

Cougar Connect

February 2, 2024



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A Note From Mrs. Anderson

Dear families,

It has been an exciting week for our OTE family. On Thursday, February 1st, at 9:35 a.m., Brix Hazen McDonald became the newest member of our OTE Cougar family. Brix weighed 7lbs. and 3 oz. at birth, and brought such joy to his family upon his arrival. Erica and Brix are both doing well, as is the rest of the McDonald family!

Mrs. Debbie Kelly joined the OTE family this week, as Mrs. Erica McDonald's substitute while she is out on maternity leave. Mrs. Kelly has spent the past couple of days visiting classrooms and getting to know our students and staff. We are grateful to have Mrs. Kelly as a part of our school community.

As we head into conference next week please see the updated information below. We look forward to sharing important information regarding your child's progress during this time.

Enjoy the beautiful weekend, families!

Sincerely,
Alicia Anderson
Assistant Principal



Save-the-Date

February

Friday, February 2: PTO Family Fun Night Glow Party 6:00-8:00 PM

Monday, February 5: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

Tuesday, February 6: Winter Conferences (4:00 PM-7:40 PM; first conference at 4:00 PM; last conference at 7:20 PM).

Wednesday, February 7: Winter Conferences (4:00 PM-7:40 PM; first conference at 4:00 PM; last conference at 7:20 PM).

Wednesday, February 7: PTO Community Service

Thursday, February 8: No School EC-8 | Winter Conferences (8:20 AM-3:00 PM; first conference at 8:20 AM; last conference at 2:40 PM).

Friday, February 9: No School | District-Wide Break

Wednesday, February 14: Valentine's Day Parties; 2:45 PM (setup); 3:00-3:25 PM (parties)

Friday, February 16: All Staff Meeting; 8:00 AM-8:20 AM

Friday, February 16: Birthday Book Lunch: January, February, and July Birthdays

Monday, February 19: No School | President's Day

Friday, February 23: Dental Screenings

Wednesday, February 28: PTO Restaurant Night | Papa Johns, All Day



PTO Events | January

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).



NOW OPEN – TRIVIA NIGHT REGISTRATION

Join us for the OTE PTO's first annual Trivia Night & Auction on April 6th. This will be one of the biggest fundraising events of the year, and its sure to be a fun one! Build your teams of 10 (adults only), which can include OTE and non-OTE friends, and grab a table. ***Our pre-registration was a success so only a limited number of tables remain.*** If you are pre-registered, you must submit payment to finalize your table reservation. Table prices will increase on February 3rd. Need more info? We've got you covered!

Click below to get all the details. [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Trivia Night \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org)

Glow Party – TONIGHT!!!

Our annual Glow Party is tonight from 6:00-8:00! This is kid-favorite event. Join us in the OTE gym to glow crazy! We'll have a DJ, glow sticks and all the fun. This event is FREE for all OTE families. A perfect way to get out of the cold and glow party with friends!



OTE Code Ninjas Event – Saturday, February 3rd

A fun PTO fundraising event is coming up! Sign your student up for TWO HOURS of engaging STEM activities at Code Ninjas. 50% of the registration fee will be donated back to the PTO to support OTE. This is available for 2nd through 5th graders. Students may be dropped off at Code Ninjas for the duration of this event. Feel free to invite your kids' friends too, simply use this [link](#) for more info and to register! Registration is required to attend this event.



▶ Below are the

Culture Week

From Feb 26th through March 1st, our school will be transformed in a travel around the world. Our library will showcase different cultures from different continents, our specials teachers will focus on music, art and sports from around the globe, and in the classroom we will discuss the different countries and cultures represented. Please see the attached flyer for more information about this event.



Chiefs Super Bowl Spirit Week

In honor of our Kansas City Chiefs making it to the Super Bowl, our Student Council has planned a Chiefs Super Bowl Spirit Week. Please see the attached graphic, which outlines how we plan to show our support and excitement for our home team, as they head to the Super Bowl.



Winter Conferences

Dear families,

The signups for Winter Conferences has closed. If you would like to schedule a conference, reach out directly to your child's teacher to schedule.

Please read the following details:

Dates:

- Tuesday, February 6 (in-person): 4:00 PM-7:40 PM
- **Wednesday, February 7 (virtual): 4:00 PM-7:40 PM**
 - **Wednesday virtual. You will receive a Zoom link from your teacher unless otherwise directed.**
- Thursday, February 8 (in-person) 8:20 AM-3:00 PM

Additionally, if you'd like to meet with a specials teacher (i.e., Spanish, Art, P.E., and Music), you may reach out directly to that individual teacher.

Reminders:

- Remember to write down the date and time of your scheduled conference.
- If you signed up for Wednesday, you are meeting on Zoom.
- If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher or the front office at OTE-oteos@bluevalleyk12.org or (913) 239-7000.

Input on Classroom Setting (Current Grades K-4)

Dear Families,

At Overland Trail Elementary, we are fully committed to students' academic success, personal growth, and general well-being. As such, we spend a great deal of time and energy ensuring that every child is placed in a classroom where they can thrive.

We begin focusing on classroom placement for the upcoming school year at this time of year. This process is extensive and multi-layered, including the perspectives of various staff members familiar with your child's personal and academic needs.

Though we do not allow requests for specific teachers, we offer families the chance to provide some optional input, if desired, regarding their student(s) as we make class lists. Please click [here](#) to provide input by March 29, 2024. After that date, input will not be accepted. Please note we will consider all input submitted by March 29, but fulfilling each family request is not always possible.

Rest assured that our team of educators considers each student's needs individually and as a member of the class group when making class lists, regardless of whether families provide their input.

Our common goal is to make the school experience the best for every child. Blue Valley is fortunate to have excellent teachers who put children first. We pledge to you that we will do all we can to make your child's education enjoyable, exciting, and productive.

Sincerely,
Erica McDonald
Principal

Alicia Anderson
Assistant Principal

BVEF Innovative Educator Award

Do you know an educator who goes above and beyond to inspire, engage, and innovate in the classroom? Now is your chance to recognize their outstanding contributions! Nominations are officially open for BVEF's annual Innovative Educator Award. This prestigious honor celebrates two classroom teachers (one elementary and one secondary) who creatively apply innovative teaching methods, foster critical thinking skills, and ignite a passion for learning in their students.



Each innovative educator will receive a \$1,250 grant for their classroom. Applications are due March 1st. Click [HERE](#) to learn more and nominate a deserving educator. Thank you!

Every Child Can Read Act

On July 1, 2023, the Every Child Can Read Act went into effect in Kansas. The intent of this legislation was to address literacy initiatives with a target of ensuring students reach grade level benchmarks by third grade. In Blue Valley, we prioritize partnership with families in continuation

with high quality, evidence-based instruction rooted in the science of reading. This has been and remains a large area of focus for professional learning.

Rather than limit conversations about reading progress to 3rd grade, it is our practice to do so at each grade level. KSDE has provided a summary of this Act which can be found [here](#). Our teachers look forward to talking with you about your child during Parent-Teacher conferences.

OTM Enrollment for 24-25 for Incoming 6th Graders

Current OTE and VPE 5th Grade Families,

You may find this hard to believe, but it is time to start thinking about middle school and 6th grade enrollment for the 2024-25 school year.

Let us officially welcome you to Overland Trail Middle School! Please mark your calendar to join us for our middle school enrollment presentation and information session on **Wednesday, January 31, 2024, from 6:00-7:00 PM in the OTMS commons**. This night is an opportunity for families to meet school administration and counselors, learn about 6th grade enrollment options, and ask questions about the middle school experience.

This information will also be made available via email for those unable to attend.

While students are welcome to attend this meeting, our target audience is parents. Our 5th graders will have the opportunity to hear this information when administrators and counselors visit the elementary schools on during the day on **Monday, January 29 (OTE)** and **Wednesday, January 31 (VPE)**. Students and families will also receive a Google Slides presentation which will allow them to learn a little about elective course options for next year. Enrollment forms will be due to your child's 5th grade teachers on Monday, February 12 following parent-teacher conferences.

We look forward to seeing you on January 31st! We are OTMS Proud!

Dr. Trent Stern & Nicole Orrick, OTMS Administrative Team

Starting Strong Middle School Edition-Parent Education & Information

This particular event is targeted for 5th and 6th grade parents and the program will feature Dr. Libby Milkovich from Children's Mercy Kansas City and Screen Sanity. The aim is to empower parents or new or soon-to-be middle schools with information related to healthy technology consumption in their family and how to support their child's online safety at this pivotal point. Please see the attached flyer for more information, and for instructions on how to register for this event.



In Blue Valley Schools, we're committed to mental health and wellness at every stage in school and life.

