

Cougar Connect

July 30, 2025



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year at Overland Trail Elementary! We are so excited to open our doors and hearts once again to our amazing students and families. Whether you're returning or joining us for the first time, we are thrilled to partner with you in creating a year filled with connection, growth, and joyful learning.

Soon, our staff will be hard at work preparing classrooms, planning engaging lessons, and building a supportive environment where every child feels seen, valued, and inspired to reach their full potential. Together, we'll make this year one to remember as we charge in under this year's theme: *Cougar Spotlight | Celebrating Our Story*.

The wait is almost over! **Class lists will be available in ParentVUE on Monday, August 11, at 4:00 PM.** Shortly after, we can't wait to welcome you to **Sneak-a-Peek at 5:00 PM** that same evening. This is a special opportunity for your child to meet their new teacher and take a first look at their classroom for the upcoming year. We're looking forward to a wonderful evening of connection and excitement as we kick off the 2025-2026 school year together!

ASQ | Ages & Stages Questionnaire

Kindergarten families, keep an eye out for an email from me on or around the first day of school. The email will describe a couple of surveys that we kindly request you complete. These surveys provide us with great information for helping your child.

Enrollment Fees

An important part of the registration process is the payment of district-required enrollment fees. These can be paid online via ParentVUE or by check (payable to OTE). We accept partial payments, and if needed, you may contact our bookkeeping office to set up a payment plan.

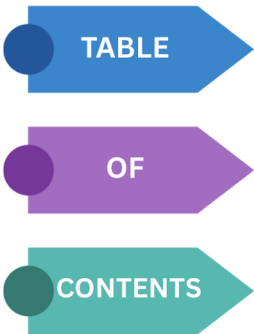
Families who qualify for the **Free and Reduced Lunch** program may have their **Learning Resource Fee waived**. You can learn more and apply [here](#).

If your child will **not be attending Overland Trail Elementary** for the upcoming school year, please notify us as soon as possible by calling **913-239-7000** or emailing oteos@bluevalleyk12.org.

Thank you for being part of the Overland Trail community. We can't wait to see you soon and embark on another incredible school year—stronger together.

With Cougar pride,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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Save-the-Date



Friday, August 1-Tuesday August 5: New Staff Onboarding
Wednesday, August 6-Tuesday, August 12: Staff Retreat | All Staff Professional Learning
Monday, August 11: Class Lists Released via Parent Vue | 4:00 PM
Monday, August 11: Sneak-a-Peek | 5:00 PM-6:30 PM
Wednesday, August 13: First Day of School for Grades 1-5 and Kindergarten Orientation
Thursday, August 14: First Day of School for Kindergarten
Thursday, August 21: Back-to-School Night | 5:00 PM-6:30 PM

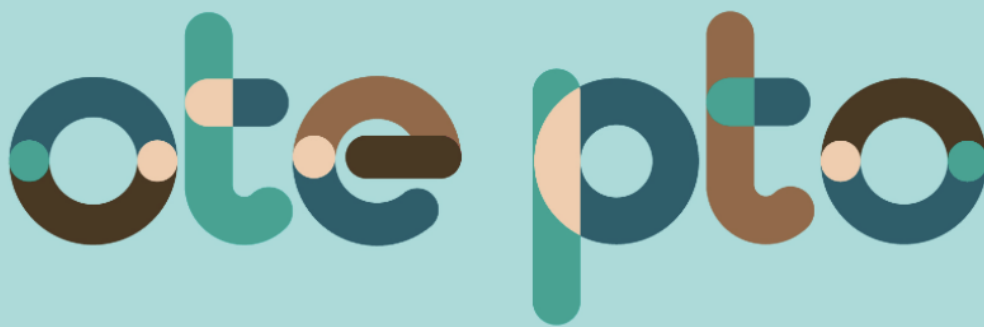
✨ Unity Squad ✨

Did you know that Overland Trail Elementary (OTE) is one of the most culturally diverse schools in the Blue Valley School District? This attribute makes OTE a special place and something we want to celebrate more. We are excited to build a parent community with parent involvement that reflects our student and family population. Being inclusive and bringing together community members from different backgrounds and experiences is critical to accomplish the goals set.



The Unity Squad collaborates with the PTO to ensure that Overland Trail Elementary remains an inclusive and celebratory community in all that we do. We look forward to another wonderful year of honoring and embracing Overland Trail Elementary's exemplary diversity.

Parent-Teacher Organization | PTO



Join the Overland Trail Elementary PTO

1. Visit otepto.org.
2. Login or create a FREE account by clicking the "Login" button.
3. Complete the family information and publish preference forms under "My Account."
4. Consider a PTO membership. Click "Register" to join. This funding helps support PTO programs

Attendance Messages

Guide to elementary school attendance messages

9:35 a.m.



Automated Attendance Message

Families will receive automated attendance messages via email, phone and text message at 9:35 a.m. if a child is absent and his/her absence has not been reported by a parent/guardian. Forgot to report an absence? No worries, reply directly to the phone call or email.

Optional



Push Notifications

Families who would also like a push notification can download the ParentVUE app and manage their notifications. If a child has an unreported absence when a teacher submits attendance, then a push notification will immediately be sent to the parent/guardian's mobile device.

Attendance Procedures

If your child will miss school, please call the Overland Trail Elementary attendance line at 913-239-7005 or email the attendance line at attendanceOTE@bluevalleyk12.org.

Please include your child's name (first and last), grade level, classroom teacher, and reason for the absence. If leaving a message, please make sure you speak slowly and clearly. It is always helpful to repeat the information as well. The Blue Valley School District has amended the district's attendance policy (Board Policy 3200). **Students will be permitted *seven* excused absences during the school year for family emergencies, vacations, and personal business.** Send a note to the teacher and the office if your child is on vacation. Separate letters should be written for each child.

Attendance Reporting and Notifications

Families can expect automated attendance messages by email and text if a child is absent and their absence has not already been reported by a parent/guardian. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to report an absence or reply to the automated phone message.

What is the purpose of attendance notifications?

We realize that students may occasionally need to miss school for planned absences, illnesses, and appointments. However, when a student does not arrive at school or unexpectedly misses a portion of the school day, we are concerned and want to ensure you know your child is absent.

How can I get push notifications?

Families who would also like a push notification can download the ParentVUE app and manage their notifications. A push notification will immediately be sent to the parent/guardian's mobile device if a child has an unreported absence when a teacher submits attendance.

Are you interested in push notifications? Download the ParentVUE app ([iTunes app store](#) or [Google Play](#)), enable push notifications in device settings, and select attendance notifications through in-app settings. Once the app is downloaded, [these instructions](#) will help you complete the setup.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

