

Cougar Connect

October 10, 2025



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Overland Trail Families,

As a friendly reminder, school doors open at **8:25 AM**. Periodically, students are dropped off before the doors are unlocked or staff is present to welcome them. We believe this is an unsafe practice and are asking that parents not drop off their children until our adult staff is on duty at 8:25 AM to provide supervision. The school day 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 identification to have

their child signed in if they arrive later than 8:40 AM.

Additionally, early student pick-ups should occur before **3:00 PM**. Please see the information below from the family handbook regarding early student pickups.

Alternate plans for leaving school:

1. All alternate after-school plan requests must be made in writing or verbally (i.e., note, email, or Pickup Patrol) to the main office at OTEOS@bluevalleyk12.org before 3:00 PM.
2. Please do not email this information to teachers; they are not guaranteed to receive it.
3. Please avoid calling after 3:00 PM; delivery of messages after 3:00 PM is not guaranteed
4. If your child is riding or walking home with a friend, please send a note to your child's teacher and the school office indicating the friend's name and plan for leaving school.
5. To ensure student safety, if we do not have written or verbal consent for alternative plans, your child must be dismissed like parents or caregivers provided at the beginning of the year.

Enjoy the extended weekend, families.

With Cougar pride,
Erica McDonald

Table of Contents

TABLE

OF

CONTENTS

Recurring News:

- Save-the-Date
- Nurse's Note
- ✨Unity Squad✨
- Community Celebrations and Observances
- Parent-Teacher Organization | PTO

Recent News:

- Welcome to OTE | Emily Kaplan, Speech and Language Pathologist
- 🍁🎃 Fall Celebration 🍁🎃
- Calling All Blue Valley Bands

Repeat News

- End of Quarter Information | Viewing Canvas Courses and Quarter Grades
- Kids Heart Challenge is Back!
- Book Fair is Coming | October 14-16
- Fall Pictures
- Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences | Signup
- Visitors During the School Day
- Birthday Policy
- Nut-Safer Guidelines
- Helpful Links (i.e., Kindergarten Tidbits, School Supply Lists, Family Handbook, etc.)

Save-the-Date



October

Friday, October 10: No School EC-12, End of Quarter, PL ½ Day
Grade Prep. ½ Day

Tuesday, October 14– Thursday, October 16: Book Fair Class
Shopping

Tuesday, October 14: Book Fair Family Night I Session 1

Wednesday, October 15: First Grade | Ernie Miller Tipi Field Trip @
OTE

Thursday, October 16: Book Fair Family Night I Session 2

Thursday, October 16: LIFT Field Trip | BV Recreation Center

Thursday, October 17: Kindergarten Field Trip | KC Pumpkin Patch

Friday, October 17: Skate Party

Monday, October 20: PTO Board Meeting; 5:30-6:30 PM

Tuesday, October 21: Fall Conferences; 4:00 PM – 7:40 PM (In-Person or Virtual)

Wednesday, October 22: Fall Conferences; 4:00 PM – 7:40 PM (Virtual Only)

Thursday, October 23: Fall Conferences; 8:20 AM – 3:40 PM (In-Person or Virtual)

Friday, October 24: No School | Fall Break

Friday, October 31: Fall Class Parties

Nurse's Note



Call for Donations

OTE Families,

The nurse's office is in need of gently used **socks** (boys and girls, all sizes) as well as boy's **underwear** in sizes 5-6 and 6-7. If you have any you would like to donate, please have your student drop off items in the health room. Thank you in advance for your donations to OTE!

Nurse Jenn

✨ Unity Squad ✨

Bullying Prevention Month

October is **Bullying Prevention Month**, and as a school community, we are committed to creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where every child feels valued and respected.

This month provides us with an important reminder: kindness, empathy, and respect are choices we can make every day. At school, students are learning strategies to build positive relationships, stand up for themselves and others, and contribute to a culture where everyone belongs. At home, families can join us in reinforcing these lessons by talking about kindness, modeling empathy, and encouraging children to use their voices when they see something that doesn't feel right.

Together, we can ensure that our students grow up in a community that prioritizes safety, compassion, and connection. Thank you for partnering with us in this important work and for continuing to help OTE be a place where every student feels safe, supported, and celebrated.

