COAL COALITION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS

Chicago Board of Education
Candidate Questionnaire
for the
General Election - November 3, 2026

The purpose of this candidate questionnaire is to ascertain each candidate's qualifications and preparedness for, and commitment to, participating as a member of the Chicago Board of Education and for President of the Board.

The Coalition of African American Leaders (COAL) encourages an informed community towards casting an informed vote. The goal is to seat a professional, qualified, independent and engaged school board, responsible to the community, that has a laser focus on providing the best K - 12 educational experience for all of the children of Chicago, regardless of family income or zip code; the high quality educational system our children deserve.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete and return this fillable pdf candidate questionnaire for the position of Chicago Board of Education member and president, responding to all questions. There are a few yes/no questions which include space to expound on your response. Once completed, please return via email to: publicpolicy@coalchicago.com. **This questionnaire should be returned no later than end of day on September 21, 2026.**

We welcome any query regarding this questionnaire or individual question(s) which will help you provide your best response. Please contact Education Committee co-chairs:

Dr. Kimberly Dulaney at 312.287.4571 / readme4000@aol.com
or
Principal Gerald Morrow at 773.593.5428 / gjmorrow86@gmail.com

Candidate Information

Name on Ballot: Ebony DeBerry

School Board District: 2A

Home Address 7206 N Rogers Ave, Chicago IL 60645

Employer/Your Title ONE Northside: program manager of educational initiatives

Phone (773) 972-6794

Email deberrycampaign@gmail.com

Candidate signature attesting to the truthfulness, accuracy, and authorship of this Questionnaire.

Date 9/21/26 **Print** Ebony DeBerry **Signature** s/Ebony DeBerry

[Please feel free to attach primary campaign literature, bio or vita]

Campaign Information

Campaign Manager N/A

Phone N/A **Email** deberrycampaign@gmail.com

Website ebony4education.org

a. Have you held or run for public office before, and if so, what office[s] with what results? I am the incumbent, after winning election in 2024.

b. COMMUNITY. In what community roles do you currently serve? Or in what capacity have you served the community in the past? Have you been appointed to any public committees, commissions, task forces? I was a previous LSC member at Gale Elementary and served as president of their fundraising arm. I am the Chicago delegate to the Illinois Association of School Boards' Executive Board, and have recently been elected by my peers as chairwoman of our Student Success Committee.

c. Please list your top three contributors who have donated $1,000 or more, and include the corresponding amounts as reported on your D-3 form (if applicable):

Contributor	Amount
William Laws	**$2,000**

d. Who has endorsed you and what are your political/stakeholder alliances (if any)? I have been endorsed by State Senator Mike Simmons, Alderwoman Maria Hadden, One People's Campaign, the Chicago Teachers Union, The CHicago Federation of Labor, Asian American Midwest Progressives, Sunrise Movement Chicago, SEIU Illinois State Council, 50th Ward United Working Families, 39th Ward Neighbors United, and Our Schools Chicago.

Candidate's Plans and Goals for the School Board

e. Why are you running for *this position*? What expertise do you bring to the board? What makes you the best candidate for *the School Board*? I am running as an incumbent for a four year term because I realize that in the year and a half I've been serving, there is still so much work to do. I am running because my entire career has centered on public education, neighborhood schools, and progressive revenue.

f. Please describe your Educational agenda. All students deserve to go to a quality school within walking distance of their home. Schools that provide for every aspect of the child: socially, emotionally, physically, including mental health and the arts, must be accessible.

ACCOUNTABILITY / TRANSPARENCY

1) We believe that it will be important for you to communicate with District constituents on a monthly basis. Communications should include, but not be limited to, updates to inform and receive feedback on upcoming CPS votes and initiatives, as well as progress monitoring. Will you commit to implementing some form of monthly communications for your constituents?

YES NO (Please provide an example)

Yes. I provide office hours monthly to check in with my constituents and I am open to creating more options for access to me.

2) What measures do you want to put in place to promote transparency in the school board system? **I think sharing information farther in advance would be helpful, as well as getting our committees up and running will create a deeper analysis for all decision making.**

3) What methods will you put in place to understand the interests / positions of your constituents, to ensure your Board votes align with your constituents, and not political funders or special interests? **(Please be specific) I serve a very educated and politically activated community and they are in touch with me on specific issues they are concerned about. I am also endorsed by several community organizations that do wonderful community work and I have committed to co-govern with them.**

4) What measures do you suggest the school board implement to ensure that CPS is held accountable and is responsive and transparent to school stakeholders?
CPS has a website, but I would love us to develop an app as well. We get briefings but there are things that could be improved with data and information sharing.

