Lakeside Cluster

DeKalb County School District Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Engagement Series #3

Executive Summary Report

Tuesday, November 10, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Meeting Overview

This third and final CAT session for the Lakeside cluster moved from separate elementary options and middle and high school concepts to four complete, combined options, labeled Option A through Option D. United Way facilitated the session.. The district opened with a welcome and a recap of the two prior sessions. Three recap videos followed, covering district plans, the combined options, feeder patterns, school capacity, and related metrics.

Because attendance was lower than during the first two sessions, the facilitator consolidated the smaller groups. Six groups discussed and reported on each option, with approximately seven minutes allocated per option and additional time provided for some groups.

Several participants watched the videos before the session, so they talked among their groups and reviewed printed materials. Engagement picked up once small-group discussion began. The facilitator closed the meeting at 7:30 PM, thanking participants and confirming that the Superintendent's recommendation to the Board is expected in December.

Participation Summary

Two scribes from KW Green Consulting documented the session. Attendance was lower than the previous two sessions; therefore, the tables were consolidated. Groups 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 reported out. Participants reviewed each group’s work during the gallery walk and added feedback.

Major Themes

Nearly every group treated Option A as the least favorable option on the table. Participants opposed its split middle school feeders and the three-way split it would create at Henderson, which several groups said would leave a renovated Cross Keys substantially underutilized. Some groups did credit Option A with preserving elementary school seats and recognized its lower cost, but these positives were consistently outweighed by concerns about disruption, unclear transportation planning, and the risk of losing families to other districts.

Option B drew interest in the relief it could bring to Chamblee Middle School and for the chance to bring a high-achievers magnet program to Henderson, which several groups saw as a real opportunity if school leadership supported it. At the same time, its cost was treated as a major obstacle. Figures cited ranged from about 100 million dollars to a broader 60 to 100 million dollars estimate that one group called too wide to be a serious number. Groups also wanted more input from magnet families and clearer operational plans for the elementary school splits the option would require.

Option C was generally seen as more cost effective than Option B, preserving one-to-one feeder patterns and improving demographic balance at Cross Keys. Several groups liked that John Lewis and Cross Keys could potentially share athletic and band resources given their proximity. Henderson's underutilization

was the most consistent concern, with one group citing a projected 63 percent utilization rate and close to 600 empty seats. Other groups raised the rationale for specific boundary shapes, overcrowding at the new Sequoyah High School, and the effect of moving Briar Vista students across I-85.

Option D was repeatedly called the least bad option. Groups liked that Dresden's ongoing construction could make a middle school conversion there faster and less disruptive, and that it offered favorable high school utilization, generally cited around 85 to 90 percent, while keeping magnet students within the cluster. The recurring concern was whether moving Briar Vista is necessary, since Druid Hills Middle and High Schools were described as already operating below capacity, and whether doing so would only reduce Druid Hills enrollment further.

A dedicated middle school for Cross Keys was mentioned across nearly every group regardless of which option they preferred. Participants also pushed back repeatedly on the accuracy of the district's capacity and cost data. Henderson's figures drew the most scrutiny, with multiple groups asking the district to verify its utilization numbers rather than treat them as settled, and at least one group renewing a request first raised at an earlier session for an in-person walkthrough of Henderson and other middle schools. Participants also raised whether more than one magnet program could be created, with one group proposing a middle school magnet at Chamblee paired with a high school magnet at Lakeside or Henderson, and several groups warning that filling schools to capacity now without room to grow could mean another rezoning conversation within five years.

Key Concerns

- Option A's split middle school feeders and the three-way split it would create at Henderson, leaving a renovated Cross Keys underutilized.
- Option B's cost, cited as roughly 100 million dollars or, on one account, a 60-to-100-million-dollar range called too wide to be meaningful.
- Insufficient input from magnet families and unclear operational plans for the elementary school splits Option B would require.
- Henderson Middle School's utilization figures, including a cited 63 percent projection and nearly 600 empty seats under Option C.
- Dividing the John Lewis community under Option C and overcrowding at the new Sequoyah High School.
- Whether moving Briar Vista is necessary under Option C or Option D, and its effect on an already below-capacity Druid Hills.
- Traffic and distance between Briar Vista and Dresden, and crossing I-85, without a clear transportation plan.
- The continued absence of a dedicated middle school for Cross Keys under most of the options.
- General doubt about whether published capacity and cost figures, especially for Henderson, are accurate.
- Risk that any option chosen without room to grow will require another rezoning process within about five years.
- Whether the French and Dual Language Immersion programming tied to Evansdale would be preserved under Option A.
- Potential loss of families to other districts if disruption under Option A is not offset by a clear long-term benefit.

Areas of Consensus

Across nearly all six groups, Option A was the least preferred of the four, and Option D was consistently described as the least bad, generally seen as the most workable combination of cost, feeder continuity, and timing given Dresden's ongoing construction. There was also broad, shared skepticism of Henderson's stated capacity and utilization figures, with multiple groups independently asking for the numbers to be verified rather than accepted as given.

Participants widely agreed that Cross Keys needs a dedicated middle school, regardless of which overall option moves forward. There was also broad agreement that whatever option is chosen should hold up for the long term, since filling schools to capacity now without accounting for future growth could mean revisiting rezoning again within a few years.

Diverse Perspectives

Views on Option B were split rather than settled. Some groups, including one that evaluated the options through both a Lakeside-stability lens and a districtwide fiscal lens, called it potentially the strongest option for Lakeside specifically despite its cost. Others treated that same cost, cited at roughly 100 million dollars, as disqualifying on its own, especially alongside continued uncertainty about whether Henderson's leadership and capacity could support a new high-achievers program there.

Reactions to Option C also varied. Several groups liked its cost effectiveness and its preservation of one-to-one feeder patterns. Others focused more on what is left unresolved, including Henderson's underutilization and middle school capacity pressure at Sequoyah and Tucker. One group was notably more skeptical of the capacity data itself, cautioning against treating Henderson's 63 percent utilization figure as an established flaw before its accuracy is verified.

A parking-lot question asked why the district could not support multiple magnet programs rather than relocating a single existing one. That question was not directly answered during the session and points to an open disagreement about whether magnet access should expand or simply move.

Questions Raised

- Why can't the district support multiple magnet programs rather than relocating one?
- Does Henderson Middle School's stated capacity and utilization figure reflect how its classrooms and spaces are actually being used?
- Will school leadership at Henderson support bringing a high-achievers magnet program there under Option B?
- Is the 60-to-100-million-dollar cost estimate for Option B accurate, or does it need to be narrowed before it is useful for comparison?
- Is moving Briar Vista necessary under Option C or Option D, given that Druid Hills Middle and High Schools are already below capacity?
- What is the transportation and traffic plan for students crossing I-85 or traveling between Briar Vista and Dresden?
- Will the district commit to an in-person walkthrough of Henderson and other middle schools to verify capacity data, as requested at an earlier session?

- Would the French and Dual Language Immersion programming tied to Evansdale be preserved under Option A?
- How will overcrowding at the new Sequoyah High School be addressed under Option C?
- What happens if the district needs to revisit rezoning again within a few years because an option did not leave room for growth?

Additional Observations

- Engagement increased noticeably once small-group discussion began.
- The facilitator closed the meeting at 7:30 PM.
- Some participants mentioned they had also attended CAT sessions at other schools.