Communication Observances and Celebrations

- Yom Kippur - the Jewish day of Atonement (Forgiveness). The holiest day of the year starts at sundown on October 1. For some, families may fast for 24 hours, attend services at synagogue, and/or abstain from work, school, activities, and technology use.
- Diwali - October 20 - the festival of lights celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and the human ability to overcome, observed by some Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and others. Some will decorate their homes with lights and rangoli art, exchange gifts, dress in colorful clothing, feast with family, and/or go to temple.
- Down Syndrome Awareness Month - celebrates those with Down syndrome and raises awareness of their abilities and accomplishments. The colors blue and yellow symbolize support for the Down syndrome community.
- Dyslexia Awareness Month - supports students, raises awareness and understanding, and creates and fosters community for the estimated 20% of the population living with dyslexia.
- **Filipino American Month** - celebrates the heritage and achievements of the second-largest Asian American population in the U.S.



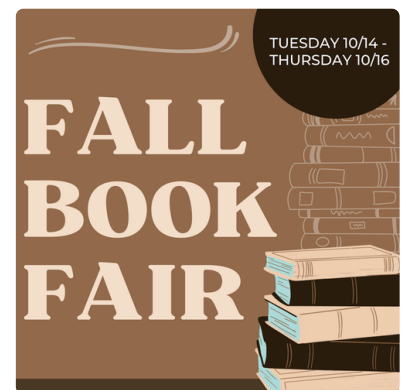
PTO News & Updates

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the OTE Fall Carnival—we hope you had as much fun as we did! As we roll into another exciting month, get ready for the **Book Fair** happening the week of **October 14**, plus our **Papa John's Restaurant Night** on **October 14**—a perfect excuse to skip cooking and support OTE at the same time! Don't forget, our next **PTO Board Meeting** is on **Tuesday, October 15 at 5:30 PM in the OTE Library**, and all parents are welcome to attend. Looking ahead, we're preparing for our **Veterans Day Assembly on November 11**—the form is now live to submit the veterans in your life for inclusion on our Honor Wall and to RSVP to attend this special event.

Book Fair Volunteers Needed!

The OTE Book Fair is coming up the week of **October 14**, and we need your help! We're looking for volunteers to greet families and students, assist with purchases, help with set-up and clean-up, and keep things running smoothly throughout the week.

We especially need volunteers for Family Night on **Tuesday, October 14**, when the fair will be extra busy with evening shoppers and families stopping by!



To see available days and times — and to sign up to volunteer — click the link below.

[Sign Up to Volunteer](#)

Honor Our Veterans—Share Their Story & Join Us for the Assembly

Each year, our PTO proudly hosts a Veterans Day celebration and assembly to honor the brave men and women who have served in the military. **This year's assembly will be held on Tuesday, November 11th.** As part of this tradition, we invite families to submit information about the veterans in their lives to be displayed on our school's Honor Wall, ensuring their service and sacrifices are recognized by our community. Additionally, families can RSVP to attend the Veterans Day Assembly alongside their honored veteran(s). To ensure a smooth and meaningful experience for all, advanced registration is required for all attendees. Please **complete the form linked below by Monday, November 3rd** to share your veteran's story and reserve your spot at this special event.



[Veteran's Day Honor Wall and Celebration Form](#)

We'd also love your help in making this celebration extra special. Volunteers are needed to assist with set-up before the assembly, help during the event and reception, and support clean-up afterward. Whether you can lend a hand for an hour or stay for the morning, your time and energy will help us create a warm, welcoming, and memorable experience for our veterans and their families.

[Sign Up to Volunteer](#)

Calling All 5th Grade Families! Help Make the End-of-Year Celebration Unforgettable

Our 5th graders are raising the funds needed for their end-of-year celebration on **Friday, May 15th** at OTE! Instead of selling products, we're asking for **direct donations and sponsorships** to reach our **\$3,500 goal**, which will fully cover all celebration expenses for every student.



Planned activities include a **DJ, snacks and treats, a photo booth, yard games, a keepsake gift, a slideshow, and an epic foam party**—all depending on how close we get to our goal.

If donations exceed \$3,500, the remaining funds will be used for a **gift to OTE in honor of the graduating class**.

Every donation helps! Families, friends, and local businesses can contribute by sharing this fundraiser link. **Donations are accepted through November 1st.**

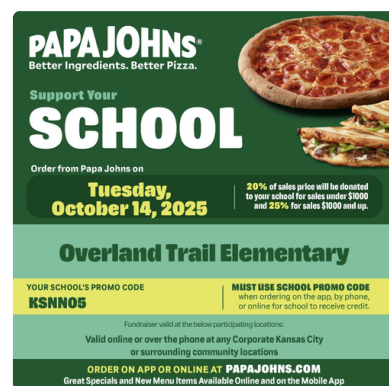
Donate here: www.otepto.org/celebrate

Restaurant Night at Papa Johns

Tuesday, October 14

Skip the cooking and order dinner from Papa Johns to support the Overland Trail Elementary PTO! Mention promo code **KSNN05** when ordering in person, on the app, by phone or online and 20% of your purchase will be donated back to our PTO.

Order from any Kansas City area Papa Johns for orders to qualify!



Donate to the Class Celebration Fund

Help us make classroom celebrations and staff appreciation events extra special this year! Your donation to the Classroom Fund supports:

- Three PTO-sponsored classroom celebrations (Halloween, Winter, Valentine's)
- American Education Week recognition
- Teacher Appreciation Week festivities



All donations are collected by grade level to ensure consistency and equity across classrooms. If a grade does not meet its budgeted goal, the PTO will subsidize the difference so that every student receives the same experience.

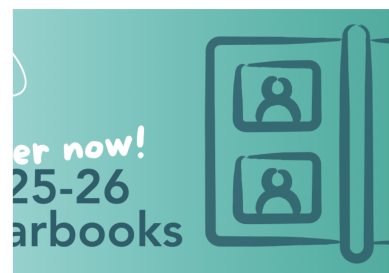
✧ Please note: These funds will not be used for teacher birthday or holiday gifts.

Thank you for your generosity and support in making Overland Trail Elementary a joyful and inclusive place for all students and staff!

[Donate Now](#)

Yearbooks

Yearbooks for the 25–26 school year are only available for purchase at otepto.org/yearbook. OTE yearbooks are no longer purchased through ParentVue. Yearbooks can be purchased at any time throughout the school year! Parents can also upload photos to be used in the yearbook anytime at otepto.org/upload.



Birthday Marquee

Make your child's birthday month extra special with their name in lights on the OTE Birthday Marquee! Limited spots remain for this school year—purchase at otepto.org/birthdaymarquee.



Welcome to OTE | Emily Kaplan, Speech and Language Pathologist

🍁🍷 Fall Celebration 🍁🍷

On Friday, October 31, we will have our school-wide fall celebration. We are excited to welcome our families to the school parade, but due to space constraints, we will only have Room Parents and up to three volunteers per class to enter the building to facilitate class parties. Additionally, we discourage siblings who do not attend OTE from attending. Please look forward to communication from your room parents soon, which will provide more details about volunteering for this year's class celebrations.

Food

Provided food must come from our district-approved [Nut-Safer Guide](#). Please refrain from bringing homemade items for class celebrations. Additionally, goodie bags will need to be non-edible. Any edible goodie bags received will be returned.

Costumes | All students look forward to the Halloween Celebration; we have specific guidelines for these parties.

1. At classroom parties where costumes may be worn, violent or gory costumes are unacceptable.
2. Costumes should not take away from instructional time. If a costume distracts the student and others, the student will be asked to go to the nurse to change.
3. No costume "weapons" or look-alike weapons may be brought to school, e.g., light sabers, swords, or toy guns.
4. Costumes will be worn to school and should not depict violence or gore.
5. Students should have costumes that do not require time-consuming assistance with makeup, dressing, etc. Also, masks and face paint should not be worn or brought to school.
6. Costumes must adhere to the Blue Valley dress code policy, as outlined in BOE policy 3513.

Halloween Parade and Celebration

2:00 PM | Room Parents and Volunteers Check-In

- Room parents will check in at the front doors of the school with identification, receive a "Visitor" sticker, and proceed to the playground for the parade. We will ask for all items to be held at the front for room parents and volunteers to grab upon entrance to the building from the parade.

2:15 PM | Parade

- We will have a school-wide parade that includes the fifth grade leading all grade levels out the bus-cut doors, walking on the west side of the Early Childhood playground, and circling the track counterclockwise before entering the exterior gym doors. Families are invited to watch the parade from the field.

2:45 PM | Room Parents Enter

- Room parents and three volunteers for each class will be invited to begin setting up for the class party. Entry will require the "Visitor" sticker received upon arrival. Room parents will facilitate communication with your families to gather volunteers for this year's celebrations.

2:55 PM-3:25 PM | Class Celebration

- The class celebration will consist of one game or craft and treats. Only room parents and their designated volunteers are invited to attend the class celebration. Room parents and volunteers will submit dismissal changes through Pick Up Patrol, if applicable. Additionally, please sign out on the provided sign-out sheet located in the room you are supporting.

Calling All Blue Valley Bands

One of BVEF's signature annual events is an adult night out to raise funds for district performing arts programming. This is our 14th year for Battle of the Bands, and the date is set for Friday, February 20, 2026, at Fiorella's in OP. This casual night is full of fun with food, auction items, and live music where adult bands battle it out to be **Blue Valley's Best Band!**



We are now accepting nominations for adult bands to participate. If you are in a band, or know a staff member who is, please reach out to Cindy McAlister cmcalister@bluevalleyk12.org or 913-239-4053 with contact details. ***If interested, please reply by November 1, 2025.***

Thanks for helping us **Rock the Valley for Education** and stay tuned for more information about this great over-21 night out!

End of Quarter 1 | Report Cards

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.

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.

Kids Heart Challenge is Back!

Dear Families,

Kids Heart Challenge is underway, and our school is excited about feeling good while doing good! Overland Trail Elementary is helping kids with special hearts through Kids Heart Challenge. We want as many families as possible to learn about heart health and the lifesaving skill of Hands-Only CPR.

You can help by completing Finn's Mission. When your student completes all the steps, they'll earn a Lifesavers Cape and earn a chance to win two tickets to Super Bowl LXI in 2027! Sign up today at http://www2.heart.org/site/TR?fr_id=12398&pg=company&company_id=520921 or by using the AHA Schools app.



Thank you,

Kilee Dahl

Physical Education Teacher

Book Fair is Coming | October 14-16

The OTE Fall Book Fair is taking place October 14th through October 16th. Students will have a chance to shop during the day on one of the days that week. There are also two family shopping nights, Tuesday (10/14) and Wednesday (10/15). Your child will be given a wish list paper to fill out

during the class shopping time in case you are saving book fair shopping for a family night event or online.

For easy shopping and checkout, set up an e-wallet for your child using the QR code on the flyer sent home and also attached to our newsletter. Non-book items such as toys and journals will not be available for purchase during school shopping hours but can be purchased during family nights.

The book fair needs parent volunteers to run smoothly. Please consider volunteering to help with the event on the PTO website.

Fall Pictures

Dear Parents,

School pictures are ready! To order, log in to your account on mylifetouch.com or create an account using your student's student ID number.

All families can also log on and order a FREE Digital SmileSafe card. More about the Smilesafe program [here](#).

Picture Re-Take Day is November 4, 2025.

Thank you,
LifeTouch Photography

Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences | Signup



Overland Trail Elementary Parents and Guardians,

At Overland Trail Elementary, our goal is to partner with each family to ensure we are providing the best possible learning experience for students. Our teaching staff is committed to meeting with every parent during fall conferences, and we look

forward to these important conversations.

Conference Schedule

- **Tuesday, October 21** | 4:00 PM – 7:40 PM (In-Person or Virtual)
- **Wednesday, October 22** | 4:00 PM – 7:40 PM (Virtual Only)
- **Thursday, October 23** | 8:20 AM – 3:40 PM (In-Person or Virtual)

Scheduling Window

Families may sign up for conferences from **Monday, September 15, through Wednesday, October 15**. If you miss this scheduling window, please consult directly with your child's teacher to arrange a time during the district-provided conference days.

Please click [here](#) to learn how to reserve a time with both general education and specialists (Art, P.E., Music, and Spanish) teachers through ParentVue.

We look forward to connecting with you!

Best,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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.

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](#)

District Calendar | 2025-2026

Family Handbook

Overland Trail Elementary's Homepage



BV Nut Safe Guidelines | 25-26 Translation

[drive.google.com](#)

Safe Schools Reporting

School Supply Lists



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