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: Ellen Sherratt

School Board District: 4A

Home Address 769 W. Melrose St.

Employer/Your Title President, Common Cents Education Consulting, LLC

Phone 312-515-6657 **Email** electellensherratt@gmail.com

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

09/21/26	Ellen Sherratt	
Date	**Print**	**Signature**

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

Campaign Information

Campaign Manager Erin Waitz

Phone 8472096694 **Email** ehwaitz@gmail.com

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

No. This is my first campaign for public office.My public service has been in policy rather than in elected positions. I have worked with the Illinois State Board of Education and with Illinois lawmakers on teacher quality and school funding, and I led the introduction of the American Teacher Act in the U.S. Congress, legislation that would set a national minimum teacher salary of $60,000.

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 am a Chicago mother and currently serve on the Board of Directors of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year. I previously served on the Board of Directors for Turning the Page (a literacy organization that operated in Chicago's south and west sides) and for the Teacher Salary Project. I was a volunteer tutor with Literacy Chicago, where I work with adults who never got the reading instruction they needed as children. That work shapes how I think about this job. Every adult I sat across from was once a third grader in somebody's classroom. Professionally, I have spent 25 years on teacher quality, advising state education agencies, testifying before lawmakers, and building coalitions across labor, district, and advocacy lines to move policy that improves who teaches our children and how well they are prepared.

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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
SEIU Illinoist State Council	$15,000
Alissa Shulkin	$7,300
Catharon Miller	$7,300

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

Chicago Federation of Labor; SEIU Illinois State Council; IUOE Local 150; former U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky; Ellen Rosenfeld, Chicago Board of Education Member; State Rep. Margaret Croke, 12th District; Paul Kendrick, Democratic Nominee for Illinois House, 12th District; Lucy Moog, 43rd Ward Democratic Committeeperson; Scott Waguespack, Alderman, 32nd Ward; Timmy Knudsen, Alderman, 43rd Ward; Bennett Lawson, Alderman, 44th Ward. I am a Democrat and I am not part of any slate, no organization has a claim on how I vote.

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 have spent 25 years on the question of what actually raises student achievement, with a PhD in education and a background in economics. I have advised the Illinois State Board of Education, worked with Illinois lawmakers, and built coalitions nationally on teacher quality, which the research identifies as the most powerful in school factor in a child's learning. I know how to read student data, including what it hides. District averages can look stable while individual schools quietly fall behind, and a board member who cannot see that in the numbers cannot govern. I am running because 24% of CPS students are proficient in math and 40% are proficient in reading, and that emergency has not been the first item on this board's agenda. I am also concerned about the financial risks this district has been asked to take. CPS carries more than $9 billion in long term debt and spent $794 million on debt service this year. When a board pushes leadership toward high cost borrowing to cover operating expenses, the bill arrives later as mid year cuts, and those cuts land on classrooms. I will not vote for that. What separates me in this race is independence combined with expertise. I will bring the same standard to every vote: does this help a child learn more this year than last?

f. Please describe your Educational agenda.

Student learning first. Proficiency numbers become the board's central metric, reviewed publicly and often. I will push resources toward early literacy, high quality curriculum with the training to teach it, and principal pipelines, because those are the levers with the strongest evidence behind them.

Honest budgets. I will not vote for a budget balanced on money nobody has appropriated, and I will not vote to borrow at high interest to cover operating costs. Both tactics move today's problem onto tomorrow's students, and both end in mid year cuts that hit classrooms.

Safe schools, full classrooms. Roughly 40% of CPS students are chronically absent. Students show up for schools where they feel safe and known, which requires social workers, counselors, and nurses actually staffed in buildings, plus real solutions on transportation.

Accountability the public can see. CPS has a five year plan with real targets. I will insist on a public scorecard against those targets, reported whether the news is good or bad.

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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. I will publish a monthly District 4A report within a week of each board meeting. It will cover how I voted and why, including votes where I was in the minority, what is coming up next month, and what I heard from constituents that changed my thinking. It goes out by email, on the campaign and district channels, and in print to school offices and library branches for families who do not live online.

I will pair that with a monthly open office hour, rotating among neighborhoods in the district so the same families are not always the ones traveling.

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

Materials for major votes should be posted far enough in advance that the public can actually read them, not dropped days before a meeting. I would push for a standing rule: any item involving more than a set dollar threshold, or affecting school assignment, closure, or renewal, gets posted with full supporting analysis at least 14 days out. Board debate should happen in open session. Too much of the real deliberation on this board has happened in closed session and in caucus, and then arrived at the public meeting as a bloc of votes with the reasoning missing. I also want the district's own performance data published in plain language, disaggregated by school and by student group, on a schedule families can rely on.

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 will hold monthly rotating office hours across District 4A, visit every school in the district on a published schedule, and convene a standing advisory group of parents, LSC members, principals, teachers, and school staff that meets before major votes rather than after them. Before any vote on budget, closure, renewal, or assignment policy, I will publish where I am leaning and why, with enough lead time that people can tell me I am wrong. I will also be clear about what independence means in practice. Board members who arrive already committed to an outside organization's position do not need any of this machinery, because the vote was decided elsewhere. My record in Springfield is coalition work across labor, districts, and advocacy groups that often disagreed with each other. I have no political benefactor to protect. I want to be direct with COAL about a District 4A obligation. This seat covers Uptown, Lakeview, and North Center, but I would be voting on a district where Black students are more than a third of enrollment and where closing the achievement gap is one of the most important issues facing this board and this city.

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?

The board's core accountability tool is the superintendent's evaluation, and it should be tied explicitly to the district's published targets, conducted on a stated schedule, with the criteria and the results made public. Right now that process is opaque enough that families cannot tell whether leadership is succeeding. Second, the board should adopt a discipline of monitoring rather than reacting. A standing quarterly review of academic, financial, and operational indicators, with the same metrics every time, prevents the board from chasing whatever is in the news. Third, complaints from parents and staff need a real path. I want an ombudsperson function that reports to the board, not to district management, with published data on volume, category, and resolution time. Fourth, the board should commission independent evaluation of its own major initiatives. Districts routinely spend nine figures on programs nobody ever studies.

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

YES, with a practical qualification about sequence and cost. A district carrying more than $9 billion in long term debt and running a structural deficit in the hundreds of millions has to be able to show the public a clear picture of its finances. My first step would be to review the audits CPS already conducts and sit down with the chief officers to understand what the district already knows about its own position. Independent audits are expensive, but I would support an independent audit targeted at filling gaps, with the scope set by the board in open session, the auditor selected competitively, and the full report published without edits.

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?

Show up where parents already are: school pickup, LSC meetings, parent group meetings, and community events. I will make my direct contact information public and answer it myself, not via a form reply from a communications office. I also want to be useful to parents, not merely available. Families in this district routinely cannot get a straight answer about special education services, transportation, or enrollment. I'll utilize existing structures such as parent advisory committees, including the bilingual and special education advisory councils, and school based parent groups and engage them directly and on a regular schedule. Recognizing the parents with the least time and the fewest resources are the ones this system asks the most of, I'll ensure any engagement plan is accessible to these families.

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?

Illinois funds CPS at 73% of what its own evidence based formula says is adequate. That is the single largest fixable fact in this district's finances, and I have won education funding fights in Springfield before. My concern is that the current board has not done the work required to win in Springfield. There has been a great deal of gamesmanship, much of it aimed at City Hall, and not nearly enough coalition building with the rest of the state. Legislators from downstate and the suburbs do not owe Chicago anything. They have to be persuaded, district by district, that the funding formula shortchanges their schools too, and that CPS is a partner rather than a supplicant that shows up once a year with a demand. Effective Springfield engagement is year round, not a February panic. It means a unified ask with a specific number attached to a specific bill, a genuine coalition with the downstate and suburban districts also funded below adequacy, and a district credibility problem solved first. Legislators fund districts they believe spend well.

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

First, stop making it worse. In 2025 this board pressured district leadership to take on massive high interest borrowing to cover operating costs. I would have voted against that. Nearly $200 million of this year's debt service still pays off bonds sold a decade ago to paper over a deficit, which is what happens when a district treats borrowing as a budget strategy. Second, stop balancing budgets with money nobody has appropriated. In July 2026 this board amended its own budget to assume $150 million in state revenue the district had not received. If that money does not arrive, the cuts come mid year, and mid year cuts always land on classrooms. Third, go after the structural causes. The state adequacy gap is the biggest one. Debt restructuring can produce real savings, and the district has shown it. Central office spending deserves a genuine outside review rather than the symbolic trims that get announced each August.

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?

I want a published equity report showing per pupil spending by school, including the actual salary cost of the teachers in each building rather than district averages. Averaging hides one of the most persistent inequities in American education: experienced, higher paid teachers cluster in schools serving more advantaged students, and the schools with the greatest need get charged the same average rate while receiving less. Allocation should follow student need. The district's Opportunity Index gives CPS a defensible way to direct resources toward the schools and communities carrying the greatest need rather than distributing dollars evenly and calling that fair. I will work closely with the Office of Equity to ensure achools serving the students furthest from opportunity deserve more money and better evidence about how to spend it.

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

Start by treating clinical staffing as a fixed obligation rather than a line item that gets cut when the budget tightens. Social workers, counselors, and nurses should be staffed to ratio in every building, and the board should publish the actual ratios by school so the public can see where the gaps are. On funding, Medicaid reimbursement is the most underused source available to CPS. Districts nationally recover substantial dollars for school based health services and lose them to weak billing infrastructure. That is fixable administrative work with real money attached. Beyond that, I would pursue partnerships with hospital systems and university training programs, which supply clinical capacity at lower cost while building a pipeline.

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 would put disaggregated achievement data at the front of the board's monthly work, reported by student group and by school, because what a board looks at is what a district works on. The work itself starts with high quality instruction. Strong curriculum, taught well by a prepared adult, is the intervention with the deepest evidence behind it, and it is the one CPS controls most directly. Early literacy sits at the center of that, because reading proficiency by third grade shapes outcomes for decades. High dosage tutoring produces some of the largest effects in the research literature and should be concentrated on the students furthest behind rather than spread evenly. CPS has run talent initiatives that succeeded in staffing hard to staff schools, including in Black communities on the South and West Sides, using targeted incentives, stronger principal pipelines, and deliberate placement strategy. Those efforts worked, and they are exactly the kind of thing that gets cut when budgets tighten. I will fight to protect and expand them. I also want CPS to make real progress on Black teacher representation. Black students who have Black teachers see measurable gains in achievement, attendance, and college going.

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?

Access is the first question: which students can reach which programs. Selective enrollment, IB, dual credit, advanced coursework, and CTE pathways are distributed unevenly across this district, and transportation determines who can actually use what exists. I support restoring meaningful transportation options, including lower cost approaches such as helping high school students earn commercial driving licenses through workforce development grants and building safe bike bus routes. Those should be designed with the families who struggle most, not for them. On programming, I would push for advanced coursework to exist in neighborhood high schools rather than requiring students to travel across the city for it, and for automatic enrollment policies that place qualified students into advanced courses by default. Districts that have done this see participation by Black students rise sharply, because the barrier was never ability. Career pathways deserve the same seriousness as college pathways. A CTE program that leads to a credential with real labor market value is an opportunity, and too many of ours are underfunded holdovers.

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

Policy should start with what schools do when a student is in crisis and who is responsible. Right now that varies enormously by building, which means a student's experience depends on which school they happen to attend. I support the Office of Student Health and Wellness in its efforts to address student mental health, and I want the board to back that office with consistent funding and consistent attention rather than treating it as a place to find savings. The people doing this work inside CPS know what they need. A board member's job is to make sure they get it and to ask whether it is reaching the schools with the greatest need. I support universal screening paired with actual capacity to respond, because screening without services identifies need and then fails it. I support restorative practices, with one caveat worth stating plainly: they work when schools are trained and staffed for them, and they fail when they are announced as policy and dropped on teachers without support.

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?

CPS does not currently give the public a clear, school by school picture of who has an art teacher, a music program, a functioning gym, a world language sequence, or shop and technology offerings. Without that inventory, the board is choosing not to know. I would publish this then push for a baseline every school meets, phased over a realistic timeline. This includes facilities, where CPS is carrying an enormous deferred maintenance backlog concentrated in schools serving Black and Latino students, and healthy food students will actually eat.

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, without qualification, on the question of autonomy. I want to start somewhere else, though, because this question is a clear example of the board not prioritizing the right things. State law established the Black Student Achievement Committee, and it still is not properly staffed. The board has spent its energy on political fights while a body created specifically to close the achievement gap for Black students sits without the people, budget, and data access it needs to function. The Black Student Success Plan deserves the same scrutiny. These are among the most critical pieces of work this district has, and they have been treated as secondary to politics. I would work hard to change that, starting with the question the board can actually answer: is the committee staffed, and if not, why. I would push for a named senior staff lead accountable to the committee, analytic support from the district's research office, a real budget, and a standing place on the board's agenda so recommendations get voted on rather than merely received. I would hold the CEO accountable for delivering it, with progress reported publicly on a schedule, because a committee that reports into nothing produces nothing. On membership, a committee designed without the meaningful authority of the community it serves would repeat the problem it was created to solve. I support a selection process in which African American community organizations, including COAL and the parent and civic groups already doing this work, carry real weight in choosing members rather than offering comment on a list assembled downtown. I would also want the committee's recommendations tracked in public: what was proposed, what the board did, and what changed.

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?

I signed the pledge supporting a moratorium on generative AI in classrooms. These tools are genuinely valuable, and students will enter a workforce that uses them, but districts adopting AI products at scale before anyone has established that they help children learn, before teachers are trained, and before student data is protected. Moving slowly and deliberately costs us very little. The line I hold is that AI cannot replace a teacher. Learning happens in relationship with a skilled adult who knows the child, and no product replicates that. Any tool that reduces adult contact with students is solving the wrong problem, whatever it saves. There is an equity risk too. Students in well resourced settings are learning to use these tools thoughtfully, while students elsewhere encounter them mainly as something they are accused of misusing. What CPS needs is a clear policy on instructional use, proper teacher training, and honest guardrails on student data. I would be cautious about expensive vendor platforms promising personalized learning, since that market has a long record of overpromising to districts under financial pressure. For teachers, AI has genuine near term value in reducing administrative burden. That is worth pursuing seriously. CTE and computer science deserve investment as pathways to real credentials and real wages, built with employers who commit to hiring.

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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, as a general rule. LSCs are among the few genuine mechanisms of community power in this system, and a board that can override them at will renders them decorative. The presumption should run strongly toward the LSC. The narrow exceptions are where state or federal law requires it, where a decision would violate the civil rights of students, including special education and language access obligations, or where student safety is at stake. Those exceptions should be defined in policy, invoked rarely, explained publicly, and subject to a documented process rather than an informal call from central office. The distinction I would hold to is between a legal constraint and a policy disagreement. Where the district has no lawful choice, it has no lawful choice. Where the board simply dislikes an LSC's judgment about what its own school needs, the board should lose that argument.

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

YES. If LSCs hire principals but the district can remove them unilaterally, then the district effectively controls principal selection and the LSC's authority is nominal. Requiring review keeps the accountability where the law put it. The exceptions should be narrow and defined: credible allegations of misconduct, criminal conduct, or conduct endangering students, where immediate removal or administrative leave is warranted. Even then, the LSC should be informed promptly and involved in what follows. I would add a condition that cuts the other way. LSCs need real support to do this well, including training, access to the principal's performance data, and clear evaluation tools. Communities cannot exercise authority responsibly if the district withholds the information required to use it.

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

The case for it is reasonable, and it rests on a fact worth stating plainly: employees in a politically charged district need confidence that adverse decisions rest on performance rather than on who they crossed. Right now that confidence is not high, and the perception itself damages the district's ability to recruit and retain people. I would want to understand the specific problem before designing the remedy. An independent review body makes sense for categories where the current process has demonstrably failed, and it should have defined scope, clear standards, reasonable timelines, and published aggregate data on cases and outcomes. I would want to avoid two failure modes. A body that takes years to resolve cases serves nobody, and a process that makes it functionally impossible to remove an adult who is harming children is not a protection worth having. Both of those exist in other districts. I would also want the board to hear from the unions representing affected employees, from principals who manage them, and from parents, before adopting a structure.

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 governing challenge is that this board has not made student learning its central work. In its first two years, the board has spent its attention on the mayor's pension reimbursement, on borrowing fights, on leadership turnover, and on procedural battles over charter renewals. Meanwhile 24% of students are proficient in math. I do not think that happened because anyone on the board stopped caring about children. It happened because the board's structure of attention rewards political conflict and nothing forces a reckoning with academic results. The fix is structural. Put disaggregated achievement data first on the monthly agenda, not at the end when members are leaving. Tie the superintendent's evaluation explicitly to published targets. Publish a public scorecard against the district's own five year goals, reported when the news is bad. Require any major initiative to state what outcome it will move and by when, then hold the review. I would also start the work on what comes after 2029: a ten year plan to make CPS the best big city school system in America by Chicago's 200th birthday in 2037. That horizon changes what a board is willing to do.

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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?

Every school receiving public money should meet real standards on academics, finances, and treatment of students, and the board should enforce those standards consistently. Guardrails are appropriate. My concern is that the authorization and renewal process as it currently operates is not working. The district needs a strong renewal process with continuous financial monitoring, with enrollment trends, debt service, cash position, and facility obligations reviewed on a schedule and reported to the board.

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

Chicago's 2013 closures caused real harm, concentrated in Black communities, and the district has not fully earned back the trust it lost. Most displaced students did not land in meaningfully better schools, and neighborhoods lost institutions that held them together. At the same time, enrollment has declined substantially, and schools operating far below capacity cannot offer their students a full program. A building with a few dozen students per grade often has no art teacher, no counselor, and no advanced coursework. Refusing to discuss that is its own form of harm, quietly borne by the students inside. My position is that the board should not pretend this question does not exist, and should not answer it the way the district did in 2013. Any consideration has to begin with the affected community, use published criteria applied citywide, guarantee that receiving schools are demonstrably stronger and resourced before any transition, and address what happens to the building. Communities should be at the table from the beginning, with real ability to propose alternatives.

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

Criteria should be published in advance, applied citywide, and never assembled after a list of schools has already been drawn. I would weigh several factors together. Whether enrollment can support a full instructional program, including specials, counseling, and advanced coursework, matters more than a raw utilization percentage. Academic trajectory over multiple years matters, not a single year's scores. Building condition and the capital cost of keeping a facility viable is a legitimate consideration. So is the availability of demonstrably stronger options within a reasonable and safe distance, which is a transportation question as much as an academic one. Equally important is what should not count on its own. A low enrollment number by itself is not a reason, particularly where a school anchors a neighborhood with few remaining institutions or where enrollment decline followed district decisions that starved the school of resources or programs. Any criteria must be tested for disparate impact before adoption. If the list disproportionately falls on Black communities, as it did in 2013, the board needs to understand exactly why before it acts.

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

I would change how the board budgets. A policy prohibiting the district from balancing an operating budget on revenue that has not been appropriated, and from borrowing at high interest for operating costs, would prevent the tactics that have produced mid year cuts and a $9 billion debt load. I would establish a public accountability scorecard tied to the district's five year targets, reported on a fixed schedule regardless of whether the results flatter anyone. I would implement automatic enrollment in advanced coursework for students who meet criteria, which raises participation among Black and Latino students sharply in districts that have adopted it. I would strengthen board transparency rules on advance posting of materials and on disclosure of member meetings with parties who have business before the board. I would also change how the district reports school level spending, so the public can see actual teacher salary costs by school rather than district averages that conceal real inequity.

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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. Charter students are public school students, and public dollars should follow them on the same basis as any other child. Funding should reflect student need, with the same weights for low income students, English learners, and students with disabilities applied consistently regardless of school type. Parity is a two way commitment. Charter schools that receive equitable funding should meet equivalent obligations on enrollment, student retention, special education, discipline reporting, and financial transparency. I would also want the district's accounting made public so the argument over what charter schools actually receive relative to district schools is based on agreed numbers. That is a solvable problem, and solving it would improve this debate considerably.

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.)**

YES to both. On the first question, a student with a disability, a student learning English, and a student experiencing homelessness need the same supports regardless of which public school they walk into. Funding for those supports should follow them. Where charter schools lack the scale to provide certain specialized services, the district should offer them through cooperative arrangements rather than leaving families to navigate alone. On the second question, mid year exit is where public accountability breaks down most visibly. A school that receives public money for a child in September has taken on an obligation to that child, and counseling out, administrative withdrawal, or discipline that functions as removal shifts both the student and the cost onto another school mid year. That practice exists at district schools as well, and my answer applies to both. I would want mid year entry and exit published by school, by school type, and by student group, with transfers distinguished from removals. Schools with patterns that stand out should have to explain them.

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?

Families choose the schools they believe will serve their children, and for many Black and Latino families in Chicago a charter school was the option that worked when the neighborhood school had been allowed to decline. That decision deserves respect rather than suspicion. I am not going to tell a parent that the school where their child is thriving is a problem to be solved. Charter schools should operate as one part of a public system that is accountable across the board. The role I want them to play is to serve the families who choose them, well and stably, with the same obligations and the same scrutiny as any other public school. Meaningful choice requires two things this system has not consistently delivered. The first is stability, which means renewal decisions made on time with clear criteria, so families can plan. The second is quality in the neighborhood school, because choice is not meaningful when the alternative is a school the district has starved. My core commitment is to make every school a family would choose. Until we get there, I am not interested in restricting the options families have.

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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?

High performing, financially sound schools should receive long renewal terms, and I support multi year renewals of five to seven years for schools meeting the standard. Short terms impose real costs. A school facing a two year horizon struggles to retain teachers, plan academically, or invest in its facility, and families live with annual uncertainty about where their children will be. Longer terms require serious ongoing monitoring rather than a high stakes review every few years. Continuous financial and academic oversight, with defined intervention triggers, protects students better than the cycle we have used. What I would end is the pattern of the last two years. Renewals were delayed repeatedly in 2025, and in May 2026 the board tabled decisions on six operators serving about 8,300 students days before summer break, over the objection of the district's leadership and after its evaluation team had finished the work. Whatever the intent, the effect fell on families and staff. Renewal decisions should be made on a published calendar, on published criteria, in the regular cycle.

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, across the board, with the caveat that the entities themselves differ. Academic and student outcome standards should be identical. Growth, proficiency, graduation, postsecondary outcomes, and the performance of every student group should be measured and reported the same way. Enrollment practices, retention, discipline, and service to students with disabilities belong in that same category, because differences in those practices distort academic comparisons. Any comparison should account for the students a school actually serves, including mobility, special education, and English learner populations, and that principle applies equally to district run schools. The same expectation holds on financial and operational performance. A publicly funded school should be solvent, well governed, and competently run, and the board should hold every school to that. Where the entities differ is in structure rather than standard. Charters are separately governed nonprofits with their own boards, their own debt, and in many cases their own buildings, so the tools required to verify solvency and governance differ from the tools used inside a district run school. Related party transactions, board composition, and organizational cash position are questions that simply do not arise the same way for a neighborhood school. That calls for different instruments, not a lower bar.

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?

I want the argument to change. Chicago has spent fifteen years fighting about school governance while proficiency sat at 24% in math and 40% in reading. That fight has consumed enormous energy and moved very few children. My vision is a system where every publicly funded school, district or charter, operates under the same clear expectations, receives funding based on the students it serves, gets timely and predictable renewal or review decisions, and faces consistent consequences for failing students. Within that framework, I want the district to stop treating charter schools as a political category and start treating them as schools: some excellent, some struggling, all accountable. Practically, over five years, that means stable multi year renewals with real monitoring, a published and agreed accounting of what each school type receives, mid year enrollment and exit data published across all schools, and shared practice moving in both directions. Charter networks have learned things about school culture and teacher development that district schools could use, and the reverse is true as well. The measure I care about is whether a child in Chicago can walk into any publicly funded school in this city and get an education that opens their future. Every governance question should be answered against that test, and I will answer them that way.

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

Thank You

for your response

COAL COALITION
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS

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.
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