

Cougar Connect

September 22, 2023



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A Note From Mrs. McDonald

Dear families,

📧 Help Wanted at OTE

We are still looking for a Lunchroom/Copy Aide and could immensely use the help. This individual would help support students during lunch while nurturing a calm, safe, and enjoyable dining experience. The position is Monday-Friday, 10:45-1:45. If you are interested, please don't hesitate to let me know--we'd love for you to join our OTE staff.

📅 Conferences

It is time to sign up for fall conferences. We welcome all parents and caregivers to meet with their child's teacher to discuss progress thus far and plans for providing your child with a high-quality learning experience this semester.

We look forward to seeing you during next week's fall conferences--have a great weekend, families!

Sincerely,

Erica McDonald
Principal



Save-the-Date

September

Monday, September 25: PTO Restaurant Night at Freddy's (4:00 PM-8:00 PM)

Monday, September 25: DEI Parent and Caregiver Meeting (6:30 PM-7:30 PM)

Tuesday, September 26-Thursday, September 28: Fall Conferences

Thursday, September 28: No School EC-8 | Parent-Teacher Conferences

Friday, September 29: No School | District-Wide Break

October

Tuesday, October 3: PTO Restaurant Night | Papa Johns, All Day

Friday, October 6: PTO Board Meeting; 9:00 AM-10:00 AM

Wednesday, October 11: PTO Community Service

Friday, October 13: No School | End of Quarter 1

Friday, October 20: Skate Party at Skate City; 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

Tuesday, October 24-Thursday, October 26: Scholastic Book Fair

Tuesday, October 24: Family Night; 5:30 PM-7:30 PM

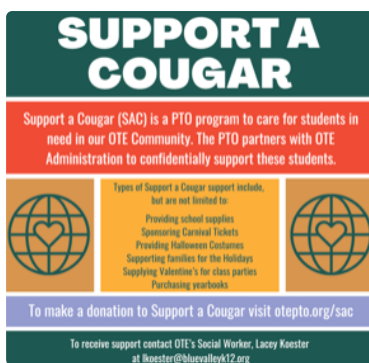
Thursday, October 26: Donuts with Grownups; 7:15 AM-8:15 AM



PTO Events | September

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

The PTO leads a program called Support a Cougar to assist students in need in our OTE Community. OTE Administration facilitates this program with the PTO to ensure all students and families that need support remain confidential. In November, the PTO puts on a Holiday Drive to support OTE families in need during the holiday season. However, Support a Cougar provides assistance year-round and can create a bigger impact with additional donations and funding. To donate, please visit [Overland Trail Elementary PTO - Support a Cougar \(otepto.org\)](https://otepto.org).



OTE Restaurant Night at Freddy's | Monday, September 25

Dinner made easy, pop into Freddy's or place an online order from 4-8:00 p.m. 15% of our OTE sales will come back to support our school. Tell the cashier you're there for the fundraiser or use code "GIVEBACK" for online orders.

☆☆ DEI Spotlight

Did you know that OTE is one of the most diverse schools in the Blue Valley School District? This makes OTE a special place and something we want to celebrate more!

We are excited to build a parent community with parent involvement that reflects our student (and family) population. Being inclusive and bringing together community members from different

backgrounds and experiences is critical to accomplish that goal. ALL parents/guardians are invited to attend a DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Council meeting on **Monday, September 25th, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** in the school library. We will discuss what was accomplished last year related to DEI and our plans for this year to consider and include all students and families in school events, activities, and day-to-day operations.

Don't think you have anything to contribute? You do!! Participate even if your English isn't as strong as you would like! You can also just come to listen to comments from others. We would love you to join us in whatever way you feel comfortable! Childcare at the school can be arranged if needed. Please get in touch with Melanie Shashindranath (801-362-9674) or Barbara Van Hamme (913-742-0772) if childcare would help you be able to attend the meeting.

Thank you for helping us celebrate the fantastic community that we have!

Welcome to OVERLAND TRAIL ELEMENTARY!

SCHOOLING: Rockhurst University and have a master's degree in education and a bachelor's degree in business.

NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING IN SCHOOLS: 18, as a high school English teacher and corporate trainer

YOUR ROLE AT OTE: Full-Time Building Substitute

FUN FACT ABOUT ME: I like racing trail bikes (the kind you pedal) with my two sons.



Safe Schools Reporting

Blue Valley Schools is committed to promoting and fostering a safe environment in and around all of our schools. Through the convergence of physical and intellectual security measures, we are continuously working to prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from a wide range of emergencies. Please check out [available ways to report safety concerns](#).

Fifth Grade Celebration | Cast Your Vote

Fifth grade families,

It's time to vote on what your student would like to do for their year-end 5th Celebration. Follow the link to read the full details and to cast your vote!

<https://forms.gle/c7xEo62XbQnX6CtH7>

Thank you,

Vanessa Blanchard

Battle of the Books

OTE Battle of the Books

We are looking for parent helpers to coach our 3rd - 5th grade teams!

- 5 books will be read by each team
- all questions/materials provided
- meet once a month during lunch
- Runs Nov - April
- "Battle" will be end of April

If you are interested or want more information

Email Mrs Mason@

jmason02@bluevalleyk12.org



Every Child Can Read Act (ECCRA)

On July 1, 2023, the Every Child Can Read Act was enacted in Kansas. The intent of this legislation was to address literacy initiatives with a target of ensuring students reach grade-level benchmarks by third grade. In Blue Valley, we prioritize partnerships with families in conjunction with high-quality, evidence-based instruction rooted in the science of reading. This has been and remains a large area of focus for professional learning. Rather than limit conversations about reading progress to 3rd grade, we practice doing so at each grade level. KSDE has provided a summary of this Act, which can be found [here](#). Our teachers look forward to talking with you about your child during Parent-Teacher conferences.

Learning Connection | iReady Math Resource

What answer do you get when you add K-8 students and a new math resource together? Outstanding academic success for all. When Blue Valley implemented its new K-8 math resource, iReady, at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, it was clear early on that it was a game-changer.

By the end of the school year, teachers were astounded. The impact the math resource had on student learning led to assessment scores that exceeded expectations.

Blue Valley students showed tremendous overall scores with students scoring on iReady's national benchmark 26 percentage points higher than the national population.

"In the first year of implementation I think that data is really impressive," said Adam Wade, Blue Valley's Director of Academic Programs and Accountability. "Our teachers leaned into the rigor of the resource."

To learn more, read this [Learning Connection story](#).

Children's Mercy--Powering Families Webinar

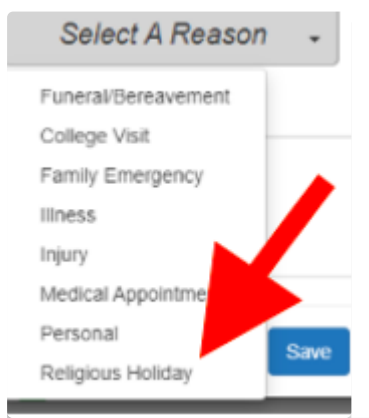
Each month, Children's Mercy will offer a free online educational event to provide parents and caregivers a chance to connect with Children's Mercy Kansas City experts on a variety of topics. Each event will include information about a specific topic followed by questions from attendees submitted via chat. Each event will be presented monthly at 12:00 noon. Webinar topics will include healthy eating, financial resources, anxiety and depression, kids' safety, and more! Participants will need internet access and a phone/tablet/computer to participate. These webinars are free, but registration is required. If families cannot attend virtually at noon, the webinar will be recorded and posted on the [Powering Families homepage](#) for later access.

These webinars are free, but [registration](#) is required. Once you have [submitted your registration](#), you will be emailed the link to join the event.

Upcoming sessions:

- Kids and Internet/Social Media - Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 12-1 pm
- Preventing Unintentional Childhood Injuries – Tuesday, October 24, 2023, 12-1 pm

To access the full list of recordings, view all upcoming webinar topics, or register for a session, visit the [Powering Families webpage](#).



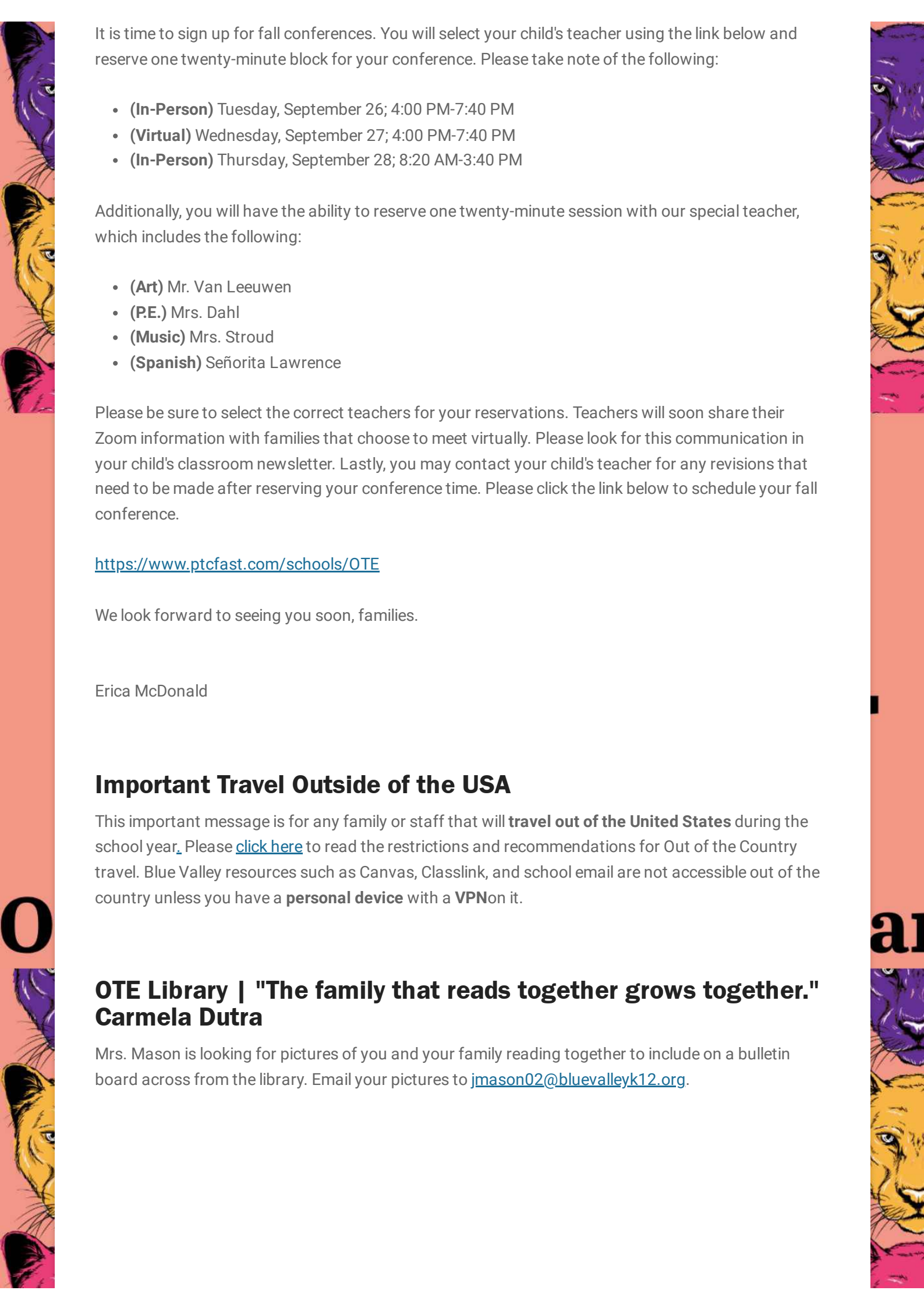
The image shows a digital form with a dropdown menu labeled "Select A Reason". The menu is open, displaying a list of reasons for absence: Funeral/Bereavement, College Visit, Family Emergency, Illness, Injury, Medical Appointment, Personal, and Religious Holiday. A large red arrow points directly to the "Religious Holiday" option. To the right of the list is a blue "Save" button.

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.

Fall Conferences

Parents and Caregivers,



It is time to sign up for fall conferences. You will select your child's teacher using the link below and reserve one twenty-minute block for your conference. Please take note of the following:

- **(In-Person)** Tuesday, September 26; 4:00 PM-7:40 PM
- **(Virtual)** Wednesday, September 27; 4:00 PM-7:40 PM
- **(In-Person)** Thursday, September 28; 8:20 AM-3:40 PM

Additionally, you will have the ability to reserve one twenty-minute session with our special teacher, which includes the following:

- **(Art)** Mr. Van Leeuwen
- **(P.E.)** Mrs. Dahl
- **(Music)** Mrs. Stroud
- **(Spanish)** Señorita Lawrence

Please be sure to select the correct teachers for your reservations. Teachers will soon share their Zoom information with families that choose to meet virtually. Please look for this communication in your child's classroom newsletter. Lastly, you may contact your child's teacher for any revisions that need to be made after reserving your conference time. Please click the link below to schedule your fall conference.

<https://www.ptcfast.com/schools/OTE>

We look forward to seeing you soon, families.

Erica McDonald

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.

OTE Library | "The family that reads together grows together." Carmela Dutra

Mrs. Mason is looking for pictures of you and your family reading together to include on a bulletin board across from the library. Email your pictures to jmason02@bluevalleyk12.org.



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

 @OTEMcDonald

 6225 West 133rd Street, Overla...

 ECMcDonald@bluevalleyk12.org

 (913) 239-7000


 bluevalleyk12.org/OTE




Alicia Anderson, Assistant Principal

 @OTEAnderson

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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