



**Board of Education Candidates Disability  
Questionnaire 2024  
Candidate: **Robert Jones****

**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 grandparent of 12, father of 4, husband, advocate and faith leader of over 40 years and a pastor of the Bronzeville community. I am running to serve on the Board of Education to bring educational and economic equity to the schools, make the sustainable community school model a reality in all of our schools, and help engage holistic restorative justice practices to the schools. I am running to be a voice from the community speaking to the solution possibilities that we must engage in.

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

Answer: While my interaction has not been with the system per se, my interaction has been hearing the problems that exist with overwhelmed, frustrated parents that feel that their children are being overlooked, when it comes to their child's needs.

**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: Unfortunately, CPS has fallen short with staffing much needed special education teachers, social workers, paraprofessionals, and nurses. On top of parents and guardians attempting to navigate lengthy documentation processes is no essay feat. Between schedule IEP's to ensure all parties involved comprehend what's transpiring the back-and-forth throughout the school layer can become overwhelming. Not to mention, students whose services have been delayed or denied.

**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: As a board member, I would prioritize investigating and resolving our school bus driver shortage. In doing so, I would champion that we hire across neighborhood and ensure we pay a fair wage with benefits. Our most vulnerable students should never be challenged or limited when traveling to school.

**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: As a board member, I would suggest we call a hearing with the Office of School Counseling and Postsecondary Advising (OSCPA). I would ask directly how OSCPAs supports special education students and what resources are being invested for them to reach their potential.

**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: Tragically, the infrastructure neglect is massive across CPS. To be clear, the average age of a CPS building is 84-years, this prevents accessibility and safety barriers. The lack of ADA accessibility is unacceptable and so is the deficit that prevents the District from addressing it. In the foreseeable future, any new developments should be mandated to be ADA compliant.

**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: As a board member, I would highlight several critical questions such as: Do we have full-time case managers at every school? What ratio of students need to be in a school to determine the number of SECA's? What diagnoses are commonly restricted from the general student population?



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

Answer: Increasing the number of qualified special education teachers; Providing robust development for staff and ensuring that the parents and students' needs are met throughout the IEP process.