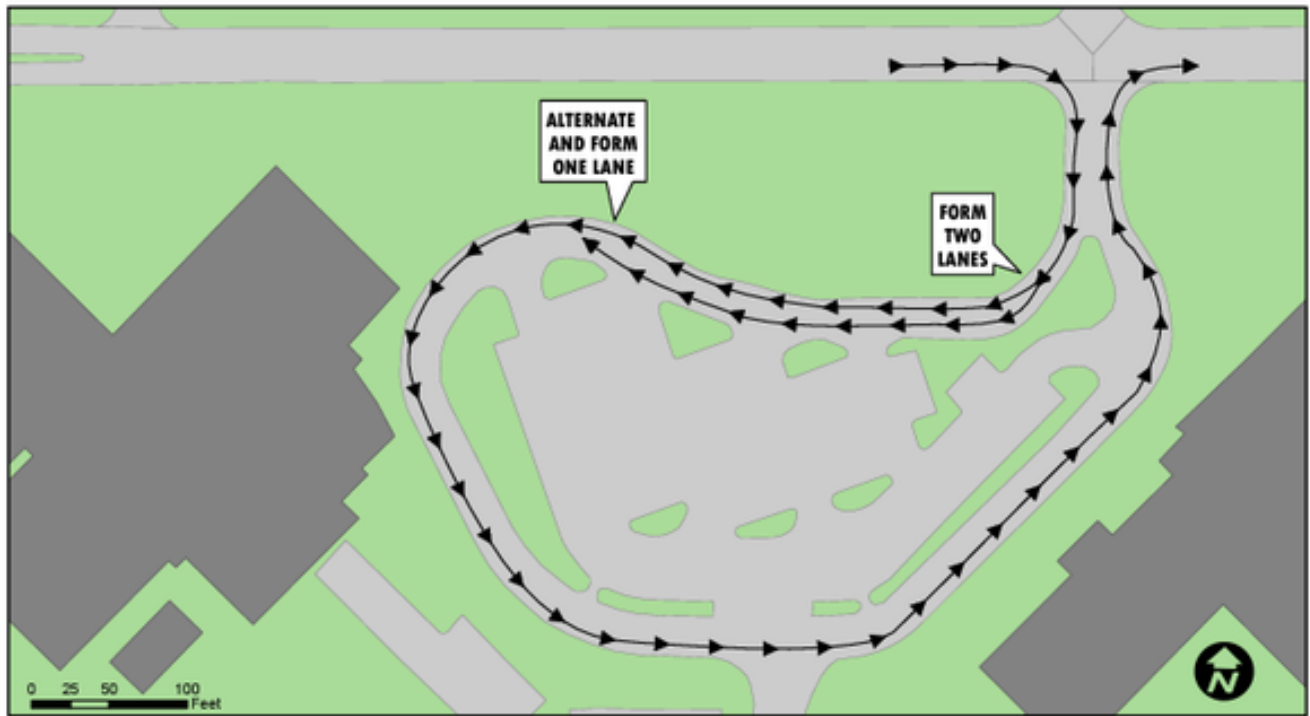
Arrival Procedures:

1. **Our school doors open at 8:25 AM.** Children should not arrive before 8:25 AM.
2. School begins at 8:40 AM. After 8:40 AM, students are considered tardy. A parent or guardian must come to the school's front entrance with their photo id to have their child signed in if they arrive at school later than 8:40 AM.
3. The crosswalk will be closed starting at 8:25 AM. If your student needs extra assistance, park in the parking lot closest to the playground. Do not park in the main parking lot.
4. Students should remain buckled in their seats until the vehicle stops in the traffic loop.
5. Cell phones should not be used while in the traffic loop.
6. **Drivers in the car line will need to always drive completely to the front to ensure the car line is a fluid and efficient process for student arrival.** Vehicles in the traffic loop will have the right of way and will be given priority over families walking or going to the parking lot.

Dismissal Procedures:

1. **Dismissal begins at 3:35 PM.** Our goal is to complete dismissal by 4:00 PM.
2. Students who walk home will exit the building through the exit doors on the North side of the building.
3. Students who walk home cannot stay on the OTE campus. Y-Care utilizes the building and playground after school, Monday-Friday.
4. **Car line drivers may not be in the car line sooner than 3:00 PM to avoid conflicting with the middle school traffic.**

Overland Trail Elementary Traffic Flow



Car Rider Pick-up and Drop-off Requirements

In order to reduce the number of cars that must line up along 133rd Street, please form two lines at the location indicated.

As you approach the pick up/drop off area, please zipper merge and form one line.



Map created by Blue Valley School District
Finance & Operations Department
Supporting data provided by Johnson County AIMS
December, 2020

PickUp Patrol | Dismissal Information

Please look forward to an invitation to PickUp Patrol (PUP) at the start of the new school year this August. This platform enables us to manage dismissal for the various ways students leave school daily. PUP eliminates the need to write notes or make phone calls when changing your student's dismissal plans. Please click the link below for more information about what to expect this school year.



See PickUp Patrol in Action - Overview



SEE PICKUP PATROL IN ACTION

Durham Bus Services



If you wish for your child to be a bus rider, please visit the bus website to sign them up: [Durham Bus Services](#). Please note, the last day to register students for transportation on the first day of school was July 21, 2025. You can also sign up for text message alerts for your student's bus.

Café (Cafeteria)

The breakfast and lunch menus for Overland Trail Elementary can be found online [here](#) or by downloading the Nutrislice app, which allows easy access to daily and weekly menus right from your device.

We are excited to welcome lunchroom visitors again this year, beginning **Wednesday, September 3**, after Labor Day. During the first few weeks of school, we will focus on practicing café routines and procedures to ensure a smooth experience for all students.

As a reminder, when visiting for lunch, please plan to sit with your child at the **designated visitor table**. For safety and consistency, we kindly ask that lunch visits be limited to you and your child—**no additional student guests, please**.

Food Deliveries

Food delivery services disrupt the learning environment and pose a potential security concern. Various doors have been utilized, and most delivery service providers have unfamiliar faces that are challenging to verify. **We will not accept meals delivered by paid delivery services during the school day for students. These deliveries will be refused.**

Visitors During the School Day



As a reminder, all elementary schools in the district—including Overland Trail Elementary—utilize a **buzz-in entry system** for all visitors during the school day to help maintain a safe and secure environment.

When visiting the school, please come to the **main entrance** and press the buzzer. You will be asked to:

1. **Show a government-issued photo ID**
2. **State the purpose of your visit**

This process is required **each time** you visit the school. If you arrive without identification, the office will need to seek administrative approval before allowing entry.

For security reasons, we kindly ask that all guests **refrain from holding the door open for others**. Each visitor should go through the buzz-in process individually to ensure proper screening.

Back-to-School Events

All Students | Sneak-a-Peek: Monday, August 11 | 5:00-6:30

We're excited to welcome families into the building for our Sneak-a-Peek event on Monday, August 11. This optional event provides a wonderful opportunity for you to walk your child into the school, visit their classroom, meet their teacher, take photos, and explore their new learning space together. While attendance is not required, we highly encourage families to attend, as this will be the only opportunity for adults to accompany children into the building—families will not enter with students on the first day of school. We look forward to seeing you there!



Grades 1-5 | First Day of School: Wednesday, August 13

As the safety of our students and staff remains our top priority, all elementary schools in Blue Valley will follow standard safety procedures during arrival on the first day of school, Wednesday, August 13. Students will enter the building at their designated entry time without adult accompaniment. We welcome families to join us on campus that morning to share a special goodbye, take first-day photos, and give hugs on the front lawn before students head inside. Thank you for supporting our efforts to maintain a safe and secure school environment during arrival.

Kindergarten | Orientation: Wednesday, August 13

Our Kindergarten team is excited to welcome our incoming students and their families for a special orientation session. This time together will allow children to explore their new learning environment, meet classmates, and ease any first-day jitters. Parents and caregivers will have the opportunity to ask questions, take photos, connect with the teacher about transportation, and begin building relationships within the classroom community. Families will attend orientation based on their last name, according to the schedule below.

Please sign up by clicking the session that corresponds with your assigned time:

- [Session 1](#) (9:00 AM-10:00 AM) | Last names A-M
- [Session 2](#) (10:30 AM-11:30 AM) | Last names N-Z

Kindergarten | First Day of School and KinderCamp (Kindergarten): Thursday, August 14-Friday, August 15

KinderCamp is a special opportunity designed to help our youngest learners transition smoothly into school. During this experience, students will explore the kindergarten classroom environment, engage in foundational learning activities, and begin building relationships with peers and staff. On Thursday and Friday, students will start their day in a temporary homeroom and rotate midday to another kindergarten classroom. At the end of the day, they will return to their original homeroom to prepare for dismissal.

This thoughtful structure allows our kindergarten team to get to know each child and observe them in a variety of settings. It helps us determine the best learning environment for your child—considering teacher fit, instructional style, and peer connections—before assigning permanent homerooms for the year, which will begin on Monday, August 18. We look forward to welcoming your child and beginning this exciting journey together!

Grades K-5 | Back-to-School Night: Thursday, August 21 | 5:00 PM-6:30 PM

We are excited to welcome you to Back-to-School Night on Thursday, August 21! This important event gives families the opportunity to learn more about their child's classroom, curriculum, and

expectations for the upcoming school year. Your child's teacher will present to the group, sharing key information to help you support your child's success and confidently navigate the year ahead. You'll also hear about opportunities to get involved with the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and ways you can contribute to classroom events and schoolwide activities. The event will be offered in two sessions, and families are asked to select the session that works best for them and plan to attend from start to finish. We look forward to seeing you there and partnering with you for a strong start to the school year!

Y Club Academy Enrollment

Y Club Academy before and after school offers learning support and academic enrichment for grades K-6 in a fun and safe environment. Programs offer a solution for working families needing school-age child care or any family seeking academic support.

Registration closes when a site reaches capacity. If a site capacity is reached you may request to be placed on the interest list by submitting a paper registration form. You must register by August 6, 2025, to be eligible for a first day of school start date. Your email receipt will serve as a registration confirmation. Minimum program enrollment numbers must be met for a program to occur. Visit the link below to learn more about how to register for Y Club Academy.



Y Club - Blue Valley

Blue Valley Y Club Academy before and after school offers learning support and academic enrichment for grades K-6 in a fun and safe environment.

🔗 kansascityymca.org

Communication



Cougar Connect: *Cougar Connect*, our weekly newsletter for parents and caregivers, will be shared at the end of each school week. These newsletters are full of important updates, upcoming events, and highlights from around the school to help keep you informed and connected.

You'll also find updates and information from our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) included in each issue.

We encourage you to read each newsletter carefully, and please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. We look forward to partnering with you for a great school year!

Attendance:

- Email: attendanceote@bluevalleyk12.org
- Phone: (913) 239-7005

Dismissal Changes:

- **Website:** PickUpPatrol.net (This information will be shared closer to the start of the school year.)

School Office:

- **Email:** oteos@bluevalleyk12.org
- **Phone:** (913) 239-7000

Personal Devices



To provide the most effective learning spaces possible, the following guidelines concerning personal cell phones (CP) and associated personal technology devices (PTD) at the elementary school level are in effect. Cell phones and personal technological devices are any devices designed for personal communication, digital information transfer, or electronic gaming/play.

Cell phones and personal technology devices are not allowed to be used by elementary school students during the school day. The school day is defined as anytime the student is on campus property on a day school is in session. CP/PTDs are to be kept in backpacks out of sight and powered off. Should the need arise for a student to contact parents during the school day, the main office phone or the classroom phone should be used for such a call. Should the need arise for parents to contact their child, the main office phone should be used for such a call. CP/PTDs may be used by the student only at the request of the classroom teacher or other staff member. CP/PTDs used to monitor identified student health needs, such as blood sugar levels, are allowed and must be approved by the principal.

Grades 3-12 | Grade Opt-In Option for Securly Filter

Parents and caregivers can now choose to place their 3-12th grade students in the High Restrictions Filter Group for their district-issued device by signing up [here](#). The link details the differences between the Default and High Restrictions Policies.

Birthday Policy

Due to the growing number of food allergies and medical needs of students, OTE has a **non-edible** treat policy. Students may bring non-edible birthday treats (e.g., pencils, stickers, etc.) per arrangement with the classroom teacher. Remember that a birthday celebration should not take away from instructional time.

Birthday Invitations: We ask that students not distribute invitations to private birthday parties at school unless every class member receives an invitation.

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 **Nut Safer Foods** and BV Guidelines can be found accessing the link below.



BV Nut Safer Guidelines | 25-26

🔗 drive.google.com



BV Nut Safe Guidelines | 25-26 Translation

🔗 drive.google.com

School Supply Lists

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