



Taft Middle School

2901 NW 23rd St., Oklahoma City, OK 73107 | P: 405-587-8000

Dear Taft 5th Grade Families,

Based on our larger-than-expected enrollment here at Taft Middle School, Supt. McDaniel has elected to open the Linwood campus to serve as the Taft 5th Grade Center for the 2019-20 school year. We are grateful to a number of district teams who are working nearly around the clock to get Linwood ready to accept Taft 5th graders at our new 5th Grade Center on August 12.

Please review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document below, which I hope will help to answer many of your questions and concerns. However, if there are other items you'd like to discuss, please feel free to reach out to our administrative team by calling 405-587-8010.

Thank you for your continued support of Taft Middle School. It's going to be a great year!

Cody Stull
Principal
Taft Middle School

Q: What is happening with 5th Grade at Taft?

- OKCPS hosted enrollment last week, July 29 - August 2. As we continued to welcome more and more families to Taft Middle School throughout the week, it became apparent that we were going to exceed our projected enrollment numbers and would need to make significant adjustments in order to ensure a high-quality educational experience for all of our Taft families.
- School leaders began meeting late last week to discuss options and a decision was made on Friday to shift our 5th graders to the Linwood campus.
- Since then, a number of district teams have been hard at work to ensure we are ready to welcome students to the Taft 5th Grade Center at Linwood on August 12.

Q: How did this happen?

- It would be easy for some to try to blame this on a mistake with the P2G projections we did last Spring, but we continue to believe that our new school zones are correct. Instead, we find ourselves in this situation as the result of a combination of things:
- More than 200 of our rising 8th grade students who were eligible to stay as part of the "P2G Grandfather" option chose to remain at Taft.
- As several of our charters who were located in the heart of the city began to make changes to their geographic locations and there are more and more questions around virtual education, we see a larger number of students than anticipated choosing to come to for the first time or to stay at Taft instead of attending an application, charter or online option.
- Also, a significant number of students who were zoned to other parts of the district have utilized a residency affidavit to adjust their attendance into Taft.
- But most importantly, we know that our outstanding school leaders at Taft Middle School and Northwest Classen High School are doing great things in what was once a struggling part of our district, and our families are becoming more and more excited to be part of that renaissance inside of OKCPS.



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- Although this situation does present a challenge for us, we believe this is good news for OKCPS.
- The warm and welcoming culture that is being created on our campuses, along with the trade-ups and other programming that OKCPS has invested in as part of *Pathway To Greatness*, have resulted in a large number of families choosing to return to us or give OKCPS a try. This is exactly what we hoped for when we started our journey toward greatness a year ago.
- But it's not just our own investments. We also know there's a significant amount of urban renewal happening and deep sense of pride in this area of the city right now which is now showing up in our enrollment numbers.
- Although there will surely be challenges ahead, we must remember that these things are good signs for OKCPS - and for Oklahoma City.

Q: Why did you wait so long to make this shift for 5th Grade at Taft?

- We weren't able to validate our projected enrollment until families began visiting Taft Middle School last week. When it became apparent that we were going to exceed projections, our team immediately began working to identify a solution.
- We are pleased that Taft had already scheduled a meeting with 5th Grade families for Monday, August 5th, which we have been able to leverage for immediate communication with those who will be impacted by this shift.

Q: Why is this shift necessary?

- OKCPS is committed to providing a high-quality education to all of our students in a safe, secure, comfortable school environment.
- Although it was not part of our original plan for 2019-20, we believe that the shift to a Taft 5th Grade Center at Linwood is necessary in order for us to be able to adequately shelter, feed, and educate all of our Taft students.

Q: What about the trade-ups you promised? Will they still be available?

- Yes, all students who attend the Taft 5th Grade Center at Linwood will still have access to a full-time counselor, as well as an Art, PE & Music teacher.
- The full-time school nurse assigned to Taft will travel back and forth between the two campuses, and our partners with the Police Athletic League (PAL) will still provide athletics to our 5th Graders at the Linwood campus as planned.

Q: What will happen to the 5th grade students with special needs?

- Our 5th grade students with special needs who were assigned to self-contained Special Education classes will remain at the Taft Middle School campus.
- Our SPED teams will be contacting each family directly to discuss any changes that might impact their student.

Q: What will you call it?

- Taft 5th Grade Center @ Linwood

Q: Who will lead the Linwood campus? Will you be hiring someone?

- Head Principal, Cody Stull will still have responsibility for both campuses. However, Amy Daughtery will serve as the 5th Grade Assistant Principal at the Linwood campus.



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Q: Will you be providing additional security?

- We will be hiring an additional security specialist for the Taft 5th Grade Center at Linwood.

Q: How many additional staff has this shift caused OKCPS to have to hire? And at what positions? Approximate cost?

- We will be hiring an additional security specialist for approximately \$18,000 annually.

Q: Will this shift impact school start times?

- No, school will still begin at 9:10am and end at 4:00pm each day.

Q: Will you provide transportation to Linwood for students who would have been bused to Taft?

- All bus routes will be based on student distance from Taft. (OKCPS only provides busing for students who live outside of a 1.5 mile radius from their zoned school.)
- AM Bus Routes - Bus will drop 5th grade students at Linwood first and then proceed to Taft.
- PM Bus Routes - Bus will pick-up 5th grade students at Linwood first and then proceed to Taft.
- AM Shuttle - Will provide a shuttle bus from Taft to Linwood for those who are slated to walk to Taft but now have a further distance to travel to Linwood.
- PM Shuttle - Will provide a shuttle bus from Linwood back to Taft.
- Also, for the first 2 weeks of school, we will also position an OKCPS Suburban at Taft for students who miss the shuttle or are late for transport to Linwood.

Q: Do you plan to create other 5th Grade Centers for other middle schools that might also be very full?

- There is no plan to create other 5th Grade Centers at this time. This is a special circumstance that required us to make immediate adjustments for our Taft Middle School students.
- We will continue to closely monitor our enrollment numbers across the district.

Q: Is this a permanent change for 5th grade at Taft?

- No, this will be a year-by-year decision as we continue to watch how our student population shifts. Our goal is to return the 5th grade to the Taft campus as soon as possible to fulfill our vision of having consistent 5-8th grade grade bands across our district.

Q: How will this shift impact OKCPS's "Newcomer" program this year? Will it be moved back to Taft Middle School? Why?

- Because we expected a full enrollment for Taft Middle School, we had originally planned to move the "Newcomer" program to John Marshall Middle School for 2019-20.
- However, because we've opted to open the 5th Grade Center, we will now have the ability to house this program which typically houses approximately 100 students at Taft.
- It's important to note that students from this program will ultimately attend Northwest Classen High School, so allowing them to stay in their feeder pattern at Taft Middle School for 5-8th grade is much less disruptive for these families who are already in the midst of such a major life change as they enter the United States and learn a new language and culture.

Again, if you have any questions about these changes, please contact the Taft Middle School office at 405-587-8010.