



# **Alachua Schools**

## ***Proposals for***

### ***Consolidation/Restructuring***

**April 13, 2026**

# Driving Factors and Considerations for Right-Sizing

- Long-term sustainability
- State enrollment
- District enrollment
- Population shifts
- Program Opportunities
- Facility optimization
- Fiscal stewardship
- Transportation costs
- Approved new housing developments
- Condition of facilities

# Right-Sizing the District: The Why

With right-sized schools, the district is able to:

- Expand and enhance offerings in advanced coursework (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge, Honors, etc.)
- Offer more magnet and speciality programs at all grade levels
- Provide additional Career and Technical (CTE) pathways
- Expand elective and exploratory course offerings
- Increase offerings in fine arts, music, theater and world languages

# Right-Sizing the District: The Why

With right-sized schools, the district is able to:

- Match enrollment and programmatic needs
- Align future capital planning and enrollment projections
- Maximize the impact of every resource
- Free up funds to upgrade and modernize facilities
- Reduce deferred maintenance and long-term capital costs

# Right-Sizing the District: The Why

With right-sized schools, the district is able to:

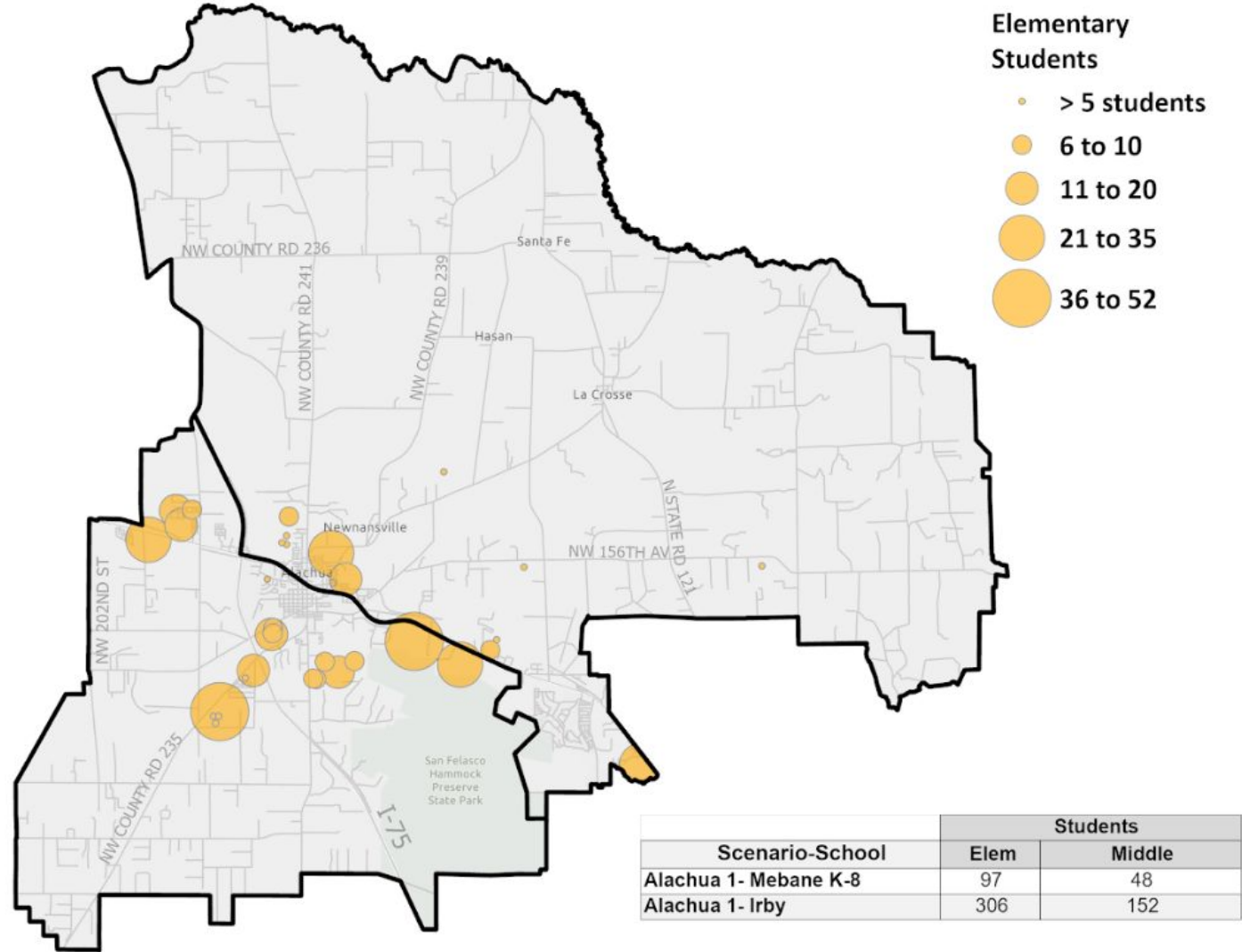
- Align school enrollment with building capacity
- Respond to demographic and community changes
- Avoid both overcrowded and underused schools
- Support safe, high-quality learning environments
- Use facilities and resources more efficiently
- Focus on long-term sustainability, not short-term fixes

*‘Right-sizing’ a school district leads to rezoning a school district.*

# Capacity Enrollment and Age of Alachua Schools

- 768 unoccupied seats in Alachua schools
  - Alachua Elementary (grades 3 – 5) is at **61%** capacity
  - Irby Elementary (grades PreK – 2) is at **70%** capacity
  - Mebane Middle School (grades 6 – 8) is at **49%** capacity
- Alachua Elementary School buildings vary in age up to 80 years old
- Irby Elementary School is 34 years old
- Mebane Middle School is 70 years old

# Elementary and Middle School Future Growth



# Board Approved Changes and Directive

- The School Board approved the following on March 12, 2026:
  - Closure of Alachua Elementary School
  - School boundary zones changes for the Alachua area and across the school district
- The School Board requested the following:
  - Options for restructuring Irby Elementary School to be brought to the Alachua community for input
- Effective dates
  - Monday, August 10, 2026 for school boundary zone changes
  - Fall 2028 for PreK-8 consolidation of Alachua Elementary School into Mebane Middle School

# School Zone Boundary Changes

- Revised boundary map
  - Link can be found [here](#)
- Effective date for school boundary zone changes
  - Monday, August 10, 2026

# Commonalities Among Options

- Four options will be presented
- Students in revised Alachua Elementary zone will attend the PreK-8 at Mebane in all options
- Irby Elementary includes grades PreK-5 in three options
- Allows for growth in the Alachua community area in all options

# Irby as a PreK-5 School

## K-2 and K-3 schools

Under Florida Department of Education rules and Florida law, K-2 schools are treated as *feeder pattern* schools and assigned a grade based on the higher-grade school into which they feed. The receiving school has limited influence on the instructional practices in the K-2 school.

K-3 schools receive school grades based *only* on the achievement third grade students in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Therefore, the responsibility of the school grade lies with a small number of students and teachers.

FDOE recommends K-5 grade bands in traditional elementary schools.

# Irby as a PreK-5 School

- Irby's current facility is able to accommodate a PreK-5 school for the proposed **Irby** zone
- Irby's current facility is not able to accommodate a PreK-5 school for the entire revised **Alachua area** - formerly the Alachua and Irby Elementaries' zones

# Qualities of a PreK-8 model at Mebane

- Siblings attend school on the same schedule, simplifying family logistics
- Student experience no school transitions, including smoother path through 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- Long-term relationships with teachers, staff, and peers strengthen connection and belonging
- Stronger family-school partnerships develop over time
- Consistent services and progress monitoring support steady academic and emotional growth, with shared specialists such as Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers, reading interventionists, and school counselors

# Qualities of a PreK-8 Model at Mebane

- Increased collaboration between elementary and middle school educators improves instructional continuity
- Reduced transition-related academic decline supports sustained achievement
- Programs are sustainable long term
- Located on existing middle school campus with access to established athletic facilities

