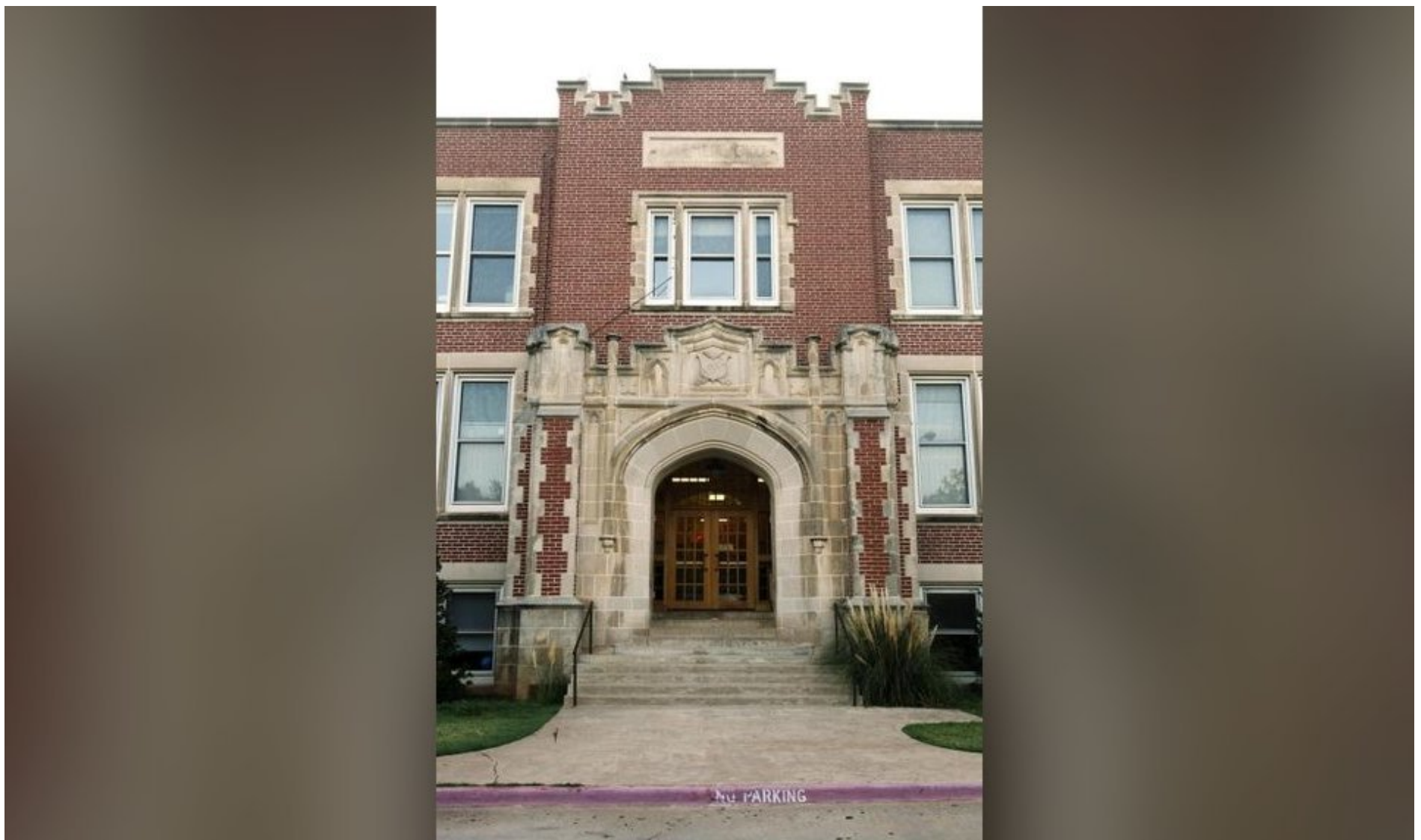


OKCPS board approves leasing empty schools



by [NURIA MARTINEZ-KEEL](#)

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Trinity School, a private Christian school that educates children with learning differences, will be moving into the former Edgemere Elementary School. [The Oklahoman Archives]

Oklahoma City Public Schools will begin repurposing 11 closed schools after receiving board approval Monday night to lease the buildings.

The school district's Board of Education voted in favor of allowing Superintendent Sean McDaniel to sign leases for eight new tenants should OKCPS complete negotiations on the buildings. The 11 schools are among 15 that closed this year as OKCPS consolidated facilities across the district.

The school district is negotiating an agreement with Trinity School to lease Edgemere Elementary. Board members voted two weeks ago to amend district rules to allow a private school to use a public school building, as long as it's not in direct competition with OKCPS programs.

Trinity is a Christian school that educates children with learning differences. If a leasing agreement is finalized, the school would move less than a mile to Edgemere from its current location at 321 NW 36. Trinity Board of Trustees President Jamie Lewallen said the school is in talks with the school district, but it's still exploring options outside of Edgemere.

The school board agreed to lease North Highland Elementary to KIPP Reach College Preparatory, a charter school that was relocated during the consolidation initiative. Monday's vote included a second charter school move, for Harding Charter Preparatory High School to take over Centennial High School.

Some closed schools will transform into health and family resource centers, with multiple organizations and public entities finalizing rental agreements.

The Oklahoma City-County Health Department will occupy two closed schools at Sequoyah and Oakridge Elementary. The department intends to host youth services and after-school programs at both school sites, said LToya Knighten, director of strategic communications and outreach.

Knighten said the department also hopes to open health clinics at both locations. It is working toward having a presence in both buildings by the start of the 2019-20 school year.

After hosting town halls and meeting with neighborhood representatives, health officials will continue to connect with residents and other organizations operating near the schools, Knighten said.

"As of right now, it appears that the residents (said) their needs and wants for the school sites align with our vision," Knighten said. "We don't want to go in and presume that we know everything the neighborhood needs. We want the neighborhood to work with us and tell us what services would benefit them the most."

The board approved a lease with Rainbow Fleet, a child care resource center, to occupy a portion of Horace Mann Elementary. OKCPS is using half of the building for pre-K class overflow.

Negotiations are nearing completion with Sunbeam Family Services to lease Pierce Elementary and a portion of Johnson Elementary. The school district is using 65% of the Johnson building for overflow of pre-K classes.

The Oklahoma Autism Center has expressed interest in three open schools. The board voted to lease either Gatewood, Linwood or Edwards Elementary to the organization.

The nonprofit Junior Achievement has also begun negotiations for a partial lease at Linwood, though it wasn't on the list of tenants the board approved Monday night. OKCPS administrative offices are housed in Edwards Elementary and will vacate the property within nine months.



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Nuria Martinez-Keel joined The Oklahoman in 2019. She found a home at the newspaper while interning in summer 2016 and 2017. Nuria returned to The Oklahoman for a third time after working a year and a half at the Sedalia Democrat in Sedalia,...

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