



Equity Analysis

Summary

The Red Clay Consolidated School District's Reimagining Secondary Education Plan represents a comprehensive effort to address longstanding structural inequities in secondary school enrollment, academic programming, college and career readiness, and access to educational opportunities.

The plan is grounded in Red Clay's Strategic Plan Priority #1- Student Growth, Success, & Equitable Outcomes and nested within Objective 3—ensuring equitable, high-quality college and career programming for every secondary student. Every student, regardless of attendance zone, neighborhood, socioeconomic background, disability status, language proficiency, or school assignment, should have meaningful access to rigorous academic programming, career pathways, extracurricular experiences, and the resources necessary for postsecondary success.

Over the past 25 years, Red Clay's secondary school system has expanded from five to seven high schools and from six to eight middle schools without corresponding enrollment growth. This expansion has contributed to underutilized facilities, fragmented enrollment patterns, and inconsistent educational opportunities across schools. More than 1,500 secondary school seats remain unfilled, while the district continues to operate multiple schools with enrollments that can limit their ability to offer comprehensive academic and extracurricular programs.

These conditions have created a system in which a student's educational opportunities may depend, in part, on the school they attend rather than their individual interests, academic readiness, or aspirations. The Reimagining Secondary Education Plan seeks to address these inequities through three interconnected strategies:

1. Enrollment and attendance-zone restructuring: Establishing more balanced enrollment across comprehensive high schools and creating clearer, geographically coherent feeder patterns between elementary, middle, and high schools.
2. Equitable access to comprehensive programming: Strengthening attendance-zone high schools so they can sustain broader academic offerings, including Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, electives, athletics, arts, and extracurricular activities.
3. Districtwide access to specialized career pathways: Transforming Thomas McKean High School into the Thomas McKean Innovation Center, providing students from across the district access to specialized Career and Technical Education (CTE), industry-recognized credentials, early college opportunities, and work-based learning experiences.

This equity analysis recognizes that restructuring schools can create legitimate concerns related to transportation, school identity, student transitions, program accessibility, and the potential disproportionate impact on historically underserved populations. These concerns require deliberate planning, transparent decision-making, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and ongoing evaluation.

The proposed redesign has the potential to substantially improve educational equity by addressing systemic disparities in access to academic, career, and extracurricular opportunities. However, achieving these benefits will depend on equitable implementation, protection of student services and rights, and the district's ability to demonstrate measurable improvements in student access, participation, experiences, and outcomes.

Equity should therefore be evaluated not simply by whether students are assigned to different schools, but by whether the redesigned system provides students with more meaningful and comparable opportunities than the existing configuration.

Purpose and Equity Framework

The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the anticipated equity implications of the Reimagining Secondary Education Plan, identify populations that may experience disproportionate benefits or challenges, and establish considerations that should guide implementation and Board oversight.

For purposes of this analysis, educational equity means providing every student with fair and meaningful access to the secondary educational opportunities, programming, resources, services, and support necessary to achieve their full potential. Equity does not necessarily require identical programming in every school. Rather, it requires that students have access to comparable opportunities and that barriers to participation are identified and addressed.

This analysis considers equity through five dimensions:

- **Access:** Whether students can reasonably access educational programs and services regardless of their school assignment or personal circumstances.
- **Opportunity:** Whether students have comparable opportunities to participate in rigorous coursework, specialized programs, and extracurricular activities.
- **Experience:** Whether students feel included, supported, connected, and appropriately served within their educational environment.
- **Outcomes:** Whether the redesigned system contributes to reducing disparities in academic achievement, graduation, college and career readiness, and postsecondary success.
- **Implementation:** Whether changes are introduced in ways that minimize disproportionate burdens, preserve legally required services, and provide appropriate transition supports.

Enrollment is a fundamental driver of educational programming. Schools depend on sufficient student enrollment to generate staffing allocations, sustain course sections, provide elective choices, maintain specialized instructional programs, and support extracurricular activities. When enrollment falls below sustainable levels, schools may experience:

- Reduced numbers of advanced coursework and elective sections.
- Difficulty sustaining a broad range of CTE pathways.
- Fewer opportunities for students to participate in advanced or specialized coursework.
- Limited flexibility in master scheduling.
- Smaller athletic programs and reduced opportunities for junior varsity and developmental teams.
- Fewer extracurricular and co-curricular options.

- Greater difficulty sustaining programs with specialized staffing or equipment requirements.

While smaller schools can offer meaningful advantages, including personalized relationships and strong school communities, small enrollment alone does not guarantee equitable educational opportunity. When enrollment limits the breadth of programming, students may face fewer choices than peers attending neighboring schools.

Red Clay's existing configuration includes multiple secondary schools operating below optimal capacity. These conditions are not distributed evenly, resulting in differences in programming and student experiences across schools. Students assigned to lower-enrollment schools experience fewer opportunities through no choice or circumstance of their own. The resulting inequity is structural rather than necessarily the product of individual school decisions.

Red Clay's high school attendance zones have remained largely unchanged since 2002, despite significant changes in school configurations, school choice, and changing K-8 attendance zones. The existing boundaries have contributed to fragmented feeder patterns, including neighborhoods whose students attend different high schools despite sharing elementary or middle school experiences. These arrangements can create inequities in school continuity, community relationships, transportation, and access to programming.

Clearer attendance boundaries and feeder patterns have the potential to improve educational continuity and strengthen neighborhood connections. .

A central finding of the district's enrollment and programming analysis is that students do not have consistent access to the same breadth of educational opportunities across secondary schools. Differences in school enrollment, staffing, scheduling, facilities, and existing program locations influence the availability of:

- Advanced Placement and dual enrollment courses.
- CTE programs and specialized electives.
- Fine and performing arts.
- Athletics and extracurricular activities.
- College and career exploration.
- Work-based learning and industry-connected experiences.

Although the district has established common expectations for college and career readiness programming, differences in school size and capacity can affect how extensively those opportunities are offered. The proposed model seeks to strengthen comprehensive high schools while establishing a shared districtwide resource for specialized programming.

This approach recognizes that equitable programming does not require every school to duplicate each specialized course. It requires a coordinated system through which all eligible students have meaningful access to those opportunities.

Equity Analysis of the Thomas McKean Innovation Center

The Thomas McKean Innovation Center is the most significant programmatic component of the Reimagining Secondary Education Plan. The proposed center will transform the existing Thomas McKean High School into a districtwide resource for specialized college and career programming. Rather than requiring students to enroll in a particular high school to access certain programs, the Innovation Center model is designed to allow students to remain enrolled at their comprehensive high schools while participating in specialized programming through coordinated schedules and transportation. This represents a shift from school-based access to districtwide access.

Career and Technical Education programs frequently require specialized facilities, equipment, industry partnerships, and appropriately credentialed instructional staff. These requirements can make it difficult to offer a broad selection of programs independently at every comprehensive high school. As a result, students' access to certain career pathways may be limited by the school they attend. The Innovation Center proposes to address this challenge by concentrating specialized resources in a shared districtwide facility while maintaining career and college readiness opportunities at comprehensive high schools.

The proposed model envisions more than 20 career pathways and opportunities for students to earn industry-recognized credentials, postsecondary credit, and meaningful work-based learning experiences. The center would also support stronger partnerships with employers, postsecondary institutions, and community organizations.

Anticipated equity benefits include:

- Reducing disparities in specialized CTE access between comprehensive high schools.
- Increasing participation in credentialing and postsecondary credit opportunities.
- Providing multiple pathways to postsecondary success beyond a traditional four-year college trajectory.
- Connecting students with industry professionals, internships, and authentic workplace experiences.
- Creating opportunities for students from different schools and backgrounds to learn and collaborate.

Importantly, the Innovation Center should not be viewed as an alternative to academic rigor. It is intended to integrate rigorous academic programming at home schools with expanded career-connected learning opportunities at the Innovation Center.

A distinguishing feature of the Innovation Center model is that students will remain members of their comprehensive high school communities. Students would continue to maintain connections to their home schools, including school activities, athletics, graduation traditions, counseling services, and other aspects of student life, while accessing specialized programs at the Innovation Center. This structure is intended to avoid forcing students to choose between participation in a specialized career-focused school and continued membership in their school community. However, the success of this model will depend on coordinated master schedules, reliable transportation, access to meals and student services, and the protection of extracurricular participation.

The creation of districtwide programs does not automatically guarantee equitable access. Student participation may be influenced by program capacity, family awareness, and master scheduling conflicts. The district must establish transparent and consistent procedures for student recruitment and enrollment and will include proactive outreach to students who have historically been underrepresented in specialized academic and CTE programs. Where programs have limited capacity, selection criteria should be clearly connected to legitimate program requirements and reviewed for potential disproportionate effects. Participation data should be disaggregated by student group, home high school, and program area to determine whether access is equitable in practice. Student participation will not be influenced by application processes or transportation as the Innovation Center is a part of the educational program for all students.

Equity Impact on Student Populations

The district recognizes that the proposed restructuring may affect student populations differently. A comprehensive equity analysis must consider both the potential benefits and the risks associated with implementation.

A. Students from Economically Disadvantaged Households

Students from economically disadvantaged households may face barriers to educational participation that include transportation limitations, access to technology, competing family responsibilities, and reduced access to enrichment opportunities outside school.

The Innovation Center has the potential to reduce some of these barriers by providing specialized college and career experiences during the regular school day, supported by district transportation and resources.

Students who may not otherwise have access to industry certifications, dual enrollment, career exploration, or work-based learning could benefit significantly from a coordinated districtwide model.

However, these benefits depend on the district ensuring that participation does not require additional family transportation, fees, equipment purchases, or other expenses that could discourage enrollment.

The district will:

- Provide district transportation for scheduled Innovation Center participation.
- Minimize or eliminate student costs associated with program materials, credential examinations, and required equipment.
- Ensure equitable access to internships and work-based learning placements.
- Provide family communications through multiple channels.
- Monitor enrollment, completion, and credential attainment by economic-disadvantage status.

Students with Disabilities

See **IDEA Compliance** for detailed response concerning students with disabilities.

Multilingual Learners

Multilingual learners may experience barriers to specialized program participation when recruitment materials, application procedures, counseling, and instructional supports are not accessible.

The proposed districtwide model creates opportunities to expand access to rigorous academic coursework, career exploration, CTE pathways, and workplace experiences for multilingual learners.

However, equitable participation requires intentional attention to language accessibility and instructional support.

The district will:

- Provide translated program information and interpretation services for families as appropriate.
- Ensure multilingual learners receive equitable college and career counseling.
- Consider unnecessary language barriers.
- Coordinate English language development services with Innovation Center schedules.
- Provide appropriate language support within specialized instruction.
- Monitor enrollment and completion patterns by English learner status.

Students from Historically Underserved Racial and Ethnic Groups

Historical patterns of residential segregation, school enrollment, and access to specialized programming can contribute to differences in educational experiences and outcomes. Attendance-zone changes and school restructuring must therefore be examined for their potential effects on the racial and ethnic composition of schools, access to programs, and student experiences. The district should assess whether the proposed configuration improves access to high-quality programming across student populations and whether any changes create unintended concentrations of educational disadvantage.

The Innovation Center has the potential to bring students from different schools and communities together through shared academic and career experiences. However, this benefit should not be assumed without examining actual participation patterns.

The district will:

- Compare racial and ethnic enrollment patterns under current and proposed attendance zones.
- Examine access to advanced coursework and specialized pathways across student groups.
- Review disciplinary, attendance, and school climate data during transition.
- Monitor Innovation Center participation and completion rates.
- Engage students and families from communities most directly affected by restructuring.

Students Experiencing Housing Instability and Other Barriers

Students experiencing homelessness, foster care transitions, significant family mobility, or other circumstances that affect school continuity may be particularly vulnerable during districtwide restructuring. The district must ensure that school assignment changes and program transitions do not unnecessarily disrupt educational stability or legally protected school-of-origin rights. Appropriate transportation, counseling, and individualized transition supports will be essential. The district should

also consider students who rely heavily on school-based relationships, extracurricular activities, and support systems when evaluating transition arrangements.

Current Thomas McKean High School Students and Families

The transformation of Thomas McKean High School requires particular attention because it changes the role of an existing comprehensive high school within the district. While the Innovation Center is intended to create expanded opportunities for students throughout Red Clay, the transition will be experienced differently by students, families, and staff who identify strongly with McKean High School. For these stakeholders, the change is not solely an adjustment in program delivery. It may involve changes to school identity, relationships, traditions, travel patterns, and educational expectations. The district will acknowledge these concerns as legitimate equity considerations.

The district will:

- Provide clear, individualized information about future school assignments.
- Develop transition supports that preserve student relationships and continuity.
- Evaluate the effects of reassignment on transportation and extracurricular participation.
- Address school identity, traditions, and community concerns through meaningful engagement.
- Provide appropriate counseling and student support during the transition.
- Ensure that current McKean students have access to educational opportunities comparable to or greater than those available under the existing model.

Equity Analysis of Attendance-Zone Restructuring

The proposed attendance-zone restructuring is intended to strengthen enrollment at the district's comprehensive high schools, align feeder patterns, and create more sustainable educational programming. The recommended configuration includes two attendance-zone comprehensive high schools, Alexis I. duPont High School and The John Dickinson School, with Thomas McKean serving as the districtwide Innovation Center. The plan also includes secondary program realignment, including the relocation of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme to Skyline Middle School.

Balanced enrollment is not an end in itself. Its educational value lies in the opportunities that sustainable enrollment can support. More balanced enrollment can improve the district's ability to offer comparable comprehensive programs across attendance-zone schools, including advanced coursework, elective options, athletics, and extracurricular activities. The district should continuously evaluate whether proposed enrollment levels support stronger programming at both comprehensive high schools rather than simply achieving similar student counts.

Clear feeder patterns can provide greater continuity as students move from elementary to middle to high school. This continuity can strengthen student relationships, improve coordination between schools, and provide families with greater predictability. However, geographic coherence must be balanced against transportation, school capacity, demographic composition, and access to programming. The district should evaluate the extent to which proposed attendance zones reduce unnecessary fragmentation while avoiding disproportionate burdens on particular student populations.

A central benefit of the proposed restructuring is the opportunity to strengthen the comprehensive high school experience. Larger, more sustainable enrollments will allow schools to offer additional course sections, increase student choice, and expand extracurricular participation. This is particularly important in programs where a minimum number of interested students is necessary to sustain a course or activity.

The district will establish common expectations for comprehensive high school programming and monitor whether both schools can deliver comparable opportunities. Comparable programming does not necessarily mean identical schedules or elective catalogs. It means students should have meaningful access to rigorous academics, broad electives, and appropriate support regardless of their attendance zone.

The proposed relocation of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme from The John Dickinson School to Skyline Middle School is intended to address enrollment imbalances and improve the alignment of secondary programs. The district will evaluate the impact of this change on current and prospective IB students, transportation, access to specialized instruction, and program continuity. Particular attention should be given to maintaining the quality and accessibility of the IB experience, preserving appropriate pathways into high school programs, and ensuring families receive clear information about the implications of the relocation.

Transportation, Scheduling, and Access

Transportation and scheduling represent two of the most significant operational equity considerations in the proposed model. The Innovation Center's districtwide structure depends on students being able to move between comprehensive high schools and specialized programming without sacrificing access to required instruction, services, or extracurricular opportunities. The district's preliminary feasibility work has identified relatively short transportation distances between the proposed comprehensive high schools and the Innovation Center, with estimated shuttle travel times of approximately 9–13 minutes.

The district will establish transportation and scheduling standards that address:

- Reliable transportation between instructional locations.
- Accessible transportation for students with disabilities.
- Coordination of class schedules to minimize lost instructional time.
- Access to meals, counseling, health services, and related services.
- Participation in athletics and extracurricular activities.
- Transportation associated with internships and off-campus work-based learning.
- Contingency procedures for delays, absences, and emergency situations.

Students should not experience lost opportunity or access to important school activities because they participate in Innovation Center programming. Transportation and scheduling should therefore be treated as essential components of educational equity rather than solely operational matters.

Potential Equity Risks and Mitigation Strategies

While the proposed restructuring is designed to address existing inequities, the district recognizes that systemwide changes can introduce new barriers if not implemented carefully. The following matrix identifies major equity risks and mitigation strategies.

Potential equity risk	Mitigation
Disproportionate impact of attendance-zone demographic groups	Conduct demographic and geographic impact analyses with University of Delaware before final implementation decisions
Disruption of student relationships, school identity, and community connections	Develop transition supports, student orientation activities, and community engagement opportunities through the creation of the Student Life Workgroup.
Unequal access to Innovation Center programs	Establish transparent scheduling procedures and annual data analysis through the creation of the Operations & Master Scheduling Workgroup.
Transportation or scheduling barriers	Coordinate master schedules, provide accessible district transportation, and monitor actual travel and instructional time through the Operations & Master Scheduling Workgroup.
Reduced access to services for students with disabilities	Conduct individualized planning and ensure full implementation of IEPs, Section 504 plans, and required services through the Meadowood and Student Services Workgroup.
Underrepresentation of multilingual learners or economically disadvantaged students	Provide targeted outreach, accessible communications, counseling, and appropriate instructional supports through the McKean Innovation Center Workgroup.
Loss of extracurricular opportunities due to Innovation Center participation	Protect participation in home-school activities through coordinated schedules and transportation through the Student Life Workgroup.
Uneven implementation across comprehensive high schools	Establish common program expectations and monitor course offerings, staffing, and student outcomes through the Operations and Master Scheduling Workgroup.
Inequitable access to work-based learning placements	Establish consistent placement procedures and provide transportation and other participation supports through the McKean Innovation Center Workgroup.

These risks do not outweigh the benefits of the plan. However, they demonstrate that equitable outcomes require more than structural design. The district must establish safeguards that translate the plan's equity commitments into practice.

Equity Accountability and Measures of Success

The district will evaluate the success of Reimagining Secondary Education through measurable indicators of student access, experience, and outcomes. Using the indicators below, the district will establish baseline data prior to implementation and regularly report progress following the transition.

Equity Area	Recommended indicators
Enrollment equity	School enrollment, utilization, demographics, and enrollment stability
Academic access	College course availability, participation, and successful completion
CTE access	Enrollment, pathway completion, and industry credentials
Work-based learning	Participation in immersion experiences
Student experience	Attendance, discipline, belonging, school climate, and extracurricular participation
Students with disabilities	Program access, service delivery, transition outcomes, and credential attainment
Multilingual learners	Access to specialized programs, participation, completion, and language supports
Transportation	Travel time, reliability, accessibility, and missed instructional time
College and career outcomes	Graduation, postsecondary credit, industry credentials, and postsecondary enrollment or employment where available

These indicators should be disaggregated, where appropriate, with a particular emphasis placed on comparing opportunities and outcomes before and after implementation.

Implications of Maintaining the Current System

An important component of this analysis is the consideration of the existing secondary school configuration as an alternative to restructuring. Maintaining the current system would avoid some of the short-term disruption associated with changes in attendance zones, school assignments, and program locations. It would preserve existing school communities and provide continuity for students and families who value their current educational environments.

However, maintaining the current system would also preserve the structural conditions that prompted the Reimagining Secondary Education work. Those conditions include underutilized facilities, enrollment imbalances, fragmented feeder patterns, and inconsistent access to academic and extracurricular opportunities. Without structural changes, the district would continue to face challenges in sustaining comprehensive programming across schools with substantially different enrollment levels.

Similarly, the district's ability to expand specialized CTE pathways, industry credentials, and work-based learning experiences would remain constrained by the need to duplicate expensive facilities and staffing or limit certain opportunities to individual schools. The equity implications of maintaining the current configuration must therefore be considered alongside the potential risks of

restructuring. Avoiding the disruption of change does not result in a more equitable educational system.

Overall Equity Determination

Based on the district's historical enrollment analysis, evaluation of attendance zones and feeder patterns, review of secondary programming, and development of the Thomas McKean Innovation Center model, the Reimagining Secondary Education Plan is designed to address structural conditions that have contributed to unequal educational opportunities across Red Clay's secondary schools.

The plan's central equity benefits include:

- Strengthening comprehensive high schools through more sustainable enrollment.
- Reducing the extent to which attendance-zone assignments determine access to educational programming.
- Establishing clearer and more coherent feeder patterns.
- Expanding districtwide access to specialized CTE, industry credentials, postsecondary coursework, and work-based learning.
- Creating a more coordinated secondary system that uses district resources to support broader student opportunity.
- Establishing multiple rigorous and meaningful pathways to college, career, and postsecondary success.

Equity Analysis Conclusion

The fundamental equity question facing Red Clay is not simply where students attend school, but what opportunities are available to them once they arrive. For many years, the district has operated a secondary school configuration in which enrollment imbalances, fragmented attendance zones, and the distribution of specialized programs have contributed to differences in student opportunity.

The Reimagining Secondary Education Plan seeks to address these conditions by creating stronger comprehensive secondary schools, establishing more coherent feeder patterns, and expanding districtwide access to specialized college and career programming through the Thomas McKean Innovation Center. The proposed model reflects an important shift to providing educational equity. Rather than attempting to duplicate every specialized opportunity in every school, it seeks to build a coordinated secondary system in which students can access high-quality programming regardless of their assigned comprehensive high school. This approach has the potential to expand student choice, strengthen academic and career preparation, and create a more sustainable system of educational opportunities.

The district also recognizes that educational equity cannot be achieved through structural change alone. It requires attention to the experiences of individual students, the needs of affected communities, and the elimination of barriers that may prevent students from fully participating in available programs. Successful implementation must therefore be accompanied by transparent decision-making, appropriate student supports, meaningful family engagement, and ongoing analysis of outcomes.