# Qualities of a PreK-8 Model at Mebane

- Large scale studies show higher achievement in math and reading, particularly in grades 6 – 8
- Students often experience less achievement loss during transitions from elementary to middle school
  - Better confidence and engagement
  - Fewer behavioral issues
  - Greater sense of belonging
  - Stronger family engagement and stability
  - Robust school identity and culture
  - Sustained quality relationships with staff
- A list of studies related to K-8 schools is available at [alachuaschools.net/k8research](http://alachuaschools.net/k8research)

# Separating Elementary and Middle School Students

- Entrances/exits
- Hallways/wings
- Dining area and lunch schedules
- Recess and playground areas
- Outside athletic areas for physical education
- Arrival/dismissal procedures
- Extended Day Enrichment Program (EDEP)

# Potential Challenges to Consider of a PreK-8 Model

- Staffing and Scheduling Complexity
  - Running a PreK–8 school requires balancing very different needs
  - Scheduling elementary and middle-grade programs
  - Difficulty recruiting teachers who want a strictly elementary or strictly middle school environment
  - Leadership must manage two very different instructional models on one campus
  
- Older students may feel constrained by an environment that still feels ‘elementary’

# Common Questions About Student Needs

- Safety
  - Clearly defined spaces and schedules for elementary and middle school students
  - Enhanced supervision during arrival, dismissal, and transition times
- Class sizes
  - Remain aligned with State of Florida guidelines
- Staffing
  - Teachers and school counselors assigned by grade band and subject area expertise
  - Support staff allocated as needed

# Plans for the New School Building

- Project Scope:
  - Middle School Renovations (to include grades 4 and 5) and new K-3 Building(s) to include:
    - Warming kitchen
    - Dining space
    - Media center/Art/Music
    - Covered court for physical education
    - Multiple playgrounds
- Projected Timeline: Opening August 2028

# Transportation: Drop-off and Pick-up

- Car line procedures
- Bus procedures
- Bus zones and timing
- Separate parent drop-off and pick-up for elementary and middle school students

# Possible Daily Schedule Overview for Grades PreK-8

- *Possible* Start/End Times
  - Early release Wednesdays
    - Pending Faculty, School Advisory Council and School Board approval of a waiver
- Student Day: Differences by grade bands
  - Grades PreK-5
    - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday : 8:00 am – 2:07 pm
    - Wednesday: 8:00 am – 12:52 pm
  - Grades 6-8
    - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 8:00 am – 2:14 pm
    - Wednesday: 8:00 am – 12:53 pm

# Possible Daily Schedule Overview for Grades PreK-8

- Current Mebane (Grades 6-8) instructional hours (180 days): 927
- Possible Grades 6-8 instructional hours under PreK-8 model (180 days with early release Wednesdays): 922.9
- Possible schedule based on current High Springs K-8 schedule
- Possible schedule exceeds state-required instructional hours by 22.9 hours
- This is one of many possible daily schedules under the PreK-8 model
- A variety of factors, such as transportation, would have to be considered before determining a final daily schedule

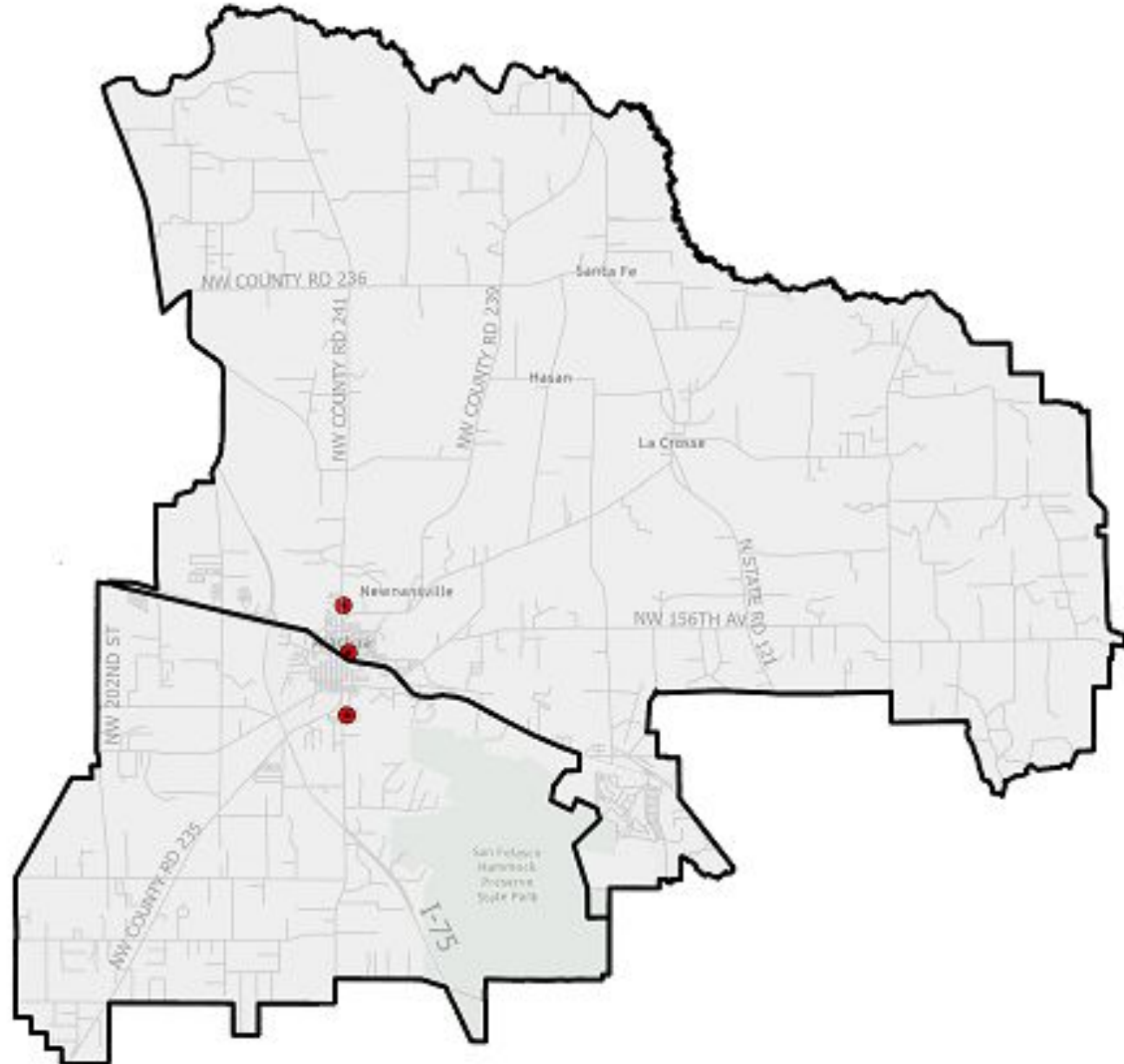
# Specials Information: Grades K-5

- Specials Classes
  - Art
  - Music
  - Physical Education

# Extended Day Enrichment Program

- Available hours
  - End of school day until 6:00 pm
  - Elementary and Middle programs are separate and distinct from one another

# Option 1



# Option 1

## *Irby PreK-5*

### ***Alachua Elementary Consolidating into Mebane as a PreK-8***

Option D - revised

Students living to the south of SR 441 zoned to Irby Elementary

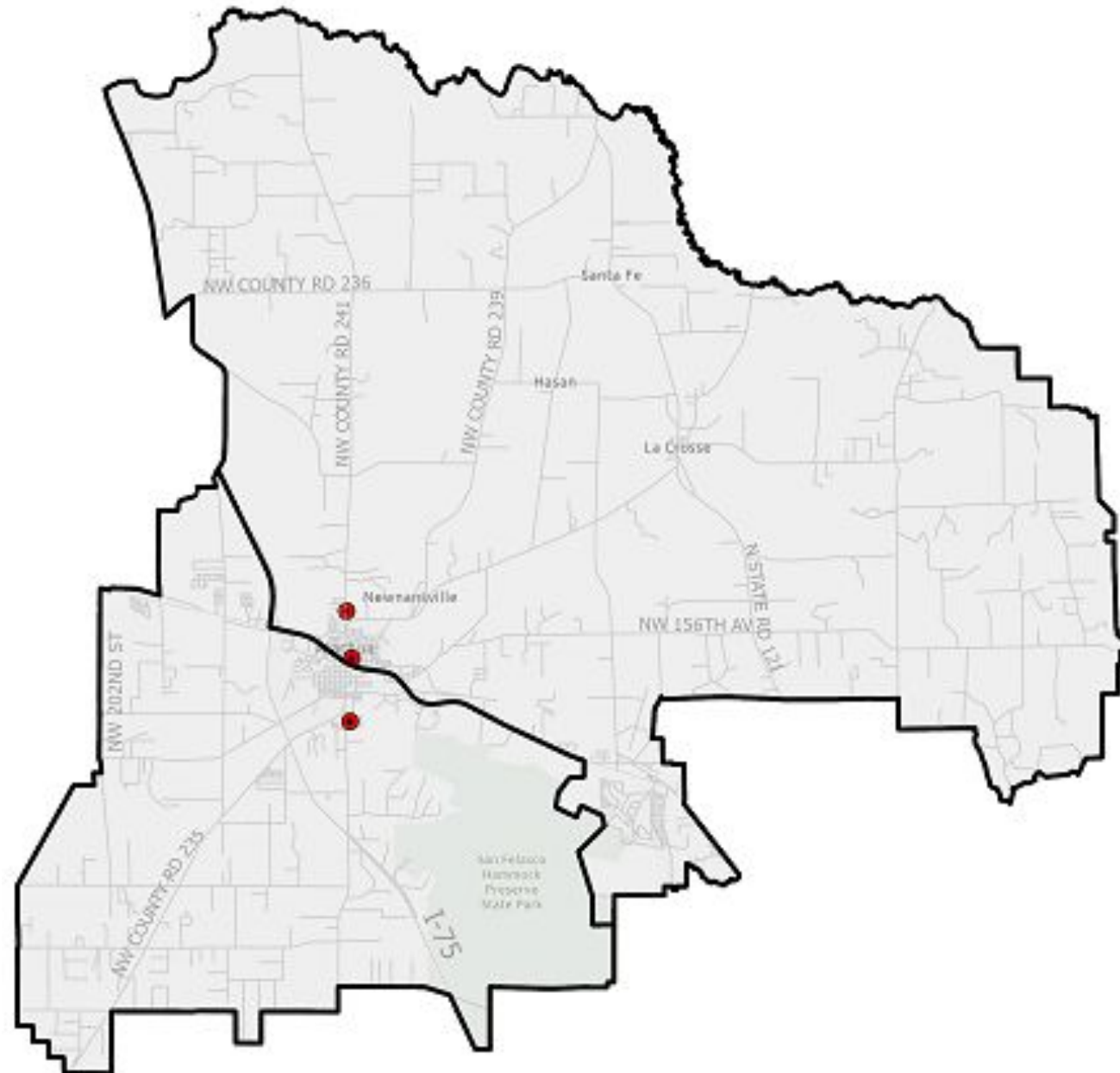
Students living to the north of SR 441 and Turkey Creek zoned to  
PreK-8 at Mebane

51% Economically disadvantaged students percentage at Irby

54% Economically disadvantaged students in grades K-5 at Mebane

Percentages are approximate

# Option 2



## Option 2 *Irby PreK-5*

### ***Alachua Elementary Consolidating into Mebane as a PreK-8***

Same as Option 1 with the following change:

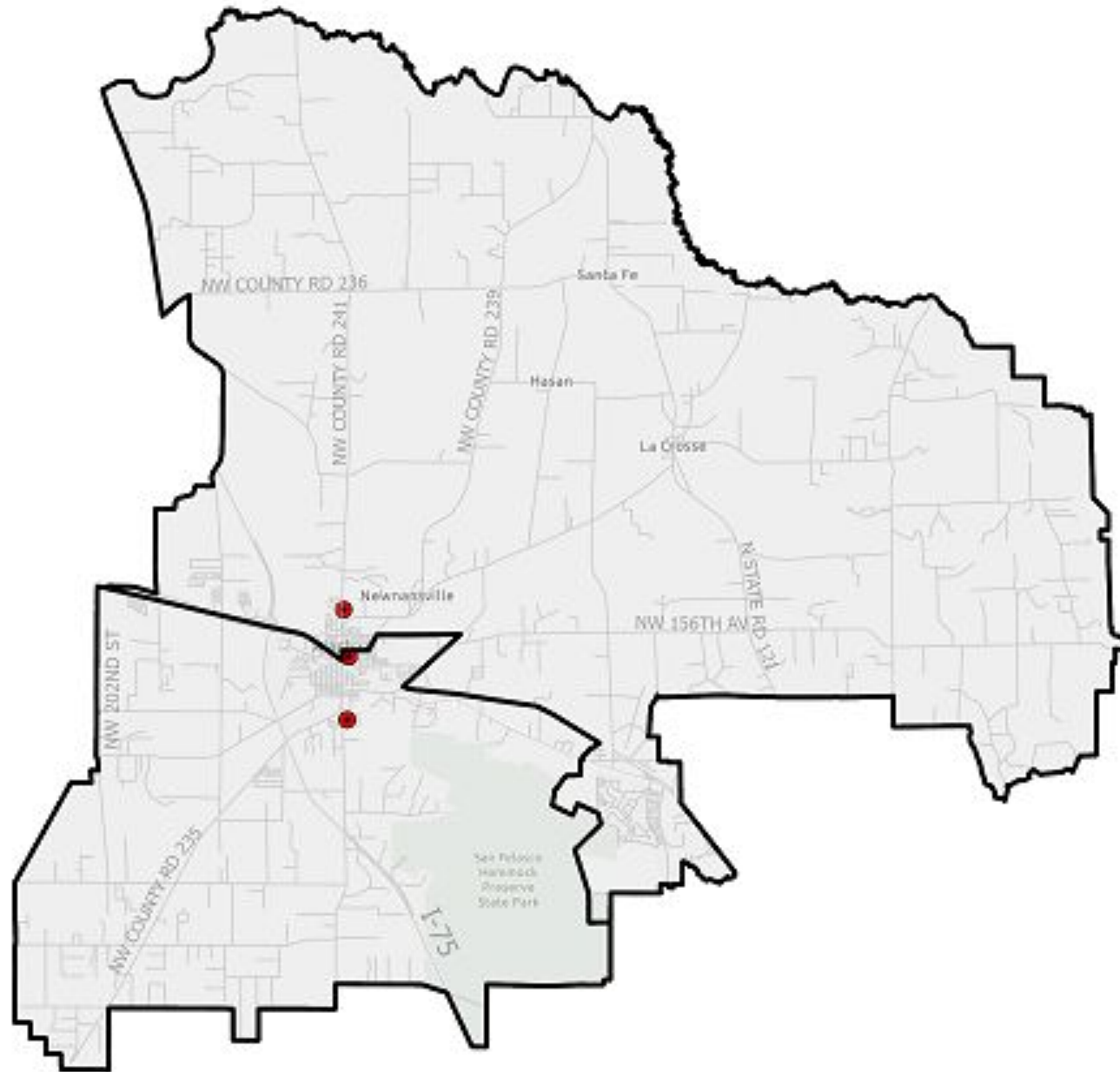
Students living north of SR 441 and west of I-75 zoned to Irby

49% Economically disadvantaged students percentage at Irby

57% Economically disadvantaged students in grades K-5 at Mebane

Percentages are approximate

# Option 3



## Option 3 *Irby PreK-5*

### *Alachua Elementary Consolidating into Mebane as a PreK-8*

Some students living north of SR 441 zoned to Irby

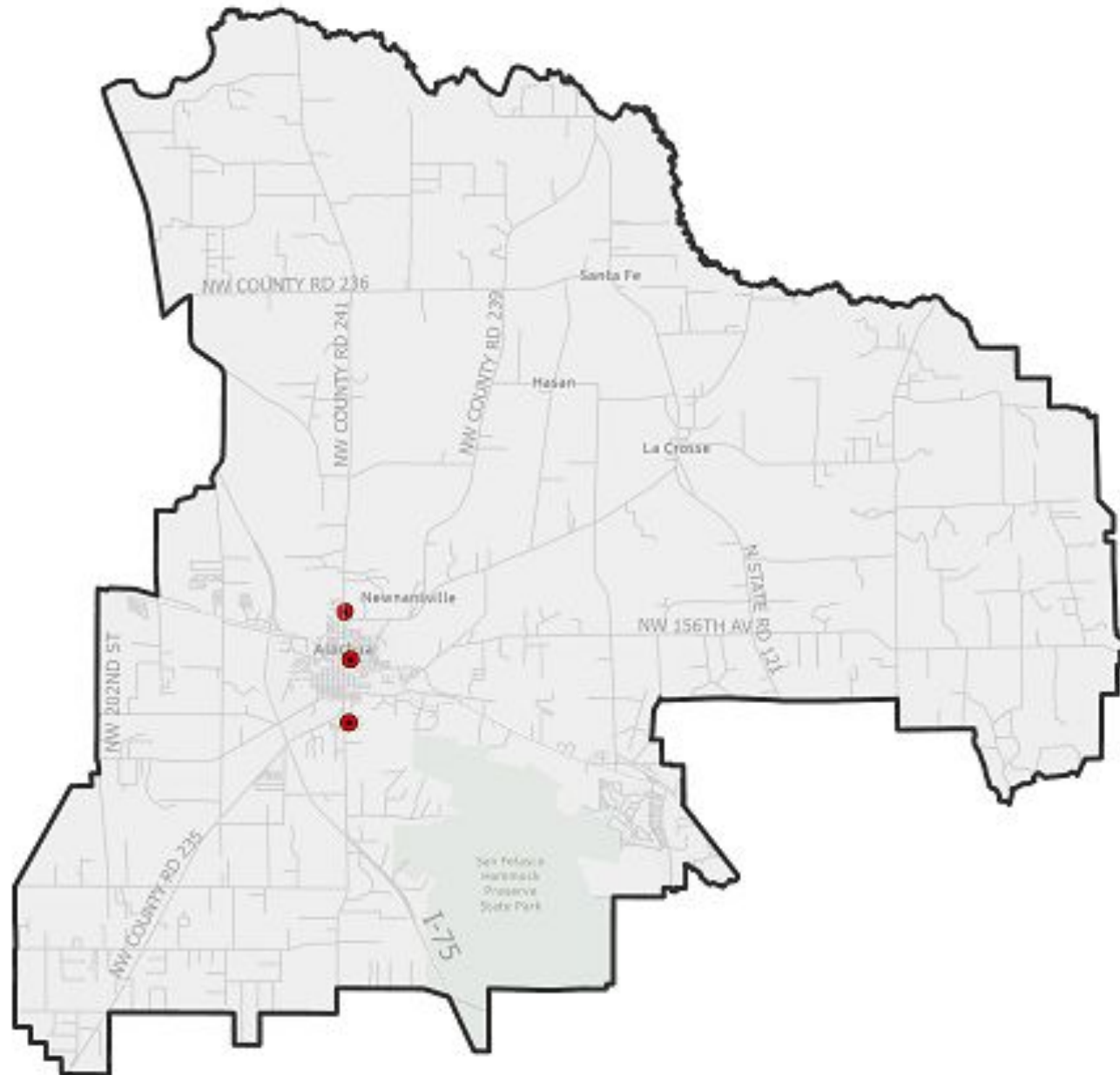
Increase in busing for K-5 students due to increase in hazardous walkzones

55% Economically disadvantaged students percentage at Irby

51% Economically disadvantaged students in grades K-5 at Mebane

Percentages are approximate

# Option 4



## Option 4:

# ***Consolidation of Irby Elementary and Alachua Elementary into Mebane Middle School as a Comprehensive PreK-8***

- All students in the Alachua zone attend Mebane PreK-8 School
- Community of Alachua students and families remains fully unified
- All Alachua students experience the full benefits of the PreK-8 model

**53% Economically disadvantaged students in grades K-5 at Mebane PreK-8**

Percentage is approximate

# Registration and Enrollment

- Enrollment
  - Current students will automatically be enrolled to their newly zoned school
- Required documents
  - None needed unless there has been a change in address or other student information
- Where to get help
  - Contact your zoned school

# Zoning Exceptions and School Choice

- Who qualifies for exceptions
  - Students entering into the final grade at their assigned school and are reassigned to another school pursuant to the District school zone amendments may submit a Zoning Exception Application to complete the final grade at their current school
- Application process
  - The application can be found at [www.alachuaschools.net/zoning](http://www.alachuaschools.net/zoning)
- Transportation implications
  - Students on zoning exceptions and school choice are not provided district transportation

# Comparison of the 4 Options

## Option 1

K-5 Students living to the south of SR 441 zoned to Irby Elementary and move to Mebane PreK-8 for grades 6-8

K-8 Students living to the north of SR 441 and Turkey Creek zoned to preK-8 at Mebane

## Option 2

K-5 Students living south of SR 441 as well as those north of SR 441 and west of I-75 zoned to Irby Elementary and move to Mebane PreK-8 for grades 6-8

K-8 Students living north of SR 441 and east of I-75 zoned to preK-8 at Mebane

## Option 3

K-5 Students living south of SR 441 as well as a portion of students north of 441 zoned to Irby Elementary and move to Mebane PreK-8 for grades 6-8

K-8 Students north of 441, except small area mentioned above, attend Mebane

## Option 4

All K-8 students in Alachua area zoned to one school as a consolidation of Irby and Alachua Elementaries into a comprehensive PreK-8 at Mebane

# Additional Opportunities for Input

- School Board Workshop: April 29, 2026 at 10:00 am
- School Board Meeting and vote: May 5, 2026 at 6:00 pm
- Contact School Board members: All: [boardmembers@alachuaschools.net](mailto:boardmembers@alachuaschools.net)
  - Thomas Vu, Chair: [vutp@alachuaschools.net](mailto:vutp@alachuaschools.net)
  - Dr. Leanetta McNealy, Vice Chair: [mcnealy@alachuaschools.net](mailto:mcnealy@alachuaschools.net)
  - Tina Certain: [certain@alachuaschools.net](mailto:certain@alachuaschools.net)
  - Janine Plavac: [plavacjd@alachuaschools.net](mailto:plavacjd@alachuaschools.net)
  - Dr. Sarah Rockwell: [rockwellsb@alachuaschools.net](mailto:rockwellsb@alachuaschools.net)

This presentation will be posted on line  
the morning of **April 14** at

[alachuaschools.net/  
alachuapresentation](http://alachuaschools.net/alachuapresentation)



# Questions



# **Alachua Schools** *Proposals for* *Consolidation/Restructuring*

April 13, 2026

## Option 4:

# ***Consolidation of Irby Elementary and Alachua Elementary into Mebane Middle School as a Comprehensive PreK-8***

- 39 acres and new/renovated buildings allow for future growth
- \$65 million total
  - Middle School renovations (to include grades 4 and 5) and new K-3 Buildings
    - Warming kitchen
    - Dining space
    - Media center/Art/Music
    - Covered court for physical education
    - Multiple playgrounds
  - \$31 million for middle school renovations
  - \$34 million for new K-3 buildings