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: Michael Neal

School Board District: 6B

Home Address 502 E. Oakwoood Blvd

Employer/Your Title Timothy Community Corporation / CEO

Phone 773 805-8641 **Email** friendsofmichaelneal@gmail.com

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

10/13/2026	Michael Neal	
Date	**Print**	**Signature**

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

Campaign Information

Campaign Manager Chris Harris

Phone **Email** pastorharris@brightstarcogic.com

Website Friendsofmichaelneal.com

a. Have you held or run for public office before, and if so, what office[s] with what results?

Local School Council (Served 3 years)

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?

Greater Bronzeville Community Action Council (Co Chair), Bronzeville Expanded Mental Health Services Program (Commissioner), Lurie Cancer Center Community Advisory Board (Co Chair)

Staff Minister at AA Rayner and Cage Memorial Funeral Homes, Founder of Timothy Community Corporation and the Leading with Literacy Program (Real Men Read)

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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
INCS	$3,000

d. Who has endorsed you and what are your political/stakeholder alliances (if any)?

The Chicago Tribune, Alderman Pat Dowell, Jessica Biggs, Pastor Chris Harris, Pastor Charlie Dates, Chicago Laborers District Council, Pastor David Swanson, Pastor Bernard Jakes, Common Ground Collective, Pastor James T. Meeks

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*?

My commitment to schools didnt begin with a campaign but a promise to serve. I am born and raised in Chicago and have served Chicago all of my life. My service in schools has been consistent for over 20 years. As an organizer and visionary I have been able to partner with educators and community to bring impacful opportunites to our community.

f. Please describe your Educational agenda.

Early Childhood Education

Supporting young learners and giving families the tools they need to support early development

Literacy Success

Expanding access to books, reading opportunities, and community-based literacy programs.

Community Voice & Engagement

Strengthening the connection between families, educators, schools, and the community they serve.

Sustainable School Partnerships
Building lasting partnerships that bring resources, expertise, mentorship, and opportunites to schools.

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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, the use of social media, websites, sharing information directly to schools and sharing with CACs, PACs, LSCs and other community forums will be the way in which to communicate. Attending community meetings in person and virtually will be another effective way to communicate news and informtion.

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

Easier ways to sign up, participate and view board meetings. Also consider having meetings be held at various locations around the district.

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)**

Constant contact and communication with the community allows board memebrs to hear and feel the pulse of the people.Therefore, a vote is not one made in a silo but an informed one based on the heartbeat and needs of the community.

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?

Open meetings, regualr audits, recorded and documented information about meetings and actions taken.

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

yes, it promotes transparency

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?

Over the years in my service to people, I have learned and understand the need to hear them, to value them. I have no doubt that that same level of hearing and understanding will continue to take place.

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?

The District should continue to engage and press our legislators to fully fund our schools as their moral obligation. While simultanously we should create other sources of revenue and champion the idea that we ALL play a part in making our schools better financially and educationally.

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

To not pass budgets recklessly but to cut where able provided it doesn't hinder the learning of students. While also tapping into new streams of income from philanthropic and corporate entities.

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?

As part of the transparency we will promote where and how funds are being utilzed, it should documented and open to all and where there is inequity it will be open for public scrutiny.

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

We must utilize the skills and resources of the numerous community based organizations who specially in mental health and partner with hospital systems that have and do the same.

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?

By engaging our entire community and giving them access and agency to make education a priority. Removing any barriers that hinders them from being the main educators of their children. With stronger more engaged communities it allows programs like Real Men Read and others that exist to flourish.

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?

Once again by engaging our community who have a vast amount of talent and skill within it to help coach, nurture and share resources and wisdom with students on their post secondary journey. Creating alumni villages around students, family support and academic support would go a long way in ensuring that students are successful in their continuing educational pursuits.

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

Continued education and quality information around mental health would first remove the stigma associated with mental health. Access to quality care also would be a great benefit as well.

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 school experieince for students must be as broad and diverse as possble. Where there might be constriants we must then look within our community to see where such opportunities reside.

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, and this committee must be comprised of a number of passionate, skilled community minded indivudals who will fight to see that Black Student Success is actually achieved oon a broad scale.

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?

We must be truly informed about the use of AI and look all potential harms it might cause should it not be properly regulated or governed. Once properly informed we must be ready to place guidelines and restrictions as needed before allowing it to be used within CPS schools

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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, but in extreme occassions or situations where the LSC has shown to not done good governance. It might be neccesary to send some decisions thru a stronger vetting process.

18) LSCs are responsible for principal selection; should CPS be required to obtain LSC review to remove a principal? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **(and why?)**

The answer to number 17 would apply to this question as well.

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

While everyone should have a right to due process, creating a board striclty to review every termination may be overkill.

OPERATIONS / POLICY / PERFORMANCE

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

The lack of support and acknowledgment of the hard work and academic success that is happening within CPS. This challenge can be overcome by inviting our community to the table to bring their passion, expertise and experience to the learning experience.

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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?

As we face such great fiscal challneges we must be diligent about how monies are allocated

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

The question should be how do we feel about school experiences? Are we giving each child the true educational experience they deserve and is it on par with what we had as students or would we want the same for our children? That being said we need to extend the moratorium on schools closing as CPS has done a horrible job on selling or repurposing their portfolio of schools from school closings over a decade ago.

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

It must not be some arbitrary number or metric, but truly should be a cases by cases look at each school building. One school may have smaller enrollment but has a building that is activated and fully alive with extenal partnerships and programs.

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

The process to become a volunteer is much too long and cumbersome. It hampers anyone who really wants to serve. The process must be streamlined and consistent across the district.

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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?)**

yes, if district operated schools are not funded equitably then how can the district turn around not fund equitably?

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 or No 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.)**

If these resources are to ensure the success of students , why wouldnt the district want to be equitable ?

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?

When the focus is on the children and students first then decisions around funding would be a priority and thus parents would not have to navigate and concern themselves with if a school is going to be fully funded.

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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?

Charter Schools should be held to the same standards district schools are. At the same time the district cannot hold charters to a certain standard while they have withheld funding, created barriers and produced policies that have hamstrung charter schools.

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?

It is hard to evaluate when the metrics for which are used are unbalanced due to different levels of support.

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?

My vision for district and charter schools are the same in that they both show robust improvment in academic achievement

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Thank You

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

WWW.COALCHICAGO.COM publicpolicy@coalchicago.com
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.