

Cougar Connect

December 8, 2023



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A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear families,

We were graced with beautiful days this week and are grateful for the comfortable time spent outdoors.

As we enter winter weather, please remember to wear your child in the proper attire for outdoor recess. Regarding needing additional cold weather attire, our lost and found has grown substantially in the last few weeks. Reminding your child to sweep through for any lost belongings will be helpful. Unclaimed items are donated after

a duration of time.

Thank you, Amy Moss, PTO President for devoting your time and effort to creating a fun and interactive bulletin board that represents our OTE family. Take a peek at her wonderful work above the Newsletter Table of Contents; staff and students are excited about the unique and fun addition!

A U K E I N U S

Before you take off for the weekend, please attend to the important information below regarding crosswalk changes and the staff spirit week, Seven Days of Celebration.

I hope you have a tremendous weekend, families!

Sincerely,
Erica McDonald
Principal



Save-the-Date

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 | Winter Break



PTO Events | December

PTO Calendar of Events

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



Last Chance to Register - 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>



Get Pre-Registered for Trivia Night

The PTO is putting on OTE's first annual Trivia Night & Auction this spring. This will be one of the biggest fundraising events of the year, and its sure to be a fun one! Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 6th, 2024. ***This event is anticipated to sell out, so we are offering a pre-registration option starting NOW for Team and Individual registration.*** Pre-registering simply puts you first in line to secure a spot when registration opens in January. Need more info? We've got you covered! Click below to get all the

details and to lock in your pre-registration. [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Trivia Night \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org).

It's Taco Monday

Grab a bite at Torchy's Tacos this Monday, 12/11 from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and help support OTE. Let them know you're there for the OTE fundraiser, place a dine in or carry out order and 15% of OTE Sales will be donated back to our school. Torchy's Tacos: 6815 W 135th St.



★ 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

Alicia Anderson
Assistant Principal

Seven Days of Celebration

OTE families,

Each year, our staff participates in a spirit week called the Seven Days of Celebration. We invite students to participate, as they wish. If you would like to bring your teacher a pastry on Monday, feel free to join in on the fun! Please see the infographic below on how we plan to begin our Seven Days of Celebration next Monday, December 11.

Erica McDonald



Crosswalk Changes for the AM and PM

Dear families,

Last week, I sent an email informing you that the crossing guard will now be standing at the roundabout morning and afternoon. The guard will no longer be at the tennis court crosswalk due to All City Management Services policy. Pedestrians are encouraged to now go to the roundabout crosswalk and not use the former crosswalk by the tennis court.

I have shared many of your concerns regarding this change with the Overland Park Police Department; however, upon their review, this is the plan that will remain in place.

If your child is used to crossing at the tennis court crosswalk, please prepare them for this change.

Thank you,

Erica McDonald



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.

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](#)

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.

Select A Reason ▾

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

Save

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



Erica McDonald, Principal

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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

Website: www.bluevalleyk12.org/OTE

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Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters

