

# Cougar Connect

April 11, 2025

## A Note From Mrs. McDonald



### A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Good afternoon,

This morning, our staff gathered for teacher-professional collaboration time. I want to share some details about how our staff spent the day.

We welcomed our incoming kindergartners and their families during Kindergarten Kick-off. Our staff met in their professional learning communities to plan for the remainder of this school year. In addition, our staff contributed to meaningful conversations that will positively impact the 2025-26 school year.

Thank you to our PTO for the beautiful yards signs provided to our incoming kindergarten families. Thank you, families, for your continued support and partnership. These days are a significant benefit for our elementary staff that will, in turn, support our students' academic success.

Have a great weekend, families!

Best,  
Erica McDonald  
Principal

## Newsletter Table of Contents

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#### Recurring News:

- Save-the-Date
- ✨Unity Squad Spotlight ✨



- Community Celebrations and Observances
- Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) News

#### Recent News:

- OTE Family Literacy Night | April 29th
- Attendance Matters: Absences Affect the Whole Class
- Become a BVEF Parent Member and Support our Schools!
- BVW Mathletics

#### Repeat News:

- Partnering for a Safe School Community
- Instagram | Find Out What's Happening in Music 🎵
- Kindergarten Registration | 2025 - 2026
- BVEF Champion for Students Award
- Teacher Collaboration Days
- Nut-Safer Guidelines
- Helpful Links (i.e., School Supply Lists, Family Handbook, etc.)

## Save-the-Date



### Save-the-Date

#### April

**Friday, April 11:** Skate Party at Skate City; 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

**Wednesday, April 16:** Unity Squad Meeting; 4:00-5:00 PM

**Friday, April 18:** All Staff Meeting; 8:10 AM-8:25 AM

**Monday, April 21-** Friday, April 25: Cultural Week

**Friday, April 25:** Cultural Night; 6:00-8:00 PM

**Thursday, April 22:** Fifth Grade Music Program; 6:30 PM

**Tuesday, April 29-** Family Literacy Night; 5:30-7:30 PM

**Tuesday, April 29-Wednesday, April 30;** Scholastic Book Fair

## ✨ Unity Squad Spotlight ✨



### Cultural Night Rescheduled to Friday, April 25

Our original date of Friday, March 7, coincides with Ramadan—a significant and sacred time for many families in our community. To honor this important observance and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to fully participate in our festivities, Cultural Night will now be held on **Friday, April 25**.

We appreciate your understanding and support as we strive to create an event that reflects our community's values of respect, inclusion, and celebration of diversity. Please update your calendars accordingly, and see the PTO information below to sign up to host a table or perform!

# Community Celebrations and Observances



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

Some April Celebrations & Observances:

- **National Arab American Heritage Month** -recognizes the achievements and contributions of Arab Americans to society, culture, and American history.
- **Deaf History Month** - celebrates the history, culture, and accomplishments of deaf and hard of hearing individuals.
- **Day of Silence** - April 11 - a national, student-led demonstration where LGBTQ+ students and allies take a vow of silence to protest the silencing and discrimination of LGBTQ+ people in schools.
- **Passover** - evening of April 12-20 - a Jewish holiday commemorating the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt. Some families will observe the holiday with a special meal, called a Seder, eating foods of symbolic significance and reciting traditional prayers.
- **Holy Week and Easter Sunday** - April 13-20 - includes the Christian holidays of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. Some families will attend church services to commemorate the week leading to the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.

OTE | PTO



PTO Events | March/April

## Order Your Child's Yearbook Today!

Ensure your child has a keepsake of their school memories by ordering their yearbook. Many parents have already ordered through ParentVUE during school registration. To check if you've already ordered, follow these steps:

1. Login to ParentVUE.
2. Go to your child's profile.
3. Click on Fee in the navigation bar.
4. Scroll down to "Paid Fees."
5. Look for "PTO Yearbook 24-25 OTE" for \$20.
6. Repeat for each child.

If you see the yearbook fee listed, you're all set! If not, you can still order through the PTO website until April 18.

Order Yearbooks: [www.otepto.org/yearbook](http://www.otepto.org/yearbook)

## Help Make Our Yearbook Unforgettable!

We need your help capturing all the special moments from this school year! 📷 If you've taken photos at school events, sports games, classroom activities, or any extracurriculars, we'd love to include them in the yearbook.

Upload your pictures today and help us showcase the amazing memories our students have made!

Upload Pictures: <https://dropevent.com/OTE>

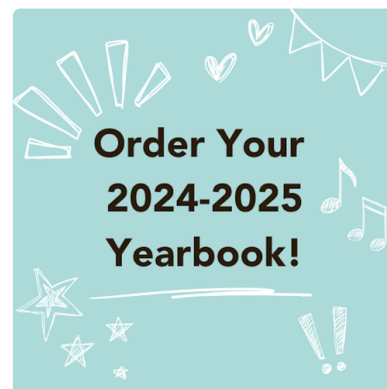
## Pajama Theme Skate Party | Friday, April 11

Come join your friends for a Pajama Party from 5-7pm at Skate City on Friday, April 11! Admission is \$7, skate rentals are \$2, and there is a large pizza special for \$11.

## Cultural Night Rescheduled to Friday, April 25

Join us for OTE Cultural Night on Friday, April 25, and celebrate the rich diversity of our community! This family-friendly event will be an evening filled with music, dance, art, and traditions from around the world. Stroll through colorful cultural displays, savor delicious foods, and enjoy captivating performances that bring global cultures to life. OTE students will even get their own "passport" to explore the event, collecting stamps and learning something new at each table for a chance to win a prize. Don't miss this unforgettable celebration of culture, connection, and community—it's going to be an amazing night!

Cultural Night Information and Sign Up: <https://www.otepto.org/cultural-night>



## 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).

## OTE Family Literacy Night | April 29th

### OTE FAMILY LITERACY NIGHT

**When:**  
Tuesday, April 29th  
5:30-7:30

**Where:**  
Overland Trail Elementary  
Gymnasium

**What:**  
Come and play phonological (sounds), syllables, and morphology (meaning) games with your child.

**Why:**  
Games for reading instruction that showcase the reading skills taught in the classroom.

**Bonus:**  
Choose a free book after playing games!

Any questions, please email:  
[hzahner@bluevalleyk12.org](mailto:hzahner@bluevalleyk12.org)

## 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.

## Become a BVEF Parent Member and Support our Schools!

As you prepare to register your student for the upcoming school year, BVEF invites you to **join us as a parent member** to make a meaningful impact on our schools and your child's education.



Parents are a driving force behind the Educational Foundation. Last year alone, Blue Valley **parents contributed over \$80,000 in support**. *Every dollar* provided by parents is directed back into classrooms through grants and directly impacts our students.

Joining is simple! While completing your student's registration, under "Optional Fees," select a donation amount from the drop-down menu next to "BV Ed Foundation Membership". The donation will be added to your fees at checkout.

Membership starts at \$35. Parents who give \$100 or more will receive a digital Activity Pass, granting free admission for one to district sponsored events throughout the 2025-26 school year\*. Members \$200+ will receive two passes and \$500+ will receive a BVEF T-shirt.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about parent membership, feel free to contact us at [ayeagle@bluevalleyk12.org](mailto:ayeagle@bluevalleyk12.org).

Thank you for being an integral part of our school community and for helping empower educators and ensure educational excellence for all Blue Valley students!

\*Does not include admission to KSHSAA playoff games. Limit to two passes per family. If eligible, you'll receive your electronic activity pass via email prior to the start of 25-26 events.

## BVW Mathletics



## BVW MU ALPHA THETA MATHLETICS

THE COMPETITION IS OPEN TO ALL 3RD, 4TH AND 5TH GRADERS. IT WILL FEATURE MATHLETICS STYLE QUESTIONS, REQUIRING TEAMS TO WORK IN TEAMS OF 3. TEAMS WILL BE COMPOSED OF STUDENTS IN THE SAME GRADE LEVEL.

Each student is responsible for bringing their own calculators and pencils.  
The top 5 teams from each grade level will be awarded

REGISTER HERE  
BY APRIL 20TH!

<https://forms.gle/mAvfTYFwgZwe7JCg9>



**DATE:** APRIL 23rd, 2025  
**TIME:** 4PM - 6PM  
**LOCATION:** BLUE VALLEY  
WEST HIGH SCHOOL

**CONCESSIONS** WILL NOT  
BE AVAILABLE  
**REGISTRATION** IS \$5 PER  
STUDENT/\$15 PER TEAM  
(by registration date)  
\$10 per student at the door

CONTACT US AT  
MATHBVW@GMAIL.COM WITH  
ANY QUESTIONS!

## Partnering for a Safe School Community

Ensuring our students' and staff's safety and well-being remains our highest priority. As we near the end of the school year, we want to take a moment to thank our families for their partnership. Your support and conversations at home have made a meaningful impact on student behaviors, reinforcing the importance of making good choices and reporting concerns appropriately.

### How We Address Threats

We take every report of a threat seriously—whether that threat is made on social media, in person or through another means. Our administrators work closely with our Safety and Security team and local law enforcement to investigate each case thoroughly. This process includes reviewing past behavior, gathering input from families, and conducting interviews. If a credible threat is identified, we will immediately notify staff and families. You can learn more about our safety protocols and threat assessment process on our [district website](#).

### Partnering to Keep Schools Safe

This spring, we will continue our informational graphics through Canvas for grades 6-12 about the real consequences of making threats. Even offhand comments or social media posts can have serious repercussions, including school disciplinary action or legal consequences. It's important for students to think before they post or speak.

We encourage families to listen to our fall 2024 [BV Unmuted podcast episode: Understanding Threats and Their Consequences](#). In this episode, former Interim Chief Simon Happer (Overland

Park Police Department), Dan Carney (Director of Safety & Security), and Dr. Katie Collier (Deputy Superintendent for Learning) discuss how Blue Valley ensures a safe and secure learning environment.

🎧 Listen here: [BV Unmuted: Understanding Threats and Their Consequences](#)

### How You Can Help

- Report Concerns: Please remind your student to report any concerning behavior to school staff or use our [online reporting system](#).
- Avoid Spreading Rumors: Social media can spread misinformation and create unnecessary anxiety. Instead of sharing posts, report them directly to school administrators or law enforcement with as much detail as possible.

Your partnership plays a vital role in maintaining a safe school environment. Thank you for your ongoing trust and support.

## Instagram | Find Out What's Happening in Music 🎵



## Kindergarten Registration | 2025 - 2026

Dear Families,

Kindergarten registration for the 2025-2026 school year is now open.



🌐 To read this message in a language other than English, [click here](#).

We are excited to welcome your new kindergarten student for the 2025-26 school year.

Please review and complete the steps below. Your timely registration will ensure our team is prepared. In a future message, we will send more information about Kindergarten Kick-Off (formerly known as Kindergarten Round-Up).

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

**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](#)?
- 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.

Note: If your family speaks English *in addition* to another language, you will still need to complete the form.

**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 2025-26 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 in 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 be able 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 receive all school communication items that will help welcome you and your family into the school community.

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 18
- Kindergarten Kick-Off Sessions | Friday, April 11
- Kindergarten Orientation Sessions | Wednesday, August 13
- First full day of school for Kindergarten | Thursday, August 14

Thank you,  
Erica McDonald  
Principal



**INCOMING KINDERGARTEN DATES  
2025-2026**

**Kindergarten Online Registration Begins  
February 18**

**Kindergarten Kick-Off Sessions  
(Formerly Kindergarten Round-Up)  
April 11**

**Kindergarten Orientation Sessions  
August 13**

**First full day of school for Kindergarten  
August 14**

**Contact your neighborhood  
school for more information.**



## 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
- April 11
- May 2

## Nut-Safer Guidelines



Nut Safer List 24-25

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 list of nut-safe foods and BV Guidelines can be found [here](#).

## Helpful Links

School Supply Lists

District Calendar (2024-2025)

District Calendar (2025-2026)

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