

Students, teachers oppose attack on public education

A WSWS reporting team
14 September 2012

Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site*, along with Socialist Equality Party vice presidential candidate Phyllis Scherrer, campaigned at picket lines and at a mass rally in downtown Chicago on the fourth day of the Chicago teachers strike.

The interviews gave expression to a general frustration and anger towards Mayor Rahm Emanuel for his role in attacks on public education, as well as an underlying unease towards the impending settlement announced on Thursday.

Scherrer denounced the attacks by the Chicago political establishment on teachers, which have sought to portray teachers as overpaid and underworked. “Absolutely,” said one teacher on the picket line. “It’s a stupid argument. We work just as hard if not harder than anyone. We work sixty hours a week.”

At a picket at Lane Tech High School, several students spoke out in defense of teachers. “The students are sick and tired of being used against teachers,” said Kaina, referring to claims by the political establishment that the strike is hurting children.

“The parents and public get only one side of the story. They think it is about about money, but it is about the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) not giving the resources we need. My French teacher had to tape up old books for us to use, and I go to one of the best schools. There is no air conditioning when it is 95 degrees outside.”

“I feel the teachers are fighting for us,” Kaina added. “I’m tired of just waiting around and seeing things go by. I feel we have to fight also.”

“We don’t want our teachers’ salaries based on tests,” said Justin, a high school senior. “It’s especially unfair when they have kids like myself who do great in the

classroom but don’t do well on standardized tests. I don’t want my teachers looked down upon because of that.”

Justin also commented that some of the new policies Rahm Emanuel is trying to implement will hurt students. “The Board of Education and Rahm Emanuel fail to notice that kids sometimes travel really far to go to schools, especially poor kids. What will happen to them if they have to get up an hour earlier for more school? And how will we do our homework or even get sleep? They say they want to give us a better education, but it’s not thought through.”

When asked about the upcoming US elections, Justin said, “There is so much shady business in politics. It bothers me. That’s why I’m out here with the teachers. We’re taking a stand for education.”

Victor, a junior, told the WSWS, “I am here to fight for teachers’ rights because they are the ones that teach for the future. I think the closure of the schools is insane. This will mean that the schools will be filled with classes of 50 kids, and we need more of our resources.” Victor said he has many classes with 30 students, but his trigonometry class has 45.

Haley is a junior at Lincoln Park High School. “I came here to support the teachers,” she said. “Sometime they get more attention if it is seen that there are students to support them.

“It’s ridiculous what they have to go through. We don’t have air conditioning, and in the beginning of the year it can be 90 degrees in the classroom.”

A teacher at one of the pickets said, “One of the biggest things for me is the conflict between how we feel on the picket lines, with all the honking in support of us, and then watching the news and seeing how vilified we are by the major networks, when they say we don’t support the students. I know this is Emanuel’s

and the Democrats' doing, but that's the message that's getting out there.”

One parent who came out to support the teachers spoke in favor of the right to strike. “I support what the teachers are doing out here. I'm an inspector for American Airlines. The right to strike is the last means for workers to bargain. When that's made illegal, it tilts the bargaining on the side of management.”

“Rahm is surprising and he's not surprising,” said one teacher after taking the *Chicago Teacher Newsletter*, published by the WSWS. “He's a politician, so he's two-faced by nature. But after the Democratic National Convention I expected more from the Democrats, especially with all the pro-union rhetoric.”

Joshua, a middle school teacher who attended the downtown rally, said, “I don't believe these tests are fair. My school has a 100 percent poverty level. We have a nurse at the school one day a week for 235 students.

“Four of my students went to a charter school but they were kicked out in the first semester, so they sent them back. That's the thing about the charters. If they don't want the students they get rid of them.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact