Dunwoody Cluster

DeKalb County School District Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Engagement Series #3

Executive Summary Report

Thursday, November 12, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 7:26 PM

Meeting Overview

This was the third and final CAT session for the Dunwoody cluster held at Dunwood High School. A United Way facilitator led the session. A DCSD representative gave remarks and said the discussions are connected to several new and renovated facilities expected to open in the coming years, including Dresden Elementary, Sequoyah Middle, and Sequoyah High. These projects could help the district balance enrollment, reduce overcrowding, and strengthen connections among elementary, middle, and high schools. She added that the group would consider whether converting an elementary school is the best strategy and which location would serve students most effectively.

Attendance was lower than usual, so the facilitator asked participants in very small groups to join other groups that had around four members form groups of approximately four. The facilitator explained the materials on the tables, including index cards, paper, and dots. Some packets were missing from the Option D map, however, so a large map was displayed at the front for reference.

After watching recap videos, participants discussed the options for about 30 minutes—approximately seven minutes per option. Each group appointed a facilitator, recorder, and reporter, then evaluated the options using the board policy criteria. They recorded their notes on chart paper and sticky notes rather than on the handouts. Groups reported their feedback on each option and were given two-minute each. The meeting ended at 7:26 PM. The facilitator gave closing remarks and encouraged participants to participate in the gallery walk on their own.

Participation Summary

Two scribes from KW Green Consulting documented the session.

Major Themes

Options C and D were the preferred choices. Nearly every group favored them over Options A and B. Groups liked that both keep one-to-one-feeder patterns. They liked lower capital costs and better balance at the high school. Groups also liked that Cross Keys gets its own middle school. Several groups leaned toward Option C and Option D.

Option A was widely seen as a band-aid. Participants liked its low or no cost. One group also liked that it could start next year with little disruption. They still oppose split feeder patterns. They worried about separating students who built friendships in middle school. They said it leaves most schools near capacity. They also said it does not help Dunwoody Elementary. Groups expressed concerns about Chestnut and Peachtree Middle and Dunwoody High, noting that Peachtree would reach 104 percent. One group said it failed the test on feeder crossover and three overused middle schools.

Option B drew strong opposition to the cost. The estimate of about 100 million dollars came up repeatedly. Several groups said the money could be better used. One group said many schools have needs and this spends too much on one. Another group said it moves the high achiever's program farther away. Another group saw benefits. They liked the Cross Keys Middle School, and the high achievers moved to Cross Keys. They liked sharing space with Woodward. They still named cost and transportation as problems.

Funding transparency was a strong theme. Groups asked where the money went. They said it does not reach teachers or buildings and asked what the 10-to-15-million-dollar investment would cover. They asked if it meant arts space and athletics and bathrooms. They wondered if 60 to 100 million dollars spent in a community without recent investment might be a better use of funds.

The high achievers program drew mixed views. Several groups worried about transportation if it moves from Chamblee to Cross Keys. One group said a student who lacks transport would be hurt. Groups suggested placing the program in every cluster or at more than one site. Some groups said this would help students who cannot travel far.

Growth and capacity planning was another theme. Another group said the Dunwoody cluster keeps growing despite the birth rate. They said 98 percent utilization at the high school is a worry. One group said Option C at 93 percent gives a helpful buffer. Others said school choice makes the lines arbitrary. They said moving kids within Dunwoody is not realistic.

Several groups said none of the options fix real problems. They expected the process to fix problems and not shuffle students and boundary lines. They said the district will likely be back at this again.

Equity and student support came through strongly on the charts. A group noted that Option A adds about 200 economically disadvantaged students to Kingsley. They said Option D adds about 90 students to the same school. They called Kingsley the most economically disadvantaged school in the cluster. They said Option D puts this poor facility school at 93 percent while other schools stay near 80 to 85 percent.

Another group said Hightower students sent to Kingsley must come with resources. They said the district cannot send more high need students with ESOL and Title I needs without fixing facilities and utilization. They also said not to push ESOL students out of schools with many ESOL students. They asked for a focused community.

Two groups addressed school closure, writing that the whole cluster needs rebalancing. They said if a school must close the district should close the one that makes the most sense and not just respond to the loudest voices. One group noted that this is the third year of this work. They said the district needs to talk about programming and close a Dunwoody Elementary school. They said the work should be about consolidation when called for. It was also noted that all options bring students into Kingsley.

There were several facility concerns. One group noted that Nancy Creek is in bad shape. They wrote that there is no plan for how a dual campus looks or how to fix it. They noted Henderson at 63 percent under Option C and linked this to under-resourcing. Groups also said Dresden Elementary has a community that deserves to keep using it as an elementary school. One group noted it was the easier building to convert because it is not full.

Two unlabeled sticky notes raised two points. One asked what the impact of all these proposals is on educational achievement and said this was never addressed. The other asked what the total cost savings are after counting closings and renovations.

Capital cost and the funding plan resonated with many participants from the gallery walk. Capital cost being above zero was a concern for both Option C and Option D. There were questions about Option D and the capital improvement costs and the funding plan. They also asked what the plan is to update or upgrade the schools that stay.

Participants asked for details on the investment under Options B and C. They said many schools are operating that need investment and these are newer schools. On Option B they asked what the investment includes and if it is necessary and where the money is under Option B.

Middle school crowding and travel across I-285 also appeared. Option A does not remove trailers or resolve crowding at Peachtree Middle. They also said they do not agree with leaving Cross Keys without a middle school. Option A leaves a middle school overused three times over. Option C leaves two middle schools over capacity and Cross Keys at low use. It was raised that two middle schools have over capacity under Option C. Groups also raised students crossing 85 or 285 under Options A, B and C.

Several groups favored a single large rebalancing. A group listed one big rebalancing under Option C as a positive. They wrote that this would avoid doing the work again soon. Another group also left suggestions. One said to expand Chestnut Elementary. One said to get Kingsley what they need. Groups also tied the Kingsley point to ESOL and Title I support.

Option A, groups listed cost and easy deployment as positive. They listed the high achievers move and Peachtree at 104 percent and split feeders and Kingsley support and Dunwoody Elementary utilization as concerns. Under Option B they listed the one-to-one feeder and a Cross Keys Middle School and benefits for Cross Keys from the high achievers move. They also listed better balance of high and middle schools and Woodward being close to Cross Keys. Their Option B concerns were cost and proximity for Hightower students moving to Kingsley and transportation. They also said Option B does not address elementary enrollment in Dunwoody. Under Option C they listed high school balance and a Cross Keys Middle School and Dunwoody High at 93 percent. Their concerns were Cross Keys Elementary utilization and Dunwoody empty seats. Under Option D they listed the one-to-one feeder and middle and high utilization. Their concerns were Kingsley support and Dunwoody empty seats and Cross Keys Elementary utilization.

Key Concerns

- None of the options solves the cluster's existing problems. One group called this a true disappointment.
- Split feeder patterns under Option A and the emotional effect on students.
- The 100-million-dollar cost of Option B and what that money could do elsewhere.
- Dunwoody Elementary utilization and empty seats not addressed under most options.
- Peachtree Middle at 104 percent under Option A and Dunwoody High at 98 percent under Option D.
- Support for Kingsley under reassignment. This includes staff and facilities and training.
- Chestnut Elementary gets little relief under Option A.
- Cross Keys Elementary utilization if a large elementary school is converted. Group 1 saw the rest of the cluster near 96 percent.

- Transportation and distance. This includes Hightower students moving to Kingsley and access to the high achiever's program at Cross Keys.
- Support for ESOL and ELL students during reassignment.
- Adding economically disadvantaged students to Kingsley.
- Poor facility conditions at Kingsley and Nancy Creek and no plan for how a dual campus would work.
- Henderson Middle at 63 percent under Option C and the risk of under-resourcing.
- Kittredge moving to Henderson under Option A. Groups cited distance and loss of the promised feeder flow.
- Splitting the magnet program between middle and high school under Option A. Groups also said Option A moves Hightower after middle school connections are made.
- Oakcliff ADA compliance cost under Option A. Groups asked how much it would be.
- Option A and utilization far above the 85 percent target.
- Capital costs above zero under Options C and D. One group raised this and asked for the funding plan.
- Two middle schools over capacity under Option C.
- Is there space to split Ashford Park and remove many elementary seats under Option C?
- Overcrowding at Kingsley.
- Funding transparency. Participants asked why money does not reach teachers and buildings.
- Dual campus plans for Montgomery Elementary. One group said a dual campus should never be a long-term solution.
- Dresden is the farthest school from Cross Keys under Option D.
- An elementary school closure in the cluster that was noted and not addressed.
- Limited room for growth.

Areas of Consensus

Options C and D were favored over A and B across the room. Most groups said this clearly. No group ranked A or B first.

Option B was opposed on cost by several groups, with one naming cost as the highest as well.

Groups agreed that Cross Keys needs its own middle school, noting it must keep a one-to-one feeder.

Groups agreed that split feeder patterns are a problem, specifically about Option A.

Groups wanted better support for students who are moved. They named ESOL and ELL students and Kingsley and the need for staff and training.

Many groups asked for transparency on funding and wanted more discussion on facilities and staff.

Questions Raised

- What would the 10-to-15-million-dollar investment at John Lewis and Dresden cover?
- Would the 60-to-100-million-dollar Option B cost be better used in a community that has had little investment?
- Where is the funding going if it is not reaching teachers or buildings?
- Could money be used to update older buildings?
- How will the district support Kingsley and its staff and English learners under reassignment?
- How will ESOL and ELL students be kept in schools that can support them?
- How will Dunwoody elementary empty seats and utilization be addressed?
- How will the district plan for growth when the high school is near 98 percent?
- What is the long-term plan for Montgomery's dual campus?
- Will the district address the closure of an elementary school in the cluster?
- Can the high achiever's program be offered in more than one location?
- Will participants get a chance to give feedback on the final option?
- Does the school choice system make boundary lines less meaningful?
- What is the total cost savings after counting closures and renovations?
- What is the impact of all these proposals on educational achievement?
- Where would the money for updating Woodward come from? Groups asked for the budget and source of the estimate.
- How will Kingsley get resources if more high need students are sent there?
- Which elementary school in the cluster should close?
- What are the capital improvement costs and what is the funding plan?
- What is the plan to update or upgrade schools that stay?
- What does the Option B investment include and is it necessary?

Additional Observations

- The Option D map was missing from **some** packets; however, a large map was provided at the front.
- The moderator reminded a participant that the group gives feedback and does not make decisions.
- Groups asked to put on record that they want feedback on the final option just as for the others.
- It was suggested to rename Cross Keys to Brookhaven High on its Option B and Option D sheets.
- One group wrote on its Option A sheet that the option is a band-aid with no room for growth. They asked why there is only one high achievers' program.
- Participants wrote Option A overcrowds Kingsley and Chestnut. It listed 78 students at Kingsley under Option B.
- Option A has too many split feeders and too much movement. They said it stresses the middle and high schools and moves part of Chestnut away from its community.

- One group said Option D the best balance for all levels. They called Option C the most balanced at the high school level.
- Another group indicated that Option C is the best possible option. They said it needs a follow-up discussion on facilities and staff and training. A blue sticky note on that sheet says clusters are important to community.
- Support was expressed for one-to-one feeder and best utilization for Dunwoody on both Option B and Option C. They said moving the magnet under Option B could drive equity within the district.
- A repeated suggestion was to rename Cross Keys to Brookhaven High School on its Option A and Option C sheets.
- An Option C sheet suggests embedding the high achiever's program in the clusters.