DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
STUDENT ASSIGNMENT PROJECT
Reimagining DeKalb

DeKalb County School District October SAP Update

Presented by: Sarita Smith

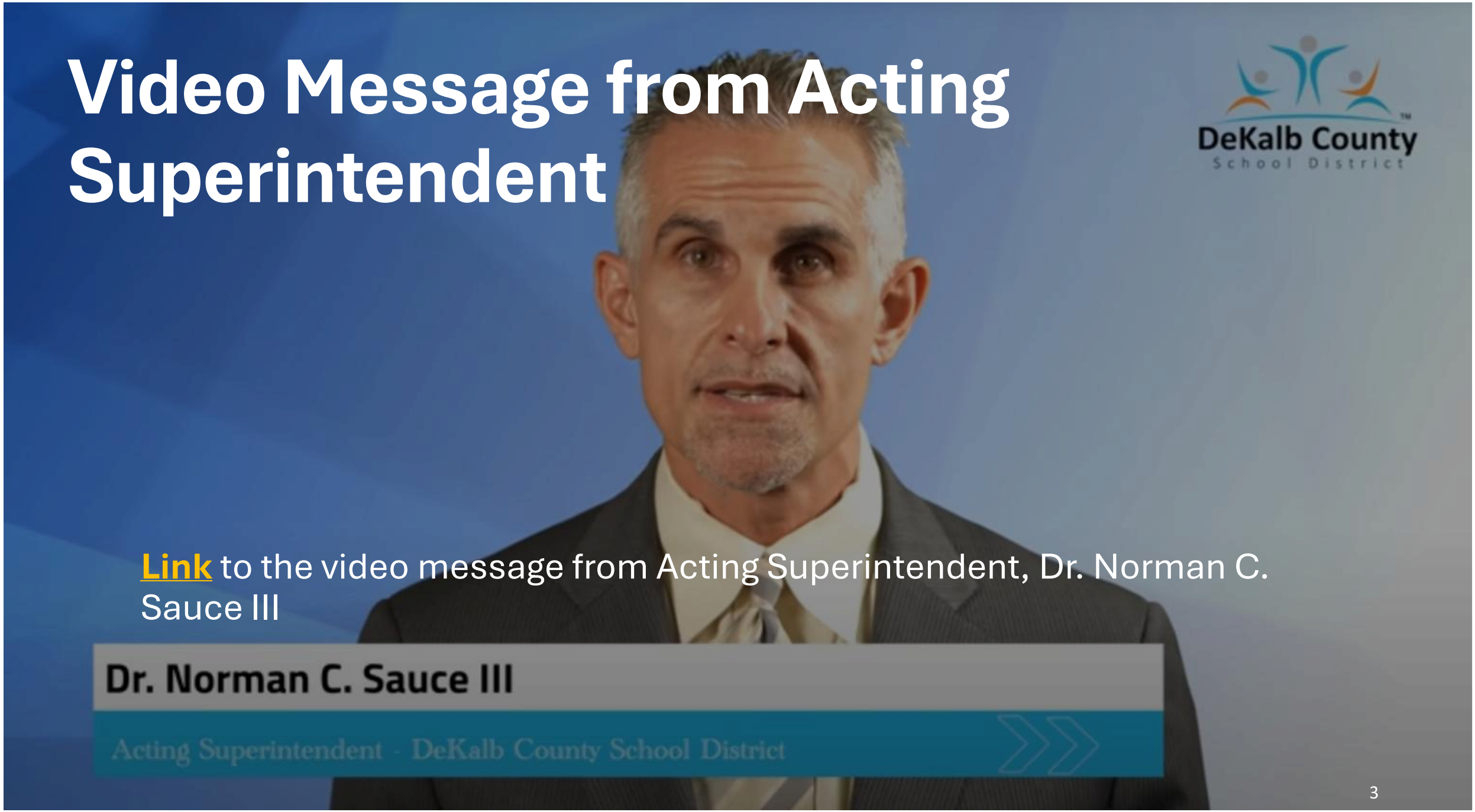
DeKalb County School District

Vision

To reimagine 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 **E**nroll, **E**mploy, engage in **E**ntrepreneurship, or **E**nlist.

Video Message from Acting Superintendent



Link to the video message from Acting Superintendent, Dr. Norman C. Sauce III

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 that all students have a quality education.
- Recommend boundaries, buildings, and programs suited for the current and projected enrollment.

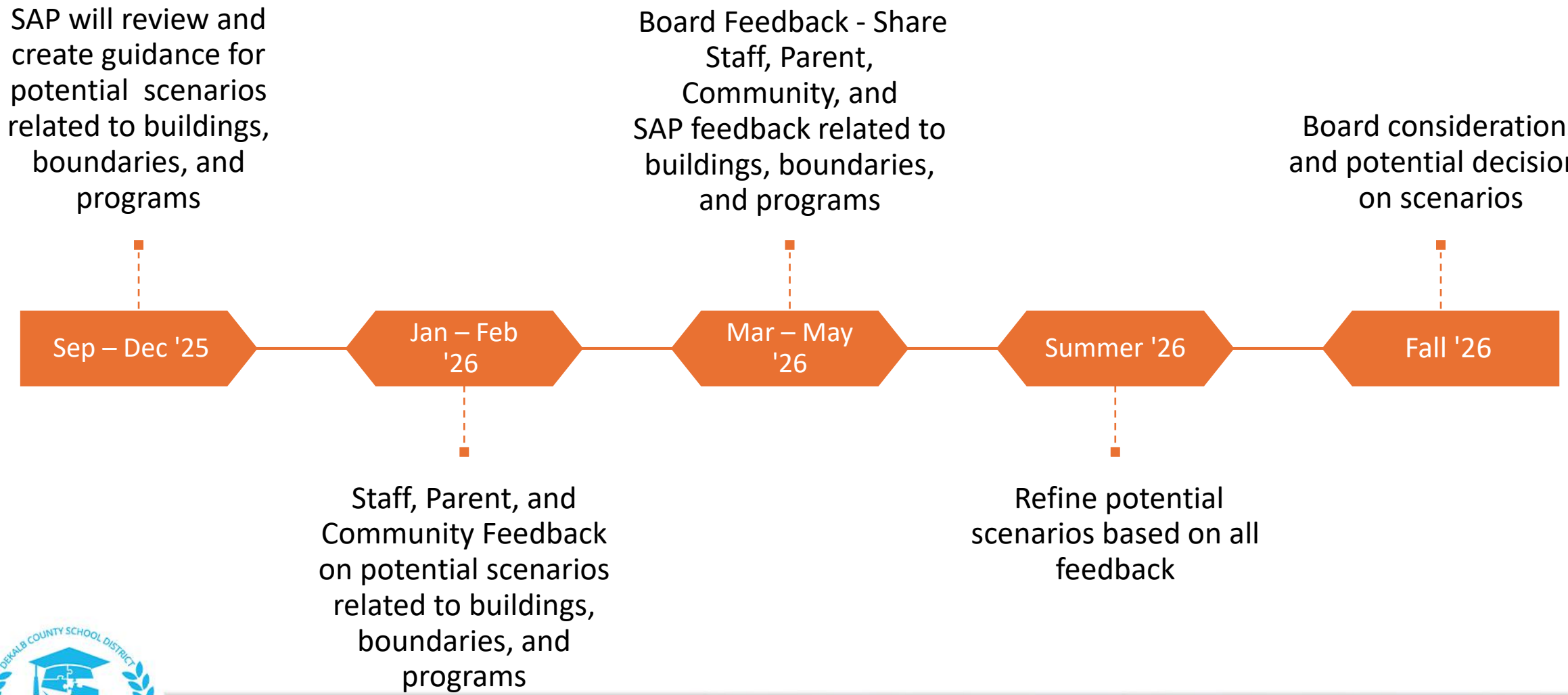
Non-Purpose of the Advisory

- 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

DeKalb County School District

Expanded Timeline (subject to change)



SAP Guidance

Placement of special programs in DCSD

Attendance boundary school (neighborhood school) criteria

October Recap

10/8/25

- Reviewed the continued goal related to program placement
- Shared community feedback
- Working groups feedback
- Share out

10/22/25

- Welcome from acting superintendent
- Review policy AD
- Understand criteria from education leaders
- Review attendance boundary data
- Working groups feedback
- Share out

SAP Guidance – Program Placement and Attendance Boundaries

Program Placement

- **Programs should be in attendance boundary schools to the greatest extent possible**
- Specialized criteria for programs placed outside of an attendance boundary school (stand-alone building)
    - **Specialized Student Needs** – Programs designed to serve students whose educational needs cannot be fully met in a traditional school setting (e.g., Special Education Centers, Alternative Programs).
    - **Specialized Instructional Expertise** – Programs that require educators with unique certifications or expertise aligned to the program's instructional model or theme (e.g., Arabia Mountain's environmental focus).
    - **Non-Traditional Grade Configurations** – Schools or programs that operate outside standard grade band structures (e.g., K–8, 4–6, 4-8 configurations such as Kittredge, Wadsworth, DAA, and Montessori programs).

Attendance Boundary Schools (neighborhood schools) Criteria Top six (6) criteria that is important for SAP to consider for prioritizing attendance boundary schools

- Building Utilization
- Program Alignment: Keep pathways coherent (e.g., ensure elementary schools feed consistently into middle and high schools)
- Resource Distribution: Ensure equitable access to high-quality facilities and educational opportunities
- Facility Condition
- Neighborhood Cohesion
- Geographic proximity and travel time / transportation impact

Committee Feedback

Take aways from 10/08/25 meeting related to program placement cont.

- The committee emphasized the need for updated data—including enrollment, population projections, facility details, and transportation factors —to guide data-driven boundary decisions. Members requested clearer definitions, transparency on how boundaries are determined or changed, and advance access to materials to enable informed participation. Concerns were raised about inconsistent data, unclear terminology (e.g., “super clusters,” program embedding), and equity and alignment across schools and programs.

Take aways from 10/22/25 meeting related to attendance boundary criteria

- The committee’s feedback emphasized **academic equity** as the top priority, calling for fair access to quality programs, transportation, and resources across all regions. Members stressed the need to maintain **program continuity**, ensure **transparent criteria** for capacity and boundaries, and strengthen **feeder pattern alignment** to support seamless academic pathways. Concerns included **uneven regional support**, **facility conditions**, **transportation logistics**, and the importance of **community stability** during changes. Several comments urged clearer definitions, consistent policy application, and consideration of **specialized and theme programs** as models for success. Overall, the committee underscored the need for **data-informed, equitable, and transparent decision-making** that balances efficiency with student experience.

Dispelling Myths

SAP Recommendations are being implemented Fall 2026

- SAP is not making any recommendations that will begin Fall 2026. Please refer to the timeline on the website.

SAP is recommending closing magnet schools and programs

- SAP is assuming all programs remain based on the current enrollment trends and will make recommendations on program placement and the development of an evaluation system for school choice.

SAP committee member have been coerced into what the district wants

- The only guidance provided by the district was the SAP vision, number of consolidations, and to follow the board policy. Staff members attend SAP meetings to provide context based on their areas of expertise, and Ms. Smith is a facilitator of the project.

SAP committee members are not from the community

- SAP committee members represent many areas of the district and DeKalb community.

SAP has inaccurate data

- SAP is reviewing data from our student information system, planning department, the last comprehensive master plan, school choice enrollment over time, private and charter school enrollment over time, research related to redistricting and programs, and much more. There is always a margin of error in data, but we do have enough data to know we are operating too many buildings, and our programs are not consistently offered or accessible to all families.

SAP is not concerned about the climate culture, and wellbeing of students

- Operating a more efficient school system will, over time, enhance support for all DCSD students, particularly by improving access to academic resources and services.

Community Feedback

1. **Preserve Magnet and Gifted Programs (Kittredge, Wadsworth, DSA, Chamblee High Achievers)**
   - Parents and stakeholders overwhelmingly support keeping existing magnet and gifted programs intact.
   - These programs are viewed as essential for academic excellence, equitable access for advanced learners, and DeKalb County's strong reputation.
   - Families argue that dismantling or relocating them would drive high-achieving students and families out of the district.

2. **Expand Successful Models Instead of Eliminating Them**
   - Rather than closing or reducing high-performing programs, parents urge DCSD to replicate their success in other schools.
   - Suggestions include expanding Kittredge through 12th grade, strengthening Montessori options, and developing "sister" magnet schools across the county.

3. **Ashford Park and Chamblee Cluster—Strong Opposition to Redistricting**
   - The most consistent feedback is to keep Ashford Park, Drew Valley, Brookhaven Fields, and surrounding neighborhoods together within the Chamblee cluster.
   - Families have chosen homes, invested financially, and built community ties specifically for these schools.
   - Many warn that breaking up this cluster will harm community trust, property values, and enrollment.

4. **Prioritize Facility Expansion Over Boundary Changes**
   - Parents agree that overcrowding exists—especially at Ashford Park—but advocate for building additions, new facilities, or a split-campus model instead of redistricting.
   - They cite Ashford Park's success as justification for investment, not disruption.

Community Feedback

5. **Concern About Educational Quality and Equity**
   - Families fear that redistricting will move students from high-performing to lower-performing schools without clear plans to maintain quality.
   - They demand data-driven assurances that academic standards, resources, and programs will remain equitable across schools.

6. **Distrust in the Student Assignment Project (SAP) Process**
   - Parents express frustration that school quality, program outcomes, and community impact are not considered in SAP decision-making.
   - They describe SAP as a "math problem with incomplete data," lacking transparency, context, and parent collaboration.

7. **Recognition of Strong School Communities**
   - Schools like Ashford Park, DSA, Wadsworth, and Montessori programs are praised for strong family engagement, teacher excellence, and positive cultures.
   - Parents emphasize that these communities thrive due to years of collective volunteerism and investment, which could be lost through redistricting.

8. **Financial and Tax Implications of Rezoning**
   - Families warn that rezoning high-value neighborhoods into lower-performing zones will lower property values, reduce tax revenue, and hurt DeKalb County's fiscal health.
   - They call for the district to assess the broader economic impact before making boundary decisions.

9. **Call for Thoughtful, Collaborative, and Data-Driven Decision-Making**
   - Across all feedback, there is a clear plea for DCSD to pause, listen, and collaborate with parents, educators, and community members.
   - Stakeholders want decisions grounded in comprehensive data, long-term planning, and genuine engagement—not reactive changes.

Communication Touchpoints

Per the request of the board, we have documented our communication touchpoints and will be uploading them on the SAP website

This page will include:
Committee Meetings
Superintendent Advisory Committees
Online communication
Board meetings
Townhalls
SAP Chats
Superintendent newsletter
PAC/PTO/PTA
Media

Community Feedback