

Cougar Connect

November 10, 2023



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A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear families,

Our staff and students had a busy week that ended in a celebratory manner. Many of our staff members submitted grant applications to the Blue Valley Educational Foundation, seeking to purchase various resources to enhance teaching and learning. We had a wonderful time celebrating the acceptance of these grants with the Blue Valley Educational Foundation. You can get a glimpse of the joy shared below.

Our staff and students honored local Veterans on this special day through an honorary celebration. We appreciate the PTO Veterans Day Committee's planning and added efforts to host a warm and celebratory event.

A Message from PTO

Reserved PTO Parking Spots: There are four parking spots in the south playground parking lot with reserved parking signs. OTE families purchased these spots at the annual PTO Auction, with those proceeds benefitting the OTE PTO. Please refrain from parking in those marked spots so the families that reserved them through their donations can utilize them this school year. The good news is, if you are interested in one of these parking spots, they will be up for bidding again during the PTO Spring Trivia Night and Auction on Saturday, April 6th. We'd love to see you there--thank you!

I wish you a celebratory Veterans Day weekend, families!

Sincerely,
Erica McDonald
Principal



Save-the-Date

Friday, November 10: Veteran's Assembly at 9:00 AM | Reception at 10:00 AM

Friday, November 10: Family Bingo for Books | 6:00-8:00

Saturday, November 11: Garden Club Event | 10:00

Monday, November 13-Friday, November 17: American Education Week

Thursday, November 16: Third Grade Music Program; Dress Rehearsal 2:30 PM; Performance 7:00 PM (OTMS)

Monday, November 20-Thursday, November 24: Thanksgiving Break

Friday, December 1: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

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 | Winter Break



PTO Events | November

PTO Calendar of Events

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



Garden Club Event – TOMORROW, November 11th at 10:00 a.m.

Help get OTE's landscaping ready for winter! This is a family event. Our Garden Club leaders will provide instructions, no previous experience needed. And bonus, McLain's Bakery is donating cookies to help fuel our volunteers. Click [HERE](#) to RSVP!



Support a Cougar Holiday Drive – Support Cougars in Need

Support a Cougar (SAC) Holiday Drive is ON! 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. If so, you may donate in any of the following ways:

Financial Contributions made online: <https://www.otepto.org/sac>
Bringing in new Books and/or Games to the collection bins at OTE

The donation deadline is 12/1

****If you're an OTE family in need of support for the holidays, please contact the OTE Social Worker, Lacey Koester - lkoester@bluevalleyk12.org**



Spirit Wear Mega Sale – One week only!

The PTO is transitioning to a new vendor for our Spirit Wear for a more efficient and dependable experience. We have a LARGE inventory of last year's designs. This one-week-only mega sale is to clean out that inventory—all t-shirts & shorts are only \$5, and all sweatshirts are only \$10. **THE SALE ENDS ON SUNDAY, 11/19. All items will be delivered to your oldest OTE student on Thursday, November 30th.**

Shop [HERE!](#)



5th Grade Celebration – No Sale Fundraiser

Each year the 5th grade students raise 100% of the funds needed for their year-end celebration. In lieu of selling a product, they're doing a "no sale" fundraiser to collect donations and sponsorships to achieve their fundraising goal of \$3000. By achieving this goal, ALL 5th grade student's celebration expenses will be covered. If their goal is surpassed, a gift will be given to OTE in honor of the graduating 5th grade students. And while most of the fundraising is done within the 5th grade class, anyone can contribute and/or sponsor. Click [HERE](#) for full details on donation & sponsorship opportunities. Fundraiser ends 11/18.

☆☆ DEI Spotlight

Nut-Safer Visual

A [Visual Nut-Safer List](#) has been created to enable ease with selecting nut-safe foods. We hope this list simplifies the selection process for families when considering daily snacks and seasonal celebrations.



Civility

We are thankful for the ongoing partnership and support we experience in our school community. Working together, we ensure the best possible student experience, allowing them to realize personal success. There are times, however, when issues arise which require our continued collaboration to resolve. Families may utilize the matrix linked on [the district website](#) to address the best questions and concerns that may arise throughout the course of a school year. Finally, all staff and visitors should conduct business without intimidation, harassment, or bullying. The district's Board of Education states expectations regarding civility within [Policy 6341](#). Again, thank you for your partnership in helping to maintain a safe school community environment for all.



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

Some November Celebrations & Observances:

- Native American Heritage Month - celebrates the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, histories, and ongoing contributions of Indigenous peoples.
- Military Family Appreciation Month - honors the military family by recognizing their sacrifices and commitments.
- Day of the Dead - November 1 - celebrated by some with Mexican heritage, a joyful time to remember and honor deceased loved ones.
- All Saints Day - November 1 - celebrated by some of the Christian faith, this solemn, holy day honors the saints of the church.
- Diwali - November 12-16 - 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.

Holiday Support-a-Cougar

During these challenging economic times, it has become increasingly difficult for some families to provide items to their children during the holiday season. We understand and know some of our Overland Trail Elementary families need support this upcoming time of year.

As such, the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) will sponsor and adopt a student program called Support-a-Cougar. This is an anonymous opportunity to make sure OTE students enjoy the holiday season. Selected families will receive a gift card to purchase presents or necessary items for their child(ren). Families will also choose a book and a board game for their child.

If you want your child to participate, complete the online form at <https://tinyurl.com/y4tqx4sd> by **December 1, 2023**.

Substitute school counselor, Linda Graves, and school social worker, Lacey Koester, will later follow up with families to provide more details, including dates to collect the items. Multiple families will be chosen. You must be a current OTE student to participate in the program.

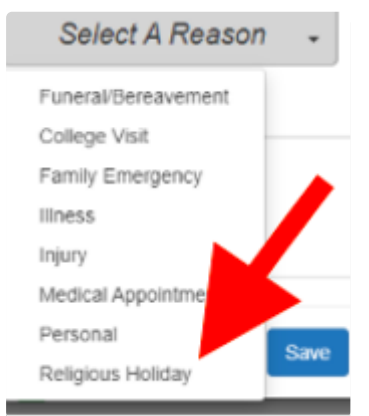


Holiday Assistance

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.

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.

School Supply Lists

District Calendar (2023-2024)

Overland Trail Elementary's Homepage


Family Handbook



Erica McDonald, Principal

 @OTEMcDonald

 6225 West 133rd Street, Overla...

 ECMcDonald@bluevalleyk12.org

 (913) 239-7000


 bluevalleyk12.org/OTE




Alicia Anderson, Assistant Principal

 @OTEAnderson

 6335 West 135th Street, Overla...

 ARAnderson@bluevalleyk12.org

 (913) 239-7000

 bluevalleyk12.org/OTE





Office Staff

 @OTECougars

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

 6225 West 133rd Street, Overla...

 (913) 239-7000

 bluevalleyk12.org/OTE

full of family

Overland Trail Elementary

