

Board of Education Candidates Disability Questionnaire 2024**Candidate:** Bruce Leon

Question: In no more than a paragraph, introduce yourself and why you are running to serve on the Board of Education.

Answer: I am Bruce Leon, a fifth generation Chicagoan, living in West Roger's Park. I have four daughters and six grandsons living in a six block radius. I am an entrepreneur, as I founded TandemHr in 1997 with 2 internal employees and sold in in 2020 with 160 internal employees to Chicago based private equity firm Shore Capital. I transitioned after a year to vice chair of board where we made four acquisitions and resold company in July 2024. I am an experienced board member having served on numerous boards including a publicly traded bank. I am running to serve on CPS board because I believe my skill set would be a valuable asset to helping turnaround the financially mismanaged and organizational disaster CPS finds itself in currently. Furthermore, I am the only candidate in district 2 race that will stand up to Mayor Johnson and the extremist leaders of CTU.

Question: Have you interacted with the special education system in CPS in any capacity? If so, what was your experience?

Answer: No answer provided.

Question: Many families of students with disabilities talk about the challenges they face trying to navigate the special education system in CPS. Why do you think families are so frustrated?

Answer: Because overall CPS is not structured to be a highly tuned customer driven organization. Instead by having 20,000 Of it 43,000 in non student interactive positions, it is bloated and bureaucratic. Hiring less managers and more special ed teachers who will be graded on how satisfied their "customers" are, that is parents and students.

Question: At the beginning of this school year, over 1,500 students with disabilities legally entitled to transportation had not received a bus route. These routing delays, common since 2020, result in students missing valuable school hours and parents missing work opportunities.

What steps will you take as a board member to ensure that students are provided bus routes in a timely manner?

Answer: The busing crises is a typical business case that I was part of solving on the numerous boards I served on. Amazon, Fed ex and UPS are gobbling anyone who can drive a truck and paying 50-70 dollars an hour including the bonuses. A subcommittee has to be formed to find ways to recruit quality drivers who can pass background checks at half the

going rate. This might include partnering with above mentioned companies to give over drivers an hour in morning and an hour each afternoon to drive a school bus

Question: Preparation for life after high school is important for all students, especially those with disabilities. Research shows that students with access to transition programs such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Dual Credit courses have greater graduation and employment outcomes than their peers. However, in CPS, disabled student enrollment in these programs lag well behind their nondisabled peers.

As a board member, what would you do to ensure equal access for students with disabilities to career training offerings?

Answer: We need to set specific goals to increase participation and track monthly. Also I believe a public / private partnership specifically for trade internships would go along way

Question: Over 65% of CPS schools are not fully ADA accessible. In practice, this means that “neighborhood schools” are not an option for many students with physical disabilities, let alone disabled teachers, disabled parents, disabled voters, or other disabled community members visiting our schools. The 2023 CPS Facilities Master Plan identifies building accessibility as an important priority, but the district has not adopted a roadmap or plan to achieve better building accessibility.

What steps should the district take to address a lack of accessibility in its buildings?

Answer: It’s unacceptable. Commercial building require ADA access so should schools. I would give three years top to make all schools ADA accessible

Question: CPS has a history of segregating students with disabilities. The Corey H. settlement in 1998 required the district to move toward meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities for students who could make meaningful progress in a less restrictive environment. In the last two years, the number of cluster classrooms in the district has increased by 200%, presumably because these students cannot be supported to make meaningful progress in the general education setting, even with supports. As a board member, what kinds of questions would you ask to understand this sharp increase in restrictive placements?

Answer: First question. Why aren’t we doing a better job to mainstream kids where appropriate. Programs like Reach which allow for a tradition shadower to help assist in mainstreaming



Question: What would be your top priority for improving access to education for students with disabilities in CPS?

Answer: To be a great school system we must have a competitive and results driven curriculum that can be accessed by ALL students.