

Tucker Cluster

DeKalb County School District Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Engagement Series #1

Executive Summary Report

Tuesday, September 8, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 8:05 PM

Meeting Overview

This first Community Advisory Team series is focused on listening, learning, and gathering feedback. At this stage, there are no student assignment concepts, attendance boundary proposals, or draft options for the community to review; those concepts will be developed later and are expected to be introduced during the next CAT series later this month. The Community Advisory Team does not make final decisions regarding attendance areas. The goal is to hear as many voices, experiences, ideas, concerns, and priorities as possible, so that the individuals responsible for developing future options have a clear understanding of community perspectives and considerations.

This was the first of three CAT engagement sessions tied to DeKalb County School District's (DCSD) student assignment/redistricting planning process for the Tucker cluster, held at Tucker High School. Dr. Weaver, district staff lead for the CAT process, welcomed participants and provided scripted introductory remarks used consistently across all cluster meetings. Jeff Street of United Way of Greater Atlanta facilitated, with two members of KW Green Consulting serving as the scribe/documentation team.

The meeting's purpose was framed as "level-setting," building relationships among CAT members, establishing guiding principles and rules of engagement, and surfacing priorities, hopes, and concerns ahead of two subsequent sessions on September 29 and October 27, 2026. Facilitators emphasized that the CAT was not being asked to advocate for a specific outcome, and that any feedback would flow to the interim superintendent, who would then make recommendations to the Board. The session covered large-group framing, small-group discussion on three guiding questions, report-out and theme identification, co-creation of guiding principles, and discussions of what would make participation feel successful and what to expect in Session #2. The meeting concluded at approximately 8:05 p.m.

Participation Summary

Participants were divided into small groups drawn from across the cluster's schools, including Smoke Rise, Livsey, Midvale, Tucker Middle, Tucker High, Idlewood, Brockett, and Austin Elementary, as well as DeKalb School of the Arts. Represented roles included parents (new and long-time), teachers, administrators (including one with 25 years of administrative experience), a school counselor splitting time between two schools, PTA and PAC leadership, and community members without children currently enrolled in DCSD. A current Tucker High School student participated and shared a firsthand perspective, which the facilitator specifically highlighted as a valuable and often underrepresented voice in these conversations.

Major Themes

Transparency and trust were the most persistent themes. Participants repeatedly said they did not understand the district's ultimate goal or comprehensive plan, and described a deficit of trust caused by limited, incorrect, or conflicting information; some questioned whether the process addressed the whole county or was limited to specific attendance boundaries. Class size and teacher-to-student ratios were a close second. Class sizes were cited in the mid-30s to low-40s, with some classrooms lacking enough chairs, and participants raised uncertainty about Georgia's class-size-reduction requirements relative to other states. Equity and access to programs also recurred, including consistent access to IB, STEM, music and arts, English-language-learner services, and IEP/504 supports, with particular concern that optional choice programs do not equitably benefit families who lack the time or resources to navigate them.

Community and school size emerged as a strong value. Participants credited strong PTA/PTO involvement and small school environments where children are known for making their schools thrive and wanted any changes to preserve that. This was reinforced by detailed, lived-experience accounts of a prior school consolidation involving Smoke Rise and Idlewood: participants described reduced frequency of specials (art and music offered only every nine days rather than weekly), restricted cafeteria capacity limiting family participation, insufficient building space for community programs, and cultural and language-integration challenges following an unprepared increase in Amharic-speaking students. Transportation was raised in connection with these concerns, including bus delays, drivers covering multiple back-to-back routes, and worry that further consolidation would deepen existing strain. Finally, participants wanted fiscal transparency (what consolidation would save and where funds would go) and evidence-based decision criteria, including research on class size and teacher burnout and turnover, rather than decisions driven by enrollment numbers alone.

Key Concerns

- A deficit of trust caused by limited, incorrect, or conflicting information, including uncertainty about whether the process addressed the whole county or was limited to specific attendance boundaries.
- Detailed, lived-experience concerns from a prior consolidation at Smoke Rise and Idlewood, including reduced frequency of specials, restricted cafeteria and lunch access for families, insufficient space for community programs and events, and students separated from their local peer community.
- Bus-route strain: young children reported waiting close to two hours after dismissal, drivers covering multiple back-to-back routes, and concern that further consolidation would deepen these delays.
- Cultural and language-integration challenges following an unprepared increase in Amharic-speaking students, with no additional support provided to help bridge the transition for staff or families.
- Class sizes already cited in the mid-30s to low-40s, with some classrooms lacking enough chairs, and confusion about Georgia's class-size-reduction requirements relative to other states.
- Concern that optional or choice programs (e.g., IB, Montessori) do not equitably benefit families who lack the time or resources to navigate them.

- Concern that available seats would be treated as enrollment targets without regard to the resulting class size or program-access impact.
- Uncertainty about how “capacity” is defined, and a desire for equity in class sizes and program access regardless of a school's size.
- A desire for redistricting and resource decisions to be evidence-based, grounded in research on class size and teacher burnout/turnover, rather than driven by enrollment numbers alone.
- A request that Policy AD, described as the driving framework for redistricting decisions, be reviewed at the start of future sessions; participants noted it was not covered at the start of this meeting despite its stated importance.
- A desire for confirmation that community feedback specifically reaches decision-makers and is reflected in the record, including whether participants could review how their comments were transcribed or summarized.

Areas of Consensus

Across groups, participants converged on preserving what is working, including successful community schools, magnet programs (including Kittredge and DeKalb School of the Arts were named specifically), and neighborhood connections, and asked that any changes not disrupt currently strong school communities. There was broad agreement that if schools grow, resources should grow proportionally, including reading coaches, English-language-learner services, and IEP/504 supports.

Participants also converged on the need for transparency and two-way information flow: a clear articulation of the district's ultimate goal, and confirmation that community feedback specifically informs the record and reaches the interim superintendent and Board. Finally, there was consensus that class size, teacher-to-student ratios, and building capacity should be treated as central, quantifiable decision criteria, and that decisions should be evidence-based rather than driven by enrollment numbers alone.

Diverse Perspectives

Perspectives ranged from career-educator viewpoints, including a 25-year district administrator and a former classroom teacher now in administration, to parents and community members without an education background. A current Tucker High School student participated and offered a youth perspective, which the facilitator specifically highlighted as valuable and often missing from these conversations. Families directly affected by the prior Smoke Rise/Idlewood consolidation offered concrete, lived-experience testimony that contrasted with other groups' more general or hypothetical concerns.

Some participants were new to the district this year, offering a comparative, outsider's perspective, while others were longtime community members or DCSD staff with institutional history. Views differed on the scope of the process, particularly whether it concerned the whole county or specific attendance boundaries, and on how the Tucker cluster's experience compared to other clusters; one participant noted that Tucker is a comparatively well-resourced cluster and wanted insight into how less-resourced clusters were experiencing the same process. A recurring frustration was that significant meeting time was spent clarifying the process itself rather than engaging in substantive discussion; some participants

referenced a lengthy prior student-assignment effort and wanted assurance that this round would be different and that their time would be well used.

Questions Raised

- What the CAT was ultimately being asked to produce: feedback, recommendations, or direct participation in planning, and how its role differed from a prior student-assignment engagement effort.
- Whether feedback shared in the room would reach the interim superintendent and Board, and what assurance participants had that their input was reflected in the record.
- Whether the process addressed the whole county or was limited to specific attendance boundaries.
- What enrollment, feeder-pattern, and capacity data would be provided ahead of future meetings, and how “capacity” was being defined.
- Why Policy AD, described as a driving framework for redistricting decisions, had not been reviewed at the start of the meeting.
- Whether participants would be able to review or approve how their comments were transcribed or summarized.
- How input from other DeKalb clusters, which may not share the same resources or participation levels, could be incorporated alongside Tucker's.
- What elementary and middle schools fed into Tucker High School.
- Whether the agenda for future sessions could be shared in advance.

Additional Observations

- Dr. Weaver confirmed that meeting transcripts and notes would be archived and labeled, with major themes compiled and individual comments available for review, and that the record would be shared with the interim superintendent for consideration.
- District staff indicated that Session #2 may present possible boundary or student-assignment scenarios for participant reaction and refinement, while reiterating that no decisions had been made.
- The meeting ran well beyond its scheduled end time, concluding at approximately 8:05 p.m., driven largely by extended discussion about the CAT's role, Policy AD, and how feedback would be used.
- Participants asked that the questions and concerns raised in this first meeting help shape the agenda for Session #2, scheduled for September 29, 2026, with a third session on October 27, 2026.
- A participant referenced DeKalb's upcoming literacy plan, expected to bring additional reading coaches into schools, as a relevant resource consideration.
- Scribe observations described CAT member participation as strong and highly engaged, with tables talkative and conversations flowing easily throughout. The tone was candid and at times frustrating to participants, but generally respectful.