

Cougar Connect

January 17, 2025

A Note From Mrs. McDonald



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Dear Families,

On Wednesday, January 15, you received an email and text message inviting you to sign up for a winter conference. The details of this email are included below. You must read the directions carefully, as you will need to indicate if your conference is virtual or in-person. If you did not include this information in your reservation, you may revise your reservation using the link provided. As a reminder, Wednesday, February 12, is virtual only, so

in-person conferences will not be this evening. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call the front office at (913) 239-7000.

Please see the information below regarding the Valentine's Day bag supplies request. Students will create their Valentine's bags to collect Valentines at school, allowing all students to take part in a fun team-building activity. No student must make a box or bag at home since we are implementing a school-wide effort to support this need.

Best,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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Save-the-Date



Save-the-Date

January

Monday, January 20: No School | Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Friday, January 24: Major Saver Campaign Kickoff

Friday, January 24: Skate Party at Skate City; 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

February

Wednesday, February 5: Unity Squad Meeting; 4:00-5:00 PM

Friday, February 7: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

Friday, February 7: PTO Family Fun Night Glow Party 6:30-8:30 PM

Tuesday, February 11: Winter Conferences; 4:00 PM-7:40 PM

Wednesday, February 12: Valentine's Day Parties; 2:45-3:25 PM

Wednesday, February 12: Winter Conferences; 4:00 PM-7:40 PM

Thursday, February 13: No School EC-8 | Winter Conferences; 8:20 AM-3:00 PM

Friday, February 14: No School | District-Wide Break

Monday, February 17: No School | President's Day

Wednesday, February 19: Fifth Grade Field Trip | School of Economics

Wednesday, February 19: PTO Community Service

Friday, February 28: No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

Friday, February 28: PTO Yearbook Sales Open

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

Unity Squad Spotlight

☆☆ Unity Squad Spotlight ☆☆

Martin Luther King Jr was born in the United States of America to African American parents. At birth he was named Michael King, but his father later changed his name to Martin Luther King Jr.



Community Celebrations and Observances



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

Some January Celebrations & Observances:

- **National Poverty Awareness Month** - While the United States is considered the richest country in the world, 37.9 million people live in poverty, including 12.5 million children. National Poverty Awareness Month works to bring awareness to issues of poverty and increase access to resources and services. To help and or find support, visit [Johnson County Outreach Services](#).
- **Maghi** - January 13 - a Sikh celebration. Some Sikh families will celebrate with a recitation of the holy Guru Granth Sahib and religious rituals in Gurdwaras - a Sikh place of assembly and worship meaning "Gateway to the Guru".
- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** - January 15 - a day that honors the life and legacy of the civil rights leader. Some families will participate in a day of service to their communities.
- **World Religion Day** - January 21 - established by the Bahá'í Faith community in 1950. Now observed by people around the world, it seeks to find common values shared by different faiths, encourage tolerance and dialogue, and foster cooperation among religious communities.
- **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** - January 27 - an annual day of commemorating the six million Jewish victims and millions of other victims of the Holocaust and Nazism.



PTO Events | January/February

Trivia Night Registration Now Open!

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! Whether you gather your own cast of characters and register as a team or sign up solo and join forces with fellow fans, this is your chance to shine under the spotlight. Assemble your Spartan Cheerleaders, Coneheads, or Weekend Update anchors and compete for the ultimate bragging rights—all while supporting our school. Don't wait—spaces are limited, and you won't want to miss this night of comedy, camaraderie, and fundraising!



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

Scavenger Hunt Skate Party | Friday, January 24

Come join your friends for a scavenger hunt from 5-7pm at Skate City on Friday, January 24! Find all the clues and get all the questions correct to win fun prizes! Admission is \$7 and skate rentals are \$2. You can get 2 slices of pizza and a small drink for \$5.



Glow Party | Friday, February 7

Save date for the 2025 Glow Party - a free family event! More details to come soon.



PTO Calendar of Events

For a complete list of all upcoming PTO events, visit [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Upcoming Events \(otepto.org\)](https://www.OverlandTrailElementary.org/pto-events).

Winter Conferences

The following email was sent to all families on Wednesday, January 15.

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

It is time to sign up for a conference this winter. Suppose you schedule a conference on Tuesday, February 11, or Thursday, February 13. In that case, you will want to follow the directions provided so that your child's teacher understands your meeting preference, in-person or virtual. Lastly, Wednesday, February 12, is virtual, with no option to meet in person.

Click [here](#) to learn how to reserve a time with your child's teacher this February.

Best,
Erica McDonald
Principal

Valentine's Bag Supplies

Valentine's Bag Supplies

This year we will be creating Valentine Bags at school with our buddy classes! This gives a fun team building activity for our students and bags will already be complete for class parties on the 12th. We will supply the bags but would love your help gathering a few more items. If you are able to send in stickers, glue sticks, pipe cleaners, crepe paper/streamers or markers we would greatly appreciate it. All items should be sent to school by Thursday 9th. They can be given to Mrs. Mason in the library or the classroom teacher.

We appreciate you adding to our activity!

Jody Mason
Library Media Specialist

Valentine's Treat Guidelines

Valentine's Treat Guidelines

Conversation hearts (see example) are **NOT** on the nut-safer list. There are currently no brands of conversation hearts that are viewed as nut-safer.

However, acceptable alternatives that are on the nut-safer list include:

- Skittles
- Starbursts
- Smarties
- Sweet Tarts (Nestle brand)
- Fruit snacks (Motts or Annie's Homegrown brands only)

- Oreos
- Sweet P's Bake Shop Frosted Sugar Cookies (available at Hyvee grocery stores)



Sunflower House

Sunflower House

OTE is excited to welcome Sunflower House to our school on February 24th and 25th to teach our students about safety. 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-tjyayiJ0jLwnp0tLhNz417x68994ZgMjy10u5FWTHqzuBg/viewform?usp=sf_link

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

BVUnmuted Legislative Podcast

BVUnmuted Legislative Podcast

In the latest Blue Valley Schools' BV Unmuted podcast episode, Superintendent Dr. Tonya Merrigan discusses the upcoming Kansas Legislative session and the district's five priority positions with Board of Education members Gina Knapp and Jan Kessinger and Chief Financial Officer Jeremy McFadden.

📻 To listen to the podcast episode, visit www.bit.ly/BVPriorities.

Fostering A Safe School Environment

Fostering A Safe School Environment

Blue Valley Schools is committed to promoting and fostering a safe environment in and around all of our schools. Through the convergence of physical and intellectual security measures, we are continuously working to prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from a wide range of emergencies. Please check out [available ways to report safety concerns](#).

Incoming Kindergarten Pre-registration

Dear Families,

We are excited to start welcoming our Kindergarten families for the Fall 2025. Children who reside in Blue Valley Schools and turn five by August 31 can attend kindergarten that school year. If you live within the Overland Trail Elementary boundaries and will have an incoming kindergarten student next fall, please complete the form linked below, Kindergarten Pre-registration (2025-2026) to begin receiving communication directly through email and text from Overland Trail Elementary. Please be mindful that this form is not a completion of registration but an opportunity for us to communicate openly and begin preparing for online registration.

[Kindergarten Pre-registration \(2025-2026\)](#)

More information will be shared with you on Tuesday, February 18, including welcome videos, online registration instructions, and information about Kindergarten Kick-Off on April 11, 2025. Please pass this link on to neighbors who might not have a student in our system and still need to receive our weekly emails.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call the office at (913) 239-7000.

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.



13th Annual Battle of the Bands



Join friends for a great adult night out with live music, a silent auction, a wine and bourbon pull and more! Proceeds from this annual fundraiser support music and performing arts programs throughout the district, and YOU can be part of the fun! Check out our new location at Fiorella's event space in OP for a great over-21 night out. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and YOU choose the "Best of Blue Valley" live band when the competition wraps up at 10 p.m. Bands are made up of BV parents, teachers and staff and funds provide significant funding for performing arts programs including band, orchestra, choir, theater, debate and competitive speaking. Get tickets today at [Event Details](#).

Can't make it to the event in person? No worries! Visit [Silent Auction](#) to start your bid on incredible auction packages and see what your school submitted. Check back frequently as more items are added to the offerings every week. The auction will close on Friday, February 21 at 8:45 p.m. and you do not have to be present to win!

You can also vote by donation for your favorite adult school-affiliated band, and the winner receives a \$1,000 grant to their school of choice. The 2025 band names, order of performances and school representations are as follows:

Young Medicine- Lakewood Elementary

Modern Thieves- Mission Trail Elementary, Leawood Middle, Blue Valley North

Hope to see you Friday, February 21, 2025, as we Rock the Valley for BV Schools!

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
- 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 List 24-25

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 list of nut-safe 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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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

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Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters