

Board of Education Candidates Disability Questionnaire 2026

Candidate: **Sendhil Revuluri**

District: President

Question 1:

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

Answer:

I'm Sendhil Revuluri, a CPS parent, former public-school teacher, former VP of the Chicago Board of Education (where I chaired the Finance & Audit Committee), and school board coach. My career has been about making sure every child gets a great education, from founding a public school and teaching math, to leading instructional improvement for tens of thousands of students. I'm running for Board President because our schools exist to help every student learn and thrive, including our nearly 60,000 students with disabilities, who are too often underserved. When schools work for the students who face the greatest barriers, they work better for everyone. I want a board that sets clear goals, insists the district actually delivers the services students are owed, and holds itself accountable for results, especially for the students furthest from opportunity.

Question 2:

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 the system is opaque, often asks families to fight for what their children are legally entitled to, and far too often doesn't deliver the learning all students are entitled to. Parents are told their child qualifies for services, then those services come late (or never) due to staffing vacancies or delays (a budgeted position that is never filled), or a process that can feel adversarial rather than supportive. Families feel like they must be experts in IEPs and due process just to secure the basics, a burden that falls hardest on those with the least time, resources, or familiarity with the system. When communication is poor, evaluations are slow, and no one is clearly accountable for delivering what was promised, frustration is the rational result. Students with disabilities, like all of our students, have a right to a free and appropriate education; not just services, but belonging, learning, thriving, and success. Families shouldn't have to litigate for this.

Background

Currently, over 60% 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.

Question 3:

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

Answer:

As in too many domains, the district’s delivery is constrained by a board that won’t name genuine priorities or monitor results. And a district that won’t align its schools with the needs of students puts itself in a position where progress is made even more challenging. Addressing these issues would enable CPS to turn this stated priority into an actual, public roadmap (with a phased timeline, cost estimates, and clear milestones), not just an aspiration without a plan. By ensuring that we have the schools our children need, we can make them truly accessible so they include students, teachers, families, and community members with physical disabilities. Like each of our core commitments, the board I lead would hold the district accountable to inventory accessibility gaps, prioritize by need and impact, and track progress so future capital and facilities decisions deliver the progress that was promised and avoid creating new gaps. Honest, long-term capital planning, just like budget and learning strategies, are crucial to ensure accessibility becomes a reality.

Background:

A core tenet of The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is “the right to a free and appropriate public education in the [least restrictive environment](#).”

Despite this, CPS has a history of separating students with disabilities from their peers instead of including them in general education classrooms. A [1998 court settlement](#) (Corey H.) required CPS to move toward *inclusion*, meaning students with disabilities should be taught alongside their non-disabled peers whenever they can make meaningful progress that way, rather than being placed in separate, more restrictive settings.

Since 2023, the number of “cluster classrooms” (separate, self-contained classrooms specifically for students with disabilities, apart from general education) has increased by over 250%.

Question 4:

As a board member, what questions would you ask to understand why the district is placing so many more students in these separate classrooms instead of general education settings?

Answer:

Putting students in more restrictive environments than they need isn't right, isn't legal, and deprives them of educational opportunity. The variation of practice across networks and across schools (even in the same disability categories) strongly indicates that this isn't about differences in student need, but in the approaches of adults within the district. So I'd ask for the honest data (not just anecdote), an analysis of what's driving them, and an accounting of the reasons for the decisions that are being made. Specifically: is this growth driven by genuine academic need identified through the IEP process, or by behavior that overwhelms a general-education classroom and leads teams to want a student placed elsewhere? (That distinction is decisive, because moving students out for behavior rather than need runs directly counter to least-restrictive-environment and to the district's own 2018 corrective action after years of "delay and deny.") How much is driven by staff vacancies (where unfilled positions lead to students in more restrictive settings)? For students already placed, could they succeed in general education with the right support? Were they succeeding in inclusion before? I'd also compare academic, social, and post-secondary outcomes for similar students in inclusive versus separate settings, and watch closely whether this falls hardest on students of color with disabilities. Underneath all of this is the question that's too often skipped: not just how we're doing it, but what we're going for. Do these placements genuinely serve each student's success, honestly measured, or simply make things easier for the adults?

Question 5:

In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of expanding cluster programming for students?

Answer:

The real question isn't about more services or less; it's about moving our focus from inputs and compliance to student success. For some students, a smaller, specialized, well-staffed setting genuinely provides the intensive support they need to make progress. For those settings to be excellent, we must align them with the needs of the students they serve and ensure they are properly resourced. But what serves most students best (and is the law of the land), is inclusion in the least restrictive environment, as long as we ask the central question: were these students successful in inclusion? Expanding cluster programming beyond the students who truly need it has serious drawbacks: separation can bring lower expectations, fewer opportunities, and weaker academic and social outcomes. At scale, it risks a drift back toward the very segregation the Corey H. settlement was meant to end. A 250% increase in cluster programming, with the variation across the system, is concerning; it suggests placement may be driven by system constraints, not student need. In my opinion, cluster settings should be used only when they're genuinely right for the individual student. This way, it's more likely that the students in those settings get the strong staffing and support they deserve, not a lesser education.

Background

Federal law allows certain students with intellectual disabilities to stay in school until they are 22. Ages 18-22 are known as the *transition years* where students focus on employment and independent living skills. Many students and families fear the “[disability cliff](#),” or lack of resources and career support that comes when students age out of the school system at the age of 22.

Question 6:

What can be done to ensure students with disabilities are well equipped for success in their career and lives after graduation?

Answer:

We owe these students a bridge to a life of opportunity and choice, not a drop-off. Advocates, the public, and the board must clarify the desired post-school outcomes for these students to hold the district accountable for achieving them: are they actually employed, in further education, and living independently? Then transition must start early, and be real (not a checkbox). That means individualized transition planning well before age 18, with genuine focus on the goals that matter: employment skills, independent living, and self-advocacy. By ensuring these students have meaningful work experiences and community partnerships, and strong “warm handoffs” to adult services (coordinating with vocational rehabilitation, employers, community colleges, and disability service organizations in advance), we make it more likely that they succeed.

Background

According to the 2024-25 [Illinois State Report Card](#), 42% of CPS students overall were proficient in English language arts and 27% in math on the state test. Among students with IEPs (formal plans for students with disabilities), only 10.5% were proficient in ELA and 7.1% in math.

Question 7:

What is your top priority for improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities in CPS?

Answer:

My top priority is to change what the system is actually aiming at: from inputs, activities, and compliance to student success itself. These proficiency rates reflect a system that too often measures whether a box was checked, not whether a child is learning. So we must define what success looks like for these students, measure it honestly, and report it publicly and clearly. Then this focus can reach into practice: IEP decisions should turn on what supports and modifications will actually help a student succeed, not on what's easier for the adults in the room. And it has to be backed by delivering what students genuinely need, which means confronting staff vacancies head-on. The board I lead will own its responsibilities: set those clear expectations, monitor progress (disaggregated so we can't hide behind averages), and hold leadership accountable for results. When we get clear about what we're going for,



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and honest about how we're doing so far, we create the conditions for these students to achieve far more than the system currently delivers for them, and have brighter futures as a result.