



**Board of Education Candidates Disability  
Questionnaire 2024  
Candidate: **Ellen Rosenfeld****

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

Answer: My entire adult career has been dedicated to working as an advocate for our students and Chicago Public Schools, whether as a teacher, a parent, a central office staff member, or a Local School Council chairwoman. I care deeply about ensuring every child has access to a high-quality education. My work with students facing challenges, my involvement in my own children's education, and my efforts to engage parents and communities around education have all been driven by this fundamental belief. I have seen what CPS gets right and where they need to improve. All of my experiences have filled me with passion for CPS, its mission, and its families. This connection, as well as my exceptionally strong record of experience, will make me a powerful and effective voice on the Board of Education. My ultimate goal is to bring forward solutions that will improve outcomes for all students in Chicago schools, and I am committed to working tirelessly toward this goal.

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

Answer: I have been involved in the special education system in CPS through various channels. As a Family and Community Engagement specialist, I have organized many workshops in collaboration with the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services at Parent University, which provided families with guidance on navigating the special education process, accessing resources, and advocating for students with special needs. Also, my personal involvement includes managing my own child's 504 plan from 5th-12th grade, which includes advocating for accommodations for their specific needs. My lived experience has shown me the complexities of the system and the importance of advocacy.

**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: The system hasn't worked for families with children with disabilities. For far too long, students with disabilities have fallen by the wayside, but when I am elected to the Board of Education, I will ensure improvements. We must remove the roadblocks that children, families, teachers and staff face on a daily basis.

**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: Addressing the ongoing school bussing challenges in CPS, particularly for special education students, is crucial to ensuring equitable access to education. I will prioritize a plan to tackle this issue. I want to start by acknowledging driver shortages. CPS must offer competitive wages, benefits, and incentives, such as signing bonuses, to attract qualified bus drivers. Additionally, we have to work with city colleges or workforce development programs to create a pipeline for training and licensing new bus drivers and collaborate with our CTE program already in high schools to offer training and licensing new bus drivers. Another goal of mine is to collaborate with groups like CPS Parents for Busses, which have done a lot of research on this topic. In terms of special education resources, I will push for regular audits of special education programs to hold the district accountable for compliance. Also, after a deep understanding of the use of the \$10 billion budget, we will need to ensure there is enough funding and staffing for special education, including paraprofessionals and specialists, to meet diverse student needs.

**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: To ensure equal access to career training for students with disabilities, I would focus on expanding opportunities in Career and Technical Education and Dual Credit programs while addressing the specific needs of these students. As a board member, I would advocate for increased funding to train teachers in special education and career readiness so they can better support disabled students in these programs. Additionally, I would work to remove any barriers to participation by ensuring schools provide the necessary accommodations and individualized support for students with disabilities. Collaboration with local colleges, employers, and community organizations would be essential to create tailored pathways that include internships, job training, and mentorship programs designed for disabled students. Finally, I would prioritize outreach to parents and students to raise awareness about the benefits of these programs, ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to prepare for life after high school.

**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: Chicago schools must adopt a comprehensive accessibility roadmap with clear timelines, ensuring that every building meets ADA requirements. We have to prioritize schools serving the highest number of students with physical disabilities and then address a long-term plan for all schools, and CPS must collaborate with architects and accessibility experts to design a plan that works for all kids. Conversations will include all community members with disabilities, students, and families. After an audit of the \$10 billion budget, this must be a priority in capital planning. CPS will be transparent with the community on the process.

**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: I would ask several critical questions to understand the sharp increase in restrictive placements for students with disabilities. First, what specific criteria are being used to evaluate whether students can "make meaningful progress" in a less restrictive environment, and how is this term defined? I would also request detailed data on family involvement in placement decisions—are families fully informed of all options, and are their voices genuinely considered? Families know their children best and should play a leading role in these decisions. Additionally, I would ask about the professional development being provided to teachers and aides to support inclusion—are they adequately trained to implement inclusive practices effectively? Finally, I would demand transparency around how inclusive practices are being implemented across classrooms and whether schools are being held accountable for fostering truly inclusive environments. This data is essential to ensure we are not defaulting to segregation but instead offering meaningful, supported inclusion wherever possible.

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



Answer: My top priority for improving access to education for students with disabilities in CPS would be fostering inclusive practices in general education settings to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to opportunities both socially and academically. This means creating classrooms equipped with appropriate assistive technologies, hiring specialized staff, and providing ongoing professional development to educators. I would prioritize supporting students in the least restrictive environment, ensuring they can learn alongside their peers whenever possible. Additionally, I would call for an immediate audit of current resources and practices to ensure equitable distribution of support across schools, so that all students with disabilities have access to the tools they need to succeed.