

Cougar Connect

February 23, 2024



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A Note From Mrs. Anderson

Dear families,

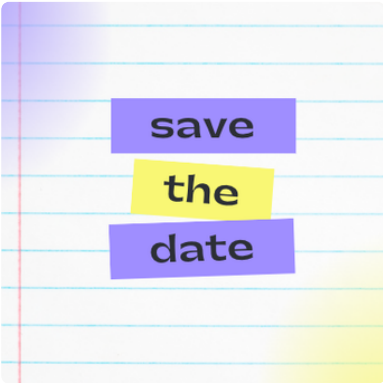
We are eagerly preparing for our upcoming Cultural Week, which will take place next week. Please see details below about the Cultural Spirit Week, in which we will celebrate and honor the different



cultures and countries represented at Overland Trail Elementary. The week will conclude with the Cultural Family Night event on Friday, March 1st.

Enjoy the beautiful weather this weekend, families.

Sincerely,
Alicia Anderson
Assistant Principal



Save-the-Date

February

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

March

Friday, March 1: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

Friday, March 1: Cultural Night 6:00-8:00 PM

Monday, March 4: BLT Meeting; 4:00 PM-5:00 PM

Tuesday, March 5: First Grade Music Program; Dress Rehearsal 2:30 PM; Performance 7:00 PM (OTMS)

Thursday, March 7: All Staff Meeting; 8:00 AM-8:20 AM

Friday, March 8: No School | End of Quarter 3

Monday, March 11-Friday, March 15: No School | Spring Break

Monday, March 18: No School | Professional Learning

Wednesday, March 20: PTO Restaurant Night | Panera, All Day

Friday, March 22: Cougar All-School Assembly



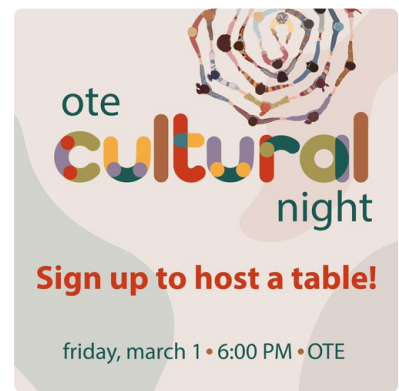
PTO Events | February

PTO Calendar of Events

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

OTE Cultural Night - Friday 2/1

OTE's Cultural Night is just around the corner. We're inviting all families to be part of this special night. Sign up to host a table representing your home country, region, or culture and showcase the richness of diversity within our school community. We encourage all OTE families to attend this free event to help make this cultural celebration a success! Sign up and read more details here: <https://www.otepto.org/cultural-night>



We need you! Get involved with the PTO.

The PTO is currently filling open Board and Committee positions for the 24/25 School Year. This is a great opportunity to feel more connected to OTE and to make an impact on our school. Click to review open positions and to sign up. [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - 2024-2025 Open PTO Board and Committee Positions \(otepto.org\)](#). Questions, e-mail info@otepto.org.



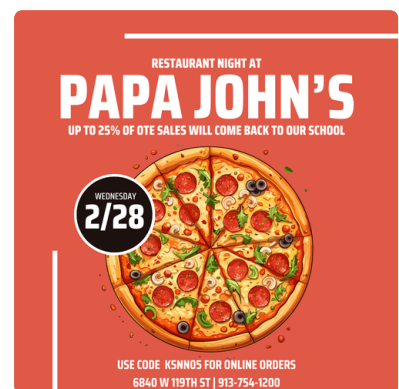
Trivia Night Coming Soon!

We are still accepting registrations for Trivia Night on April 6th. However, registration will close on Friday, 3/8. Be sure to get your Team or Individual Registration in ASAP. We are also still looking for help securing donations for the Auction. From tickets, to experiences, to memorabilia, to products, we'd love your help! Please contact Alyson Jones - alysonmoyes@gmail.com or Liz Levy - liz.c.levy@gmail.com to donate.

[Overland Trail Elementary PTO - 2024 Trivia Night \(otepto.org\)](#)

Restaurant Day : Papa Johns: Wednesday, February 28

Lunch or Dinner made easy. Call in an order to Papa Johns to support OTE. Use code **KSNN05** at checkout for sales to be counted towards this fundraiser. 6840 W. 119th location.



☆☆ DEI Spotlight

Cultural Week: February 26th through March 1st

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.



OTE Cultural Spirit Week

We will celebrate the different cultures and continents represented at Overland Trail Elementary with a Cultural Spirit week. You will find the graphic of the Cultural Spirit Week attached.



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!

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.

The flyer is titled "Starting Strong Middle School Edition" and is dated Thursday, February 29, 6-8PM at the Hilltop Conference Center. It features a photo of three young girls looking at a tablet. The flyer includes the following text: "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". It also lists the speakers: Dr. Libby Matile Milkovich, MD (Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Children's Mercy Kansas City) and Annie Ruethoven from Screen Sanity. A registration link is provided: "Registration opens February 1st - watch for details and your invitation by email." Logos for Screen Sanity, Advent Health, BV Well, and Blue Valley Educational Foundation are at the bottom.

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.

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 welcome your new kindergarten student for the 2024-25 school year. Please review/complete the steps below. Your timely registration will ensure our team is prepared. We will send more information about Kindergarten Round-Up in a future message.

Step 1: [Please watch this school welcome video.](#)

Step 2: **Do you have questions about kindergarten programs in Blue Valley? (Click on the blue links below)**

- What do kindergarten students experience during a [typical day](#)?
- What opportunities are provided within our partnership with Greenbush for [Virtual Education](#)?
- How can I learn about the [Chinese immersion](#) option?

Step 3: Is there another language spoken in your home?

If so, please complete this [form](#). Otherwise, move to step 4.

Step 4: How do I register my child?

 To view registration instructions in a language other than English, [click here](#).

To begin the registration process for the 2024-25 school year, simply go to www.bluevalleyk12.org/registration and click **New Student Registration** in the Useful Links. Families new to Blue Valley will be asked to create an online parent account. Online registration will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and it is an important step in getting your student started with kindergarten! You will be asked to pay fees later this spring.

Please note: If your child is currently enrolled in the Blue Valley early childhood program, you will not complete online registration at this time. Families transitioning from early childhood to kindergarten will have an opportunity to verify the information and complete the registration process later this spring.

To make Blue Valley's Online Registration process smooth and convenient, please have the following information available:

- Student proof of identity (birth certificate)
- Emergency contact name(s) and phone number(s)
- Doctor, dentist and preferred hospital contact info
- Immunization record and health assessment (physical)
- Proof of residency (purchase contract, lease or current utility bill)
- Custodial documentation (if applicable)
- Previous school records and contact info
- IEP or 504 Plan (if applicable)

Tip: As soon as your child's registration is complete, you will begin receiving all-school communication items that will help welcome you and your family into the school community. [This newsletter](#) includes important information regarding registration for the new school year, school supplies, and PickUp Patrol, our dismissal system used at OTE.

We recommend that you keep the link to this newsletter accessible, as it will be updated as we receive new information to share.

If you have any questions, please call the Overland Trail Elementary office at 913-239-7000.

Important Dates for Kindergarten Families

- Kindergarten Online Registration Begins | Tuesday, February 20
- Kindergarten Round-Up Sessions | Friday, April 12
- Kindergarten Orientation Sessions | Wednesday, August 13
- First full day of school for Kindergarten | Thursday, August 14

Thank you,
Erica McDonald
Principal

Alicia Anderson

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.

Boundary and Neighborhood Changes for OTE

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.



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 and 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 4341 (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: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

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.

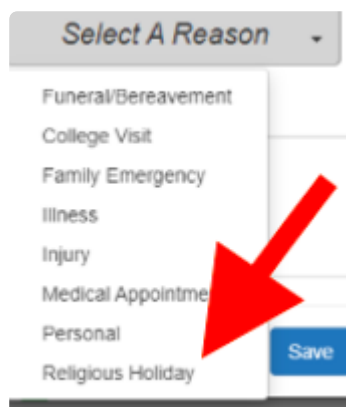
To learn more about Fastbridge, read [this Learning Connection story](#).

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

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](https://twitter.com/OTECougars)



Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters