

Cougar Connect

March 7, 2025

A Note From Mrs. McDonald



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Good afternoon,

Well, one full week completed for the first week of March. I would like to think this is a SUCCESS. On another note, great work first grade and Ms. Baumgarner on the awesome performance at OTE.

This weekend promises to be sunshine and clear skies--enjoy it, families!

Best,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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Save-the-Date



Save-the-Date

March

Friday, March 14: No School | End of Quarter 3

Monday, March 17-Friday, March 21: No School | Spring Break

Monday, March 24: No School | Professional Learning

Monday, March 31: PTO Online Auction Opens

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 ✨



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.

OTE | PTO



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/qDDgSQWr6Z>

Parent Feedback Survey: Room
Parent & Classroom Celebrations
Program



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!

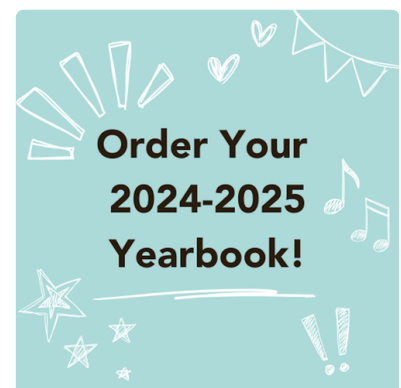


Register at <https://www.otepto.org/trivia>.

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

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).

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 NEW DRUG TALK
 CONNECT TO PROTECT

Movie Screening
THE NEW DRUG TALK

Keeping Our Kids Safe

APRIL 8, 2025

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

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



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 central banner reads '15TH ANNUAL'. Below this, the main title 'BLUE VALLEY SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE FAIR' is prominently displayed in white and yellow text on a blue background. A circular badge on the left states 'FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC'. The website 'bvseac.org' is listed below the title. A yellow banner indicates the 'NEW DATE' as 'APRIL 10, 2025' from '5-8 PM'. The location is 'HILLTOP CONFERENCE CENTER, 7700 W 143RD ST, OVERLAND PARK, KS 66223', with a note about the entrance. A section titled 'CONNECT WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS IN THE KC AREA!' lists various services. The bottom of the poster notes it is '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

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

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.**



Growth and Development | Grade 4 & 5 | Thursday, March 13

Dear OTE Families:

The growth seen during the elementary years can be an exciting time in health education. The Blue Valley Health Curriculum was written by a committee of Blue Valley teachers, nurses, and counselors to educate our students about health-related issues. The curriculum was reviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction Committee (which includes parents, board of education members and faculty members) prior to being approved by the Blue Valley Board of Education. It is based on the National and Kansas Health standards. The purpose of the curriculum is to develop positive attitudes toward health and wellness among our students. The curriculum learning standards can be found at Blue Valley Website (<http://www.bluevalleyk12.org/>) and select Academics – Elementary School – Curriculum - Health.

The content taught in 4th and 5th grade focuses on the topic of human growth and development.

These topics are introduced at age-appropriate levels of understanding. The identification of male and female reproductive parts and functions are part of the intermediate curriculum in grades 4 and 5. This content will be presented separately by both grade and gender. During instruction students are always encouraged to talk with their families about concepts learned in health.

The Growth and Development curriculum will be taught on **Thursday, March 13th, 2025**. You are welcome to contact Nurse Jenn to review the district approved instructional materials that will be presented. If for any reason you choose *not* to have your student participate in the session, please email Nurse Jenn at JAArnoldColeman@bluevalleyk12.org to opt-out.

Thank you for your continued support.

Jenn Arnold Coleman
Nurse

BVEF Champion for Students Award

Do you know a Blue Valley educator who goes above and beyond to cultivate a learning environment where relationships are the cornerstone, where kindness and compassion are guiding principles, and making a profound difference in the lives of young people is not just a goal but a lived reality? Help the Blue Valley Educational Foundation (BVEF) recognize their extraordinary impact by nominating them today for the BVEF annual Champion for Students Award! This \$2,500 BVEF award recognizes three exemplary teachers (one elementary, one middle, and one high) whose impact extends far beyond the learning environment, shaping the trajectory of their students' journeys and leaving an enduring legacy of excellence.

Any member of the Blue Valley Schools' Community (e.g., school administrator, student, family member, staff, etc.) is welcome to submit [one nomination](#) on behalf of an educator (any staff member in Blue Valley Schools - teacher, paraprofessional, administrator, kitchen manager, etc.). The application window will open on February 10th and close on March 7th.

To nominate an educator, complete the [2025 BVEF Champion for Students Award form](#) by Friday, March 7th.

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