Student Assignment Project:

FAQs from Engagement Session #1 Focus Groups

What is the best way to ensure that my feedback is considered in this process?

The best way is to participate through one or more of the available feedback opportunities, including the online survey, focus groups, and public comment sessions. Each provides a different way to share your perspective.

The most important thing is to be specific. Tell us what you value, what concerns you have and how you believe an option would affect students, families, and the community. Feedback will be reviewed alongside the criteria in Board Policy AD and the other information being considered as attendance areas are developed.

I provided feedback that I do not support a certain concept, yet it still moved forward. I feel like you are not considering feedback.

We understand why that can be frustrating. Listening to feedback does not always mean that the District will remove an option simply because some participants do not support it.

At this stage, the District is asking the community to consider multiple options and identify the benefits, concerns and tradeoffs associated with each. An option moving forward for further consideration does not mean it has been selected or that feedback against it has been disregarded.

Feedback can influence how an option is evaluated, modified, or ultimately recommended. The goal is to understand not only whether people support or oppose an option, but why.

What is the purpose of the CAT committees? I was under the impression that these groups are responsible for making recommendations to the Superintendent.

Community Advisory Teams, or CATs, are designed to provide a representative group of community voices that can engage more deeply with the information and options being developed.
CAT members do not make the final decision. Their role is to review information, discuss potential impacts, raise questions and provide community-informed perspectives that can help shape the work. The Superintendent and District leadership are responsible for developing recommendations, and the Board of Education ultimately makes decisions regarding attendance areas.

How are the different feedback pathways weighted? Focus Groups vs. CATs vs. Public Comment vs. Online Surveys?

There is not a simple formula in which one type of feedback is worth more than another.
These engagement opportunities serve different purposes. Surveys can provide broad input from a larger number of participants. Focus groups allow for deeper discussion. CATs provide an opportunity for sustained review and discussion of options. Public comment gives community members an opportunity to address the District and Board publicly.

The District will consider the substance of the feedback across all of these channels rather than simply counting one type of participation against another. The volume of comments is one part of understanding community perspective, but it is not the sole basis for a recommendation.

What is the weighting or formula that determines the priority of the primary and secondary criteria?

The criteria established through Board Policy AD provide the framework for evaluating attendance-area changes. They are not intended to function as a mathematical formula in which every consideration is assigned a specific numerical score.

Where criteria compete with one another, the District will need to evaluate the circumstances and tradeoffs associated with each option. Those tradeoffs should be explained clearly so the community and Board can understand why an option performs better or worse against the established criteria.

Are we considering future unfunded construction in this redistricting?

Attendance-area planning needs to be based on projects that have a reasonable and established path toward implementation. Unfunded or speculative construction should not be treated the same way as a funded or approved project.

The District is currently planning around new and expanded schools that are expected to come online beginning in 2027. The specific projects and their timing should be clearly identified when they are used in developing an attendance-area option.

What is the weight of public feedback compared to the policy criteria?

Public feedback and Policy AD serve different purposes.

Policy AD establishes the framework the District must follow when considering attendance areas. Community feedback helps the District understand how potential changes affect students, families, and communities and helps identify benefits, concerns, and tradeoffs that may not be apparent in the data alone.

Public input does not replace the policy criteria, but neither is it separate from the decision-making process. The goal is to use both the policy framework and community input to develop recommendations for the Board's consideration.

Why isn't school performance a consideration in the policy?

Policy AD establishes the criteria used specifically for school attendance areas. Academic performance is not identified as a stand-alone attendance-area criterion in the current policy.

That does not mean academic outcomes or student experience are unimportant. It remains and has always been a paramount consideration when evaluating what students need and what educational opportunities schools can provide. However, attendance boundaries cannot be designed simply by ranking schools according to test scores or other performance measures. The District should also be careful to distinguish school performance from other factors that affect student opportunity, such as access to programs, resources, class size and appropriate enrollment.

The policy is from 2013. Why hasn't the Board updated it?

Policy AD is the Board's current policy governing school attendance areas. Policies can remain in effect until the Board chooses to revise them.
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he fact that the policy dates to 2013 does not by itself make it invalid or prevent the District from using it. In fact, most districts don't have a policy to govern this work at all. Having an established policy makes this work more structured and fair. At the same time, questions about whether the policy still reflects current conditions are legitimate and can be considered through the Board's policy process.

There was discussion around changing this policy during the Student Assignment Project process in 2025-26. What ever happened to it?

There was discussion during the earlier phase of the Student Assignment Project about the criteria and framework used for this work. That discussion helped inform the broader conversation about student assignment.

For the current attendance-area process, however, the District is operating under the Board's existing Policy AD unless and until the Board formally changes it.

Questions about any proposed policy revisions and their current status should be directed to the Board policy process rather than represented as changes that have already been adopted.

Can the request-to-remain provision in Policy AD extend to siblings?

Policy AD provides a process for students who may request to remain at their current school under certain circumstances. Whether that provision applies to siblings, and under what circumstances, depends on the specific language of the policy and the implementation rules.

The District should provide families with the exact eligibility requirements before making assumptions about sibling eligibility. A request to remain is not the same as a guarantee of placement.

Can the Board suspend Policy AD for this process?

The Board has authority over District policy, but whether and how a policy can be suspended or waived depends on the specific policy language and applicable law.

The District should not assume that Policy AD can simply be suspended for this process. Any proposed waiver, suspension, or amendment would need to go through the appropriate Board and legal review process.

What happens to feedback and comments once submitted? Is it documented, summarized and shared with the Superintendent and Board? Will CAT/focus group notes ever be made public?

Feedback collected through surveys, online surveys and focus groups, during public comments and at Community Advisory Teams meetings will be summarized and shared at dekalbscoolsga.org/SAP upon the completion of each engagement session.

Is the Board's vote all-or-nothing across the whole District, or can individual clusters be voted on separately?

The Board's voting procedure will depend on how the final recommendation is presented and what action the Board takes.

The attendance-area work is being developed by cluster, but that does not necessarily mean the Board must vote on each cluster independently. The final recommendation should make clear what specific attendance-area changes are being presented for Board action and whether they are being considered together or separately.

Given that the new Board members are being sworn in around this timeline, will outgoing members be the ones voting, or will it fall to the incoming Board?

The answer depends on the Board's official election, certification, seating and meeting calendar.
The Board member who is legally seated and serving at the time of the vote would participate in the vote.
The District should confirm the exact timing of the December Board action and any transition dates rather than characterize the current or incoming Board as the decision-maker before those dates are finalized.

What is HPM's role in this process, and who at the District is actually authoring the options?

HPM provides planning and technical expertise to support the Student Assignment Project. Its role includes helping analyze facilities, enrollment, capacity, and other planning information.
The District and Superintendent remain responsible for the work and for any recommendations ultimately presented to the Board.

How were CAT team members selected/vetted, and why isn't membership public? Why aren't CAT team sizes proportional to the size of the school or cluster they represent?

CATs are intended to provide a manageable group for deeper discussion rather than to function as a proportional-representation body based on school enrollment.

Members were selected using a random process established for the CATs, with the goal of bringing a range of community perspectives into the discussion. The size of each CAT is therefore not intended to correspond directly to the number of students at a school.

Why don't magnet/choice schools without a home attendance area, such as Kittredge, have a CAT team?

The current CAT structure was designed around the six clusters whose attendance areas are being examined during this phase of the work.

Schools such as Kittredge that operate as choice or magnet programs without a traditional residential attendance area present different planning questions. That does not mean the students and families connected to those programs are excluded from the process. Their concerns can be shared through the survey, focus groups, public comment and other engagement opportunities.

Is there a process for a community group to submit its own alternative boundary proposal rather than only reacting to District-drawn options?

Community members are encouraged to identify alternatives and explain what they believe would work better.

If a community group develops a specific boundary proposal, it should submit that proposal through the established engagement channels so it can be documented and reviewed. A community-created map would not automatically become a formal District option, but it can provide information and an alternative perspective for the District to consider.

How is the District ensuring feedback isn't dominated by the most vocal or most-resourced communities, including families with scheduling, language or access barriers?

No single engagement method can reach everyone equally, which is why the District is using multiple ways to participate.

The District is providing online opportunities, public sessions, focus groups, and Community Advisory Team participation, while also making information available through translated materials and multiple communication channels.

The District will monitor who is participating and where gaps exist. The goal is not simply to hear from the largest number of people, but to make a meaningful effort to hear from students, families, staff, and communities who may face barriers to participation.

Is there an educational-outcomes or academic-strategy expert involved in shaping these options, or is this purely a facilities/capacity exercise?

This is not simply a facilities exercise. The purpose of the Student Assignment Project is to strengthen student opportunities while addressing enrollment and facility challenges.

Facilities and enrollment data are important because attendance areas determine where students attend school and how capacity is used. But the evaluation also considers educational programs, student experience, continuity, transportation and other factors that affect students.

What data and methodology are these options built on, and can that methodology be reviewed before options are released? Is there a known under-projection bias in past forecasts, and how is that being corrected this cycle?

The options are being developed using enrollment, capacity and planning data. The District's instructional-capacity model is based on the number of classrooms in a building and does not include portable classrooms. The model has been used since 2021, with adjustments when buildings have been renovated or rebuilt.

Enrollment and forecast information is also being updated as more current data becomes available. The Engagement Session #1 materials used preliminary August data, with later phases moving to updated enrollment and forecast counts.

Will a traffic and safety study be completed before the Board votes?

Traffic and student safety are important considerations when attendance areas change. The District will evaluate transportation, travel distance, traffic patterns, and safety impacts associated with proposed options before a final recommendation is presented.

Will students enrolled in special programs such as DLI, Gifted, High Achievers, etc. be permitted to stay if their address is rezoned? Is it possible that they could be kicked out if a resident student wants that spot?

Attendance-area changes and program eligibility are two related but separate questions.
A student who participates in a choice or special program may have placement rights or eligibility requirements that are different from those of students assigned through a residential attendance area. The answer can also vary by program.

Does special-program participation guarantee placement in continuing programs?

Not necessarily. Program participation does not automatically guarantee that the same program will continue at the same location, in the same form or with the same eligibility requirements.
At the same time, program continuity is an important issue for the District to consider when developing and evaluating attendance-area options. Families should receive clear information about what happens to students already participating in DLI, gifted, high-achiever, magnet and other specialized programs.

How can you ensure that my student will have the same or better student experience at a different school?

The District cannot promise that every student will have an identical experience at another school, and it should not make that promise.

What the District can do is evaluate how proposed changes affect students and identify ways to protect or strengthen educational opportunities. That includes looking at class size, programs, transportation, school capacity, student support, feeder patterns, and other factors that shape a student's daily experience.

The Engagement Session #1 survey showed that families are particularly concerned about continuity, programs, transportation, and neighborhood connections.

Will future construction projects (additions, new schools, etc.) be considered in this process?

This Fall the Student Assignment Project is focused on "overcrowded schools in the Lakeside, Cross Keys, Chamblee, Tucker, Dunwoody, and Druid Hills Clusters impacted by the new and expanded schools opening from 2027-29" (quoted from the SAP webpage). Potential new construction projects that have not already been approved and funded by the Board of Education are not being taken into account during this process as such projects will not be completed within the timeframe currently being considered (2027-29). It is normal for attendance areas to be adjusted periodically as needed, and It is expected that future construction would require future attendance area adjustments to accommodate changing capacity.