

Cougar Connect

November 17, 2023



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A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear families,

It is an honor to be here as your Principal and to serve alongside the tremendous OTE staff and families. As we go into this Thanksgiving break, I am beaming with pride, happiness, and peace, knowing I can return to this great place, Overland Trail Elementary. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and support; our staff is honored to be here with you.

As many of you know, the McDonald family will welcome a new bundle this February. As I take a short leave of absence to care for our newest addition, there will be a substitute administrator to work alongside Mrs. Anderson, our Assistant Principal. As soon as this information becomes available to me, I will share the timeline of the transition. I plan to return at the beginning of May to conclude what has already been an excellent year for OTE staff, students, and families.

I am wishing you a warm, relaxing, and memorable week with those dearest to you--Happy Thanksgiving, OTE.

Sincerely,
Erica McDonald
Principal



Save-the-Date

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://otepto.org).

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

Donate to Holiday **SUPPORT A COUGAR**



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 only \$5, all

sweatshirts only \$10. **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.



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.



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.

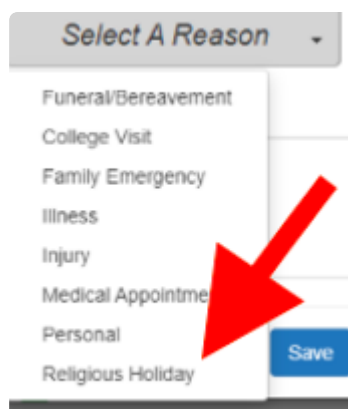


Holiday Assistance

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.

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

Email: ECMcDonald@bluevalleyk12.org

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Phone: (913) 239-7000

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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

Location: [6225 West 133rd Street, Overland Park, KS, USA](#)

Phone: (913) 239-7000

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Erica McDonald

Erica is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters

CALLIE DANIELLE♡