

# Cougar Connect

March 14, 2025

## A Note From Mrs. McDonald



### A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Good afternoon,

As we conclude the third quarter of the school year, I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude for your continued support and involvement in your child's education. It's been an exciting and productive term filled with growth, learning, and memorable experiences for our students.

Throughout this quarter, we've seen our students demonstrate resilience, curiosity, and a strong commitment to their learning. Their hard work and enthusiasm are truly inspiring, and we couldn't be prouder of each and every one of them.

As we move into the final quarter of the year, I encourage you to continue engaging with your child's learning journey—whether through reading at home, discussing their school day, or supporting them with any challenges they may face. Your involvement plays a crucial role in their success.

Thank you again for being such an essential part of our school community. Let's finish the year strong and continue to foster a love of learning in our students!

Have a restful and enjoyable Spring Break, families.

Best,  
Erica McDonald  
Principal

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- Save-the-Date
- ✨Unity Squad Spotlight ✨
- Community Celebrations and Observances
- Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) News

### Recent News:

- *No recent news at this time*

### Repeat News:

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- Input on Classroom Setting (K-4)
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## Save-the-Date



### Save-the-Date

#### March

**Monday, March 17-Friday, March 24:** No School | Spring Break

**Monday, March 31:** PTO Online Auction Opens

#### April

**Friday, April 4:** PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

**Saturday, April 5:** PTO Trivia Night and Auction

**Friday, April 11:** No School | Teacher Professional Collaboration

**Friday, April 11:** No Kindergarten Classes | Kindergarten Kickoff

**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-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 Observance** - to promote awareness and appreciation of our Blue Valley families.

Some March Celebrations & Observances:

- **The Nineteen-Day Fast** - March 1-19 - a time of prayer, meditation, and fasting; some adult members of the Bahá'í faith refrain from food and water from sunrise to sunset each day. This practice might include prayers of spiritual preparation for the new year.
- **Ramadan** - evening of March 1-30 - the holy month of fasting for the Islamic faith. For some Muslim families, it is a time for introspection, communal prayer, reading the Qur'an, and fasting between sunrise and sunset.
- **Ash Wednesday** - March 5 - a Christian holiday signifying the first day of the Lenten season, the 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading to Easter. Some families will attend religious services and receive ashes in the shape of a cross on their forehead.
- **Holi** - March 14 - known as the Hindu festival of colors, Holi honors the triumph of good over evil and marks the beginning of Spring. Some families will light bonfires, throw colorful powder called *gulal*, eat sweets, and dance to traditional music.
- **Eid al Fitr** - March 31 - marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting. Some families will celebrate the "Festival of Breaking the Fast" by joining in communal prayer and meals, visiting family, gift-giving, and charity.



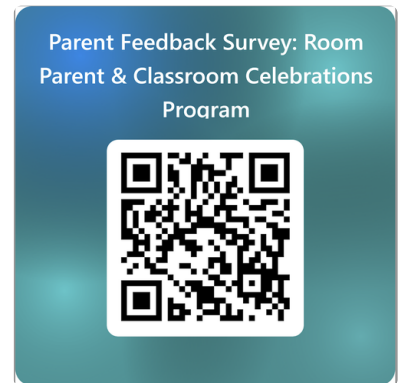
## PTO Events | March/April

### 📢 We Want Your Feedback: Room Parent & Classroom Celebrations Survey

The PTO is looking to improve the **Room Parent & Classroom Celebrations program**, and we'd love input from **all parents and guardians**—whether you've volunteered, contributed supplies, attended events, or even if you haven't participated at all. Your feedback will help us create a program that best serves students, teachers, and families.

Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts by completing our survey. Thank you for your time and input!

Take the Survey Here: <https://forms.office.com/r/qDDgSQWr67>



### Don't miss out! Register today for Trivia Night! | 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! 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!



Annual Trivia Night & Auction | Saturday April 5, 2025

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.

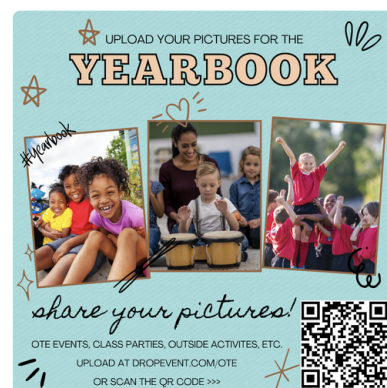
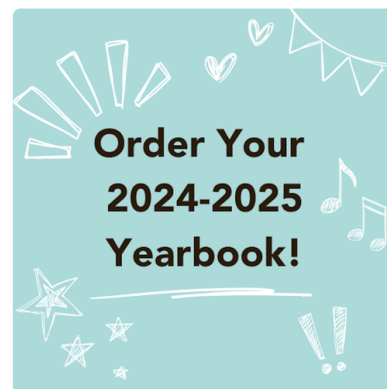
Order Yearbooks: [www.otepto.org/yearbook](http://www.otepto.org/yearbook)

## 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>



## Cultural Night Rescheduled to Friday, April 25

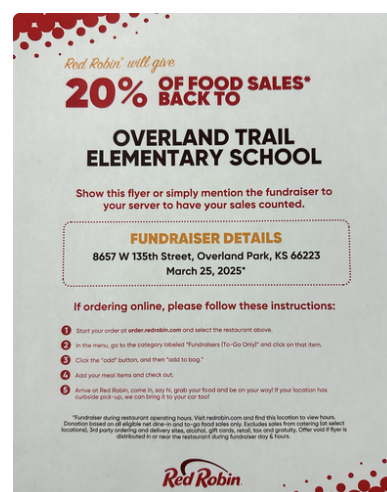
Join us for OTE Cultural Night on Friday, April 25, and celebrate the rich diversity of our community! This family-friendly event will be an evening filled with music, dance, art, and traditions from around the world. Stroll through colorful cultural displays, savor delicious foods, and enjoy captivating 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>

## Join us at Red Robin!

Support Overland Trail Elementary at our Red Robin fundraiser on Tuesday, March 25! 20% off all food sales from 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. will go back to support OTE. Show the flier above or mention OTE to your server to have your sales counted.



## 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).

## 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)
<b>Quarter 1</b>	Friday, October 11	Tuesday, October 22
<b>Quarter 2</b>	Friday, December 20	Friday, January 10
<b>Quarter 3</b>	Thursday, March 13	Wednesday, April 2
<b>Quarter 4</b>	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](http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/canvas).

## DAPT Community Event | April 8th

PLEASE REGISTER USING THIS QR CODE.  
[bit.ly/bvthedrugtalk](https://bit.ly/bvthedrugtalk)




**THE NEW DRUG TALK**  
 CONNECT TO PROTECT

Movie Screening  
**THE NEW DRUG TALK**

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

SPONSORED BY




**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.**

## 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](http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/summerprograms).



## **Special Needs Resource Fair**





The poster features a blue and yellow color scheme. At the top, there are two circular logos: 'BVSEAC' (Blue Valley Special Education Advisory Council) on the left and 'Blue Valley Schools' on the right. A banner across the top reads '15TH ANNUAL'. Below this, the main title 'BLUE VALLEY SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE FAIR' is written in large, bold, white letters on a blue background. A circular orange badge on the left says 'FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC'. Below the title, the website 'bvseac.org' is listed. A yellow banner with a blue border contains the text 'NEW DATE APRIL 10, 2025 5-8 PM'. Below this, a blue box with white text provides the location: 'HILLTOP CONFERENCE CENTER, 7700 W 143RD ST, OVERLAND PARK, KS 66223, ENTRANCE ON THE WEST SIDE OF CAMPUS'. A light blue section at the bottom contains the heading 'CONNECT WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS IN THE KC AREA!' followed by a bulleted list of services. At the very bottom, it states 'SPONSORED BY THE BLUE VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND BV SEAC'.

**15TH ANNUAL**

**BLUE VALLEY SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE FAIR**

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

[bvseac.org](http://bvseac.org)

**NEW DATE APRIL 10, 2025 5-8 PM**

**HILLTOP CONFERENCE CENTER**  
7700 W 143RD ST  
OVERLAND PARK, KS 66223  
ENTRANCE ON THE WEST SIDE OF CAMPUS

**CONNECT WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS IN THE KC AREA!**

- ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING VARIOUS DISABILITIES
- CAMPS AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
- THERAPIES AND EQUIPMENT
- PEDIATRIC AND ADULT TRANSITIONAL SERVICES
- FINANCIAL/LEGAL
- HEALTH & WELLNESS AND MUCH MORE!

SPONSORED BY THE BLUE VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND BV SEAC

## 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](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](mailto: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](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