

Chicago teachers must lead fight against Trump's attacks on public education and immigrants!

Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Committee
18 March 2025

Educators, staff and parents: Build the Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Committee! Attend the public meeting on Saturday, March 22 at 2pm, "How the working class can defeat Trump's war on education and democracy," which is being held at the Chicago Public Library Uptown branch at 929 W. Buena Avenue. To get more information on the rank-and-file committee, complete the form at the end of this article.

The Chicago Educators Rank-and-File Committee calls for the broadest mobilization of the working class to oppose the Trump administration's plans to destroy public education. We support the call by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to build rank-and-file committees in every school and neighborhood to prepare mass action, including mass meetings and coordinated strike action to defend the right to high-quality public and secondary education for all and to defend immigrant workers.

Acting on behalf of the American oligarchy, Trump and Musk have slashed the workforce of the Education Department in half and plan to close the half-century-old federal agency. They are slashing federal funding for low-income, disabled and English learners, vastly expanding school vouchers, and seeking to transform schools into centers for right-wing, nationalist and religious indoctrination. The Department of Agriculture is reducing funding for free school lunch programs.

Financially strapped school districts across the country, including in Chicago, will be devastated. Chicago Public Schools will lose a significant portion of the \$1.8 billion in federal funding the school district receives every year, which makes up approximately 20 percent of its operating revenues. This is on top of the \$500 million or more deficit for the 2025-26 school year, which is the result of the Biden-Harris administration's decision to let federal COVID relief school funding (ESSER) run out.

Just last week, Democratic Gov. JB Pritzker told a conference of the Illinois Education Association that the state "cannot replace" the \$3.5 billion in federal funding school districts receive every year.

The claims made by the Chicago Teachers Union leaders that

their contract proposal will "Trump-proof" the district are beneath contempt. Whatever schemes the mayor and the CTU bureaucracy are cooking up, i.e., increasing the district's debt load, offloading pension payments, etc., will not make up for the massive cutbacks coming from Washington, DC. This is not "financial fearmongering," it is reality.

The months-long charade between CTU bureaucrats, the mayor's office and the school board has had only one aim: preventing teachers from launching a citywide strike to prevent the program cuts, layoffs and school closures that Mayor Johnson and CTU President Stacy Davis Gates know are coming.

This is consistent with the decades-long record of the Democratic Party and its accomplices in the CTU bureaucracy. The betrayal of the 2012 strike by CTU leaders Karen Lewis and Jesse Sharkey was followed Mayor Rahm Emanuel's closure of 50 schools, the largest in US history. In exchange for suppressing popular opposition, Emanuel gave the AFT the green light to unionize and collect dues from low-paid teachers employed at the growing number of for-profit charter schools.

In the winters of 2021 and 2022, there was overwhelming opposition from teachers, parents and students to Biden's reopening COVID-infected schools. The Chicago Educators Rank and File Committee fought to unite teachers across the US and internationally to save lives. But CTU leaders worked closely with Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the Biden administration to reopen schools with token "safety agreements," allowing Chicago to become the first major city where mass infection through schools was encouraged.

Whatever their token complaints about Trump, the Democrats are the fascist president's enablers. That is why Democratic Senators voted for the Republican spending bill, which has provided Trump with a green light to slash federal jobs, gut Medicaid, Social Security and Medicare, and build up the structure for a police-state dictatorship. In the face of the existential threat to public education, AFT and NEA leaders are telling educators and parents to text their feelings to the White House. This is like writing letters to Hitler!

Efforts by Sanders, AOC, Johnson and the Democratic

Socialists of America (DSA) to provide the Democrats with a “left cover” cannot conceal the fact that it is a capitalist party, which defends the same financial and corporate oligarchy as Trump. The Democrats largely support the administration’s austerity measures and are more frightened by a movement of the working class from below than they are of fascism.

Biden deported 3.3 million immigrants, and the Democrats joined Republicans in backing Israel’s mass murder in Gaza and slandering anti-genocide protesters as “antisemitic.” This encouraged Trump to abduct and threaten to deport Mahmoud Khalil and other pro-Palestinian activists in blatant violation of First Amendment free speech rights.

Whatever their rhetoric about “sanctuary” cities, the Democrats have given Trump a green light to wage war against immigrants. ICE agents to round up immigrant workers across the country, including in Chicago where Francisco Andrade-Berrera was snatched last month while dropping his children off at school. In defiance of a federal judge, Trump has deported immigrants to a Salvadorean concentration camp.

Educators must draw serious lessons from their experiences with the left-talking Democrats and empty “social justice” rhetoric issued by complacent upper middle-class union bureaucrats. If there is going to be a fight to defend the right to public education and democratic rights, it will have to be organized by rank-and-file educators, independently of and in opposition to the CTU bureaucracy and the Democratic Party.

This means organizing rank-and-file committees in every school and neighborhood to organize mass meetings, protests and strike action to win the demands that educators need to provide all children with high-quality public education.

This includes:

- Hundreds of billions to schools, not tax cuts for the rich and war. No cuts, no school closures!

- Restore the Department of Education! End all education privatization schemes! For full staffing, bus transport, modern HVAC, high quality nutrition, arts & music, libraries & librarians, and health care for *all* students in Chicago Public Schools!

- Free Mahmoud Khalil! Release, return, reinstate and rehire all students and teachers whose civil rights have been violated for opposing the Gaza genocide.

- Stop deportations. No ICE raids! Defend immigrant communities! Build defense committee networks in schools and neighborhoods!

Such a struggle by Chicago educators would win widespread support among educators, parents and young people throughout the country and would serve as a catalyst, on an even greater scale than the 2018 West Virginia wildcat strike, for a far broader movement of educators and the whole working class. Rank-and-file committees would enable educators to link up with teachers in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Oakland, along with Philadelphia and other cities facing similar contract battles this year, along with educators in Brazil,

Argentina and other countries that are carrying out similar slash-and-burn policies.

Fascism is not some distant threat—it is the guiding principle, the daily playbook of Trump, Musk, Vance and the rest of the gangsters in the administration. This is the outcome of the decades-long transfer of wealth from the bottom 90 percent to the top, overseen by both big business parties, which has handed unprecedented economic and political power to a capitalist oligarchy. Their plans to destroy whatever is left of the social reforms of the past can only be achieved through authoritarian measures.

The only social force that has the power to defend and expand democratic and social rights is the working class. But this requires a conscious political struggle to unite all workers—black, white, immigrant and native born—and link up the fight against austerity with the defense of immigrants and all democratic rights. The dictatorial rule of the oligarchy can only be broken through a struggle to put political power in the hands of workers, expropriating the ill-gotten wealth of the mega-billionaires and millionaires and redistributing society’s wealth to meet human needs. This is how public education can be defended and vastly improved, so the entire population can benefit from the widest dissemination of science, culture and historical knowledge.

Attend this Saturday’s public meeting, “How the working class can defeat Trump’s war on education and democracy.”

Saturday, March 22, 2025, 2 pm

Chicago Public Library Uptown branch

929 W. Buena Avenue

Chicago, IL 60613

Meeting Guidelines: The Socialist Equality Party and the IYSSE takes the pandemic seriously and aims to minimize risk of COVID transmission. We encourage all attendees to wear an N95 mask at meetings to protect yourself and others.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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