

Cougar Connect

December 13, 2024

A Note From Mrs. McDonald



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Dear Families,

Don't forget to gear up for next weeks, Five Days of Celebration. Please view the information below about how your child can help us rally into the last week of the first semester.

Don't forget next Friday, December 20 is an early dismissal following the Winter celebrations. School dismisses at 11:45. Stay connected for upcoming updates.

With gratitude,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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Save-the-Date



Save-the-Date

December

Monday, December 16-Friday, December 20: Five Days of Celebration Spirit Week

Wednesday, December 18: DEI Council Meeting; 4:00-5:00 PM

Friday, December 20: Jingle Bell Assembly; 10:00-10:45 AM | Half

Day Dismissal; 11:45 AM | End of Quarter 2 | End of First Semester

Monday, December 23-Tuesday, December 31: No School | Winter Break

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

☆☆ 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 and student community 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 students, 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.

Our next DEI Council Meeting will take place on **Wednesday, December 18th from 4:00-5:00 PM**. Please complete the following form, if you are interested in attending the next meeting with your child. Thank you for helping us celebrate the fantastic Overland Trail Elementary community.

[DEI Council | Family Interest.](#)

OTE DEI Council

Community Celebrations and Observances



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.

OTE | PTO



PTO Events | November

Holiday SUPPORT A COUGAR

Our holiday Support-A-Cougar drive is back! The Support-A-Cougar program partners with OTE administration to support students in need throughout the year. Our annual holiday drive allows us to provide OTE families with gift cards, new games and books during the holiday season. We need your help to make this possible!

WAYS TO DONATE 11/18- 12/6

*Bring new games and books to school and place in the collection bins

*Donate through the PTO Site via the QR code
Log-In and select your donation level

*Send cash or check in an envelope marked "Support-a-Cougar" and have your student give to their teacher

The Support-a-Cougar Committee will work with our school counselor and social worker to purchase gift cards and distribute the donations to families in our OTE community. If you are an OTE family in need of support for the holidays, please contact the OTE Social Worker, Lacey Koester - lkoester@bluevalleyk12.org



DEADLINE TO DONATE
12/6/24



QUESTIONS? SUPPORT-A-COUGAR CHAIRS:

Tara Adams - tara.adams6@gmail.com

Sarah Cullor - sarah@cullor.com

Support a Cougar Holiday Drive – Spread Joy This Season!

Support a Cougar is a PTO-led program that helps OTE Cougars in need throughout the year, and our annual Holiday Drive is a special way to make the season brighter for families in our community. Through your generosity, we provide gifts and financial support during the holidays with donations of Target gift cards, new books, and games.



Here's how you can help:

- **Financial Contributions** – Choose a donation level and submit your payment directly on our website. [Donate by clicking here.](#)
- **New Books and Games** – Drop off your donations in the collection bins at OTE starting November 18th.

Donation deadline is December 6th. Thank you for helping us make the holidays a little brighter for our OTE community.

If you are an OTE family in need of support this holiday season, please reach out to the OTE Social Worker, Lacey Koester - lkoester@bluevalleyk12.org

Upload your pictures for the Yearbook!

Your picture uploads throughout the year make the yearbook extra special. Please use the link below to upload pictures from school events, class parties, extracurricular activities, etc. Be sure to choose a folder for your pictures to help us keep them organized. Only the PTO will be able to see and access the photos you share. [Click here to upload pictures from the Carnival and other events!](#)



PTO Calendar of Events

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

Winter Celebration

Parents and Caregivers,

Next Friday, December 20, classrooms will have their celebrations before the Winter break. These celebrations will begin promptly after the Jingle Bell Assembly, which is an assembly for staff and students only.

- Room parents and the selected volunteers will need to arrive no sooner than 10:15 to begin setting up for the parties. The parties will begin at 10:45 and conclude promptly at 11:15. You must have a valid ID to enter.
- Adhering to our celebration guidelines, please remember that only room parents and selected volunteers will be able to enter the building.
- Additionally, all food and drinks must be from the current Nut-Safe List. If the safety of food goes undetermined, we will kindly return the food and drink items.

We appreciate your attention to sustaining a safe place for our students and staff.

Thank you,
Erica McDonald

Viewing Canvas Courses and Quarter Grades

End of Quarter Information - Viewing Canvas Courses and Quarter Grades

At the end of each quarter, courses in Canvas will conclude and will no longer be visible on the Canvas app. However, a concluded course remains visible through the Canvas website by selecting ALL COURSES and then PAST ENROLLMENTS.

How do I view my child's report card?

- Log in on [ParentVue](#).
- Select the student's name
- In the left navigation bar, choose Report Card

Each new quarter, classroom teachers will publish the 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.

Important dates for families:

	Courses Conclude on Canvas	Grades Viewable on ParentVue (after 4pm)
Quarter 1	Friday, October 11	Tuesday, October 22
Quarter 2	Friday, December 20	Friday, January 10
Quarter 3	Thursday, March 13	Wednesday, April 2
Quarter 4	Thursday, May 22	Wednesday, June 4

Please note: The dates are subject to change based upon calendar updates or technology needs.

Five Days of Celebration | Spirit Week: December 16-20

FIVE DAYS OF CELEBRATION

MERRY MONDAY (12/16)
Wear red and white or blue and white.

TOASTY TUESDAY (12/17)
Wear fun socks and/or slippers!

WINTRY WEDNESDAY (12/18)
Wear a festive winter sweater!

HATS OFF TO FOOD (12/19)
Wear your holiday headgear.

SLEIGH IN YOUR PAJAMAS FRIDAY (12/20)
PAJAMA DAY

WINTER CELEBRATIONS
WHEN: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20
TIME: 10:45-11:15
WHO: ROOM PARENTS AND CONFIRMED VOLUNTEERS
DISMISSAL : 11:45 AM

Important Travel Outside of the USA Information

Important Travel Outside of the USA Information

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.

Teacher Collaboration Days

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: November 1st 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 November 2nd.

Nut-Safer Guidelines



Nut Safer List 24-25

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](#).

Helpful Links

[School Supply Lists](#)

[District Calendar \(2024-2025\)](#)

[Overland Trail Elementary's Homepage](#)

[Family Handbook](#)



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Alicia Anderson, Assistant Principal

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Office Staff

- 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