BV Well and BV School Counselors, Social Workers and Psychologists invite you to a complimentary session especially for **5th and 6th grade parents** of new or soon-to-be middle schoolers. The session will help you support your child's wellbeing by addressing:

- expected **social and cognitive milestones** for 11 to 14-year-olds and the importance of championing your child's **online safety** at an age when access to smartphones and social media often increases
- the **number one parent factor that fosters child wellbeing** and what you can do to build and sustain it
- **digital health and wellness** practices for your family

Featuring:

- **Dr. Libby Matile Milkovich, MD**, Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrician, Children's Mercy Kansas City
- **Annie Rusthoven** from **Screen Sanity**, a nonprofit whose family-education programs help parents consider the role technology plays in their lives and connect with their kids in meaningful ways
- **Panel Discussion** with Dr. Libby, Annie and additional experts

Registration opens February 1st - watch for details and your invitation by email.



Planning for Inclement Weather Days in Blue Valley

As the winter months continue, there is always the possibility of inclement weather. When extreme weather conditions exist, the district may cancel school or utilize a two-hour delayed start when temporary adverse weather conditions exist. When possible, inclement weather announcements

will be made the day before so staff and families can plan. More information about inclement weather (including 2-hour delayed starts) can be found on the district [website](#).

Securly HOME

Have you ever wondered how to monitor your child's usage on their Blue Valley device? We have parent tools that will allow you to receive notifications to ensure your child is using their device safely. School staff members monitor these devices during the school day and intervene, when necessary. However, parents can receive alerts if concerns arise when students use devices after school hours—including weekends and school breaks. Check out the [Securly Home](#) Parent Portal App here.

Kindest Kansas Citian

"Calling all OTE students! We are looking for the kindest person in Kansas City in the annual Kindest Kansas Citian contest! Any student K-12th grade can participate in the contest where they write (or draw a picture if they are K-2nd) about a kind adult over the age of 18 who lives in Kansas City. Entries are due to Mrs. Harsch by February 13th, or you can submit online by February 16th. Questions? Ask Mrs. Harsch at eharsch@bluevalleyk12.org. Find all the information [here](#). We can't wait to spread kindness with this fun contest!"

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

Some February Celebrations & Observances:

- **Black History Month** - created to celebrate the achievements, contributions, and rich cultural heritages of African Americans. Black History Month highlights the triumphs and adversities that have helped shape the United States.
- **World Hijab Day - February 1** - this day recognizes the millions of Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab. Inviting women of all identities to wear the hijab for one day, it promotes understanding of other cultures and personal freedoms of religious expression.
- **Lunar New Year - February 10** - celebrated by families of Chinese and other Asian heritages, some people celebrate with religious ceremonies honoring ancestors, giving and receiving red envelopes containing small amounts of money, lighting colorful lanterns, and eating traditional foods such as dumplings and sticky rice balls that symbolize family unity.
- **Ash Wednesday - February 14** - a Christian holiday signifying the first day of the Lenten season, the 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading to Easter. Some families will attend religious services and receive ashes in the shape of a cross on their forehead.
- **Magha Puja Day - February 24** - an important Buddhist festival celebrating the gathering between Buddha and his first disciples. Some families will attend temple, meditate, listen to teachings, perform giving alms, and hold candlelight processions.



Incoming Kindergarten Information

Dear families,

We are excited to start welcoming our kindergarten families for Fall 2024. Children who reside in Blue Valley Schools and turn five by August 31 can attend kindergarten that school year. If you live within the Overland Trail Elementary boundaries and will have an incoming kindergarten student

and text from Overland Trail Elementary. **Please be mindful that this form is not a completion of registration but an opportunity for us to open communication and begin preparing for official registration at the end of February.**

[Overland Trail Elementary Kindergarten Pre-registration Form](#)

More information will be shared with you at the end of February, including welcome videos, online registration instructions, and information about Kindergarten Round-Up in April. Please pass this message and link on to neighbors who might not have a student in our system and still need to receive our weekly emails.

Our team is ready to support you; please don't hesitate to call the office at (913) 239-7000 or email OTEOS@bluevalleyk12.org for questions.

Thank you,
Erica McDonald
Principal

Alicia Anderson
Assistant Principal

INCOMING KINDERGARTEN DATES
2024-2025

Kindergarten Online Registration Begins
February 20

Kindergarten Round-Up Sessions
April 12

Kindergarten Orientation Sessions
August 13

First full day of school for Kindergarten
August 14

Contact your neighborhood school for more information.

Our OTE community will be impacted by some neighborhood boundary changes. We will be welcoming some amazing, new families to our school this year. At the June 2023 Board of Education meeting, the board adopted boundary adjustments that address elementary school enrollment and building capacity issues. These will begin for the 2024-25 school year. The following neighborhoods are impacted:

- Autumn Park (Arcadia), Villages of Overland View and Executive Hills boundaries will be adjusted to attend Indian Valley Elementary. This adjustment will also include a change in feeder pattern to Oxford Middle and Blue Valley Northwest.
- Deer Creek boundaries will be adjusted to attend Overland Trail Elementary.
- Sandstone Creek, Savoy and Plaza Gardens boundaries would be adjusted to attend Harmony Elementary. This adjustment will also include a change in feeder pattern to Harmony Middle and Blue Valley Northwest.
- Villas of Carrington Square Area boundaries will be adjusted to attend Heartland Elementary
- Glen Abbey & Villas of Chapel Green, and Highland Villas and Highlands Creek boundaries will be adjusted to attend **Prairie Star Elementary**. This adjustment will also include a change in feeder pattern to Prairie Star Middle and Blue Valley High.

OTE Volunteer Agreement

In order to ensure the safety of our students and staff, the admin team, in collaboration with the office staff, has devised a volunteer agreement that all volunteers must acknowledge and sign in the front office prior to volunteering in the building. Effective immediately, this volunteer agreement must be completed annually by all volunteers.



School Volunteer Agreement (updated 12/31/23)
School Volunteer Agreement

Thank you for offering to volunteer at Overland Trail Elementary in the Blue Valley School District. We value having parents and caregivers in the building to support our students, staff, and school community.

The following agreement establishes an understanding of the role of a volunteer and ensures an understanding of the volunteering guidelines and school culture.

As a volunteer at Overland Trail Elementary, my initials below indicate that I understand and agree with the following:

- _____ 1. I must have my driver's license present at arrival to access the building.
- _____ 2. I will sign in at the office and acquire a volunteer sticker to wear visibly.
- _____ 3. I will report to my designated place of support and attend to my requested task.
- _____ 4. I will stay in my designated place of work and will not transition to places where my support is not requested.
- _____ 5. I understand volunteering is a complimentary service to Overland Trail Elementary.
- _____ 6. I will respect student confidentiality and not discuss my observations or experiences with other individuals.
- _____ 7. I understand that transporting or instructing students is not a volunteer's role.
- _____ 8. I will inform the school's administrators of any issue that may impact my service as a volunteer.
- _____ 9. I will adhere to the Blue Valley School District board policy **CIVILITY TOWARD STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES 6341** (see opposite page)
- _____ 10. Upon conclusion of my volunteering, I will sign out in the front office.

I understand this agreement and will follow the guidelines set forth:

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Volunteers need to fill out this agreement once per school year.*



Valentine's Day Celebrations

Dear families,

Please look forward to information from room parents regarding volunteers. Similar to the Winter 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.

Valentine's Day Celebration Date and Time:

- Wednesday, February 14, 2024
- 2:45 PM-3:25 PM (at 3:25 celebrations will wrap up and classes will prepare for dismissal)

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Erica McDonald
 Principal

Valentine's Day Celebration Donations

Dear families,

Students will be making their Valentine's boxes in Art with Mr. Van Leeuwen this year. If you would like to help out we would love to have some supplies donated.



Metallic/glitter markers

Fun heart stickers

Red/Pink/heart tissue paper

Anything heart related that could be used for a valentine box.

Kindergarten – Shoe Box

4th-5th – Shoe Box

Kale Van Leeuwen

Art Teacher

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.

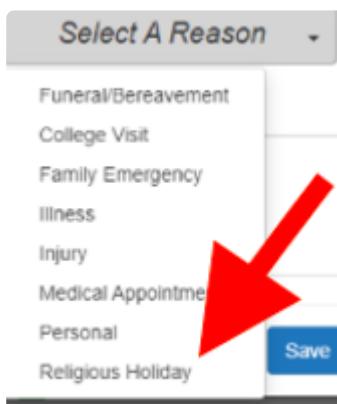
To learn more about Fastbridge, read [this Learning Connection story](#).

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.



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](#)

Erica McDonald, Principal

Email: ECMcDonald@bluevalleyk12.org

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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](#)

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Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters