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

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Candidate Information

Name on Ballot: Katherine S Dunneback

School Board District: Subdistrict 9b

Home Address
2535 W 117th Pl
Chicago, IL 60655

Employer/Your Title
Saint Xavier University - Adjunct Clinical Faculty

Phone (312) 625-6458

Email kateforcps@gmail.com

Candidate signature attesting to the truthfulness, accuracy, and authorship of this Questionnaire.
09/21/2026
Katherine S. Dunneback
KSDunneback [electronic signature]

Date Print Signature ***[Please feel free to attach primary campaign literature, bio or vita]***

Campaign Information

Campaign Manager: Ilissa Valerio

Phone 630-240-2525
Email ilissa.valerio@gmail.com

Website www.kateforcps.com

a. Have you held or run for public office before, and if so, what office[s] with what results?
No

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?
My community organizing work includes:

- Burrito Brigade to prepare food and directly distribute it to unhoused neighbors and food pantries.
- Southside Catholic Peace and Justice which works on issues related to our Catholic faith (immigration, affordable housing, food access, anti-war legislation).
- Kamala Harris' 2024 campaign; Whistle Kit Assembly gatherings through mutual aid; and our Politics & Coffee democratic organizing group.
- Executive board member of Beverly Theatre Guild

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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
James Swofford	$7200
John Dotson	$1200
Sue and Larry Heyle	$1200

d. Who has endorsed you and what are your political/stakeholder alliances (if any)?
Chicago Teachers Union
Cook County College Teachers Union
Our Schools Action
United Working Families

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 for the school board to protect our public schools from those looking to privatize, profit from, or close them. I attended public schools from kindergarten through my Master's Degree. My grandmother, mother, sister, and other family members were/are public school teachers. Almost 15 years of my career was in public schools and their teachers' unions. I served as a union representative in the Unit 5 school district and a delegate to the IEA Representative Council. I am a CPS parent with my sons graduating from Clissold Elementary. I received special education law training to advocate for my children and several other families with children on IEPs. I was on Clissold's PTA, directed the school play, and volunteered on the CPS-created committee on inclusion. During CTU's 2019 strike, I walked the picket line at Clissold and supported the staff. I have worked with CPS and the Office of Diverse Learners Supports and Services on behalf of many clients making the transition from the state Early Intervention program to CPS early childhood centers. I am a public school champion and will do everything in my power to protect this vital public resource for our children.

f. Please describe your Educational agenda.
My priorities when I am a member of the CPS board will include:
-sustainable and equitable funding for neighborhood schools
-smaller class sizes
-reduction in use of technology and screentime

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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. Improving the transparency and consistency in communication between the board and the communities it services is one of my goals. I plan to create digital communications after each board meeting to explain actions and votes and to share these with the LSC and PTA presidents of the schools in my subdistrict.

2) What measures do you want to put in place to promote transparency in the school board system?

There needs to be improvement in the quantity and quality of communication between the board and the CPS families it serves. An example of this is my plan to use the Special Education Advisory Committee as a way to improve communication with Special Education families about their students' rights and the Special Education process.

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 plan to establish and maintain communication with the LSC and PTA presidents in the schools in my subdistrict through email as well as town halls and forums.

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?

Improving access to communication with board members is important - including establishing and maintaining consistent office hours within the district, using LSCs and PTAs as partners for communicating the needs of schools, and incorporating video conferencing options in meetings that working parents are often unable to attend.

5) Will you support a third-party independent audit of Chicago Public Schools? YES NO (and why?)

Yes. This is the best way to ensure transparency and public trust.

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?

Creating and maintaining relationships with the LSCs and PTAs in the schools in my district will help me improve the transparency and consistency in communication with CPS families. Also, establishing working relationships with other locally elected officials so that, if parents come to them with school-related issues, they can easily be referred to me.

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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?

I was a member of the IEA-RC that worked with Bruce Rauner to create the Evidence Based Formula for increasing state funding to public schools. I will use the knowledge and lessons learned from previous work with state representatives to continue to advocate for the funds promised to us via Public Act 100-0465. I will also work with city and state officials to close corporate tax loopholes created by the federal government, tax offshore accounts, and implement a billionaire's tax similar to the one used in California to fund their public schools.

8) What are your ideas to address the School District's consistent $500-$700 million budget gap?

We need to consider cutting costly private contracts as well as money spent on technology and curricula that are not data driven or evidence based. We also need to continue pushing the state to provide the funds previously promised and to create new progressive funding sources.

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?

Improving the equitable distribution of funding and resources to historically underfunded schools is a top priority for me. The schools in my district that have been ignored for too long will finally have an advocate on the board when I am elected.

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

Incorporating community resources and public health services into the school setting is a way to meet the mental health needs of students and faculty and staff. We also know that working with city and state officials to create affordable housing, provide higher quality school meals, and improve school environments will improve the mental health of our students and faculty and staff.

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?

I plan to support the Black Student Success Plan and the newly established Black Student Achievement Committee in addressing these systemic failures. I also plan to advocate for equitable distribution of funds and resources to our historically underserved schools.

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?

We need to fully fund all neighborhood schools equitably so every student in CPS has access to resources that will lead to post-secondary success.

13) What are your thoughts and/or ideas on policies to address the mental health needs of students, faculty, and staff?

I support and will advocate for the Treatment Not Trauma campaign in addressing the mental health needs of our CPS students and faculty and staff.

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?

Securing sustainable funding sources will allow for the hiring of the staff needed to provide these resources to all neighborhood CPS schools.

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?)

I will commit to supporting the newly appointed members of the Black Student Achievement Committee in their mission to close the achievement gaps for Black students and make the systemic changes necessary to support our historically disinvested schools and communities.

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?

These are three very different things and each requires its own approach. I would like to see more oversight and rule-making around AI. Computer science should be driven by curriculum needs. CTE programs are valuable ways for students to leverage their educational background for employment purposes.

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.

Local school councils are elected officials. The CPS Board will soon be fully elected. One set of elected officials should not be allowed to override the decisions of others without a discussion at the state legislative level.

18) LSCs are responsible for principal selection; should CPS be required to obtain LSC review to remove a principal? YES NO (and why?) LSCs should be a part of any discussion of removal of principals.

19) What are your thoughts on establishing an independent review board for terminations within CPS?

This is a policy that is worth exploring but would take a lot of engagement with LSCs, parents, staff, and teachers, along with unions.

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OPERATIONS / POLICY / PERFORMANCE

20) What is one challenge or area of growth you see within CPS? What are your solutions for addressing this challenge?

Funding equity across schools is a major improvement this school board can accomplish. The board should direct more resources to schools serving students facing greater socioeconomic and developmental challenges. Funding should be transparent, regularly reviewed, and tied to clear equity goals so that every school has the support students need to succeed.

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?

School choice is a misnomer. It merely re-allocates public funding toward private schools and other companies that have contracts with private companies. I am against this.

22) What are your thoughts on school closings and consolidation?

School closings and consolidation harm our already disinvested communities. We need to do everything we can to keep schools open and serving the communities in which they are located, including converting them to Sustainable Community Schools.

23) What criteria should be used to identify which schools should be considered for closure/consolidation?

I do not support closing schools at this time.

24) What existing CPS policies would you like to change, or what new policies would you like implement?

- Strengthening community-school connections by creating more opportunities for families, neighbors, and local organizations to contribute to our students' success.
- Improving the day-to-day experience at CPS schools by making classrooms safer, more welcoming, and more supportive of students and staff.
- Ensuring equitable and sustainable funding so every CPS school has the resources it needs, regardless of neighborhood or enrollment trends.
- Smaller student-teacher ratios
- Better support for special education and student services
- Reducing screen time and testing in classrooms
- Safer and more sustainable schools, not closures
- Transparent leadership that listens to families, educators, and communities

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?)

No. Access to free and appropriate public education is the right of every child. Taxpayer money should only go to schools providing this service. Charter schools exist to create profit for their investors, not quality education for our students. For this reason, more charter schools should not be opened in Chicago.

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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, except in the cases of student/staff safety or criminal activity
(Please explain in detail.)

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?

We should not expand the number of charter schools in CPS and we should bring charter schools under the auspices of CPS so they have the same responsibility and accountability as all other public schools.

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?

We should not renew current charter school contracts. These schools should be brought under CPS control.

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.

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 should not expand the number of charter schools in CPS and we should bring charter schools under the auspices of CPS so they have the same responsibility and accountability as all other public schools.

Thank You

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for your response

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About COAL

COAL is an umbrella organization founded by 13 of Chicago's historic African American mens clubs. COAL's overarching mission is to identify, examine, illuminate and find resolution to issues impacting the greater community. We strive to use our collective experience, expertise and resources to improve the quality of opportunity, quality of preparedness and the quality of outcomes (expressed as 'quality of life') for our community.

What We Believe

The Coalition of African American Leaders believes that it is important to examine the critical issues confronting the African American community where injustice, inequality and the absence of access and opportunity continue to prevail, thereby negatively impacting us as a people. COAL is an assemblage that advocates and organizes for appropriate and responsible public policy change, system behavior change and equality of opportunity. We aim to achieve for all of our people the fullness of the life experience without any form of racism or exclusion as a deterrent. We believe we must prepare ourselves for the opportunity of this full participation, thereby achieving the necessary education and training to participate.

Founding Member Organizations

100 Black Men Of Chicago ■ Chicago Assembly ■ Chicago Connection ■ Druids Club ■ Frogs Club ■ Lunch Bunch ■ New Committee ■ Original 40 Club Of Chicago ■ Rat Pack ■ Royal Coterie Of Snakes ■ Saints ■ Sigma Pi Phi Beta-Boule ■ UIC Male Forum / Chicago Good Health Group

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COAL is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization incorporated in Illinois, USA. Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by U.S. law.