

Cougar Connect

November 15, 2024

A Note From Mrs. McDonald



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Dear Families,

What a fantastic turnout for Thursday's National Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day! Thank you to Mrs. Mason, the OTE PTO, the OTE DEI Council, and all volunteers who planned, organized, and facilitated the special activities. We would also like to thank all the parents and caregivers who joined the staff and students as they united to commemorate this special day.

Our Hearing and Vision screening will take place this coming Monday. If your child wears glasses, please ensure they wear them for the Monday screening.

Kindly,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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- Civility Policy
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Save-the-Date



Save-the-Date

November

Monday, November 18: Hearing and Vision Screening

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

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

December

Thursday, December 5: Support-A-Cougar Donations Due

Thursday, December 5: Choir Concert; 6:00-7:00 PM

Friday, December 6: No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

Friday, December 6: PTO Holiday Lunch

Wednesday, December 18: DEI Council Meeting; 4:00-5:00 PM

Friday, December 20: Jingle Bell Assembly; 10:15 AM | Half Day Dismissal; 11:45 AM | End of Quarter 2 | End of First Semester

Monday, December 23-Tuesday, December 31: No School | Winter 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 Walk to School Day

Thank you for joining us in this week's honoring of Ruby Bridges. The walk was fun, memorable, and impactful. As a school community, we united and took actionable steps to recognize Ruby Bridges and the profound impact she has made to help create the Overland Trail Elementary community we celebrate.

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



WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

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.



PTO Events | November

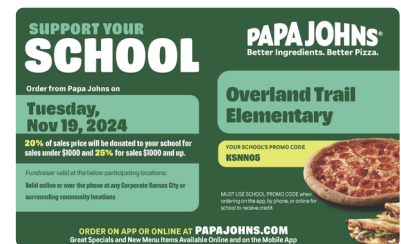
Hearing and Vision Screening | Monday, November 18

Nurse Jenn is looking for volunteers to help support students' hearing and vision screenings **in the afternoon of Monday, November 18th**. Please click the link below if you are interested in supporting this essential day.

[HEARING AND VISION SCREENING VOLUNTEER SIGN UP](#)

Papa Johns Restaurant Night | Tuesday, November 19

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, November 19, 2024! Order from Papa John's and support Overland Trail Elementary with every delicious slice. Use our school's promo code **KSNN05** when ordering online, on the app, or by phone, and a portion of the sales will be donated to our school.



This fundraiser is valid at any corporate Papa John's location in Kansas City and surrounding community locations. Enjoy a night off from cooking while giving back to our school community!

Celebrate Our Amazing Teachers & Staff During American Education Week!

This American Education Week, join us in showing our appreciation for the dedicated teachers and staff who go above and beyond for our students every day. We're hosting a special Staff Appreciation BBQ on **November 22**, and we'd love your support! The PTO will provide smoked meat and beans, but we need your help to complete the meal with sides, desserts, and drinks.



Here's how you can contribute:

- **Sign Up to Bring Food:** Whether homemade or store-bought, your dish will help us serve up a fantastic meal that celebrates our hardworking educators. [SIGN UP FORM.](#)
- **Make a Donation:** If you're unable to provide food, a financial donation is a wonderful way to contribute. Every dollar goes toward making this event an unforgettable experience for our teachers and staff. [DONATE.](#)

Your support, big or small, makes a difference. Let's show our gratitude and make American Education Week extra special for those who enrich our school community!

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

Support a Cougar Holiday Drive – Spread Joy This Season!

Support a Cougar is a PTO-led program that helps OTE Cougars in need throughout the year, and our annual Holiday Drive is a special way to make the season brighter for families in our community. Through your generosity, we provide gifts and financial support during the holidays with donations of Target gift cards, new books, and games.



Here's how you can help:

- **Financial Contributions** – Choose a donation level and submit your payment directly on our website. [Donate by clicking here.](#)
- **New Books and Games** – Drop off your donations in the collection bins at OTE starting November 18th.

Donation deadline is December 6th. Thank you for helping us make the holidays a little brighter for our OTE community.

If you are an OTE family in need of support this holiday season, please reach out to the OTE Social Worker, Lacey Koester - lkoester@bluevalleyk12.org

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://otepto.org).

Attendance Matters: Learning is More Than Just Worksheets

Attendance Matters: Learning is More Than Just Worksheets

When children miss school, it's not just about catching up on homework or getting missed assignments. The classroom experience offers far more than what can be sent home. In-class learning involves hands-on activities, group projects, interactive lessons and discussions that help students engage in learning.

For young learners, these experiences are irreplaceable. Being part of the class helps your child develop social skills, teamwork and problem-solving abilities. Teachers craft lessons that involve direct participation, and when a student is absent, they miss out on these critical elements.

Every day of school provides opportunities for your child to grow, connect and learn. Ensuring they are present as much as possible gives them the best chance to succeed.

BV Unmuted Podcast Episode: Why Attendance Matters

BV Unmuted Podcast Episode: Why Attendance Matters

In the latest Blue Valley Schools' BV Unmuted podcast episode, Superintendent Dr. Tonya Merrigan is joined by Leah Vomhof (Blue Valley Northwest principal), Stacey Sperry (Prairie Star Elementary principal) and Dr. Cory Cox (Blue Valley North assistant principal) to discuss the importance of school attendance.

To listen to the podcast episode, visit <https://tinyurl.com/AttendanceBV>.



Civility Policy

Civility Policy

We are thankful for the ongoing partnership and support we experience in our school community. Working together we ensure the best possible student experience allowing them to realize personal success. There are times, however, when issues arise which require our continued collaboration to resolve. Families may utilize the matrix linked on [the district website](#) to best address questions and concerns that may arise throughout the course of a school year. Finally, all staff and visitors should conduct their business free from intimidation, harassment, or bullying. The district's Board of Education states expectations regarding civility within [Policy 6341](#). Again, thank you for your partnership in helping to maintain a safe school community environment for all.

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 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.



Nut Safer List 24-25

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](#)



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](#)



Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters