

Board of Education Candidates Disability Questionnaire 2024**Candidate:** Kimberly Brown**Question: In no more than a paragraph, introduce yourself and why you are running to serve on the Board of Education.**

Answer: I am a champion for Chicago's Future, driven by a deep commitment to education, community, and resilience. Born into a working-class family with a deep-rooted connection to Chicago and a family legacy in public service, my early experiences instilled in me the importance of hard work and the power of education to transform lives. I believe that we can grow our economy and create a brighter future for all by investing in our schools and communities. I am a strong advocate for small business support, community empowerment, and equitable access to education. My commitment to creating opportunities and fostering growth in Chicago is unwavering. I received my degrees from Northwestern University Medill School and have held executive positions in highly regulated industries, including government, education, and financial services. My experience as a diverse learner, CPS parent, and educator has given me firsthand insight into the needs of students and families. With my strong leadership skills and unwavering commitment to Chicago, I am a powerful force for positive change.

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

Answer: I have worked with families as a Communities United volunteer who are trying to navigate the city and CPS system to find appropriate care and educational support. I am a volunteer and supporter with Network 4 Family and Community Engagement (FACE) that serves the parents and students of the network 4 (and mostly voter district 4) schools. I have supported the families at Nettelhorst, which has a Cluster program, through my volunteer work as a Board Member on the Nettelhorst Parent Teacher Organization. I have been an advocate, listener and supporter of Amy Nussbaum and the March Fourth protesters that have been consistency (and legally) advocating for disabled students rights in CPS.

Additionally, I've been engaged in the Illinois Special Education system. My family has professionals who have spent the last fifty years working the districts around Chicago supporting special education students.

As an adjunct professor, I work with diverse learners. I create and teach curriculum (online and in person) that addresses all student types and accommodations.

As an executive, I have lead teams of diverse professionals and advocated for equal rights for all. Our public schools should be farther along and more progressive and inclusive than our corporations, not the other way around.

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: Families are frustrated because they are being categorically and intentionally discriminated against in appalling, systematic, and blatant ways. They are being fought and silenced by the very government, agencies, education systems created to service and care for them. The adults carrying the burden are the moms.

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: My priority number one has always been to bring back buses and district-managed, safe group transportation for all students. I am the ONLY candidate in District 4 that is endorsed by the CPS Parents for Buses because parents know I am the strongest and most experienced advocate and leader to get children to school NOW.

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 comprehensive programming that provides credit hours for job training, skills training, apprenticeships and internships beginning as early as junior high for all students with an emphasis of acceptance for our students with disabilities. We need expansion of the program to ensure there are no waiting lists. In public education, the access and available needs to scale with the demand. As a Board Member, I would work with all industry and government organizations to provide appropriate training

opportunities that align with educator standards. I would cut the "red tape" bureaucracy to ensure the students' work and time earn them credit and access to post-education employment if needed. I would work with the Federal government and multi-state NGOs to ensure students with disabilities have guaranteed support for viable post education work and livelihood. I would create engagement with our sister nations who do similar exemplary work for their citizens to provide meaningful and economically viable contributions to society. Every person is an equal citizen. We are all different and beautiful and unique, especially our students with disabilities. It is an economically innovative opportunity to support their growth into adulthood in Chicago.

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: The current facilities master plan is not feasible or viable. We need to work with innovative architects, educators, city planners, advocates and parents to build a viable infrastructure plan that backs into a budget and timeline. Then we need to work with the Federal and State government as well as nonprofit foundations to get the capital budget to execute on that plan to have it completed in three years or less.

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've already asked the questions of professionals and parents. As a trained Chicago journalist, CPS parent, and Chicagoan, I also have done the objective research and observed as well. While it's important to understand the content of why and how we got to where we are, it is not a good use of time to overanalyze it. We need to set the goal for meaningful inclusion of students in every CPS school in 3 years, then work with every principal, parent, and community group to build a tactical strategy to ensure we successfully get there.

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

Answer: We need to prioritize and create a 3-year investment plan to ensure every school is accessible for students with disabilities in CPS. It is the law and the ethical thing to do. It keeps siblings and friends together, it supports neighbors and communities, and it provides long-term stability for learning and development. The investments need to include physical infrastructure as well as learning resources. We are surrounded by schools and districts who do wonderful work with students with disabilities. We don't need to look far to listen, learn, and adopt the strategies that work for CPS.