5) Will you support a third-party independent audit of Chicago Public Schools? **YES NO**
(and why?) Yes. All stakeholders should be aware of how the budget is being spent.

6) Recognizing that parents of CPS students are a critical portion of your constituency, what will you do to build and nurture a relationship with parents in the District? **I would really like to meet parents where they are and attend school functions and set aside meet and greet time. Parents lead busy lives and I think this would be helpful to them.**

BUDGET / FINANCE

7) In what ways should the school district engage Springfield for funding? In what ways will you engage external partners to assist with funding CPS initiatives? **Every citizen, community partner and stakeholder in the state should reach out to state elected officials as well as the Governor to use all of the proposed revenue ideas shared with them. The state government is responsible for funding public schools adequately and they are not doing so.**

8) What are your ideas to address the School District's consistent $500-$700 million budget gap? **We need revenue. Billionaires and corporations are not paying their fair share.**

9) How will you hold CPS accountable for ensuring equitable funding for all schools? And how should the Board / CPS prioritize to ensure funds are allocated where needed? **This question haunts me, and this is why it's important our Black Student Success Committee continues, why I have constant engagement with our immigrant communities, and always recognizing that the trend for our students with special needs are on the rise. I want all of our children to flourish; all of our communities need something different, and equity is about meeting the needs of everybody appropriately. We are noticing that our black and brown students are lagging in educational outcomes. These are stemming mostly from drastic staffing changes from year to year. We must ensure consistency in these levels.**

10) What are your ideas for **funding** the mental health needs of students, faculty, and staff?

We must secure the right relationships with external partners, including universities and community based organizations already doing this work, and then find out how to best leverage what the city offers as beginning steps. We must also employ a level of clinicians we have never had.

EDUCATION / STUDENTS

11) Achievement Gap: The data show persistent disparities in measures of educational performance among subgroups of students, especially groups defined by socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity and gender. How do you plan to address/close the intransigent achievement gap for African American students? **We must recruit good teachers to open positions in predominantly-black schools and recruit teachers from HBCUs. As a board member of Grow Your Own Teachers, I've seen firsthand not only what these new teachers bring to the classroom, but the change in enthusiasm that their students have had.**

12) Opportunity Gap: The disparities in providing access points and multiple pathways to position students for post-secondary success. How do you plan to address/close the opportunity gap for African American students? **Our students are graduating and getting accepted to college at high rates, but rates of college graduation are not parallel. We must ensure our students have access to mentorship post-graduation and that they are choosing the colleges best suited to their needs. We also must get our students experiences with the trades.**

13) What are your thoughts and/or ideas on **policies** to address the mental health needs of students, faculty, and staff? **Our current youth board member created a resolution this school year that maintained we would devote one day every school year to mental health awareness and resources. Recently, we voted on a measure to ensure that teachers and support staff receive a very similar day. The people that support students need to be healthy too.**

14) How will you work towards all schools providing recess and physical education equipment, healthy food offerings, and classes in the arts, shop, and technologies, as well as foreign languages? **The underlying issue underneath them all is that the district is forced into austerity because of previous unsustainable decision making. Funding our district off of primarily property taxes is not going to end this cycle. We need progressive revenue from our state to ensure our students get everything they deserve.**

15) The elected representative school board legislation includes the establishment of a board-level *Black Student Achievement Committee*, to develop actionable strategies to close the achievement gap for Black students. What actions will you take to ensure that this committee is staffed appropriately to give it its best chance of achieving measurable improvements in the education of Black students, system-wide? And, importantly, will you commit to the African American community having a strong voice / autonomy in the selection of Black Student Achievement committee members? **YES NO (and why?) Yes, black students, teachers, and schools should decide what success means to them and how to get there. There will be community members as part of the committee, and I have no reason to believe that committee chairman Jitu Brown will have any issues involving every stakeholder and ensuring our policies are wide ranging and consistent.**

GOVERNANCE

16) What are your thoughts on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Career and Technical Education (CTE), Computer Science (CS), and other emerging technologies in education for students, faculty, and staff? **AI certainly needs limits before it is introduced widely across classrooms. As of now, we have a policy in place that students can only be introduced through a teacher. I wholeheartedly support CTE and CS programming across the district.**

17) Do you think the school board should have autonomy to override LSC decisions that are made at the local level? **YES NO** Please explain your answer with an example. **No, LSCs were built to ensure that these decisions are made at the local level. The board should remain a partner rather than a supervisor for them.**

18) LSCs are responsible for principal selection; should CPS be required to obtain LSC review to remove a principal? **YES NO (and why?) The only circumstances I know of where CPS has removed a principal is because of inexcusable behavior while on the job. I would only involve myself in that process if that were the case. Personnel matters can often be personal; LSCs may not have all of the information necessary to make an informed decision.**

19) What are your thoughts on establishing an independent review board for terminations within CPS? **Personnel matters are private, and board members have an oath to uphold. We have worked hard to change an employee's firing from a Do Not Hire designation to possibly being allowed to return to their position in the future; I believe this power should remain with the board.**

OPERATIONS / POLICY / PERFORMANCE

20) What is one challenge or area of growth you see within CPS? What are your solutions for addressing this challenge? **Language access and poverty. Working in North Side schools, I see language barriers everywhere I look, particularly with those in the immigrant community. Their parents' earning potential is blocked for the same reasons. Many children have to shoulder the burden of all English communications in their family, and it's a huge**

responsibility for them. We must expand ESL programming and ensure that programming with a diversity of languages is being offered in the schools that have high levels of ESL students.

21) What are your thoughts on the financial and academic oversight of school choice, and do you believe guardrails should be put in place? If so, why? **Most changes in charter oversight would require changes to state law. I would support efforts in Springfield to increase these guardrails to maximize the opportunity for our district to have a stable and predictable budget.**

22) What are your thoughts on school closings and consolidation? **Many of these former buildings are not being utilized effectively once shut down, and if we invested in our neighborhood schools, they would be more likely to be filled. We've also seen research that suggests that our communities are weakened and made less safe whenever we close schools. We need to find ways to utilize our schools to better support our communities and integrate programs and services, and not put the safety of our students at risk.**

23) What criteria should be used to identify which schools should be considered for closure/consolidation? **We should be looking for opportunities and not reasons for a closure. Other places are creating affordable housing in these buildings, as well as grocery stores and health clinics. A school should continue to be a benefit to the community.**

24) What existing CPS policies would you like to change, or what new policies would you like to implement? **I'd like to see us be more proactive in early learning. We should provide all 3- and 4-year olds with a free school day, assessing their learning and ensuring they receive early intervention if necessary to set them up for their future career in CPS.**

CHARTER SCHOOLS

25) Funding Equity: Chicago Public Schools provides funding to both district-operated and charter public schools. Do you support funding parity between charter public schools and district-operated schools? **YES NO (and why?) All of our students deserve a quality public education, regardless of how their school is operated.**

26) Equitable Access to Resources: Do you believe funding for student support services should be allocated equitably to all students, regardless of whether they attend a district operated or charter school? **Yes** If a school accepts public funding for a student should it also be responsible for continuing to serve that student the entirety of the year? **YES NO**
(Please explain in detail.) Yes, resources ascribed to a student should remain with that student, no matter where they go to school.

27) Parent Choice and Educational Options: Well-to-do families have the resources to afford the type of education they want for their children. Many Black and Brown families who may be unable to afford private or parochial schools, choose charter schools because they believe those schools best meet the educational, social, emotional, or cultural needs of their children. What role do you believe charter schools should play within the Chicago Public Schools system, and how would you ensure families continue to have meaningful educational choices? **Many Black and Brown communities have faced significant school closings and have had no real local choices. Charter operators that have good student outcomes and transparent finances have an important role in educating our children, and we should be creating more good choices for parents to choose from throughout the district.**

28) Charter Renewal Stability: School board meetings can involve lengthy discussions on charter renewals. What are your thoughts on charter school renewals, including multi-year renewals? **I understand families and teachers need a level of security that multi-year commitments provide, but many operators have acted in bad faith after renewal, such as laying off significant numbers of staff. We need real financial oversight to ensure our district**

can operate effectively.

29) Accountability and Student Outcomes: Should charter schools and district-operated schools be evaluated using the same academic, financial, operational, and student-outcome standards? **YES NO** Where might they differ? **Yes, there should be one standard for all CPS schools.**

30) Long-Term Vision: What is your vision for the relationship between Chicago Public Schools and public charter schools over the next five years, and how would your policies support improved outcomes for all Chicago public school students? **We need stronger policy that protects our system from bad faith partners. We also need stronger regulations for charter partners so that our students are prepared and meet the same benchmarks all other students have.**