Cross Keys Cluster

DeKalb County School District Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Engagement Series #3

Executive Summary Report

Thursday, November 12, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Meeting Overview

This was the third and final CAT session for the Cross Keys cluster and it was held at Cross Keys High School. The format moved from separate options to four combined options labeled A through D. A United Way facilitator led the session and a representative from DCSD opened with remarks and a review of session 2. The facilitator shared the ground rules, asked participants to listen to understand and to share airtime, and to challenge ideas and not people. The facilitator also asked participants to stay curious and to ask questions before making assumptions. The facilitator added that the 90 minutes would cover a review of options and small group discussion, followed by a brief share out and a gallery walk.

The video recap covered the district plans and the four options and feeder patterns and school capacity. The meeting closed at 7:30 PM. The facilitator announced that the Superintendent will make recommendations to the Board in December.

Participation Summary

Two scribes from KW Green Consulting documented the meeting. Attendance was lower than expected, so the facilitator divided participants into four groups, allowing seven minutes per topic before reporting out. Groups 2 did not reach Option D because they ran out of time.

During the gallery walk, participants used colored dots to identify resonant ideas, reviewed other groups' charts, and added their feedback.

Major Themes

Option A received mixed reactions. Participants valued its low cost and more efficient use of resources, as well as the opportunity for students to attend a nearby school and make a wider range of friends. One group said it would break a pattern of demographic segregation. It would also bring a new middle school to Cross Keys. Groups still raised problems. Three schools stay over capacity. One group said it splits too many middle schools. A group raised the emotional safety of students who may feel unwelcome. Group 2 asked why five schools are split. It also asked why the district should rush a new middle school.

Option B drew mostly cost concerns. Some groups called it expensive or too expensive. The groups expressed positive points like it adds diversity at Cross Keys and Chamblee by changing the John Lewis boundary. They also valued the schools' proximity, which gives some families walkable access and provides a shared field with Cross Keys. One group said one high school would be stable and only two middle schools would be overused. Another group asked what happens to the Cross Keys CTAE program if high achievers move while another worried that families would be split.

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Option C was the most positive for several groups – one group even named it a favorite. They liked that John Lewis is a newer building and that Cross Keys gains diversity. They liked that the plan keeps students together. They also liked that ESOL and special education supports would follow students from elementary to high school. A group liked that high achievers stay at Chamblee and that all high schools fall under capacity and another liked the one-to-one feeder pattern. One group disliked crossing I-85 while another group worried Druid Hills would be underused. Some groups asked where John Lewis teachers would go.

Option D received the least discussion because some groups ran out of time. One group wrote on its chart that D is expensive and brings constant change for staff and students. Another group had a chart comment calling it a huge waste of money, and another had a chart had a comment about racial and ethnic communities. Staff and program impacts came up across groups. Participants asked what happens to teachers when elementary schools close or convert. They asked what happens to the Cross Keys CTAE program. They asked where the high achiever's program should go. One group asked if it could be housed at Woodward.

Key Concerns

- Cost of Options B and D and the cost to convert a school to a middle school.
- Three middle schools and two high schools stay over capacity under Option A.
- Splitting five schools in a way that splits friends and communities.
- Crossing I-85 under Option C.
- Underuse of Druid Hills under Option C.
- No space for an athletic field under Option C according to one chart.
- Where teachers from John Lewis and other converted schools would go.
- What happens to the Cross Keys CTAE program if high achievers move.
- Where would the high achiever's program go and whether it would stay at the same school.
- Living near construction sites under Option B.
- Constant change for staff and students under Option D.
- Emotional safety of students who may feel unwelcome after boundary changes.
- Support and funding that follows the school zone and the child over time.

Areas of Consensus

Groups agreed that cost is the main drawback of Option B.

Groups agreed that one to one feeder patterns and keeping students together matter. Groups supported Option C.

Groups agreed that diversity matters and that Options A, B and C could improve it.

Groups asked about teachers. Groups asked what would happen to staff at John Lewis. One group asked about teachers from schools that would close.

Groups agreed that all high schools should be under capacity and that Option C meets this goal.

Diverse Perspectives

Groups saw Option A differently. Some groups liked its low cost and diversity benefits. Other groups saw less transition and low change for kids. Another group said it fixes overcrowding at no cost but leaves middle and high schools overused. One group asked why the district should rush a new middle school. Option C split opinions. While group named it a favorite and liked a newer John Lewis building while another group disliked crossing I-85 and said it has no room for an athletic field. It was noted that John Lewis would be closer to the Cross Keys field.

Another group spoke about demographics and school choice. They discussed going to the best school regardless of where a student lives. They discussed diversifying zoning.

Questions Raised

- Why split five schools?
- Why rush a new middle school?
- What happens to teachers at John Lewis and at schools that stop being elementary schools?
- What happens to the Cross Keys CTAE program if the high achievers program moves?
- Where would the high achievers go? Would they stay in the same school?
- Why can't the high achievers or magnet program be housed at Woodward?
- Can Option A be tweaked to reduce overuse of schools?
- How will the school district address overuse at three schools under Option A?
- What is the cost of converting a middle school to a high school?
- How will support and funding follow students when zones change?
- Should teachers move with students or stay in the same school as students grow?

Additional Observations

- The facilitator stated feedback will be used to refine future options for the cluster.
- The facilitator added the Superintendent will make recommendations to the Board in December.