

Cougar Connect

April 4, 2025

A Note From Mrs. McDonald



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Good afternoon,

It was pleasing to walk through the building and see the joy of learning occurring in classrooms this week. Next week, we will begin the Kansas Assessments in grades 3-5. We would appreciate your support in reviewing school expectations with your child to help provide a calm testing environment.

Stay warm and dry this weekend, families.

Best,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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Save-the-Date



Save-the-Date

April

Saturday, April 5: PTO Trivia Night and Auction

Friday, April 11: No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

Friday, April 11: No Kindergarten Classes | Kindergarten Kick-off

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

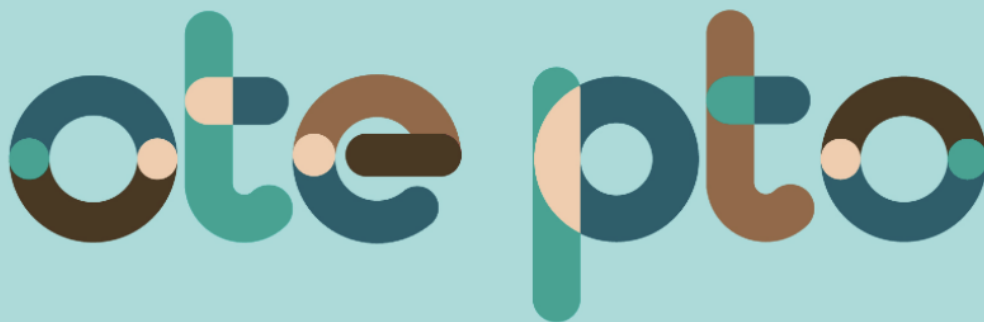


Community Celebrations and Observances - to promote awareness and appreciation of our Blue Valley families.

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

Trivia Night is Tomorrow! | Saturday, April 5

Live from Overland Park, it's Saturday Night! Ready to bring the laughs and test your trivia skills? Register now for our Trivia Night and Auction!

No team? No problem—we need individual players too! Register as an individual player and we will find you a team.

Don't wait—spaces are limited, and you won't want to miss this night of friendly competition and fundraising!

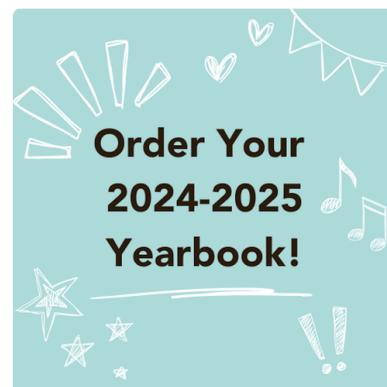
Register at <https://www.otepto.org/trivia>.



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.



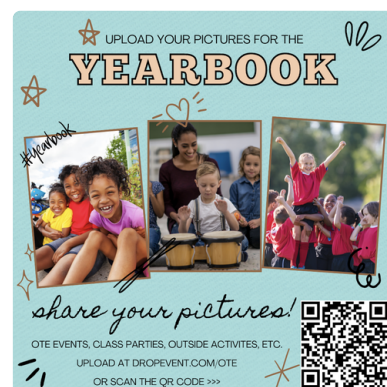
If you see the yearbook fee listed, you're all set! If not, you can still order through the PTO website until April 18.

Order Yearbooks: www.otepto.org/yearbook

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/cultural-night).

Attendance Matters: Setting the Stage for Success

At the elementary level, regular attendance is key to building habits that last a lifetime. Children thrive on routine, and attending school every day helps them feel part of their class, stay engaged in learning and build confidence. When students are absent, they miss valuable lessons, classroom discussions and social interactions.

Regular attendance ensures that your child stays on track with their learning. Each day builds upon the previous one, and when your child is present, they are able to grow academically and socially. You play an important role in helping your child establish good attendance habits, which will serve them throughout their school years and beyond.

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 🎵



Viewing Canvas Courses and Quarter Grades

End of Quarter Information - Viewing Canvas Courses and Quarter Grades

Important dates for families:

	Courses Conclude on Canvas	Grades Viewable on ParentVue (after 4pm)
Quarter 1	Friday, October 11	Tuesday, October 22
Quarter 2	Friday, December 20	Friday, January 10
Quarter 3	Thursday, March 13	Wednesday, April 2
Quarter 4	Thursday, May 22	Wednesday, June 4

At the end of each quarter, courses in Canvas will conclude and will no longer be visible on the Canvas app. However, a concluded course remains visible through the Canvas website by selecting ALL COURSES and then PAST ENROLLMENTS.

Please note: The dates are subject to change based upon calendar updates or technology needs.

How do I view my child's report card?

- Log in on [ParentVue](#).
- Select the student's name
- In the left navigation bar, choose Report Card

Each new quarter, classroom teachers will publish the 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.

DAPT Community Event | April 8th

PLEASE REGISTER USING THIS QR CODE.
bit.ly/bvthedrugtalk




THE DRUG TALK

Keeping Our Kids Safe

APRIL 8, 2025

6:00-7:30 PM
Hilltop Conference Center
7700 W. 143rd St.

Learn about fentanyl & educate your kids.
 A panel will follow the presentation.



Movie Screening
THE NEW DRUG TALK



Guest speaker
LIBBY DAVIS
 "FIGHTING FENTANYL...
 KNOW IS THE NEW NO"

SPONSORED BY




Input on Classroom Setting (K-4)



Dear Families,

At Overland Trail Elementary, we fully commit 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 provide input by **April 4, 2025** through the links provided below. After that date, input will not be accepted. Please note we will consider all input submitted by April 4, 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.

Best,
Erica McDonald

Incoming Kindergarten Students (2025-2026)

Please provide additional information about your child that would be helpful with class placement. Please address only those areas with a specific need or concern.

Reminder, requests for specific teachers (by name) are not accepted. Staffing is fluid yearly, and grade-level teachers often fluctuate or change until school starts. Thus, class lists are released in August. We appreciate your collaboration and overall support.

[Input on Classroom Setting \(Incoming Kindergarten\)](#)

Current K-4 Students (2024-2025)

Please provide additional information about your child that would be helpful with class placement. Please address only those areas with a specific need or concern. **This form is for current students, K-4, not incoming kindergarten students for 2025-2026.**

Reminder, requests for specific teachers (by name) are not accepted. Staffing is fluid yearly, and grade-level teachers often fluctuate or change until school starts. Thus, class lists are released in August. We appreciate your collaboration and overall support.

[Input on Classroom Setting \(K-4\)](#)

Blue Valley Summer Explorations Enrollment Opens March 25

Is your child ready to spark their creativity, explore new hobbies or discover the joy of science this summer? Sign your child up for Blue Valley's Summer Explorations program. With hands-on experiences, these one-week sessions are designed to keep kids engaged and excited about learning. Enrollment opens 8 a.m. March 25 and closes 4 p.m. April 7.

For more information about the Summer Explorations program, visit www.bluevalleyk12.org/summerprograms.



Special Needs Resource Fair



Sunflower House | Rescheduled for May

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Sunflower House was unable to come to our building this week. However, we are excited to announce we have rescheduled our presentations to May 6th, 7th, and 8th.

Please check your classroom teacher's newsletter to find out what day! Kindergarten and First grade will learn about personal safety from Happy Bear! 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders will learn about safety from a trained Sunflower House educator on the Think First and Stay Safe: Safe and Healthy Boundaries curriculum. By talking with our young children about these important safety issues, we will create a safer community for all children. If you would like your child to opt-out of the presentation, please fill out the link below:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd-tjvayiJ0jLwnp0tLhNz417x68994ZgMjy10u5FWTHqzuBg/viewform?usp=sf_link

If you have questions, please reach out to Emily Harsch at eharsch@bluevalleyk12.org

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 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

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](https://twitter.com/OTECougars)



Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters