

# Cougar Connect

December 20, 2024

## A Note From Mrs. McDonald



### A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear Families,

With the help of room parents and volunteers, we were able to close out this semester in a warm and memorable manner. Thank you for your committed efforts and partnership with the school staff this semester.

I wish you a relaxing and rejuvenating break, families—we will see you next year!

With gratitude,  
Erica McDonald  
Principal

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#### Recurring News:

- Save-the-Date
- ✨Unity Squad Spotlight ✨ (formerly DEI Spotlight)
- Community Celebrations and Observances
- Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) News

#### Recent News:

- Structured Expectations
- Personal Electronic Device Expectations at School

## Repeat News:

- Viewing Canvas Courses and Quarter Grades
- Important Travel Outside of the USA Information
- Teacher Collaboration Days
- Nut-Safer Guidelines
- Helpful Links (i.e., Kindergarten Tidbits, School Supply Lists, Family Handbook, etc.)

## Save-the-Date



### Save-the-Date

#### December

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

#### January

**Wednesday, January 1-Thursday, January 2:** No School | Winter Break

**Friday, January 3:** No School | Professional Learning

**Monday, January 6:** PTO Teacher Grant Applications Open

**Friday, January 10:** PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:30 AM

**Monday, January 13:** PTO Trivia Night Registration Opens

**Wednesday, January 15:** PTO Community Service

**Friday, January 17:** PTO Teacher Grant Applications Due

**Monday, January 20:** No School | Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**Friday, January 24:** Major Saver Campaign Kickoff

**Friday, January 24:** Skate Party at Skate City; 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

**Friday, January 31:** No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

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!

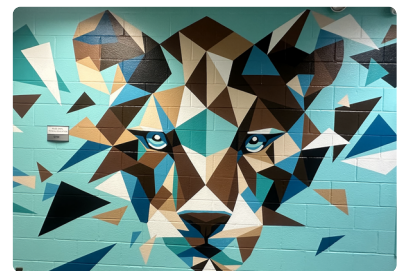
[otepto.org](http://otepto.org)

## Unity Squad Spotlight

### ☆☆ Unity Squad 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 uniting community members from different backgrounds and experiences is critical to accomplish the goals set.



During the last DEI Council meeting, we collected feedback to help understand what the school community envisioned through our collaborative efforts. Additionally, we shared a few ways to increase community engagement while considering a council name change to better express our

overall intent. There were several DEI Council name change suggestions provided. Of the suggestions, the name **Unity Squad** won the vote from the council.

The Unity Squad represents the staff, students, and families that unite to make OTE an inclusive place for all.

OTE Unity Squad

## Community Celebrations and Observances



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

Some December Celebrations & Observances:

- **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 well-being of people with disabilities.
- **Bodhi Day** - December 8 - commemorates the day that the historical Buddha experienced enlightenment. Some Buddhist families will practice meditation, study the Dharma, chant Buddhist texts (sutras), and share a traditional meal of tea and cake.
- **Christmas** - December 25 - a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Some Christian families will celebrate by attending church services and exchanging gifts.
- **Hanukkah** - evening of December 25 - evening of January 2 - an eight-day Jewish festival of lights. Some Jewish families will celebrate by lighting a Menorah and eating foods cooked in oil.
- **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 | December

## 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 \(otepto.org\)](http://Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Upcoming Events (otepto.org)).

## Personal Electronic Device Expectations at School

### Personal Electronic Device Expectations at School

With the holidays around the corner, we know personal electronic devices, like cell phones, may be on some wish lists. As a reminder, Blue Valley elementary schools are committed to keeping classrooms focused and distraction-free during the school day.

If students bring devices to school, they must remain silenced and stowed away in backpacks at all times. If your child needs to contact you, they can use a classroom or main office phone, and we ask families to call the main office if they need to reach their child.

Thank you for helping us create a positive, distraction-free environment where students can thrive.

## Structured Expectations

### Structured Expectations

As we get ready to launch another semester we appreciate your partnership. As you know, our staff has been hard at work this year implementing structured expectations for our school community along with how we teach and reinforce them in all settings. You may have seen our visuals or graphics during first semester. Click [here](#) to read a few points about why these are important to our school.

	Classroom	Recess	Cougar Café	Hallway & Restroom	Special Events	Digital Citizenship	
<b>Be Safe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not run or shove</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	
<b>Be Respectful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not use inappropriate language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate gestures</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate facial expressions</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate body language</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate eye contact</li> <li>• do not use inappropriate hand gestures</li> </ul>
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## 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](http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/canvas).

**Important dates for families:**

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

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

## 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



## Erica McDonald, Principal

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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

