

Cougar Connect

January 12, 2024



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A Note From Mrs. Anderson

Dear families,



While this has been an unexpectedly short week, it has been a productive one. Several classrooms completed their Fastbridge assessments, as the building maintained a flexible learning environment conducive to testing.

As a staff, we also celebrated Principal McDonald's birthday and her upcoming new arrival! A special **THANK YOU** to the PTO, for contributing and keeping her celebration a secret, as she was pleasantly surprised! 🎉🎂

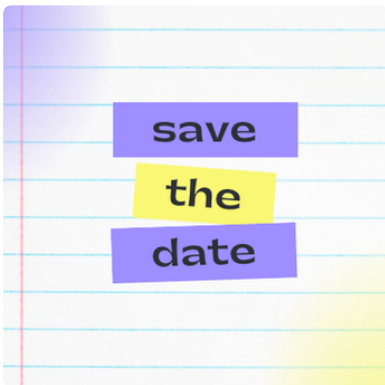
We look forward to our upcoming Cougar All School Assembly, in which our Student Council will perform, and there will be a focus

on RESPECT here at OTE.

Lastly, please refer to the email that Principal McDonald sent regarding Winter Conferences signups, which begin today.

Stay safe and warm this weekend, families!

Sincerely,
Alicia Anderson
Assistant Principal



Save-the-Date

January

Monday, January 15: No School | Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Tuesday, January 16: BLT Meeting; 4:00 PM-5:00 PM

Friday, January 19: All Staff Meeting; 8:00 AM-8:20 AM

Friday, January 19: Cougar All School Assembly; 9:00 AM

Friday, January 26: Skate Party at Skate City; 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

February

Friday, February 2: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

Friday, February 2: PTO Family Fun Night Glow Party 6:30-8:30 PM ***DATE CHANGE***

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

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



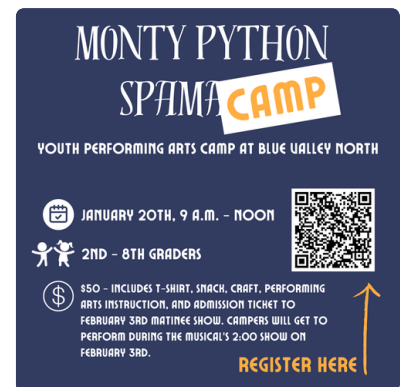
PTO Events | January

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).

BVN Youth Performing Arts Camp – Saturday, January 20th

BVN is putting on a Performing Arts Camp for 2nd-8th graders! Campers will get to join BVN in part of their matinee Musical production on February 3rd. Click the link below for more info and to register! [BVN Spamalot Camp \(google.com\)](https://www.google.com).



OTE Skate Party – Friday, January 26th

Grab your friends and head to Skate City from 5-7:00 p.m. on 1/26 for OTE Skate Night. Adults are free to attend (if you don't skate) and dinner specials will be available too. A portion of OTE sales will come back to the PTO to support our school. Hope to see you there!



Last Call: Get Pre-Registered for Trivia Night

The PTO is putting on OTE's first annual Trivia Night & Auction this spring. This will be one of the biggest fundraising events of the year, and its sure to be a fun one! Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 6th, 2024. ***This event is anticipated to sell out, so we are offering a pre-registration option starting NOW for Team and Individual registration.*** Pre-registering simply puts you first in line to secure a spot when registration opens in January. Need more info? We've got you covered! Click below to get all the

details and to lock in your pre-registration. [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Trivia Night](https://www.OverlandTrailElementaryPTO.org) ([otepto.org](https://www.otepto.org)).

★ DEI Spotlight

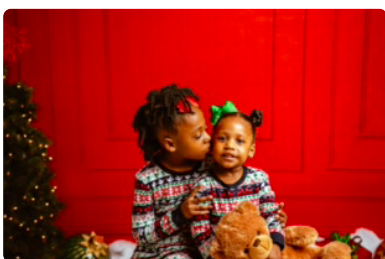
For December, various holidays are celebrated worldwide, and many are observed among our families here at Overland Trail Elementary. Seeing how the staff has planned to engage with students to embrace and honor our cultural differences is fun. We welcome families to share how they plan to celebrate this December-January with the team. If you would like to send pictures, food, artifacts, etc., we would love to allow students to share more about themselves.



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

Some January Celebrations & Observances:

- **National Poverty Awareness Month** - While the United States is considered the richest country in the world, 37.9 million people live in poverty, including 12.5 million children. National Poverty Awareness Month works to bring awareness to issues of poverty and increase access to resources and services. To help and or find support, visit Johnson County Outreach Services.
- **Maghi** - January 13 - a Sikh celebration. Some Sikh families will celebrate with a recitation of the holy Guru Granth Sahib and religious rituals in Gurdwaras - a Sikh place of assembly and worship meaning "Gateway to the Guru".
- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** - January 15 - a day that honors the life and legacy of the civil rights leader. Some families will participate in a day of service to their communities.
- **World Religion Day** - January 21 - established by the Bahá'í Faith community in 1950. Now observed by people around the world, it seeks to find common values shared by different faiths, encourage tolerance and dialogue, and foster cooperation among religious communities.
- **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** - January 27 - an annual day of commemorating the six million Jewish victims and millions of other victims of the Holocaust and Nazism.



A Note from Mrs. McDonald, Principal

Overland Trail Elementary families,

If you have seen me recently, you know I am expecting a baby soon! The McDonald family is excited to add our third child later this month. Therefore, I will begin my maternity leave in the next few weeks. Mrs. Debbie Kelly and Dr. Cathy Austin will step into my principal role during my absence. This placement will be a shared leadership role coupled with daily support from our Assistant Principal, Mrs. Alicia Anderson. Mrs. Kelly and Dr. Austin are seasoned Blue Valley administrators who served as long-time principals in the district and have a combined 80 years in education. We are excited for Mrs. Kelly and Dr. Austin to join us, with an anticipated start date of February 1.

Thank you for welcoming both leaders to the OTE family!

Erica McDonald

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 next fall, please complete the form below to begin receiving communication directly through email 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.



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.

Winter Conferences

Dear families,

Next week, you will receive an email inviting you to sign up for a winter conference. You can sign

with specials (i.e., Art, Music, Spanish, and P.E.), too.

Please be mindful of the following:

Tuesday, February 6: In-person

Wednesday, February 7: Virtual

Thursday, February 8: In-person

Please look forward to more information next week, families.

Erica McDonald

Fostering A Safe School Environment

Blue Valley Schools is committed to promoting and fostering a safe environment in and around all of our schools. Through the convergence of physical and intellectual security measures, we are continuously working to prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from a wide range of emergencies. Please check out [available ways to report safety concerns](#).

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



Games on District Devices

In an effort to reduce distractions in the learning environment for all of our students, beginning on January 4, 2024, all students will have general gaming websites blocked on district devices (examples include: Fortnite, crazygames.com, recreational games, arcade-like games, etc.). Educational games will still be allowed.

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](#).



End-of-Quarter Information

End of Quarter Information - Viewing Canvas Courses and Second Quarter Grades

At the end of each quarter, courses in Canvas will conclude and will no longer be visible on the Canvas app and website. Courses for this year's second quarter will conclude on December 20th.

Report cards will be generated and families will be able to view second-quarter grades on ParentVUE at the end of the day on January 12th.

How do I view my child's report card?

- Log in on [ParentVue](#)
- Select your elementary student's name

- In the left navigation bar, choose REPORT CARD

If you have questions about Standards Based Grading as you view your child's report card, please review the information found on the [Elementary Report Card resource page](#).

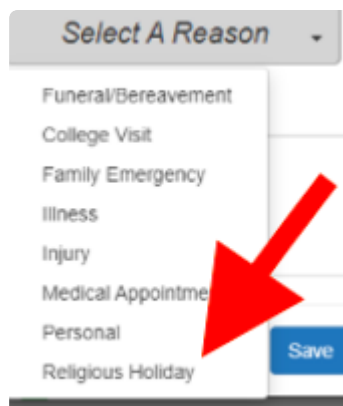
Each new quarter, classroom teachers will publish their next quarter's Canvas course. As courses are published, students and families will again be able to see current courses on the Canvas app and Canvas website. For Canvas parent resources, visit www.bluevalleyk12.org/canvas.

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.



Select A Reason

- Funeral/Bereavement
- College Visit
- Family Emergency
- Illness
- Injury
- Medical Appointment
- Personal
- Religious Holiday

Save

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