

Chamblee Cluster

DeKalb County School District Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Engagement Series #1

Executive Summary Report

Thursday, October 1, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 7:36 PM

Meeting Overview

The second DeKalb County School District (DCSD) Community Advisory Team session for the Chamblee Cluster moved from open listening to direct review of specific student assignment options. Held at Chamblee High School, the session was facilitated by United Way, with KW Green Consulting serving as the scribe and documentation team. District staff opened with a recap video on the Student Assignment Project and a summary of what was heard at the first engagement session, then moved into more videos covering the elementary options and middle and high school concepts for this session.

Three goals were presented as driving the elementary options. The first is redistributing the Carey Reynolds elementary attendance area into neighboring schools. The second is relieving overcrowding at Ashford Park and Montgomery Elementary. The third is rebalancing the Tucker cluster, which is still under a temporary boundary from construction at Idlewood Elementary. Option 1, Limited Impact, uses available space at the Nancy Creek building, currently home to Carey Reynolds, to relieve Montgomery. Option 2, Balance As Needed, pairs Montgomery with Nancy Creek and pairs Ashford Park with John Lewis as a dual campus and creates an attendance area for Oakcliff Theme School by moving Carey Reynolds into Oakcliff rather than Pleasantdale. Option 3, Balance All Schools, follows the primary criteria most strictly, splits Carey Reynolds between two nearby schools, and balances enrollment in the Druid Hills, Dunwoody, and Lakeside clusters.

Two middle and high school concepts were also presented. Both respond to the opening of Sequoyah High School in 2029, which will create seven high schools but only six middle schools in the area. Concept A follows the district's board policy criteria directly, with the six middle schools feeding into seven high schools through split feeders. Concept B tries to preserve a one-to-one middle to high school feeder pattern by finding an additional middle school to serve Cross Keys High School, the only high school without a natural middle school feeder once Sequoyah opens. That could mean converting Cross Keys into a 6-12 campus or converting an elementary building into a middle school serving grades 6 and 7. A new request surfaced this session for additional school counselors to support larger buildings under any reconfiguration. The next CAT session is scheduled for October 29 at a new location, Chamblee Middle School.

Participation Summary

There were approximately 38 participants in attendance divided into ten groups. Each group had eight minutes per section, five sections in total across the three elementary options and two middle and high school concepts. Groups 1 and 5 did not form or report this session. Eight

groups reported out, Groups 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Although there was not enough time for a gallery walk, participants were asked to stay and complete it.

Major Themes

Nearly every group stated Option 1 is the least disruptive but does not solve capacity long term. Several groups pointed to specific unused seats and questioned why more of the Nancy Creek and Montgomery capacity was not used. One table proposed an alternative, Option 4, built around early learning centers at Nancy Creek and Montclair to serve John Lewis, Dresden, Ashford Park, and Woodward elementary schools.

Dual campus questions were a major theme that dominated the discussion of Option 2. Participants wanted to know how shared resources, staffing, PTO involvement, after-school care, drop-off and pickup, and transportation would work across two buildings serving one attendance area. One group cited a disruption figure of 2,057 students and said 86 percent of John Lewis Elementary students would be displaced under this option. Several groups said other districts nationally are moving away from dual-campus models and wanted more detail before supporting one here.

Option 3 was widely described as the most disruptive, with one group citing a disruption figure of 3,296 students. At the same time, at least one group argued it causes the most movement now but may be the best long-term solution, since it balances numbers and could cost less over time compared to repeated smaller changes.

One group reported specific seat-shortage figures tied to how the elementary options interact with Concept B, including shortfalls of 186 seats, 448 seats, and 286 seats depending on the option, and argued the district should target 80 to 90 percent utilization rather than 100 percent.

On the middle and high school concepts, opposition to split feeders and to 6-12 grade configurations was close to universal. Participants raised concerns about mixing developmentally different age groups, about scheduling and athletics, and about school culture. A dedicated middle school for Cross Keys was requested by multiple groups, with suggestions to convert an existing elementary building, including Dresden or John Lewis, for that purpose. Several groups said they could not fully evaluate the elementary options without knowing the eventual middle and high school feeder patterns.

Data quality and completeness were also a theme. Participants asked whether trailers currently in use are included in capacity counts, whether enrollment trends reflect more than a single year, and whether projections account for census and preschool-age population rather than only currently enrolled students. Participants also asked whether magnet, special education, and Montessori programming are factored into the capacity modeling at all. One table suggested exploring Nancy Creek as a magnet school to help spread capacity across Ashford Park, Montgomery, and Huntley Hills.

Key Concerns

- Whether Option 1 provides any real long-term fix, given unused capacity it leaves in place.
- How a dual-campus model would work in practice, including shared staff, resources, PTO involvement, after-school care, and transportation.
- Large numbers of students and families affected under Option 2 and Option 3, including a cited 86 percent displacement of John Lewis Elementary students.
- Whether proposed elementary options account for magnet, special education, and Montessori programming.
- Whether current capacity figures include trailers currently in use, and whether enrollment projections reflect multi-year trends and incoming preschool-age population.
- Split feeders under Concept A, and the developmental, scheduling, and cultural concerns of a 6-12 configuration under Concept B.
- Cross Keys High School's continued lack of a dedicated middle school.
- Evaluating any elementary option without knowing the eventual middle and high school feeder patterns.
- Whether proposed bus routes and traffic impacts have been reviewed with the district's transportation department.
- Seat-shortage figures reported by one table under Concept B should be verified.
- How class sizes and staffing levels, not just overall building-capacity percentages, would change under each option.

Areas of Consensus

Across nearly every group, there was strong agreement that Option 3 is the most disruptive option on the table, even among the few participants who also saw long-term value in it. There was similarly broad, close to unanimous opposition to split feeders under Concept A and to a 6-12 grade configuration under Concept B, and wide agreement that Cross Keys High School needs its own dedicated middle school rather than continuing without one.

Participants consistently agreed that the elementary options are difficult to judge without first knowing how middle and high school feeder patterns will be drawn. There was also shared concern about dual-campus logistics regardless of which elementary option is chosen, and shared interest in seeing capacity data that reflects trailers, multi-year trends, and future population growth rather than a single year of current enrollment.

Diverse Perspectives

Reactions to Option 3 varied to degree. Most of the groups called it the most disruptive option and wanted it set aside. One group took a different view, arguing that its short-term disruption

could make it the best long-term solution because it balances enrollment more completely and may cost less over time than smaller, repeated changes.

Views on split feeders were mostly but not entirely uniform. Most groups opposed Concept A outright. One group was more measured, noting that Concept A makes good use of existing buildings even while saying they were not enthusiastic about its split-feeder structure. Another table group said the split-feeder question itself was confusing, since under some scenarios two schools would share a dual feeder at the high school level, and felt the proposed groupings were not well defined.

Questions Raised

- For the schools that see no action under Option 1, what is the plan to provide them any relief?
- How would a dual campus function, including staffing, shared resources, PTO involvement, after-school care, and transportation?
- What is the plan for the Nancy Creek building under each option?
- Have district officials communicated with the transportation department about proposed bus routes and reviewed the maps for traffic impact?
- Do current capacity counts include trailers currently in use, and do enrollment projections reflect more than one year of data or account for incoming preschool-age population?
- Why aren't magnet, special education, and Montessori programs factored into the capacity modeling for each option?
- Can Cross Keys High School get a dedicated middle school, and could an elementary building, such as Dresden or John Lewis, be converted for that purpose?
- What would a new or converted middle school cost, and is that a new capital improvement?
- How will class sizes and staffing levels change under each option, beyond overall building-capacity percentages?
- How could district-owned property be better used or developed as part of long-term capacity planning?
- Will an early-learning-center alternative be considered as part of the options presented in the third session?
- Might Dresden Elementary be used as a middle school?
- Participants still want clarity on what happens with currently overcrowded schools not addressed in these options, like Dunwoody?
- How would current magnet, special interest and Montessori programs be considered?

Additional Observations

The following were highlighted during the gallery walk as participants were exiting:

- There was a strong lack of support for the 6-12 configuration citing safety, overexposure and bullying as concerns.
- The request for Cross Keys to have its own middle school was strongly supported, aligning with the 1-1 middle and high school feeder preference.
- Questions were asked about differences in instructional capacity numbers as well as how they were calculated.
- Participants asked about considering Nancy Creek as a middle school (in response to dual campus proposal) or magnet with Kittredge being repurposed into Cross Keys Middle.
- Feeder patterns were requested to better evaluate options.
- There was a request for an Option 4 along with strong lack of support for Option 3.
- There were also questions raised about how transportation would work in all these options and had the education (academic programs) and well-being of students been considered in these proposed options.
- A concern was raised about ESPLOST vote when voters don't know what their schools will look like.