

Cougar Connect

November 1, 2024

A Note From Mrs. McDonald



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Dear Families,

Thank you, parents, caregivers, and PTO, for contributing to this past week's Halloween Celebration. Seeing students smiling, laughing, and making memories on such a fun occasion fills my heart with joy.

I hope this weekend gives you the recharge needed for a whole week of school. We look forward to seeing students on Monday.

Kindly,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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

Recent News:

- Welcome to Overland Trail Elementary | Vishnupriya Venkatesh
- Attendance Matters: Absences Affect the Whole Class
- Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day | November 14, 2024: **Updated Information**

Repeat News:

- Hearing & Vision Screening | Volunteers Needed
- Cougar Specials Newsletter | Quarter 1
- Teacher Collaboration Days
- Nut-Safer Guidelines
- Helpful Links (i.e., Kindergarten Tidbits, School Supply Lists, Family Handbook, etc.)

Save-the-Date



Save-the-Date

November

Tuesday, November 5: Picture Retake Day

Friday, November 8: Veteran's Day Assembly; 9:15 AM | Breakfast 10:00 AM

Monday, November 11: Support-A-Cougar Holiday Drive Begins

Wednesday, November 13: PTO Community Service

Thursday, November 14: Fourth Grade Field Trip | BV Wilderness Science Center

Thursday, November 14: Third Grade Music Program; Dress Rehearsal 2:30 PM; Performance 6:00 PM (OTMS)

Friday, November 15: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00-10:30 AM

Friday, November 15: Fourth Grade Field Trip | BV Wilderness Science Center

Friday, November 15: PTO Bingo for Books

Monday, November 18: Hearing and Vision Screening

Monday, November 18-Friday, November 22: American Education Week

Monday, November 25-Friday, November 29: Thanksgiving Break

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

DEI Spotlight

☆☆ DEI Spotlight ☆☆

"Ruby Bridges has always been civil rights advocate, with her experience as the first Black child to enter an all-white school in the south making her a household name. Though her experience in school was harrowing due to blatant racism and the targeting of her family, Bridges never once missed a day.

Through the Ruby Bridges Foundation, speaking engagements, and writing children's books, Bridges continues to strive for an end to racism. Please join OTE in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. You can read the additional details about this honorable event below."

Source: [National Women's History Museum](http://NationalWomen'sHistoryMuseum)

Are you interested in joining OTE's DEI Council? If so, please submit your contact information here: [DEI Council | Family Interest](#).



Community Celebrations and Observances



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

Some November Celebrations & Observances:

- **Native American Heritage Month** - celebrates the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, histories, and ongoing contributions of Indigenous peoples.
- **Military Family Appreciation Month** - honors the military family by recognizing their sacrifices and commitments.
- **Day of the Dead** - November 1 - celebrated by some with Mexican heritage, a joyful time to remember and honor deceased loved ones.
- **All Saints Day** - November 1 - celebrated by some of the Christian faith, this solemn, holy day honors the saints of the church.
- **Diwali** - November 12-16 - the festival of lights celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and the human ability to overcome observed by some Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and others. Some will decorate their homes with lights and rangoli art, exchange gifts, dress in colorful clothing, feast with family, and/or go to temple.

OTE | PTO



PTO Events | November

Veteran's Day Assembly

Calling all Veterans!

Veterans Day Assembly: We are honored to invite all veterans and their families to join us for our annual OTE **Veterans Day Assembly on Friday, November 8th at 9:15 am**. Coffee and pastries will be served in the library starting at 10:00 am for our veterans and their families to enjoy following the assembly. RSVP at



otepto.org/veterans by November 1st to ensure we can prepare a special welcome for you!

Veterans Honor Wall: Do you have a veteran in your life you'd like to recognize? We are creating a Wall of Honor in the halls of OTE and would love to feature them! Please submit their information and photo at otepto.org/veterans.

We can't wait to celebrate and honor the bravery and service of our veterans!

The Eras Carnival T-shirt: Now in Adult Sizes!

You asked, we listened! For a limited time, the exclusive Overland Trail **The Eras Carnival T-shirt** is now available for purchase in *adult* sizes, along with remaining youth sizes. This is your last chance to get one—we will only print one additional run!

Don't miss out on this unique piece of school spirit. **Order by November 1st** to secure yours!

[Order your T-shirt today!](#)



BINGO for Books | Friday, November 15

Join us for an evening of fun, BINGO, and book prizes at this **FREE** family event on Friday, November 15. Keep an eye out for more information as we get closer to the date.

We hope to see you there!



Holiday SUPPORT A COUGAR

Our holiday Support-A-Cougar drive is back! The Support-A-Cougar program partners with OTE administration to support students in need throughout the year. Our annual holiday drive allows us to provide OTE families with gift cards, new games and books during the holiday season. We need your help to make this possible!

WAYS TO DONATE 11/18- 12/6

*Bring new games and books to school and place in the collection bins

*Donate through the PTO Site via the QR code
Log-In and select your donation level

*Send cash or check in an envelope marked "Support-a-Cougar" and have your student give to their teacher

The Support-a-Cougar Committee will work with our school counselor and social worker to purchase gift cards and distribute the donations to families in our OTE community. If you are an OTE family in need of support for the holidays, please contact the OTE Social Worker, Lacey Koester - lkoester@bluevalleyk12.org



DEADLINE TO DONATE
12/6/24



QUESTIONS? SUPPORT-A-COUGAR CHAIRS:

Tara Adams - tara.adams6@gmail.com

Sarah Cullor - sarah@cullor.com

New Spirit Wear Line Now Available!

We're excited to announce the launch of our brand-new Spirit Wear line, and trust us—you're going to love it! With multiple designs, products, and price points to choose from, you can show off your school pride in style! Best of all, the store is 100% online and open 24/7, so you can browse and shop whenever it's convenient for you. Orders will ship directly to your house. Visit the store, grab your gear, and get ready to rock that school spirit from head to toe. Happy shopping!

[Spirit Wear Online Store](#)



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 \(otepto.org\)](https://www.otepto.org).

Welcome to Overland Trail Elementary

Welcome to OVERLAND TRAIL ELEMENTARY!

WELCOME TO

Overland Trail Elementary

DREAM
BELIEVE
ACHIEVE

Vishnupriya Venkatesh

SCHOOLING: DEGREE IN ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING

NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING IN SCHOOLS: 1ST YEAR AS A LUNCHROOM AIDE IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

YOUR ROLE AT OTE: LUNCHROOM AIDE

FUN FACT ABOUT ME: I AM A VERY CALM AND COOL PERSON



Attendance Matters: Absences Affect the Whole Class

Attendance Matters: Absences Affect the Whole Class

Did you know that your child's absence affects more than just their own learning? When students miss school, it can cause disruptions for the entire class. Teachers often have to adjust their plans to help absent students catch up, which can slow down the pace of learning for everyone. Group projects, hands-on activities and class discussions are all harder to manage when students are missing. All students play a vital role in the classroom. By making attendance a priority, you're supporting your child's growth, ensuring the class can learn together.

Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day | November 14, 2024



Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day November 14th

Join us on Nov. 14, as students across the country will participate in Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day, an annual, commemorative event that honors the courage of Ruby Bridges, who made history by becoming the first Black student to integrate an all-white elementary school in New Orleans in 1960.

Students across the country now walk to school on this day to commemorate her bravery and continue the important conversation about equality and inclusion. We invite our Overland Trail families to walk to school on November 14th to participate in this nationwide event! Upon arrival join us for the events below:

OTE Activities to celebrate the day:

- 8:10 Gather at the picnic tables on the playground
 - Sidewalk chalk & bubbles will be available
 - Create a group banner!
- 8:20 Begin to "walk" to school as a group.

Parents sign up here to help!



Hearing & Vision Screening | Volunteers Needed

Parents and Caregivers,

We need volunteers to help support students' hearing and vision screenings on November 18, 2024. Please click the link below if you are interested in supporting this essential day.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4FAFA62CA6FDCF8-52719789-hearing>

Jenn Arnold-Coleman
Nurse

Cougar Specials Newsletter | Quarter 1

Cougar Specials Newsletter

Cougar Specials Newsletter

Quarter 1 (2024-2025)

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 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**



Nut Safer List 24-25

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](#)



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Alicia Anderson, Assistant Principal



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Phone: (913) 239-7000

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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