

Cougar Connect

August 30, 2024



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear Families,

On Monday, September 9, please prepare to receive communication inviting you to sign up for a fall conference. We encourage **every** family to conference, as this is a great opportunity to partner with teachers and learn more about your child's personal and academic progress. It is important to not the following:

- **Tuesday, October 22:** In-person or virtual; you will need to indicate your selection within your reservation.
- **Wednesday, October 23:** Virtual only; there will be no option on this evening to conference in person.
- **Thursday, October 24:** In-person or virtual; you will need to indicate your selection within your reservation.

Lastly, you will have the option to conference with our specials teachers (i.e., Art, Music, Spanish, and P.E.) through the same link shared on Monday morning.

Please let us know if you have any questions. I wish you a fantastic weekend, families!

Kindly,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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Repeat News:

- Teacher Collaboration Days
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- Helpful Links (i.e., Kindergarten Tidbits, School Supply Lists, Family Handbook, etc.)



Save-the-Date

September

Monday, September 2: No School | Labor Day

Tuesday, September 3: No School | Teacher Professional Learning

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 Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:30 AM

Friday, September 13: PTO Teacher Grants Due

Friday, September 13: Fifth Grade Field Trip | Kaufmann Stadium

Friday, September 20: Picture Day | Individual and Classroom

Friday, September 22: Birthday Book Lunch

Tuesday, September 24: LIFT Field Trip | Olathe Lanes East Bowling

Wednesday, September 25: Fourth Grade Field Trip | Johnson County Fairgrounds

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 ☆☆

Did you know that OTE staff, members of the DEI Council, collaborated and created a friendly Nut-Safe List for families?

Click [here](#) to view the picture friendly list.

Are you interested in joining OTE's DEI Council? If so, please submit your contact information here: [DEI Council | Family Interest](#).



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.



**OVERLAND TRAIL
THE ERAS CARNIVAL**

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 \(otepto.org\)](#).

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 \(otepto.org\)](#).

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



Welcome to OVERLAND TRAIL ELEMENTARY!

FREE Field Trip T-Shirt

Your student will receive their FREE field trip t-shirt once a parent creates an account on the OTE PTO website AND completes their Directory information. A PTO Membership is NOT required to receive the t-shirt, we simply ask that your family create a free account with the PTO. You may also select to remain unpublished in the online Directory." [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Overland Trail PTO \(membershiptoolkit.com\)](#)

WELCOME TO



Overland Trail Elementary

Lexi Ward

SCHOOLING: I ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA. BUT DID MY STUDENT TEACHING IN SAINT SIMON'S ISLAND DURING THE CRAZY YEAR OF 2020-2021. I HAVE MY UNDERGRAD IN EARLY CHILDHOOD GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION. I AM CURRENTLY IN MY MASTER'S PROGRAM THROUGH PITT STATE FOR A MASTERS IN LOW & HIGH INCIDENCE SPECIAL EDUCATION.

NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING IN SCHOOLS: THIS UPCOMING YEAR WILL BE MY 4TH YEAR TEACHING AND ALL MY TIME TEACHING HAS BEEN IN BLUE VALLEY!

ROLE AT OTE: LIFT TEACHER

FUN FACT ABOUT ME: A FUN FACT ABOUT MYSELF IS THAT I HAVE A NERVE STIMULATOR THAT CHANGES MY VOICE EVERY MINUTE AND A HALF. I ESPECIALLY LOVE TELLING MY STUDENTS THAT I AM BIONIC AND RUN ON A BATTERY!



Proactive School Safety: How Blue Valley Addresses and Assesses Threats

At Blue Valley Schools, student safety is our top priority. Our approach to safety blends proactive prevention, fostering strong adult-student relationships and maintaining robust physical security measures. Central to our strategy is understanding and addressing potential threats.

What Constitutes a Threat?

A threat includes any expression of intent to harm, whether spoken or written. Identifying and responding to these expressions is crucial to the safety of our school community.

The Role of Threat Assessments

Blue Valley's comprehensive threat assessment process has two primary objectives:

- **Preventing Violence:** We work to intervene before potential threats escalate.
- **Resolving Underlying Issues:** By understanding the reasons behind a threat, we can resolve conflicts and provide necessary support.

Structured, Evidence-Based Approach

Blue Valley Schools follows the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG), a nationally recognized, evidence-based program. This approach ensures that we not only prevent violence but also support individuals in need.

Since the fall of 2023, Blue Valley building leaders have been trained in and actively using this Threat Assessment approach. This consistent use of CSTAG has equipped leaders with a common

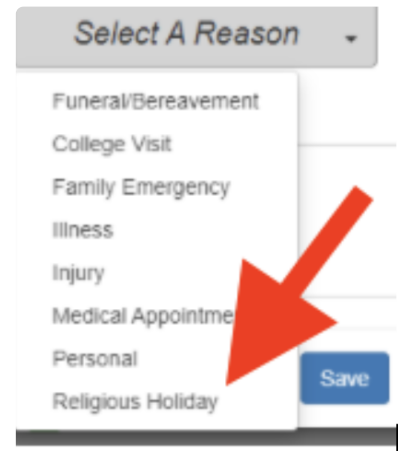
vocabulary and protocol, enabling them to resolve situations more effectively when threats arise.

By staying committed to this structured and compassionate approach, Blue Valley Schools ensures that students and staff are supported, safe and able to focus on what truly matters—learning through extraordinary educational opportunities.

More information about Blue Valley’s threat assessment process is available on the [district website](#).

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.



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.

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 \(2024-2025\)](#)

[Overland Trail Elementary's Homepage](#)

[Family Handbook](#)



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Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters