

THE ACADEMY OF SEMINOLE



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Oklahoma State Board of Education,

My name is Wren Hawthorne, and I am the Superintendent of The Academy of Seminole (TAOS) in Seminole, Oklahoma. We are now in our sixth year and have seen great success since opening our doors in 2018. We have had three successful graduations—100% of our seniors have graduated on time and with a detailed life plan. A number of our students have earned an associates degree or industry certificate while in high school. We received an A for academic growth on our state report card in both our elementary and high school. Our students have earned the highest state test scores in the county for the past two years. Most importantly, when you walk through our halls, it is evident that our students are passionate about learning. When outside guests visit, we are greeted with the same question: “What’s your secret?” The answer is simple: our staff. We have a wonderful group of individuals who come to work every day with the goal of empowering and inspiring students. They understand that students need to feel safe in their school, and they have created that environment for us all.

TAOS is a reflection of the community around us. We are all unique and offer our own gifts and experiences when we enter the classroom. As a charter school, we have the opportunity to hire qualified individuals who are *not* certified teachers. Though it is our preference to hire those who are certified, we have found that some of the greatest teachers have felt the call to education as a second career. They come to us, straight from their area of expertise, and are able to offer a unique, practical perspective in the classroom. We are grateful for such an opportunity. We have, however, encountered a small road block. This year, we were informed that only certified teachers could administer state tests. While we respect this decision, it is our hope that consideration may be given to waive this requirement for us. Students feel safe when they are in the presence of their classroom teacher—especially during something as significant as state testing. We trust our teachers to lead our lessons and engage in classroom discussions. It is our hope that they can guide our students during state testing as well.

We hope that you will consider allowing our non-certified classroom teachers to serve as state testing administrators. We firmly believe this would benefit our students and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wren Hawthorne

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Superintendent

The Academy of Seminole