

Cougar Connect

August 23, 2024



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear Families,

Thank you for joining our staff for Back to School Night. We were pleased to see such a great turnout and appreciate your partnership in helping launch the school year. Our staff has been hard at work creating and sharing structured expectations for our school community along with how we are going to teach and reinforce them in all settings. You may have seen our visuals or graphics during your visit. Click [here](#) to read a few points about why these are important to our school.

If you were not able to attend Back to School Night, please contact your child's teacher to learn more about what information is needed to remain informed this school year.

I wish you a wonderful weekend, families.

Kindly,
Erica McDonald
Principal



Newsletter Table of Contents

Recurring News:

- Save-the-Date
- ✨DEI Spotlight ✨
- Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) News

Recent News:

- Welcome to Overland Trail Elementary | Jessica Baumgarner
- OTE | Kansas Teacher of the Year Nominee

- Let Me Run
- Important Travel Outside of the USA Information
- Johnson County Health Update
- Game Atmosphere
- Teacher Collaboration Days

Repeat News:

- Join the OTE Team
- Bus Zone | Know Your Child Got on the Bus Safely
- Title I at Overland Trail Elementary
- Weekend Food Pack Program
- Attendance Message to Parents and Caregivers
- General Reminders for Visitors During the School Day
- Birthday Policy
- Nut-Safer Guidelines
- Helpful Links (i.e., Kindergarten Tidbits, School Supply Lists, Family Handbook, etc.)



Save-the-Date

August

Thursday, August 29: Blue Valley Education Foundation
Community Breakfast

Friday, August 30: No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

September

Monday, September 2: No School | Labor Day

Tuesday, September 3: No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

Friday, September 6: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:30 AM

Friday, September 6: Birthday Book Lunch: August, September, and October Birthdays

Friday, September 6: Author Visit | Grades 3-5

Wednesday, September 11: PTO Community Service

Friday, September 13: PTO Teacher Grants Due

Friday, September 20: Picture Day | Individual and Classroom

Friday, September 22: Birthday Book Lunch

Thursday, September 26: First Grade Field Trip | Ernie Miller Tipi @ OTE

Friday, September 27: No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

Friday, September 27: OTE Carnival; 5:30 PM-8:00 PM

The PTO is already in full swing for the year ahead. Follow these simple steps to ensure you don't miss any of the fun!

otepto.org

☆☆ DEI Spotlight ☆☆

Dear families,

Did you know that Overland Trail Elementary (OTE) is one of the most culturally diverse schools in the Blue Valley School District? This attribute makes OTE a special place and something we want to celebrate more. We are excited to build a parent community with parent involvement that

reflects our student and family population. Being inclusive and bringing together community members from different backgrounds and experiences is critical to accomplish the goals set.

Do you have insight to contribute? All parents and guardians are invited to be members of the Overland Trail Elementary DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Council, which includes parents, caregivers, staff, and students. We welcome you to participate, even if your English is not as strong as you would prefer. You can join the warm community by listening, providing input, and planning ways to support Overland Trail Elementary's inclusive efforts.

Please complete the following form, DEI Council | Family Interest, and a member of the DEI Council will contact you soon. For previous members, we ask for you to complete the form, too. Thank you for helping us celebrate the fantastic Overland Trail Elementary community.

[DEI Council | Family Interest](#)

Erica McDonald
Principal



PTO Events | August

PTO Back to School Checklist

1. Visit otepto.org.
2. Login or create a FREE account by clicking the "Login" button.
3. Complete the Family Information and Publish Preference forms under "My Account". By doing this you'll receive your child's Field Trip shirt for the 24/25 school year.
4. Consider a PTO membership. Click "Register" to join. This funding helps support PTO programs.
5. Explore! Buy carnival tickets, check out the calendar of events, and follow the PTO on Facebook and Instagram.



Fall Carnival Sponsorship Opportunities

The Overland Trail Elementary PTO will be hosting our school's Fall Carnival on September 27th, 2024. This year's theme is "The Eras Carnival" and will be one of the PTO's major fundraisers for the year. We are currently seeking sponsors and donors for this event. You can help support your local Cougars while promoting your business at the upcoming Carnival. All the money collected will support OTE PTO's 20+ committees set up to enrich and benefit OTE's students, families, and staff. Any amount or

donation is greatly appreciated!

View all the sponsorship details and secure your spot on our PTO website at <https://otepto.membershiptoolkit.com/carnival-sponsors>.

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).

Friday, August 23th - Back to School Skate Party @ Skate City - 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

A percent of the OTE sales come back to the PTO.

Friday, September 27 - The Eras Carnival coming to OTE

Tickets to The Eras Carnival are on sale now! Perks to pre-ordering wristbands: fast pass entrance, carnival t-shirt*, and swag bag.* Click to pre-order! [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Carnival \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org)

*Place your order by September 1st to guarantee t-shirt size. Swag bags guaranteed for first 400 students.

Welcome to OVERLAND TRAIL ELEMENTARY!

WELCOME TO

Overland Trail Elementary

**Jessica
Baumgarner**

SCHOOLING: Bachelor of Music Education,
Oklahoma State University

**NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING IN
SCHOOLS:** 8

YOUR ROLE AT OTE: Music Teacher

FUN FACT ABOUT ME:

In college, I played with the band Kansas in
concert.



OTE | Kansas Teacher of the Year Nominee



Ariel Puccetti, Kindergarten Teacher at OTE, will represent our school as the Kansas Teacher of the Year nominee. Ariel gracefully planted herself at OTE, bringing a touch of kindness and a dash of happiness to students and staff. She continues to execute teaching and learning uniquely, exemplifying lifelong learning and the power behind looking for the best in each of her students while never expecting less. Ariel Puccetti continues to magnify within her practices that if you can "... dream it and believe it, you will achieve it." Way to go, Ariel Puccetti!

Let Me Run

Mrs. Franchett is excited to announce that Let Me Run is back at OTE this fall! Let Me Run is a wonderful program that is building a new generation of men by teaching boys to be their best selves through a character development program powered by running! Our fall season will begin September 10th. Practices will be held at OTE on Tuesday & Thursdays from 4:00-5:15 PM. **SPACE IS LIMITED!**



Registration is **OPEN NOW!** [Registration Link](#)

Questions? Email kfranchett@bluevalleyk12.org

Important Travel Outside of the USA Information

1. For security reasons the district blocks all inbound/outbound connections to/from foreign countries. This is due to the high number of cyber security attacks that take place against the

District's network on an hourly basis. For this reason the District cannot provide technical support or assistance to those students or staff that choose to take their Blue Valley device out of the country.

2. The District does NOT recommend taking any Blue Valley device out of the country:
 1. Students and Staff will not be able to access necessary systems such as Canvas, Classlink, employee online, and/or email.
 2. The District cannot fully secure, monitor, or keep live inventory of the device while it is out of the country.
 3. The District cannot provide remote support or full security updates for the device while it is out of the country.
3. If students or staff feel that they have a critical need to access the District's Network from outside of the country, they will need to do so on a personal device only, and they would need to install and use a VPN client on their personal device. The VPN must display an IP address inside the United States.
 1. The District cannot make recommendations or provide technical assistance with the installation and/or use any VPN client on any personal device.
 2. Students and staff must understand that there is no guarantee of successfully connecting to any of the District's internal systems while using their personal device in or out of the country.
4. Parents will still be able to access their Canvas Parent account from outside the country, it is not housed on a BV server it should connect without any issues.

We take every precaution to ensure that the Blue Valley Network remains safe and secure!



Johnson County Health Update

- COVID, RSV, & Influenza: Exclude until symptoms are getting better AND no fever for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication. Precautions such as wearing of a mask for 5 days is recommended, but not required.
- Fever, Diarrhea, and/or Vomiting: Fever, diarrhea, vomit-free for 24 hours without the use of medication (*this is not a change, but just a reminder*). Note: Fever is 100.0 degrees or higher

Game Atmosphere

Blue Valley families,

We are excited to have your families come to support our high school activities and athletics. It is great to see the entire community at these events. It is imperative that our parent community partner with us as we work to encourage positive elementary and middle school behavior at high school games or events.

We are asking that all elementary and middle school students enter the game with an adult and sit with that adult throughout the game. Please do not drop your child off at a district event without supervision as they will not be allowed to enter. It is challenging to monitor and keep all students safe without the help of our parent community. Thanks for your help with this protocol to make district events a great experience for all who attend. We hope to see your family cheering for our Blue Valley teams this school year.

Matt Ortman
Director of School Administration, Athletics and Activities
Blue Valley School District

Teacher Collaboration Days

As we kick off the 2024-25 school year, I want to remind families about the teacher professional collaboration days designed for teacher plan and collaboration time. These eight days, which occur throughout the school year, are non-student attendance days for K-5 students. These days are vital to ensure the best possible preparation for our elementary students and key to quality teacher retention.

The following days, which can be found in the [2024-25 calendar](#) on the district website, have been designated as teacher professional collaboration days:

- August 30
- September 27
- November 1
- December 6
- January 31
- February 28
- April 11
- May 2

Reminder: August 30 is a K-5 non-student attendance day for teacher collaboration time. During this time, elementary educators will be in their buildings and classrooms working to ensure the best possible preparation for our elementary students and supporting student learning outcomes.

School will be back in session on September 4.



Join the OTE Team

We are currently seeking a Part-time REAL/Library Para to join our Overland Trail Elementary team. The details of this position are listed below. If you have interest in this position, or know of someone who may be interested, please click this [link](#) to apply.

Days of the week for this position: Thursday & Friday plus every other Wednesday

What the day looks like:

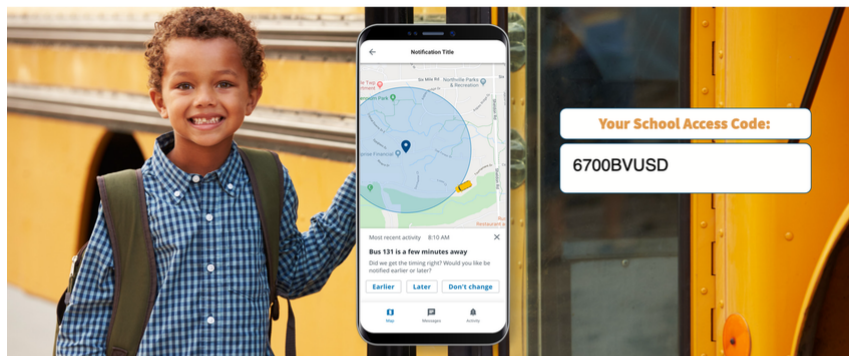
- REAL (Reading for Enjoyment and Appreciation Literature)
 - Create lessons
 - Can pull from lessons from the past several years
 - Also, take turns creating with our other part-time para
 - For kindergarten - 2nd grade
 - 30-minute rotation and splits time with Computer classes
 - Usually consists of reading several books and a related activity
- Library Responsibilities
 - Help students find books and answer questions

- Check-in books and reshelve
- Place and check interlibrary loans
- Pull books for teachers
- Other fun activities
- Before & after school duties
 - Breakfast
 - Assist with dismissal

Listing:

Overland Trail Elementary Instructional Paraprofessional
 Part-time
 18 hours per week
 No benefits

Bus Zone | Know Your Child Got on the Bus Safely



Know your child got on the bus safely.

Lighten your daily load.

Raising children is a tough job. This easy-to-use mobile app allows you to check on the school bus whenever you want.

Set up BusZone:

1. Download the BusZone app from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Enter the above School Access Code.
3. In the search field, enter the bus or route number you want to follow.
Complete this step for all the buses your students ride throughout the week.
4. Enter your child's unique student ID.
5. Create alert zones around drop-off and pick-up points.

When your child's bus enters an alert zone, you will receive notification by email or text.

Trust that your information is secure.

Security is priority one, especially where student information is concerned. All parent/guardian information is locked down and password protected within the app to prevent unauthorized people from opening the app and viewing the child's bus information.

Have questions? Need more information?

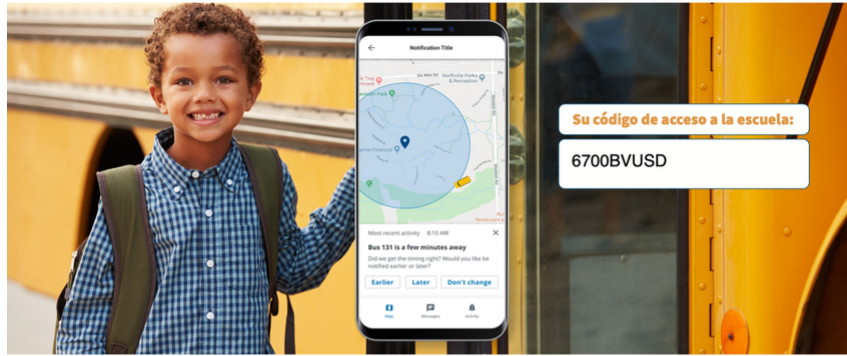
Email buszone6700@nellc.com

Key features

- View a real-time, map-based bus locator
- Guarantee parent/guardian and student information privacy
- Create custom zones for each stop and facility
- Send email alerts and SMS messages
- Available on smartphones and tablets



Learn how to use BusZone
 Scan the QR code to see the user guide.



Le da tranquilidad.

Alivie su carga diaria.

Criar niños no es fácil. Esta aplicación móvil sencilla le permite verificar la ubicación del autobús escolar cuando quiera.

Configuración de BusZone:

1. Descargue la aplicación BusZone desde App Store o Google Play.
2. Ingrese el código de acceso de la escuela que figura arriba.
3. En el campo de búsqueda, ingrese el número de autobús o de ruta que desee seguir. Complete este paso para todos los autobuses que sus estudiantes utilizan durante la semana.
4. Ingrese la identificación única de estudiante de su hijo.
5. Cree zonas de alerta alrededor de los puntos donde su hijo se sube y baja del autobús.

Cuando el autobús ingresa en una zona de alerta, usted recibirá una notificación por correo electrónico o mensaje de texto.

Confíe en que su información está resguardada.

La seguridad es prioridad, especialmente cuando se trata de la información de un estudiante. En la aplicación, toda la información de los padres o tutores está bloqueada y protegida con contraseña para evitar que personas no autorizadas ingresen a la aplicación y vean la información del autobús del niño.

Para obtener respuestas sobre la configuración y la asistencia, envíe un correo electrónico a buszone6700@ncllc.com

Características importantes

- Acceso al localizador del autobús basado en mapas en tiempo real
- Garantía de confidencialidad en la información del estudiante y de los padres o tutores
- Creación de zonas personalizadas para cada parada y ubicación
- Envío de alertas por correo electrónico y mensajes de texto
- Disponible en teléfonos inteligentes y tabletas



Aprenda Cómo Usar BusZone. Escanee el Código QR para ver la guía del usuario.

Title I at Overland Trail Elementary

Dear Families,

Overland Trail Elementary School has been identified as an official Title I school, based on the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch benefits. Title I is a federal program where select schools receive targeted funds to provide additional reading support.

Federal guidelines mandate that Title I schools provide parents with a “right to know.” As a parent, you have the right to know information regarding qualifications of your child’s classroom teachers. This information can be found at <https://appspublic.ksde.org/TLL/SearchLicense.aspx>.

As a parent, you also have the right to view both district and building report cards, which can be found by going to www.bluevalleyk12.org, scrolling down to “District Quick Links” and selecting “Accountability Reports.” Parents also have the right to request access to students’ state assessment scores. These will also be shared via the KITE Parent Portal around the end of the school year.

Thank you,
Erica McDonald
Principal, Overland Trail Elementary



Weekend Food Pack Program

To help alleviate food insecurity, Community for Kids partners with Overland Trail Elementary to provide one bag of non-perishable food items to participating children each week during the school year. Bag distribution will begin on Thursday, September 5 for families that opt-in by August 18. Families can opt-in throughout the school year and distribution of the bags will continue weekly. Bags are typically distributed at school each Thursday, except during breaks. Participation is free and optional.

If your child could benefit from access to more food and you would like your child to participate and receive a weekend food pack, simply complete the brief online [form](#). No additional information is needed.

Contact Lacey Koester, school social worker, with any questions or concerns. She can be reached by phone at 913-239-7029 and by email at lkoester@bluevalleyk12.org.

Attendance Procedures

If your child will miss school, please call the Overland Trail Elementary attendance line at 913-239-7005 or email the attendance line at attendanceOTE@bluevalleyk12.org.

Please include your child's name (first and last), grade level, classroom teacher, and reason for the absence. If leaving a message, please make sure you speak slowly and clearly. It is always helpful to repeat the information as well. The Blue Valley School District has amended the district's attendance policy (Board Policy 3200). **Students will be permitted *seven* excused absences during the school year for family emergencies, vacations, and personal business.** Send a note to the teacher and the office if your child is on vacation. Separate letters should be written for each child.

Attendance Reporting and Notifications

Families can expect automated attendance messages by email and text if a child is absent and their absence has not already been reported by a parent/guardian. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to report an absence or reply to the automated phone message.

What is the purpose of attendance notifications?

We realize that students may occasionally need to miss school for planned absences, illnesses, and appointments. However, when a student does not arrive at school or unexpectedly misses a portion of the school day, we are concerned and want to ensure you know your child is absent.

How can I get push notifications?

Families who would also like a push notification can download the ParentVUE app and manage their notifications. A push notification will immediately be sent to the parent/guardian's mobile device if a child has an unreported absence when a teacher submits attendance.

Are you interested in push notifications? Download the ParentVUE app ([iTunes app store](#) or [Google Play](#)), enable push notifications in device settings, and select attendance notifications through in-app settings. Once the app is downloaded, [these instructions](#) will help you complete the setup.

General Reminder for Visitors During the School Day



Our office staff wants to share a general reminder that all elementary schools in the district utilize the buzz-in entry system for visitors during the school day. Visitors will need to come to the front of the school. At the front entrance, visitors will press the buzzer, show government-issued photo identification, and state the purpose of their visit each time they visit the school. **If you arrive without identification, the office will seek the**

administration's approval for entry.

We ask that guests not hold the door open for another visitor once they have been buzzed in. Instead, allow the door to close for visitors to go through the above-mentioned procedures. We appreciate the support of our safety procedures.

Overland Trail Elementary will open for visitors after Labor Day beginning Wednesday, September 4, 2024.

Birthday Policy

Due to the growing number of food allergies and medical needs of students, OTE has a **non-edible** treat policy. Students may bring non-edible birthday treats (e.g., pencils, stickers, etc.) per arrangement with the classroom teacher. Remember that a birthday celebration should not take away from instructional time.

Birthday Invitations: We ask that students not distribute invitations to private birthday parties at school unless every class member receives an invitation.



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](#).

Kindergarten Tidbits

Please review the attached newsletter for information missed at Kindergarten Roundup and what to look forward to as we begin a new school year at Overland Trail Elementary.

Welcome to Kindergarten Newsletter

School Supply Lists

District Calendar (2024-2025)

Overland Trail Elementary's Homepage

Family Handbook



Erica McDonald, Principal

Email: ECMcDonald@bluevalleyk12.org

Website: www.bluevalleyk12.org/OTE

Location: [6225 West 133rd Street, Overland Park, KS, USA](#)

Phone: (913) 239-7000

Twitter: [@OTEMcDonald](https://twitter.com/OTEMcDonald)

Alicia Anderson, Assistant Principal

Email: ARAnderson@bluevalleyk12.org

Website: www.bluevalleyk12.org/OTE

Location: [6335 West 135th Street, Overland Park, KS, USA](#)

Phone: (913) 239-7000

Twitter: [@OTEAnderson](https://twitter.com/OTEAnderson)



Office Staff

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

Website: www.bluevalleyk12.org/OTE

Location: [6225 West 133rd Street, Overland Park, KS, USA](#)

Phone: (913) 239-7000

Twitter: [@OTECougars](#)



Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters