

# Cougar Connect

March 1, 2024



## Newsletter Table of Contents

### Recurring News:

- A Note From Mrs. Anderson, Assistant Principal
- FYI and Save-the-Date
- Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) News
- ✨DEI Spotlight

### Recent News:

- Viewing Canvas Courses and 3rd Quarter Grades
- Calendar Adjustment: Students In School on April 1
- Growth and Development Information
- Blue Valley Summer Explorations
- Clothing Drive for Project Grad

### Repeat News:

- Input on Classroom Setting (Current Grades K-4)
- BVEF Innovative Educator Award
- Community Celebrations and Observances
- Incoming Kindergarten Information
- Boundary and Neighborhood Changes for OTE
- OTE Volunteer Agreement
- New Assessment Tool Replaces Longtime MAP Tests
- Out of the Country Information
- Reporting Religious Absences
- Important Travel Outside of the USA
- Nut-Safer Guidelines
- Helpful Links (i.e., School Supply Lists, Family Handbook, etc.)

## A Note From Mrs. Anderson

Dear families,



It is hard to believe that Spring Break is only a few days away! This past week has been full of optimal learning experiences for our students, along with celebrating the cultures and countries represented here at OTE. As we wrap up the third quarter of learning, please pay close attention to the third quarter grading information posted below.

Have an amazing weekend, families!

Sincerely,  
Alicia Anderson  
Assistant Principal



## Save-the-Date

### March

**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

### April

**Friday, April 5:** PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

**Monday, April 8:** BLT Meeting; 4:00 PM-5:00 PM

**Thursday, April 11:** All Staff Meeting; 8:00 AM-8:20 AM

**Friday, April 12:** No Kindergarten Classes | Kindergarten Round-Up

**Friday, April 12:** Skate Party at Skate City; 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

**Monday, April 15:** PTO Restaurant Night | Goodcents, 3:00 PM-8:00 PM

**Friday, April 19:** No School | Professional Learning

**Monday, April 22:** PTO Community Service (Earth Day)

**Thursday, April 25:** Fifth Grade Music Program; Dress Rehearsal 2:30 PM; Performance 7:00 PM (OTMS)

**Friday, April 26:** Birthday Book Lunch: March, April and May Birthdays

**Tuesday, April 30:** Scholastic Book Fair



# PTO Events | March

## 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).

## 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 \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org). Questions, e-mail [info@otepto.org](mailto:info@otepto.org).

2024/25  
Open PTO  
Positions



## Trivia Night – Only 4 Tables Left

We are still accepting registrations for Trivia Night on April 6th. **However, there are only 4 tables left.** 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](mailto:alysonmoyes@gmail.com) or Liz Levy - [liz.c.levy@gmail.com](mailto:liz.c.levy@gmail.com) to donate.

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

## Screen Sanity Parent Night – March 25th

Navigating digital health for our children can be challenging. Screen Sanity, a local organization, has created a great platform to bring parents together to take a proactive approach to the topic of Digital Health for our kids. The OTE, OTMS and VPE PTO's have partnered together to put on this Parent Night event. Join us for conversation and takeaway tips and tools around Screen Sanity's STARTing Point steps. This event is for OTE, OTMS and VPE parents with kids of any age – whether they currently have a cellphone yet or not. [REGISTER HERE.](#)



## ☆☆ DEI Spotlight

### OTE Cultural Night – TONIGHT – 6-8:00 p.m.

OTE's Cultural Night is TONIGHT. We're inviting all OTE families to be part of this special night. Come by at your leisure to enjoy as our students and their families share their experiences. With Cultural Night passports in hand, embark on a journey around the globe exploring different countries or cultures. The evening will include an open podium with diverse performances and workshops. **This is a free, family event for all to enjoy. However, all students must be accompanied by an adult.**





**\*Please be mindful that there is an event occurring at Overland Trail Middle School this evening as well. We ask for your patience and understanding upon arrival and departure from the Cultural Night event.**

## **Viewing Canvas Courses and 3rd Quarter Grades**

End of Quarter Information: Viewing Canvas Courses and Third 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 third quarter will conclude on March 7th at 11:59pm. Report cards will be generated and families will be able to view third quarter grades on ParentVUE at the end of the day on March 29th.

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 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).

## **Calendar Adjustment: Students In School on April 1**

We wanted to remind you to mark your calendars as school will be in session on April 1st instead of the previously scheduled professional development day in order to meet the state attendance requirements. This adjustment was made in response to the Chiefs Super Bowl Parade Day. We understand that this change may impact your plans, and we apologize for any inconvenience it may cause. If your child will not be present on this day, please use our typical absence reporting protocols to report the absence.

## **Growth and Development Information**

Dear 4th and 5th grade families:

The growth seen during the elementary years can be an exciting time in health education. The Blue Valley Health Curriculum was written by a committee of Blue Valley teachers, nurses, and counselors to educate our students about health-related issues. The curriculum was reviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction Committee (which includes parents, board of education members and faculty members) prior to being approved by the Blue Valley Board of Education. It is based on the National and Kansas Health standards. The purpose of the curriculum is to develop positive attitudes toward health and wellness among our students. The curriculum learning standards can be found at Blue Valley Website (<http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/>) and select Academics – Elementary School – Curriculum - Health.

The content taught in 4th and 5th grade focuses on the topic of human growth and development. These topics are introduced at age-appropriate levels of understanding. The identification of male and female reproductive parts and functions are part of the intermediate curriculum in grades 4 and

5. This content will be presented separately. During instruction students are always encouraged to talk with their families about concepts learned in health.

The Growth and Development curriculum will be taught on **March 7th, 2024**. You are welcome to contact Nurse Jenn ([JAArnoldColeman@bluevalleyk12.org](mailto:JAArnoldColeman@bluevalleyk12.org)) to review the district approved instructional materials. If for any reason you choose to have your student *not* receive the information in class, please contact Nurse Jenn to opt-out. Thank you for your continued support.

## Blue Valley Summer Explorations enrollment opens March 18

Is your child looking to do a little exploration this summer? What about breaking out of summer boredom? Is your child a poet and they don't know it yet? Don't miss out on Blue Valley's Summer Explorations program, which features a variety of one-week, hands-on experiences that put fun at the forefront of learning. From Cardboard Constructions and Football Talk to Junior Chef Adventures, there is something for everyone. Enrollment opens 8 a.m. March 18 and closes 4 p.m. April 3. All summer programs will be held in person unless otherwise noted. Additional information about the Summer Explorations program, including a course catalog, can be found online at [www.bluevalleyk12.org/summerprograms](http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/summerprograms).



## Clothing Drive for Project Grad

Looking for an opportunity to do some closet spring cleaning? Donate your used clothes, shoes and more to support Project Grad. For those unfamiliar with PG, it is a long-standing community sponsored tradition at BVN and provides a safe, alcohol-free, drug-free environment following Commencement for the entire Senior class. See the attached graphic for more information.



## 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!

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

Some March Celebrations & Observances:

- Women's History Month - recognizes the achievements and contributions of women to society, culture, and American history. Women's History Month coincides with International Women's Day on March 8.
- World Teen Mental Wellness Day - March 2 - aims to raise awareness and decrease the stigma of mental health issues among teenagers.
- Ramadan - evening of March 10-April 9 - the holy month of fasting for the Islamic faith. For some Muslim families, it is a time for introspection, communal prayer, reading the Qur'an, and fasting between sunrise and sunset.
- Holy Week and Easter Sunday - March 24-March 31 - includes the Christian holidays of Palm Sunday, Maundy (Holy) Thursday, and Good Friday. Some families will attend church services to commemorate the week leading to the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.





- Holi - March 25 - known as the Hindu festival of colors, Holi honors the triumph of good over evil and marks the beginning of Spring. Some families will light bonfires, throw colorful powder called gulal, eat sweets, and dance to traditional music.

## 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](http://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  
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.**

**BLUE VALLEY**  
SCHOOLS  
Education Beyond Expectations



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 FORWARD 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.*

## 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.

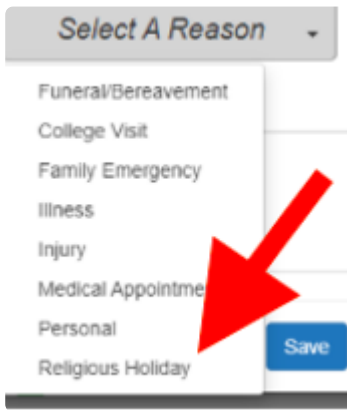
To learn more about Fastbridge, read [this Learning Connection story](#).

## 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](mailto:ECMcDonald@bluevalleyk12.org)

Website: [www.bluevalleyk12.org/OTE](http://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](mailto:ARAnderson@bluevalleyk12.org)

Website: [www.bluevalleyk12.org/OTE](http://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](http://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



