

February 4, 2025

Reimagining Success: DCSD Advisory Committees Continue Vital Work Defining Boundaries That Make Sense

(STONE MOUNTAIN)- *“We’re not just redrawing lines—we’re reimagining an entire ecosystem.”* With those words, Sarita Smith, Executive Director of Student Assignment for the DeKalb County School District (DCSD), set the tone for what was expected at the January 29 meeting of the combined Southeast and Southwest Student Assignment Planning Advisory Committees at Miller Grove High School.

For months, advisory committees have played a crucial role in reviewing student assignments to DCSD schools, a process that goes beyond adjusting attendance boundaries. Composed of teachers, parents, community partners, and local leaders, these committees serve North, Central, Southwest, and Southeast DeKalb.

These committees meet monthly to offer impartial, data-driven recommendations to the Board of Education and District leaders. Their vital contributions include:

- Proposing equitable boundaries, facility uses, and program enhancements.
- Identifying ways to eliminate inequities and improve academic opportunities for all students.
- Providing insights on enhancing family and community engagement in schools.

Ultimately, this collaborative “reimagining” process focuses on program reviews, community feedback, and potential reorganizations to better serve students and families.

Key Takeaways from the January 29 Session include:

Fiscal Responsibility and Redistricting

Managing school capacity is crucial as under-capacity facilities incur high fixed costs such as staffing, safety, and maintenance. It is also essential to redistribute resources effectively to relieve overcrowding in certain schools while addressing the underutilization in others.

Community Engagement and Support

Families value clear feeder paths from elementary to high school, so adjusting school boundaries based on proximity can effectively address changing demographics. Moreover, consistent transparency through community meetings, social media, and sharing positive school stories will help build trust and reduce resistance to change.

Challenges and Opportunities in Mapping and Planning

Committee members considered shifting away from rigid geographic zones to models that promote individual choice and acknowledge shared regional boundaries. They suggested redefining educational experiences by increasing hands-on learning opportunities and improving technology for parental engagement, focusing on a 20 to 50-year outlook.

Reimagining the School Experience

A thorough analysis of community feedback, enrollment trends, and future workforce demands should inform decisions regarding program placement, transportation needs, and enrollment capacities. Furthermore, District leadership should consider factors beyond immediate enrollment fluctuations. To this end, DCSD is working to design a modern, adaptable system that ensures student continuity while remaining financially sustainable.

DCSD appreciates the feedback from committees as they analyze data and refine proposals. This process allows for reorganizing school boundaries, programs, and facilities for the first time in nearly 15 years. Demographic changes and uneven resource use and allocation highlight the need for planning to improve student success.

Following the 24-month Student Assignment process, DCSD will review school boundaries every five years to align with E-SPLOST planning and ensure fiscal responsibility. The goal is to provide a high-quality education that prepares students for college, careers, entrepreneurship, or military service, with final recommendations expected by March 2026.

The upcoming combined meeting will be a District Committee of the Whole for all four regional committees on Wednesday, February 26, at the Administrative Complex at 1701 Mountain Industrial Boulevard in Stone Mountain, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

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