Chamblee Cluster

DeKalb County School District Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Engagement Series #3

Executive Summary Report

Thursday, November 12, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 7:35PM

Meeting Overview

This was the third and final CAT session for the Chamblee cluster and it was held at Chamblee Middle School. The format moved from separate elementary options and middle and high school concepts to four complete, combined options, labeled Option A through Option D. United Way of Greater Atlanta facilitated the meeting. A DCSD representative opened the session with remarks.

The facilitator said this was the final session of this type and that it would run 90 minutes. The facilitator asked participants to consider perspectives beyond their school or neighborhood, including strengths, concerns, questions, and trade-offs. Each group had seven minutes per option to record positives and challenges on sticky notes, while index cards were available for questions. Groups then reported three to five key themes.

A short discussion opened the video segment. One of the participants suggested a show of hands to see who had already watched. Most previewed the videos. Some asked to skip the video because earlier meetings ran over. A DCSD representative noted that not everyone had raised a hand. The video played for those who had not seen it. Some participants read materials. Others held side conversations. More people arrived during the video.

During the small group discussions, some participants said they could not judge options without more information. They said it was hard to comment on other communities. Facilitators answered some questions and sent others to the parking lot. One participant strongly criticized the lack of a study of student outcomes. Several participants applauded. The meeting ended at 7:35 p.m.

Participation Summary

Two scribes from KW Green Consulting documented the session. Attendance was lower than in earlier sessions, so the groups were merged.

Some groups reported in pairs of their choosing. Several participants used their time to voice broader grievances. It was stated that the CAT process is a source of fear and division. That was also emailed to the facilitator. During the gallery walk, participants gathered in a circle around the DCSD representative. They asked about the options and shared frustration with the process. Some people left. Several stayed after the meeting to talk.

Each group posted one sheet per option with sticky notes for positives and concerns. Colored dots on the chart paper show which notes other participants agreed with. These sheets add details and confirm several points. They are folded into the sections below.

Major Themes

The strongest theme was distrust of the process. Participants asked whether the district wanted their feedback. They asked how feedback would be used if all four options were unacceptable. One participant said her input from the last session did not appear in the report. Another asked how notes were being captured. Facilitators said all notes and charts would be photographed and shared. A participant pushed back. She said this had not happened before. Another said she felt there had been a plan all along to move ahead with some of the options. She pushed back and cited the need for transparency. Others said the surveys were too short and asked for better feedback loops.

A second theme was a lack of information. Participants said they could not weigh positives and negatives without knowing which programs would be at which schools. One parent said she was confused about what CAT was being asked to do. Others said it was hard to comment on other communities. Groups asked for terms to be defined. They named dual campus and instructional capacity.

The third theme was student outcomes. Participants asked whether academic quality and student outcomes had been studied. They questioned why 2029 was the focus. They asked how the short-term moves and renovations would be funded. A participant said the lack of an outcomes study was shameful and that the numbers seemed to drive the process more than students. One participant asked if the final recommendation would list programs by school and outcome studies.

Option A drew almost no support. Groups opposed it saying that it made no sense. Another group raised utilization and asked how the option addressed overcrowding.

Groups wrote “No positives” and “Non-starter” and “Please do not proceed” on the Option A sheet. Groups also wrote that split feeders are a disservice to students and not feasible. They wrote that three overcrowded middle schools are not acceptable. They said moving the magnet program from Chamblee Middle to Henderson would bring costs and likely staffing challenges. They also said it moves high achievers and does not help overcrowding.

Option B drew mostly negative comments. Groups cited the cost of about 100 million dollars and the cost of moving both magnet programs. They said the move needs administrators and qualified staff and clerks who know magnet programs. They said it is not a simple switch. One group named Woodward as the best site for a Cross Keys Middle School. The group noted it is an older school that needs renewal and shares a campus with the high school. Others saw shared athletic space with Cross Keys but said many students would travel far.

Option C drew mixed comments. Groups liked the one-to-one feeder pattern and the new Cross Keys Middle School. Participants liked that both high achiever’s programs stay in Chamblee. Concerns included Ashford Park leaving its cluster and dual campus space for Montgomery and data errors. Groups also asked about staff and resources.

Option D drew the most favorable comments. One group named it the preferred option. They noted Dresden sit closer to the middle of the cluster. They said magnet programs stay in place and called it one of the least costly options. Other groups liked its feeder pattern and utilization. They also asked how it serves crowding and staffing. They asked whether the same problems would be returned in 2029. Positives were that it keeps Ashford Park in Chamblee and has a one-to-one feeder. Utilization was called appropriate except for Tucker Middle. The group said middle and high school magnet programs stay in the Chamblee cluster. They said it is probably one of the least expensive options. They noted that Dresden is in the middle of the Cross Keys attendance area. They said this is closer than the Woodward and Cross

Keys High locations. They asked if boundaries for Tucker and Henderson middle schools could be adjusted to relieve Tucker in Option D.

Some participants say the entire process is invalid because it does not consider student outcomes. The same set of concerns repeats across options. These are the facts that students' outcomes need to be studied and what happens to teachers and staff. Others are what programs are available where and how affected families feel. They also asked how many times students will move and said time is needed to plan after school programs. They noted there is no guarantee that a middle school would be funded.

Groups also raised programs at Kittredge. There were notes that said, "Do not change the Kittredge feeder pattern because it is successful." They said splitting Kittredge would change its culture. They asked what the move from Kittredge to Henderson Middle would accomplish under Option A. They asked not to separate Kittredge and Ashford Park German students. These students need access to an in-person German teacher. They added magnet students need many AP classes that they cannot get at Cross Keys. Participants asked what would happen to the magnet teachers under Option B. They said the district cannot go on good faith that a middle school will come later. They also noted that Lakeside High and Cross Keys High utilization would be too low under Option A.

Key Concerns

- Distrust that feedback will be used and that district leadership wants it.
- Short surveys and weak feedback loops to district leadership.
- Too little information to judge options. Participants wanted to know which programs go where.
- No study of student outcomes and academic quality.
- The unclear meaning of short term. One participant asked if it meant two or three or ten years.
- Temporary arrangements with no set end dates.
- The cost of Option B. The estimate was 60 to 100 million dollars compared with 10 to 15 million for John Lewis and Dresden.
- The cost of moving both magnet programs and the staff needed to run them.
- Long travel for students in the Cross Keys cluster if Woodward becomes the middle school.
- Tucker overcrowding. Groups asked that boundaries be reviewed to use Henderson capacity.
- Ashford Park leaving its cluster or being split between middle schools.
- Dual campus plans for Montgomery and Nancy Creek.
- Data errors and high utilization rates in the options.
- Staffing and whether the next proposal will show cost savings over the next three years.
- A parent concern is that the process is pitting communities against each other.
- Moving the magnet program from Chamblee Middle to Henderson brings costs and staffing challenges.
- Losing teaching expertise and administrative support if both magnet programs move.
- Separating Kittredge and Ashford Park German students from an in person German teacher.
- Changing the successful Kittredge feeder pattern.
- No guarantee a middle school would be funded or built.
- Magnet students may lose access to AP classes at Cross Keys.

- Time needed to plan after school programs.

Areas of Consensus

Option A had little to no support in either set of notes. No group defended it.

Groups across both sets of notes shared concerns about process. They wanted to know that feedback counts. They wanted a plan for future sessions. Many said they felt unheard.

Several groups said the district had not given enough information on programs and student outcomes.

Option D was the least criticized option among groups that discussed it but only a few groups gave detailed comments on it.

Participants responded better to the consultant's explanations than to the wider process. Jackson noted this twice.

Diverse Perspectives

One group said none of the four options were acceptable. It argued that Woodward is the right choice for a Cross Keys middle school even though it is the most expensive. The group said the district should do the right thing for that community. It spoke of unity and said communities should not be each other's opposition. It asked for better options and transparency and accountability for all DeKalb children.

One group preferred Option D. It also found value in some of the shared space under Option B. The group rejected Option A. It asked how the next proposal would show savings.

The chart sheets show a different emphasis on each group. Groups weighed geography and cost and magnet programs. One group rejected the process itself. Its notes said the whole process is invalid because it ignores student outcomes. Groups said the dual campus idea is unclear.

Participants asked more than once what the point of this was. The group spoke with passion about accountability and said the district still had no plan.

Views on the process itself split. Some wanted to skip the video. Others had not seen it. Some used the gallery walk time to ask the consultant about options. Some wanted to continue talking about ideas and work as a group. A few participants left early.

Questions Raised

- What is CAT being asked to do and how will its input be used?
- Which programs will be at which schools under each option?
- Was a vote taken after the Superintendent discussion? Another asked if a decision had already been made.
- Why is 2029 the focus and why is the plan short term?
- What does short term mean? Is it two or three or ten years?
- Has the district studied how each option affects student outcomes and academic quality?

- How were the cost estimates reached? Why is Option B 60 to 100 million dollars and the others 10 to 15 million?
- How will the next proposal show cost savings over three years and what will staffing cost?
- What does instructional capacity mean in the policy?
- How is dual campus defined?
- How can Tucker be relieved using space at Henderson?
- How will magnet programs work from one feeder to the next under Option B?
- Will feeder patterns change in 2029 under Option D?
- What happens to staff under each option?
- How are notes being captured and will every note be considered?
- Is there a plan for future sessions?
- Does the district want community feedback if participants say all four options are unacceptable?
- Can attendance boundaries for Tucker and Henderson be adjusted to relieve Tucker Middle under Option D?
- What does moving Kittredge students to Henderson Middle accomplish under Option A?
- What happens to magnet teachers if the programs move?
- How will Kittredge and Ashford Park German students keep an in person German teacher?
- How many times will students move?
- How do affected families feel?
- What is the dual campus idea?

Additional Observations

- DCSD explained cost this way: Woodward is a building from the 1950s or 1960s and needs major work. John Lewis and Dresden are newer. They mostly need a performing arts suite and gym work.
- DCSD said building work and new construction are outside this process. They would come later if an option moved forward.
- DCSD said the process has a limited time frame. Some solutions fall outside it. The dual campus at Dunwoody and Nancy Creek is not meant to be a forever solution. No end date is set.