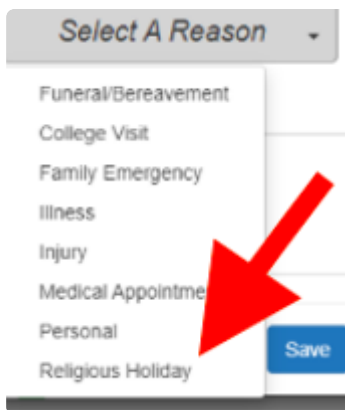
Holiday Assistance



Do you need some assistance in purchasing items for the upcoming holidays? If so, consider seeking support at one of the local area organizations providing assistance. Click the links below for more details and online applications.

[Johnson County Christmas Bureau](#)

[Salvation Army](#)



Reporting Religious Absences

Did you know? Families can select “Religious Holiday” as an option for a child’s absence in ParentVue, when applicable. This notation could be helpful to our school staff so they can plan accordingly for your student’s absence.

Important Travel Outside of the USA

This important message is for any family or staff that will **travel out of the United States** during the school year. Please [click here](#) to read the restrictions and recommendations for Out of the Country travel. Blue Valley resources such as Canvas, Classlink, and school email are not accessible out of the country unless you have a **personal device** with a **VPN** on it.



Nut-Safer Guidelines

At OTE, we have a wide variety of food allergens and restrictions. To remain safe and to prevent exclusion, we don't accept food, including items from the Nut-Safe List, to serve in school or send home with students for birthday celebrations. This complies with our **non-edible birthday celebration**. Essentially, we must remember that sending food home is a risk for children as they transition between school and home, putting our families in an undesirable position when they cannot eat what is provided.

Blue Valley (BV) School's Nut Safer Guidelines for daily snacks will be implemented throughout the school year.

- Classroom snacks must be from the Nut Safer list.
- Nut Safer seating is available in the café during lunch.

We appreciate your support as we work to be more preventative with food safety measures to enhance student and staff safety.

The complete **Nut Safer Foods** and BV Guidelines can be found [here](#).

[School Supply Lists](#)

[District Calendar \(2023-2024\)](#)

[Overland Trail Elementary's Homepage](#)

[Family Handbook](#)



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- Robin Warren, Administration Assistant/Bookkeeper
- Yolonda Merritt, Administration Assistant/Registrar
- Debby Alexander, Attendance

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Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters