

Cougar Connect

October 3, 2025



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Overland Trail Families,

We are so excited for the school carnival this weekend—it's one of the best times of the year! 🎉 We hope you and your children can join us for an afternoon of games, food, and lots of laughter. The carnival is a wonderful chance for students to play and explore, while families connect with one another and celebrate our amazing community.

We can't wait to see our students showing off their skills at the games, enjoying sweet treats, and making special memories with their friends. These moments of joy and connection are what make OTE such a great place to learn and grow.

Wishing each of you a fantastic weekend filled with fun, family time, and, of course, a little carnival magic. ✨

With Cougar pride,
Erica McDonald
Principal

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Save-the-Date



October

Saturday, October 4: School Carnival; 2:00-5:00 PM

Tuesday, October 7: Fifth Grade Field Trip | Arrowhead Stadium

Wednesday, October 8: Community Service; 3:45-4:30

Thursday, October 9: Kindergarten Field Trip | Deanna Rose Farmstead

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

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

Thursday, October 16: Book Fair Donuts with Grown Ups*

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

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 ✨

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.

**BLOWING
OUT SOMEONE ELSE'S
CANDLE
DOESN'T MAKE YOURS
SHINE ANY
BRIGHTER**



Anti-Bullying Quotes via Gecko & Fly



PTO News & Updates

It's a busy and exciting month at OTE! 🎉 Our **Fall Carnival is tomorrow**—one of the biggest community events of the year—and we can't wait to see you there. Didn't pre-order? No problem—wristbands and tickets will be available for purchase at the main entrance when you arrive. Looking ahead, join us for **Papa John's Restaurant Night on October 14** and don't miss the **Book Fair, October 14–16** (we'll need plenty of volunteers to help make it a success!). And mark your calendars for our next **PTO Board**

Meeting on Monday, October 15 at 5:30 pm in the OTE Library—all parents are welcome!

🎮 Level Up! OTE Fall Carnival

Get ready, Cougars—it's almost time to **LEVEL UP!** 🎉 The OTE Fall Carnival is happening **Saturday, October 4 from 2:00–5:00 pm at Overland Trail Elementary**, and you won't want to miss it! Bring the whole family for an afternoon packed with **games, inflatables, treats, raffles, music, and maybe even a few surprises along the way**. Didn't pre-order? No problem—wristbands and tickets will be available for purchase at the main entrance when you arrive.

🌟 Don't miss one of the biggest community events of the year—come play, explore, and celebrate with your OTE Cougar family!

👉 [Find all the details on the PTO Carnival Page](#)

Volunteer & Power Up the Carnival!

The **OTE Fall Carnival is TOMORROW**, and we still need volunteers to help make it a success! 🎉 From inflatables and concessions to carnival classics, every game and station needs helping hands.

Parents, older siblings, and students are all welcome—middle schoolers, high schoolers, and even 5th graders can join in and earn official service hours (PTO will gladly sign off for National Honor Society or other programs).

Just an hour of your time makes a huge difference. Sign up today and help us power up one of the biggest and most exciting events of the year!

👉 [Click here to volunteer](#)



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!



Book Fair Volunteers Needed!

The OTE Book Fair is coming up the week of October 14 and we need your help! We are looking for volunteers to help with greeting families and students, assisting students with purchases, helping with set-up/clean-up, and keeping things running smoothly throughout the book fair. To see the available days/times and sign up to volunteer, click the link below.

[Sign Up to Volunteer](#)



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 | Gina Avitia, Occupational Therapist

National Bullying Prevention Month

October marks National Bullying Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness and highlight strategies that help schools create safer environments. Bullying remains a significant concern, especially with the rise of new digital platforms. To help address bullying in schools, all 50 states have adopted anti-bullying legislation that requires schools to develop and implement a policy prohibiting bullying.

Click here to view [Overland Trail Elementary's Anti-Bullying Plan](#).

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,

Your mission starts Monday! Kids Heart Challenge is back and we're ready to become lifesavers! Check your students' backpack for a flyer with a QR code to sign up TODAY and learn Hands-Only CPR, the warning signs of a stroke and help kids with special hearts by completing Finn's Mission! Download the AHA Schools app for [iPhone](#) or [Android](#) and sign up! Next, send 10 emails or texts to family and friends asking for their support! Once you complete Finn's Mission you'll receive your own lifesavers cape and be entered to win Super Bowl LXI tickets in 2027!



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.

Blue Valley North Homecoming Parade | October 8



Come to the Blue Valley North Homecoming Parade this Wednesday, October 8th. Feeder school students with their families are encouraged to come cheer for the Mustangs along the route and to enjoy the food trucks!

When: October 8

Time: 6:15 PM-7:15ish

What: Watch the BVN Parade and grab a bite to eat from the food trucks (Hot Dog King, Kona Ice, and Chic Fil A). See the map for parade route and food trucks.

School Pictures are Ready!

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

Support-A-Cougar | Opt In Form

Dear Overland Trail Elementary Families,

Overland Trail Elementary is committed to ensuring that every student has the resources and support needed to reach their full potential both in school and within the community. We strive to foster a culture where success is celebrated and challenges are met with care and collaboration.

Support-A-Cougar is a program designed to assist families who may be experiencing financial uncertainty due to life stressors or unforeseen circumstances. Our hope is that this additional

support will positively impact the well-being of our students and strengthen the sense of community that defines Overland Trail.

If you believe your child may benefit from Support-A-Cougar, please complete this confidential [Google Form](#) to opt in and be considered for support. Responses will be seen only by our school's social worker and counselor, ensuring your privacy is respected.

If you have any questions about Support-A-Cougar, please contact our school social worker, Heather Meinking, at 913.239.7029 or HMeinking@bluevalleyk12.org.

If you are interested in receiving assistance in one or more of the following areas, please click [here](#) to proceed.

- Food
- School Supplies
- Carnival
- Class Parties
- Book Fair
- December | Holidays
- Yearbook

Warm regards,
Heather Meinking
Social Worker

SchoolCash Online | Fall Field Trips

New this year, field trips will be charged individually for each trip unlike in previous years when the entire year of field trips were charged for and paid at one time during registration. You can now conveniently pay for field trips through SchoolCash Online. When accessing SchoolCash Online, you will only see the **fall semester field trips** ready for payment. The **spring semester field trips** will be available for payment starting January 1, 2026.

SCHOOLCASH ONLINE

- Blue Valley Schools is excited to introduce [SchoolCash Online](#) — a convenient, secure way for families and students to pay online for certain non-Board of Education fees. Introduced during the 2025–26 school year, this new platform reduces cash and check handling in schools, and it offers families and students a convenient, secure way to pay online.

Please contact the Overland Trail Elementary office for questions.

Phone: (913) 239-7000

Email: oteos@bluevalleyk12.org

BV Well/BV Father's Club

Save the Date: BV Well Fall Programs for Parents

Parents - don't miss the Fall lineup of **BV Well programs**, brought to you by the Blue Valley Educational Foundation. These free events are designed to support student and family well-being through expert-led workshops, resources, and meaningful conversations. This Fall's programs include a [suicide prevention event](#) with our Father's Clubs as well as a workshop on [executive function skills for parents](#) with expert Sarah Ward. [Check out the schedule and register today.](#)



FALL 2025 PROGRAMS



SEPT 21	SPEAK UP WALK 2025 Walk to support vital mental health services in our schools
STARTS WITH US	Prevention Month program with Father's Club SEPT 30
OCT 7	STARTING STRONG ELEMENTARY Executive function skills for K-5 parents with Sarah Ward
YOUTH MHFA TRAINING	Mental Health First Aid training for parents and caregivers NOV 12-13



Learn more and register at WWW.FUNDBV.ORG/BVWELL

Starting Strong (Elementary): A Parent's Guide to Executive Function Skills

Tuesday, October 7, 6:00 – 7:30 pm


Hilltop Conference Center 7710 W 143rd St Overland Park KS

Kick off the school year with confidence! As part of **BV Well's Starting Strong series**, this special program features internationally recognized executive function expert **Sarah Ward**. In this practical session focused on Elementary aged learner, Sarah will share proven strategies to help your student develop essential executive function skills including time management, organization, task initiation, and focus. You'll walk away with tools you can use at home to support your child in managing homework, reducing distractions, and staying on track throughout the school year. Whether your child struggles with structure or you simply want to help them thrive, this session will give you the insight and tools to help them start strong.


Starting STRONG
ELEMENTARY EDITION
TUESDAY OCTOBER 7 | 6-7:30PM
HILLTOP CONFERENCE CENTER | FREE

STARTING ELEMENTARY STRONG
A Parent's Guide to Executive Function Skills



Kick off the school year with confidence! Join internationally recognized executive function expert **Sarah Ward** to learn proven strategies to help your Elementary student manage homework, reduce distractions, and stay on track all year.

REGISTER NOW!



Register at fundbv.org/bvwell or scan the

Sarah Ward, MS, CC/SLP is the Co-Director of Cognitive Connections. A popular speaker, Sarah regularly presents workshops on the programs and strategies she has developed including the "revolutionary" and "groundbreaking" 360 Thinking Program. She has presented to and consulted with over 2,000 schools worldwide.

Reporting Religious Absences

Select A Reason

Funeral/Bereavement

College Visit

Family Emergency

Illness

Injury

Medical Appointment

Personal

Religious Holiday

Save

Did you know? Families can select "Religious Holiday" as an option for a child's absence in ParentVue, when applicable. This notation could be helpful to our school staff so they can plan accordingly for your student's absence.

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](#)



Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters