

DeKalb County School District SAP Fall Update

September 8, 2025
Presented by: Sarita Smith





● Agenda

- ✓ Vision, Purpose. Non-Purpose of SAP, & Outcomes
- ✓ Guiding Principles
- ✓ Why SAP Now?
- ✓ Timeline
- ✓ Survey and Research Highlights
- ✓ Support & Collaborations

Vision, Purpose & Non-Purpose, and Outcomes of SAP

Vision

To reimaging DCSD by considering **programs**, **boundaries**, and **buildings** holistically, using data, and reviewing every 5 years to align with E-SPLOST.

This comprehensive planning process will help position **ALL** our students upon graduation to **Enroll**, **Employ**, engage in **Entrepreneurship**, or **Enlist**.



SAP Advisory Purpose and Non-Purpose

Purpose

- **Serve as a critical thought partner in assessing systems related to buildings, boundaries, and programs.**
- Serve as a critical thought partner in assessing DCSD's current student assignment procedures and policies.
- Provide impartial recommendations suited to dismantling structural inequities.
- **Use data to make informed decisions and recommendations.**
- Recommend ways for DCSD to become fiscally efficient.
- Review and recommend ways to **reimagine** DCSD programs and offerings so all students have a quality education.
- Recommend boundaries, buildings, and programs suited for the current and projected enrollment.

Non-Purpose of the Advisory

- To make **final decisions** regarding policy or standard operating procedures related to DCSD.
- **To determine the daily operations of schools or programs.**
- To direct DCSD to make specific changes within the purview of the Board of Education.
- **To make decisions that only impact specific children or communities.**

SAP is the WHAT not the HOW



SAP Outcomes

To develop recommendations related to buildings, boundaries, and programs that has been triangulated with data, informed by community input, and filtered through the SAP guiding principles.

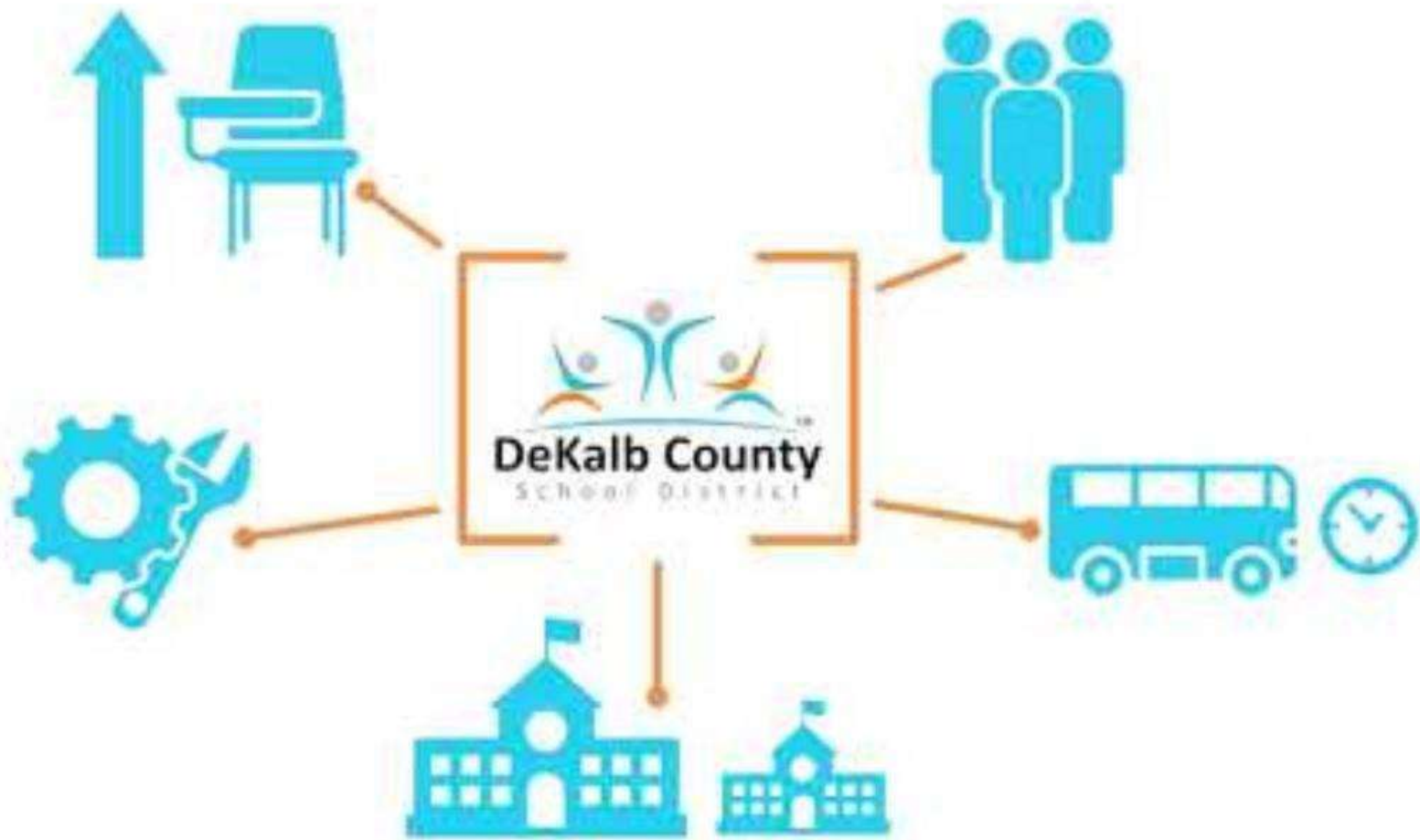


Guiding Principles

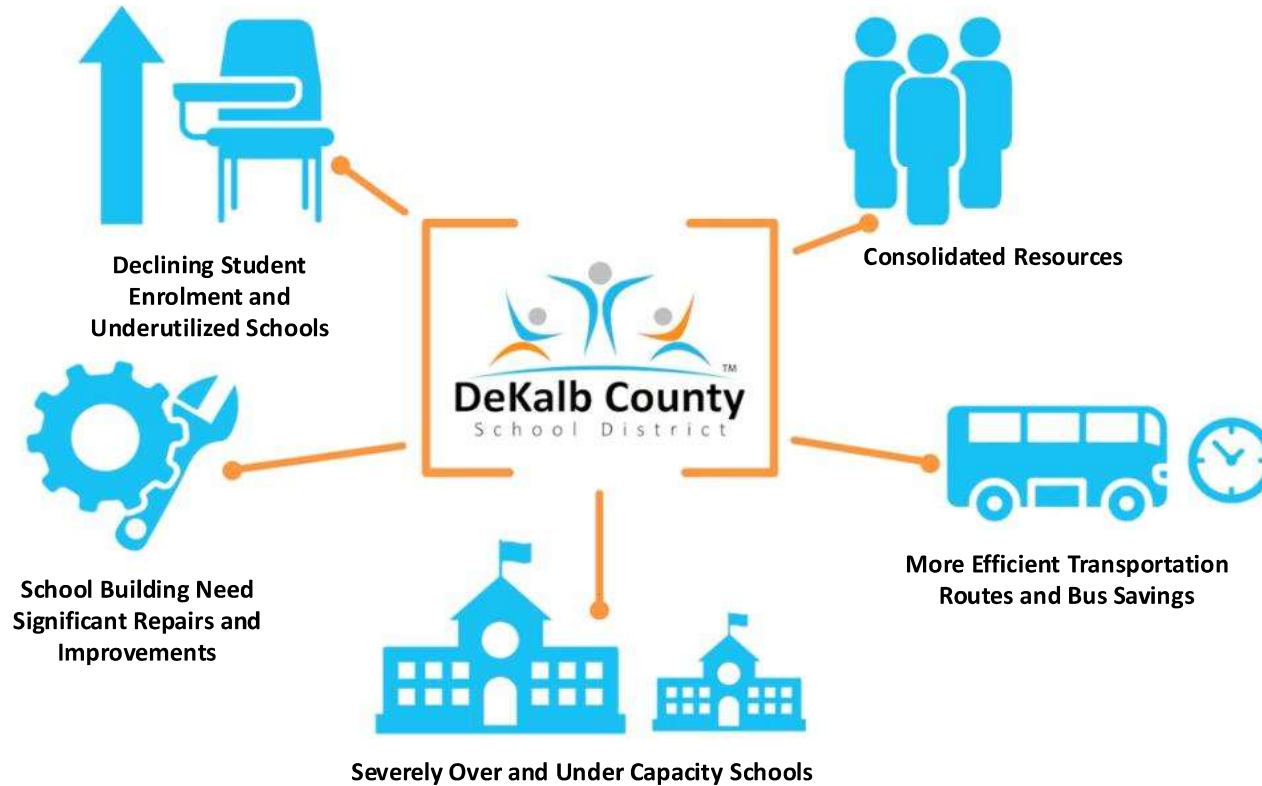
Buildings	Ensure safe, high-quality, and fiscally responsible learning environments by establishing clear standards for building age and facility conditions.	Use consistent metrics to guide decisions on expansion, consolidation, or replication, ensuring long-term sustainability, and efficiency.	Create and maintain safe, secure, and comfortable learning environments for all students.	All facilities will be fully accessible to individuals of all abilities, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.	Maintain optimal school capacity to foster a supportive learning environment, prioritizing balanced utilization over mere occupancy.
Boundaries	School boundaries should be guided by reliable data on enrollment trends, population shifts, and school capacity to ensure balanced utilization, long-term program sustainability, and equitable access— reviewed regularly to maintain efficiency and responsiveness to change.	Boundary decisions should be made through a transparent, collaborative process that actively involves all stakeholders and provides clear, timely communication to build trust and ensure community needs are reflected.	Boundary decisions should optimize transportation efficiency and consider both short- and long-term financial impacts, ensuring responsible use of resources while minimizing burdens on students, families, and the district.	Boundaries should support consistent school feeder patterns and equitable access to specialized programs, ensuring smooth academic transitions and expanding opportunities for all students to engage in programs that match their interests and needs.	School boundaries should be flexible and regularly evaluated to respond to changing demographics, educational needs, and community dynamics— favoring incremental adjustments, supporting diverse learning options, and strengthening local community ties.
Programs	Programs must demonstrate measurable success, meet community and student needs, operate efficiently, and undergo regular, data-driven evaluations to ensure their sustainability and relevance.	Program placement and expansion should be guided by strategic analysis of enrollment, staffing, facility readiness, transportation logistics, and future scalability to optimize resource use and support district growth.	Ensure equitable access to all programs by considering geographic distribution, community needs, diverse learners, and intentional outreach, so that every student has the opportunity to succeed regardless of location or background.	Programs should be designed intentionally with distinct focus areas, aligned entry criteria, clear student profiles, and progression models that match developmental stages and community needs.	Programs should directly support the district’s 4E pathways (Enrollment, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Enlistment) and be aligned across grade levels to ensure long-term student success and district coherence.



Why SAP Now?



Five Reasons for DCSD To Thrive



K- 12 Enrollment Forecast (preliminary data)

Our planning department uses a method of population forecasting called “cohort-survival analysis.” In this method, future enrollment is forecasted based on historic matriculation patterns from grade to grade, birth rates, future housing development, and historic patterns of school-choice enrollment.

It is imperative to know that projections beyond 2-3 years can vary drastically. However, the DCSD annual forecast averages 99% accurate for the District and 95% accurate for individual schools. Our methodology is vetted by 3rd-party demographers.

	Current Seats Available	2024 Enrollment	2025 Forecast	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast
Elementary	52,104	41,263	40,872	40,503	40,085
Middle School	23,400	18,087	18,120	18,203	18,477
High School	31,310	26,953	26,328	25,903	25,574
Other	1,400	1,135	1,135	1,135	1,135
Charter	N/A	4,405	4,405	4,405	4,405
Totals	108,214	91,843	90,860	90,150	89,675



SAP Timelines



SAP MEETING DATES & LOCATIONS

SEP '25 - JAN '26

September

Wednesday @ 6:30pm
10 - VIRTUAL
24 - Lakeside HS

October

Wednesday @ 6:30pm
8 - VIRTUAL
22 - Tucker HS

November

Wednesday @ 6:30pm
5 - VIRTUAL
19 - McNair HS

December

Wednesday @ 6:30pm
3 - VIRTUAL
10 - Lithonia HS
LAST SAP MEETING
(before Board Meeting)

January '26

Monday @ TBD
12 - Board Meeting - AIC

Note

Please note that these dates, times, and locations are subject to change. Information will be shared with you should changes arise. Thanks!
~ SAP Team

REV. 8.12.25



Research & Survey Results

SAP Survey Highlights

The SAP Committee has reviewed a wide range of data to support the decision-making process. This includes information from the previous redistricting efforts, the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP), school choice program data, capacity and utilization reports, CTAE program data, various school and program models, facility planning, transportation costs, per-pupil spending, Magnet Schools of America guidelines, community survey results, and feedback from school-based meetings.

Educator's Survey	Community Survey
<p>707 Respondents (67% no students in DCSD and 33% do)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top 2 priorities: building improvements and school choice process (87% agree outcomes vary by school) - Educator's express concerns about <u>equity and the consistency</u> of educational quality within DCSD. - Educators have mixed views on drawing neighborhood boundaries <u>without</u> regard to diversity. - Strong consensus exists for making school boundaries more <u>walkable</u>. - There is less agreement and more uncertainty about changing school grade bands or adjusting school start/end times for transportation efficiency. - Educators believe Fernbank Science Center and DeKalb Alternative School are well known to the community. All others are not. 	<p>3,052 Respondents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High Achievers Magnet, Fernbank Science Center, and DLI are the most widely recognized school choice program. Other programs such as Montessori and Special Interests Magnet have lower levels of familiarity. - Alarming lack of awareness of state board policy related to student assignment and how to apply for programs. - 52.5% of respondents believe their school has enough space for students to learn and play. - A substantial portion of families depend on school buses, underscoring their importance to school access. - The DCSD student registration process is viewed neutrally. - Overall satisfaction with children's current schools is moderate. - Majority report adequate space, but minorities flag concerns - ~69% of respondent's families are satisfied with their child's school experience.



Survey Recommendations

Enhance Communication: Create accessible, clear informational campaigns about school choice options, application procedures, and policies to increase community and staff awareness.

Review and Update Boundaries: Continue initiatives to balance school diversity, class size, and proximity while considering community feedback on neighborhood boundaries.

Support Equity-Focused Programs: Invest in programs supporting students with exceptionalities and underrepresented groups, focusing on equitable access district-wide.

Improve Facilities Based on Need: Prioritize capital improvements guided by data on facility conditions and enrollment trends.

Transportation Optimization: Consider restructuring start/end times and routes to improve efficiency and safety, while enhancing walkability options.

Engage Staff and Families: Involve employees and families in planning processes to ensure policies address their concerns and build community trust.



Hanover Research

DESIGNING EQUITABLE AND EFFECTIVE ATTENDANCE BOUNDARIES

BALANCING ENROLLMENT

- Schools operating below target capacity range may signal an attendance zone that need to be expanded or paired with another school.
- It is best practice to review and adjust boundaries periodically to respond to population changes, economic development, and community's shift.
- Districts can use an Enrollment Management Plan before adjusting attendance boundaries

PROMOTING EQUITY

- Attendance boundaries can be deliberately crafted to reduce racial and socioeconomic isolation.
- District leaders should confront resistance to equitable boundary changes with transparency and engage in honest dialogue about how boundary changes can address racial and economic disparities.
- Strategic specialty program planning that considers neighborhood demographics, including current and projected demographics, can support diversity and integration

MANAGING TRANSPORTATION LOGISTICS

- Optimizing school bus routes is an extremely complex process due to the large number of variables and constraints involved in identifying bus routes.
- Using transportation technology that employs algorithms, and analytic software can drastically reduce the amount of time and effort necessary to optimize, monitor, and evaluate bus routing
- Promising practices using modeling software to improve the efficiency of bus routes include tiered bell systems and mixed-load buses



Hanover Research

BENCHMARKING SPECIALIZED PROGRAM MODELS

Based on our findings, Hanover suggests DCSD consider the following recommendations:

Expand and diversify specialized program offerings using vertically aligned pathways across all grade bands. Several districts offer comprehensive K-12 access to specialized magnet programs, including in high-demand areas like STEM and the arts. Miami-Dade (M-DCPS) offers a large variety of programs around career-related themes as early as elementary school.

Explore the magnet consortium model for targeted regional programming.

Montgomery County (MCPS) offers middle and high school clusters that are geographically based and offer distinct, whole-school thematic programs under a shared choice lottery process. Students within the consortium boundary are guaranteed access to one of the schools, and out-of-boundary students can apply via the choice process. This program was designed to increase academic performance and options and reduce socioeconomic isolation in the target schools within the consortium.

Conduct research to identify the district community's perceptions and needs for specialized programming.

Surveys and interviews can provide insights into the perceived gaps and barriers in current program access. It can also gauge parent and student interest in new program offerings, such as extended CTE academies, language immersion, or advanced programming options.



Support

Levels of Support

Community:

- Follow our multi-channel updates and feedback (email, text, social media, town halls, flyers, translated communications).
- Attend area and neighborhood specific meetings to understand the process, the needs, and general recommendations.
- Follow our process on our website.

DCSD Administration and Internal Staff:

- A cross-department team (planning, transportation, student assignment, communications, academics) with defined roles.
- Operations support with demographers for enrollment projections, GIS mapping, and scenario modeling.
- Bus routing, ride times, and cost impacts analyzed in based on recommendations.
- HR metric for redistricted schools and a communicated plan for any impacted educators.

Board:

- Support to update Policy AD (boundaries) and JBCC (school choice).
- Plan for spring community meeting and feedback sessions.

HPM:

- Closely aligned the outcomes of HPM assessment with SAP recommendations.
- Share the facility planning and state of schools with SAP to use as data to make an informed decision.
- Engage the SAP committee to review reimagined options and draft recommendations.





QUESTIONS

