

Cougar Connect

December 1, 2023



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STAY IN THE KNOW!

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A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear families,



Our team wants to express our sincere gratitude for the delicious lunch provided for American Education Week on Friday, November 17, from the PTO and specific members, Lindsay Persell and Sarah Wiedeman. Our hearts remain full of the support and love you provide. Thank you, PTO and families.

Also, before the break, third-grade students performed an adorable "Go Fish" musical led by Mrs. Katie Stroud, our music teacher. From the uniquely designed costumes to the comical script, it was quite an enjoyable show and an excellent job well done.

Fantastic work, Mrs. Stroud and the third-grade students! A few moments were captured; take a peek at the glimpses above.

Lastly, don't forget that **Monday, December 4 is Picture Retake Day**. I hope this first weekend of December treats you well, families.

Sincerely,
Erica McDonald
Principal



Winter Break

Save-the-Date

Monday, December 4: Picture Retake Day

Monday, December 11: PTO Restaurant Night | Torchy's Tacos, 10:00 AM-9:00 PM

Friday, December 15: Birthday Book Lunch: November, December, and June Birthdays

Wednesday, December 20: Jingle Bell Assembly; 10:15 AM | Half Day Dismissal; 11:45 AM | End of Quarter 2 | End of First Semester

Thursday, December 21-Sunday, December 31: No School |



PTO Events | December

PTO Calendar of Events

For a complete list of all upcoming PTO events, visit [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Upcoming Events \(otento.org\)](#)

Donate to Holiday SUPPORT A COUGAR



Last Call for Support a Cougar Holiday Drive

A few hours remain to donate to the Support a Cougar (SAC) Holiday Drive! SAC is a PTO-led program that supports our OTE Cougars in need ALL YEAR. Our annual Holiday Drive allows us to provide gifts and financial support to our OTE Community in need during the Holidays. We do this through Target gift cards and NEW books and games donations. There's still time to contribute financially: <https://www.otepto.org/sac>. Your generosity is appreciated!



OTE Event at Code Ninjas – December 9th

A fun NEW PTO fundraising event is coming up! Sign your student up for TWO HOURS of engaging STEM activities at Code Ninjas. 50% of the registration fee will be donated back to the PTO to support OTE. This is available for 2nd through 5th graders. Students may be dropped off at Code Ninjas for the duration of this event. Feel free to invite your kids' friends too, simply use this link for more info and to register! Registration is required to attend this event. <https://cn.mystudio.io/e/?>

[=LWCN/109/80760//1701109156](https://www.otepto.org/sac)

★ DEI Spotlight

For December, various holidays are celebrated worldwide, and many are observed among our families here at Overland Trail Elementary. Seeing how the staff has planned to engage with students to embrace and honor our cultural differences is fun. We welcome families to share how they plan to celebrate this December-January with the team. If you would like to send pictures, food, artifacts, etc., we would love to allow students to share more about themselves.



Classroom Winter Celebrations

Dear families,

Please look forward to information from room parents regarding volunteers. Similar to the Halloween Celebration, participation on this day will only be open to room parents and the assigned volunteers.

Jingle Bell Assembly: 10:15-10:45 (Staff and Students)

Winter Parties: 10:45-11:25 (Staff, Students, Room Parents, and Volunteers)

Half Day Dismissal Preparation and Dismissal: 11:25-11:45

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Erica McDonald
Principal



Half-Day Dismissal Times for Dec. 20

There are two half-day dismissal times for MS and ES during the school year at the end of each semester. Here are the half day dismissal times on these half days–10:50am for MS and 11:45am for ES.

*Note: HS dismissal time on Dec. 20 is 10:25 am. Durham will consolidate bus routes and plan ahead to make the times work for all levels.

What is New in the Art Studio?

OTE Parents and Caregivers,

I often get asked, “What can I do to help in art class?” We will be doing a lot of fun projects this spring that require unusual materials. Below is a list of items we would love to have donated. I’m sure a lot of you have these items already and would love to get rid of them. If you would like to contribute, you may send the items in with your child.

- Wire Coat Hangers
- 4x4 inch wood squares that are about 1 inch thick. (about 80)
- Fake Flowers (old, new, used)
- Old Crayons (any)
- Cupcake Pans (Small)
- Cookie Sheets (small)
- Toaster Oven (So I can bake more sculpey at one time.)
- Sharpies
- Cookie Cutters
- Scrapbooking Paper – Patterns especially, but we can use any
- Paint Swatches (like you are ready to choose colors for your living room)

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/30MEKGIT90BCJ?ref_=wl_share

Mr. Van Leeuwen

Art

Out of the Country Information

☞ ✈ This important message is for any family or staff that will **travel out of the United States** during school breaks. [Click here](#) to read the restrictions and recommendations for out of the country travel. Canvas, Classlink, and email are not accessible out of the country unless you have a **personal device** with a VPN on it.



We do not recommend BV Devices leave the country.

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

Some December Celebrations & Observances:



- Universal Human Rights Month - people all across the globe are encouraged to come together and stand up for equality, justice, and the dignity of all humans.
- **International Day of People with Disabilities** - December 3 - a day to celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with disabilities, promote an understanding of disability issues, and mobilize support for the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of people

with disabilities.

- **Hanukkah** - evening of December 7 - evening of December 15 - an eight-day Jewish festival of lights. Some Jewish families will celebrate by lighting a Menorah and eating foods cooked in oil.
- **Christmas** - December 25- a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Some Christian families will celebrate by attending church services and exchanging gifts
- **Kwanzaa** - December 26 - January 1 - a seven-day African-American holiday celebrating culture, family, and community. For some, celebrations may include song, dance, storytelling, and a large traditional meal.

Holiday Assistance



Do you need some assistance in purchasing items for the upcoming holidays? If so, consider seeking support at one of the local area organizations providing assistance. Click the links below for more details and online applications.

[Johnson County Christmas Bureau](#)

[Salvation Army](#)

Select A Reason

- Funeral/Bereavement
- College Visit
- Family Emergency
- Illness
- Injury
- Medical Appointment
- Personal
- Religious Holiday

Save

Reporting Religious Absences

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.

Important Travel Outside of the USA

This important message is for any family or staff that will **travel out of the United States** during the school year. Please [click here](#) to read the restrictions and recommendations for Out of the Country travel. Blue Valley resources such as Canvas, Classlink, and school email are not accessible out of the country unless you have a **personal device** with a **VPN** on it.

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 [here](#).

School Supply Lists

District Calendar (2023-2024)

Overland Trail Elementary's Homepage

Family Handbook



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Alicia Anderson, Assistant Principal

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Office Staff

- Robin Warren, Administration Assistant/Bookkeeper
- Yolonda Merritt, Administration Assistant/Registrar
- Debby Alexander, Attendance

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Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters