COAL Chicago Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

Isaiah White, District 6A. General Election, November 3, 2026.

Candidate Information

- **Name on Ballot:** Isaiah White
- **School Board District:** District 6A
- **Home Address:** 300 N State St Apt 2532 Chicago IL, 60654
- **Employer / Title:** SECA at Chicago Public Schools
- **Phone / Email:** 312-625-2249

Campaign Information

- **Campaign Manager:** Connor Deeds, 214-404-7048, connor@isaiahwhite.org
- **Website:** isaiahwhite.org
- **Social:** @isaiah4chicago

a. Have you held or run for public office before?

I have not held elected office. I previously sought election to the Cook County Board for District 12.

b. Community roles and public appointments.

I spent six years teaching in different capacities in public schools.

c. Top contributors of $1,000 or more.

INCS Action, Paul Jacobs, Mary Finnegan, Paul Finnegan, Michael Smith, Noah Wright, Phillip White, Jon Shulkin, Robert Melman, Urban Center PAC, Rebekah Shalit, LIUNA Chicago Laborers' District Council PAC, Jay Shooster, Martha White, Connor Flexman, Common Ground Collective PAC, Lionel Barrow, Neil Book, Bright Futures Chicago PAC, Vaughan Hospitality Group, Rokas Urboas, Austin Chen, Matthew Kuras, Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council PAC, and Linda Erlinger.

d. Endorsements and alliances.

Chicago Tribune; Ald. Brian Hopkins (2nd Ward); Ald. Brendan Reilly (42nd Ward); Ald. Scott Waguespack (32nd Ward); State Sen. Lakesia Collins (5th District); Margaret Croke, 12th District State Representative and Democratic nominee for Comptroller; Ald. Felix Cardona (31st Ward); Ald. Bill Conway (34th Ward); Operating Engineers Local 150; the Laborers' International Union of North America (LiUNA); Tim Egans, 2nd Ward Committeeman; Karen Kane, member of the 18th District Police Council; Paul Kendrick, Democratic nominee for 12th District State Representative; Drake Warren, Democratic nominee for 10th District Cook County; the 2nd Ward Democrats; Chicago New Liberals; A City That Works; Personal PAC; Chicago Growth Project; One Future Illinois; INCS, CGC, Urban Center, and the 42nd Ward Democrats

e. Why are you running? What expertise do you bring? What makes you the best candidate?

I'm running because every child in Chicago deserves a school that is excellent and a place they want to be. I've been a public school educator for six years. I understand health policy and public budgets from

my previous years working in government. I know how to read a budget and ask hard questions of an administration. A new elected board has to build real capacity to govern: understand the numbers, set clear goals, and hold the district to them. I bring a teacher's view of the classroom and a technocrat's discipline with money, and I'm independent enough to say no to anyone. For me this isn't a career, it's about making change.

f. Describe your educational agenda.

Five commitments guide my agenda:

- **Joyous schools.** Kids should want to be at school, and so should teachers. That means arts, recess (and lots of it), clubs, and strong relationships alongside rigorous academics.
- **Excellent outcomes.** High expectations, strong curriculum, and public targets that we track and report.
- **Horizontal equity.** Students with similar needs should get the same resources, no matter their zip code.
- **Prudent fiscal management.** No borrowing to cover operating costs, fully paying down our pension debt, and an end to reliance on risky borrowing.
- **A board that can govern.** Staff, data, and committees that let the Board oversee a large system with a highly lean but capable administration.

Accountability / Transparency

1. Will you commit to monthly communications with constituents?

YES. Every month (or week depending on demand) I will send a short newsletter covering what is on the Board's agenda, how I plan to vote and why, and how to weigh in, with a link to a brief feedback survey. I'll also post the same update on social media and share it with LSCs and community organizations for those without email. I intend to attend each school's LSC at least twice a year and I will attend dismissal at least twice a week so parents and families can share with me directly their needs and concerns.

2. What measures promote transparency in the school board system?

Publish agendas and board materials well ahead of meetings, with a plain-language summary of every major vote. Publish an online dashboard of key data, including budgets, enrollment, outcomes, and staffing, by school. Explain every vote I cast. Keep public comment meaningful by making it easy to sign up, offering translation, and, critically, offer responses to what people say.

3. How will you make sure your votes align with constituents and not funders or special interests?

- Hold regular town halls in different parts of the district, including evenings and weekends.
- Hold weekly office hours.
- Run short surveys before big votes and share the results.
- Meet regularly with LSCs, principals, parents, and educators.
- Attend dismissals twice a week.
- Publish my reasoning on every significant vote.
- Disclose my contributors and avoid any appearance of conflict.

I'm independent of the CTU and the mayor this race, and I intend to stay that way in office.

4. What measures should the Board implement to ensure CPS is accountable, responsive, and transparent to stakeholders?

Set a small number of clear, measurable goals and track them publicly. Require regular reports from the administration, including Network Chiefs, tied to those goals. Create a simple way for families to raise problems and see them resolved. Follow up in writing when the Board asks for something, so requests don't disappear.

5. Will you support a third-party independent audit of CPS?

YES. The public cannot trust the numbers unless someone independent has checked them. An audit of finances and operations would give the Board a factual baseline, flag risks early, and help us decide where reforms matter most. However, this is not to say that there is malfeasance in CPS central office, there isn't. CPS central is run by consummate professionals who are in public service for the right reasons. Audits serve as a check and a trust building exercise, unless there is something terribly wrong, they should turn up nothing we don't already know.

6. How will you build a relationship with parents?

By showing up. I'll visit schools, attend LSC meetings and dismissals, and hold community conversations where parents already are, with childcare, translation, and flexible times when possible. I'll keep parents informed through the monthly update and answer their questions directly. Parents know their kids best, and members of the Board should treat them as partners, not as an audience.

Budget / Finance

7. How should CPS engage Springfield, and external partners, for funding?

CPS should make a unified, data-backed case to Springfield for adequate, predictable funding and for relief on pension obligations through a consolidation of the Chicago Teacher's Pension with the State of Illinois's Teacher retirement system. I'd work with the delegation and the district's partners on that case. On the partner side, I'd look to employers, universities, health systems, and philanthropy to support CTE, mental health, and out-of-school programming, as supplements to core funding.

8. What are your ideas to address the $500-$700 million budget gap?

A gap of that size is a structural problem and needs a multi-year plan, not more one-time fixes: I propose the following:

- No more debt for operating costs, and no more reliance on expensive borrowing.
- Be honest with the public about pensions.
- Review administrative spending carefully while protecting classrooms.
- Maximize state, federal, and Medicaid reimbursement.
- Make decisions about buildings and enrollment through a transparent process. The Board must see the full multi-year picture before it votes.

9. How will you hold CPS accountable for equitable funding, and how should funds be prioritized?

I believe in horizontal equity. I'd ask CPS to continue to publish per-pupil funding and staffing by school, and explain the differences. Differences should reflect student need, not politics or who has the loudest advocates. Classroom spending should be prioritized along with early literacy.

Education / Students

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

Maximize Medicaid and other reimbursement for school-based services, which is an area I understand well from my health policy work. Pursue state and federal grants. I'd also like to see us partner with health systems and community organizations.

11. How will you close the achievement gap for African American students?

The gap is real, and closing it takes sustained focus. I'd prioritize early literacy, high-quality instructional materials, high-dosage tutoring, and interventions to address chronic absenteeism. I'd work to place strong teachers and leaders in the schools that need them most, and I'd set public, school-level targets for students in reading, math, and graduation, reviewed regularly by the Board. The Black Student Success Plan is the right framework, but it only matters if it is implemented and the results show up.

12. How will you close the opportunity gap for African American students?

Access to opportunity shouldn't depend on where you live. I'd expand access to selective enrollment, AP, IB, dual credit, and CTE, including pathways in the trades. I'd make sure families know about their options early and can get to them, including transportation for choice programs. I'd strengthen counseling and post-secondary support so college and career pathways are real for every student.

13. What are your thoughts on policies to address mental health needs of students, faculty, and staff?

Treat mental health as a core part of school, not an add-on. That means adequate counselors, social workers, and psychologists in every school, school-based health partnerships, and clear referral pathways. It also means addressing educator burnout through manageable workloads, fewer unnecessary administrative demands, and a supportive school climate. We should track the results, including attendance, retention, and student well-being in the classroom.

14. How will you work toward all schools providing recess, PE equipment, healthy food, and arts, shop, technology, and foreign language classes?

Set a minimum standard of offerings for every school and report publicly on which schools meet it. Protect those offerings in the budget so they aren't the first things cut. Use partnerships and shared-staffing models for smaller schools that can't support every program. Joyful schools are well-rounded ones, and I taught English in Spain, so I know how much language learning opens up worlds of opportunity and exploration for kids.

15. Will you commit to the African American community having a strong voice in selecting Black Student Achievement Committee members? What will you do to ensure the committee is staffed appropriately?

YES. The committee will only succeed if the community trusts it and sees itself in it. I'd support an open, public nominating process with significant input from Black parents, educators, students, and community organizations, within what the law allows. I'd also give the committee full access to central office staff, full access to school-level data so the committee can produce measurable improvements and not just reports.

Governance

16. What are your thoughts on AI, CTE, computer science, and other emerging technologies?

Technology should serve good teaching. CTE and computer science open doors to good jobs and should be available to far more students, including through partnerships with employers and the trades. AI has real potential, but we should be careful. I'd want a clear districtwide framework on appropriate use, student data protection, and teacher training, with small, well-evaluated pilots before scaling anything. Educators need a seat at the table in those decisions.

Operations / Policy / Performance

17. Should the school board have autonomy to override LSC decisions?

LSCs are one of the most important forms of local democratic participation in the country, and I believe in shared governance. The Board should step in only where there is a clear legal, culture, academic, safety, or serious financial problem. Otherwise, the Board should support LSCs, not overrule them. Board intervention should be far from the norm.

18. Should CPS be required to obtain LSC review to remove a principal?

LSCs aren’t perfect. There need to be alternative mechanisms for discipline in edge cases. At the same time, the LSC role in principal selection should remain the primary pathway.

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

I'm open to the idea. Fair process matters for employees, and transparency matters for the public. Any review mechanism should be independent, have clear timelines, and be designed so it doesn't slow down the removal of anyone who is harming students. I'd want to look closely at the design before committing.

20. What is one challenge you see within CPS, and what are your solutions?

CPS is a very large system, and the Board and administration need more capacity to manage it well. Too often, the people making decisions don't have clear data, and schools are left waiting for answers. My solution is to build the Board's own governance capacity, with staff and committees that can analyze budgets, draft policy, and track performance. I'd support a lean but capable board administration.

21. Thoughts on financial and academic oversight of school choice. Should guardrails be put in place?

Yes. Choice is valuable, but it has to be fair and accountable. I'd support clear, public information for families, transparent enrollment and admissions processes, bus transportation so choice is real for families, and consistent financial and academic oversight across all public schools.

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

Closures should be a last resort. They are painful for families and neighborhoods, and the record of past closings is overwhelmingly negative. When consolidation is on the table, the process must be transparent and start early, with real community input and a credible plan for where students will go and how they'll be supported. The guiding principle should be community direction and a promise that students will always end up better off.

23. What criteria should be used to identify schools for closure or consolidation?

While I don't support consolidation or closure as a policy end in and of itself, if it were to happen, criteria should be public and consistent: sustained low enrollment and building utilization, facility condition and the cost of repairs, academic performance, the quality and availability of nearby options, and travel distance and safety for students. The Board should also look at the impact on neighborhoods, and should not apply the criteria in a way that falls hardest on Black and Brown communities.

24. What existing CPS policies would you change, or what new policies would you implement?

- A firm rule against borrowing for operating costs.
- Transportation support for choice programs.
- Expanded CTE and trades pathways.
- A public dashboard of school-level data and goals.
- A required minimum of arts, PE, and recess in every school.
- Stronger shared governance with LSCs.
- No book bans.

Charter Schools

25. Do you support funding parity between charter public schools and district-operated schools?

Charter students are Chicago public school students and they should receive the same funding that a district school would receive for that student. The same is true in reverse.

26. Should student support services be allocated equitably regardless of school type? Should a school that accepts public funding for a student serve that student for the entire year?

A student's needs don't change based on the type of school they attend. Support services should reflect the needs of the child. A school that accepts public funding for a student should be responsible for serving that student for the full year unless the parent wishes to move the child elsewhere. When a student leaves mid-year, the funding and the responsibility should be handled clearly and fairly so no student falls through the cracks.

27. What role should charter schools play, and how will you ensure families keep meaningful choices?

Charters are just one part of CPS portfolio, and many Black and Brown families choose them for good reasons. I'd support a system where all public schools, charter or district, are held to a high standard and families can pick what works for their child. I'd make sure families have clear, accurate information and, where possible, transportation to the school they choose.

28. What are your thoughts on charter renewals, including multi-year renewals?

Schools that are performing well should get stability. A multi-year renewal gives them room to plan and gives families confidence, while ongoing reporting and clear triggers allow the Board to act if performance slips. Clear-cut renewals should be handled efficiently so that Board meeting time is spent on the harder cases.

29. Should charter and district schools be evaluated by the same standards?

Every public school should be evaluated on the same core academic, financial, operational, and student-outcome measures. Some operational details may reasonably differ, such as governance structures or facilities arrangements, but accountability for results should be the same.

30. What is your five-year vision for the relationship between CPS and charter schools?

I'd like to see all public schools in Chicago, whatever their governance, held to the same high standards and focused on the same goal: excellent outcomes for every child. That means clear and consistent evaluation, funding that follows students fairly, shared best practices, and decisions made on performance and community need, not politics. If we do that well, families get better options and the whole system improves.