Tucker Cluster

DeKalb County School District Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Engagement Series #3

Executive Summary Report

Tuesday, November 10, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 7:35PM

Meeting Overview

This third and final CAT session for the Tucker cluster was held at Tucker High School and facilitated by United Way of Greater Atlanta. The district representative opened with prepared remarks, noted this was the third of three sessions, and then introduced the facilitator. The facilitator recapped Session 2 and reviewed four complete, combined options, labeled Option A through Option D, each pairing an elementary school configuration with a proposed Cross Keys middle school.

Three videos were shown, one covering Option A, one covering Options B, C, and D together, and one summarizing the district's special programs. Option A would retain the current elementary-school structure and would not establish a Cross Keys Middle School; instead, some students would be assigned to separate middle and high schools. Options B, C, and D each convert a different elementary school, Woodward, John Lewis, or Dresden, into that middle school, and each preserves one-to-one feeder patterns across all seven clusters. Groups discussed each option against three guiding questions: How well does it adheres to Board Policy? What stands out as a positive? And what stands out as a concern? Each group had seven minutes per option and two minutes per group to report out. The meeting ended at 7:35 p.m.

Participation Summary

Two scribes from KW Green Consulting documented the session and an estimated 40 to 45 people were in attendance. Due to attendance, some of the tables were combined, but they all reported out. The gallery walk concluded the session, with participants using dot stickers to identify themes that resonated with them.

Major Themes

The strongest and most consistent theme was that none of the four options meaningfully solves Tucker's own overcrowding. Tucker Middle School remains over capacity under most of the options, and several groups said the process is centered on building a Cross Keys middle school rather than addressing Tucker directly. One group summarized this as the options not addressing Tucker at all, comparing the process to "musical chairs." Multiple groups wanted a scenario built specifically around Tucker's own enrollment, including ongoing housing development and population growth in the area.

Option A was credited with requiring no real capital investment and with keeping elementary school communities together, but it drew consistent concern for converting Oak Cliff from a theme school into a regular neighborhood school, a change both scribes said would significantly disrupt an entire school community. Participants also raised split feeder patterns as a concern and said the option still leaves multiple middle schools, including Tucker's, over capacity.

Option B, converting Woodward Elementary into a middle school, was repeatedly named the least favorite option because of its cost, estimated at 60 to 100 million dollars, which multiple groups said was hard to justify given the modest capacity relief it would produce. Some groups liked its improved middle school utilization. One group asked directly why Tucker Middle School itself was not being considered for a similar conversion instead.

Option C, converting John Lewis Elementary, drew a mixed reaction. Several groups liked its more central location and reasonable travel distance. One group called converting John Lewis into a middle school the better option relative to Option B. Other groups raised the opposite concern, that John Lewis had only recently been renovated and converting it now seemed wasteful, and that the resulting boundaries around Doraville and Hightower looked irregular and likely to cause traffic problems. Opposite claims about Henderson Middle School's utilization under this option, were further discussed below.

Option D, converting Dresden Elementary, was described by multiple groups as the best or most balanced of the four, mitigating more overcrowding than the other options while requiring a smaller investment, in the 10-to-15-million-dollar range. It was also credited with keeping the High Achievers program in place. Henderson Middle School's continued underutilization came up again.

Financial transparency was a recurring theme across groups. Participants asked what the district is trying to solve and where funding will come from. They also asked whether it affects current renovation budgets, and which schools could gain or lose Title I funding. The request for a clear two-, three-, and ten-year plan rather than isolated facility changes was made. One group specifically asked whether the district's strategic waiver for oversized classes was being factored into the options, and another asked whether school choice programs would continue. A recurring request from participants to the district was: “Show us where the savings are.”

Key Concerns

- None of the four options meaningfully solves Tucker Middle School's own overcrowding.
- Oak Cliff's conversion from a theme school to a regular neighborhood school under Option A, described as a significant disruption to an entire school community.
- The estimated 60-to-100-million-dollar cost of converting Woodward Elementary under Option B, relative to the limited capacity relief it would produce.
- Why Tucker Middle School is not being considered for conversion or expansion the way Woodward, John Lewis, and Dresden elementaries are.
- Converting John Lewis Elementary under Option C so soon after it was renovated, and the irregular boundaries it would create around Doraville and Hightower.
- Whether the district's strategic waiver for oversized classes is being factored into the options under consideration.
- Whether school choice programs will continue, and how they affect enrollment stability and capacity planning.
- Lack of a clear two-, three-, and ten-year plan, and unclear source of funding for whichever option moves forward.
- Which schools could gain or lose Title-I funding because of reassignment.
- Transportation and travel distance for families south of I-85 under Options B, C, and D.

- The expected overflow at Sequoyah Middle School in Fall 2027 and which short-term fix, including possible use of portables, the district will choose.

Areas of Consensus

Across nearly every group, there was agreement that whichever option moves forward should be judged first by whether it relieves Tucker's own overcrowding, not only by whether it creates a Cross Keys middle school. There was also broad appreciation for keeping a one-to-one feeder pattern across Options B, C, and D, and shared skepticism that Option B's cost is justified by its results.

Participants consistently wanted clearer financial information before supporting any option Areas mentioned were actual savings, funding sources, and Title I implications. Participants agreed that disrupting an established, successful program, whether Oak Cliff's theme status or the High Achievers program, carries a real cost to the families built around it.

Diverse Perspectives

Views on Option C were otherwise mixed in a more ordinary way. Some participants saw converting John Lewis as the more reasonable choice relative to Option B's cost. Others objected specifically because John Lewis had only recently been renovated, making its conversion feel wasteful regardless of cost. There was also frustration with unresolved overcrowding and funding questions.

Questions Raised

- Why do none of the four options meaningfully address Tucker Middle School's own overcrowding?
- Why is Tucker Middle School itself not considered for conversion or expansion?
- What is the actual return on investment for an estimated 60-to-100-million-dollar conversion of Woodward Elementary under Option B?
- Why convert John Lewis Elementary under Option C when it has so recently been renovated?
- Is the district's strategic waiver for oversized classes being factored into any of the four options?
- Will school choice programs continue, and how do they affect enrollment stability and long-term capacity planning?
- What is the district's two-, three-, and ten-year plan, and what specific problem is each option meant to solve?
- Where will funding for any of these options come from, and which schools could gain or lose Title I funding as a result?
- How old are the buildings being considered for conversion, and what is the condition of their major systems?
- How will the district manage the expected overflow at Sequoyah Middle School in Fall 2027 in the short term?
- How will longer travel distances and existing transportation challenges be addressed for families south of I-85?

Additional Observations

- The facilitator announced there will not be a fourth CAT session planned. The next opportunity for public input district-wide is public comment, after which all engagement channels will be synthesized into a Board recommendation presented in December.