

Oppose the militarist high school graduation policy of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel!

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) calls on students, youth and workers to oppose the “Learn. Plan. Succeed.” program of Chicago’s Democratic Party Mayor Rahm Emanuel, recently adopted by the Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

Beginning in the year 2020, the new policy will require CPS high school students to provide evidence of government-authorized plans to receive their high school diploma. Students will have to prove that they have been accepted into college, the military, a trade program, a gap-year program or have a job, before being allowed to graduate. The new policy is only the latest in Mayor Emanuel’s reactionary education “reform.”

The primary aim of this program is to push working class youth into the military. The program comes at time of unprecedented military control of the political establishment, and with the world on the brink of major military conflict. The Trump administration is dominated by Army and Marine officials, most notably retired Gen. John Kelly, retired Gen. James Mattis and active duty Gen. H.R. McMaster, who together occupy some of the most influential positions in Washington.

There is ongoing discussion among these layers over the depletion of US armed forces, now stretched thin over the decades of unending wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The military is searching for ways to broaden its base of recruitment, with some leaders considering the reintroduction of the draft. The targeting of inner city high school students in largely impoverished areas is only one tactic in a much larger plan of beefing up the armed forces.

Students graduating high school in the class of 2018 will be met with the highest college tuition prices of any generation in history. These students will be employed at a lower rate than their parents’ generation,

make less money, and have a much smaller chance of finding a full-time job, let alone one with benefits. Under these conditions, the real “choice” being offered to young people is one of crippling debt, wage slavery or as cannon fodder for US imperialism.

Emanuel’s new graduation policy promotes the lie that students who drop out or do not go on to college are lazy youth draining society’s resources. Such lies must be rejected. Students and youth are not responsible for the disastrous social conditions in Chicago and throughout the country. Unemployment, stagnating wages, the destruction of pensions and health care—all have been carried out behind the backs of workers and students by the ruling class and its representatives, both Democratic and Republican.

Emanuel, President Obama’s former chief of staff, has played a leading role in creating the disastrous social conditions in Chicago. His record on education differs very little from that of Trump’s secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, who has made the destruction of public education in favor of privatization the center of her work. A recent lawsuit forced Mayor Emanuel to release more than 2,000 personal emails revealing that prominent businessmen, wealthy entrepreneurs, and billionaires Ken Griffin and Penny Pritzker were all included in Emanuel’s education discussions aimed at privatizing the public school system.

In Emanuel’s time as mayor he has overseen a systematic destruction of Chicago’s public education system. In 2013, with the full complicity of the leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union, Emanuel carried out the largest mass public school closings ever to take place in a single US city, affecting over 11,000 students. At least two-thirds of those closed schools remain vacant buildings, while the \$24 million cut have been used mostly on private charter schools.

What little funding has reached the school system has been used on reactionary measures such as increased security. Chicago has become one of the big-city school districts in the country that employs far more security staff than it does counselors.

One in five children in Chicago live in poverty, and the city's school district estimates there are over 18,000 homeless students. As the social crisis in the city has intensified, the entire Democratic city leadership has also worked to systematically cover up and defend police murder, including the killing of Laquan McDonald in 2014.

What is required to improve the future of high school students is a complete redistribution of social resources. College education must be free and available to everyone. Young people have the right to a good job of their choice after completing their education. Billions must be seized from the ruling class and spent on pressing social needs. The giant banks and corporations must be placed under the democratic control of the working class.

As part of this, the military should be abolished. No more young lives can be sacrificed for the wars of the ruling class! The hundreds of billions of dollars spent every year on the military-intelligence apparatus must instead be used to meet basic social needs, including the right to an education and a decent-paying job for everyone.

The IYSSE calls upon students to join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality and build chapters of the IYSSE at their schools to fight for socialism!



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