

Cougar Connect

September 26, 2025



A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Overland Trail Families,

It's almost time to **Level Up!** at the OTE Fall Carnival. Every person attending the carnival will need a wristband—students, siblings, parents, and guests—so be sure to pre-order yours today.

Overland Trail Elementary students can grab a **Player One Pack**, which includes their wristband, t-shirt, swag bag, and XP Tickets for our special attractions. For younger siblings not yet in elementary school, pick up a **Little Gamer Band**. Parents, grandparents, middle schoolers, and high schoolers get in with a free **Sidekick Band**—just make sure to order one for each family member. For more information regarding how to sponsor, volunteer, or participate in the school carnival, click [here](#).

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 Parents: The nurse's office is in need of gently used **socks** (for both boys and girls in 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!



✨ Unity Squad ✨

Community Celebrations and Observances

Community Celebrations and Observances - to promote awareness and appreciation of our Blue Valley families.

Some September Celebrations & Observances:



- Hunger Action Month - dedicated to taking action to end hunger. The BV Food Pantry, located at Hilltop Conference Center, is available to all Blue Valley community members. Click this [LINK](#) to make an appointment.
- Milad Un-Nabi, also known as Mawlid - the evening of September 4th through September 5, is an Islamic holiday to commemorate the birth of Prophet Muhammad. Some Muslim families will gather to recite the Prophet's teachings, decorate their homes with lights, and/or prepare a feast which is served to guests and the poor.
- National Hispanic Heritage Month - September 15 to October 15 celebrates the history, diverse cultures, achievements, and contributions of individuals with Hispanic and Latino heritage.
- Constitution Day - The United States commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787.
- Rosh Hashanah - the Jewish New Year. Observance begins at sundown on September 22 and continues through the evening of September 24. For some, families will attend services at synagogue, eat apples and honey for a sweet new year, and/or abstain from work, school, activities, and technology use.

Parent-Teacher Organization | PTO



Thank you to everyone who came out for our Community Service meeting this past Wednesday and to those who supported our Chipotle Restaurant Night—we had a great turnout at both! 🎉

Our Fall Carnival is just three weeks away—don't forget you have one more week to pre-order your carnival tickets before prices go up at the door.

We'll also be holding our next PTO Board Meeting this Monday, September 15, from 5:30–6:30 PM in the OTE Library. All parents are welcome and encouraged to attend—we'd love to see you there!

Level Up! Carnival Pre-Order Store is LIVE!

It's almost time to **Level Up!** at the OTE Fall Carnival, and we've got everything you need right here. Every person attending the carnival will need a wristband—students, siblings, parents, and guests—so be sure to pre-order yours today.

OTE students can grab a **Player One Pack**, which includes their wristband, t-shirt, swag bag, and XP Tickets for our special attractions. For younger siblings not yet in elementary school, pick up a **Little Gamer Band**. Parents, grandparents, middle schoolers, and high schoolers get in with a free **Sidekick Band**—just make sure to order one for each family member.



Carnival Sponsors Needed

The Overland Trail Elementary PTO is excited to host our annual **Fall Carnival on Saturday, October 4, 2025!** This year's theme, *"Level Up,"* promises an unforgettable night of fun for our school community while serving as one of the PTO's biggest fundraisers of the year. We are actively seeking sponsors and donors to help make this event a success. By partnering with us, you'll not only promote your business to hundreds of local families but also directly support the **20+ PTO committees** that enrich the lives of OTE students, families, and staff. Every contribution—big or small—makes a difference. Click below to see sponsorship opportunities outlined and sponsor today.



Learn More and Sponsor: www.otepto.org/carnival-sponsors

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.

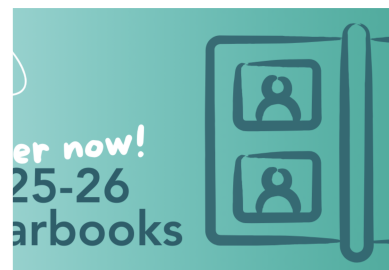
✧ Please note: These funds will not be used for teacher birthday or holiday gifts.

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 | Colett Berak, Special Education Consultant

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

Safe Schools Reporting

Blue Valley Schools is committed to promoting and fostering a safe environment in and around all our schools. We are continuously working to prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from a wide range of situations. Please check out [available ways to report safety concerns](#).

KAP + Fall | ParentVue

Hello, Blue Valley Families!

We hope this email finds you well!

We wanted to share that student assessment scores (Acadience, Fastbridge, iReady, KAP) are now available in ParentVue. For click-by-click directions on accessing the scores, please click [here](#).

For descriptions of each test and their purpose, we encourage consultation of the interpretation guides on the [district assessment page](#). (NOTE: The interpretation guide for “KAP - 2025 & beyond” references more detailed score reports being available in the KITE Parent Portal. Those should become available by the end of September.)

If translated versions of the interpretation guides are needed, please click [here](#).

Best,
Adam Wade
Director of Academic Programs & Accountability

Room Parent Communication Opt-Out Form

Room Parents support teachers and students by coordinating class celebrations and activities and will use email to share updates with families. If you prefer not to receive these emails, please complete the [Room Parent Communication Opt-Out Form](#) by **Friday, September 26**.

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 Suicide 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	

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

It Starts With Us: Supporting Youth Mental Health at Home and in School

Tuesday, September 30, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Hilltop Conference Center 7710 W 143rd St Overland Park KS

In recognition of Suicide Prevention Month, **BV Well** is partnering with [Father's Club](#) on a powerful evening focused on supporting student mental health— both at home and in the classroom. This event will bring together Blue Valley staff, parents, and local experts from organizations including **Johnson County Mental Health**, **Keep the Spark Alive**, **Sources of Strength**, and **GiveMe20**. Together, we'll explore practical tools, trusted resources, and real-world strategies to help you support your child's emotional well-being.

[Register here.](#)



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 6:00 PM
HILLTOP COMMUNITY CENTER

IT STARTS WITH US:
SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL

JOIN BV WELL AND FATHER'S CLUB FOR A POWERFUL EVENING FOCUSED ON SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

REGISTER AT FUNDBV.ORG/BVWELL

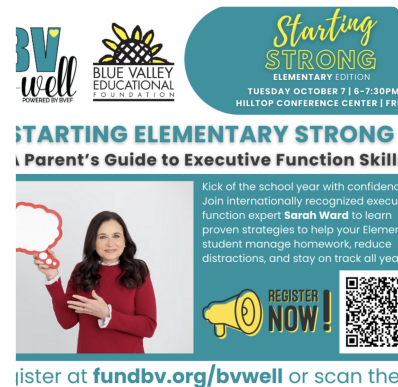


Starting Strong (Elementary): A Parent's Guide to Executive Function Skills

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
Parent's Guide to Executive Function Skills

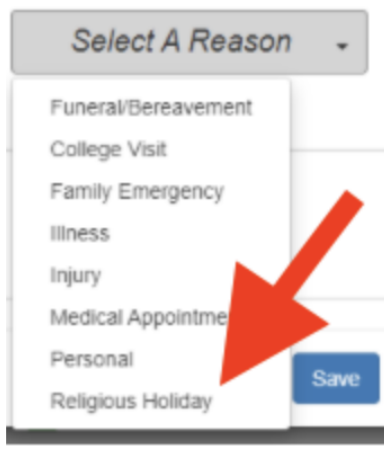
Kick off the school year with confidence! Join internationally recognized executive function expert **Sarah Ward** to learn proven strategies to help your Elementary student manage homework, reduce distractions, and stay on track all year long.

REGISTER NOW!

Register at fundbv.org/bvwell or scan the QR code

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.

Little Mustangs Cheer Clinic

Registry for this year's Little Mustang Cheer Clinic & Halftime Performance is now open! The clinic will be hosted on Saturday, September 20 at North, and the performance will take place on Friday, September 26 during the BVN Football game at the DAC Field. An exciting change for this year, all Little Mustangs will join the BVN Cheerleaders for a halftime performance on the field under the Friday Night Lights! We can't wait to cheer on the Mustangs with you! [Click the link or scan the QR code to register now!](#) Go Mustangs!



NOW OPEN TO 6TH GRADERS!

Little Mustangs Cheer Clinic & Halftime Performance
Come cheer with the BVN cheerleaders!

CLINIC @ BVN - SAT. 9/20
TAILGATE & PERFORMANCE @ DAC - FRI. 9/26

SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER
COST:
\$90 BY 8/31
\$100 ON OR AFTER 9/1

cheer

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



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](#)



Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters