

Students in Southeast Michigan join nationwide walkouts against ICE terror and dictatorship

Usman Khan, Joshua Rodriguez
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This week, hundreds of students in Southeast Michigan walked out in protest against the reign of terror being carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) throughout the state and across the country. The protests took place in the context of a growing wave of high-school walkouts throughout the country against ICE abductions and the killings of Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti.

Students at the Plymouth-Canton Educational Park (PCEP) campus staged a walkout on Wednesday morning against ICE. PCEP is located in Canton Township, a suburb of Metro Detroit. It consists of three separate high schools with a combined student population of more than 7,000. Aerial footage published by Fox 2 Detroit and estimates from the walkout organizers indicated that over 1,000 students participated in the protest.

Students carried a variety of handmade signs. One read, “Prison without due process is a concentration camp.” Another, referencing the musical *Hamilton*, noted, “Immigrants, we get the job done,” highlighting the role of immigrants in the working class.

The WSWs reached out to the student running the Instagram account “PCEP ICE Walkout.” Vinny Howes, the organizer of the protest at PCEP, is a senior at Plymouth High School.

Howes noted that “unlike other school districts in Michigan, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools (PCCS) has yet to release any statement nor show concern about the presence of ICE in our neighborhoods and their impacts on students. As a district full of immigrant families, students were outraged. PCEP students demanded that the PCCS school board break their silence on the matter and show their solidarity with immigrant families; or at the very least, display their concern for students’ safety.”

Howes stated that there are differing views among the student body about ICE. However, the size of the protest—encompassing over one-seventh of the campus population—shows substantial opposition among students.

One sophomore remarked that the killings were “pretty scarring.”

Howes also emphasized that “both PCEP students and their families have been threatened by ICE. As stated earlier, the PCCS community is full of immigrants and people from all over the globe; our diversity is a part of what makes us special!”

Later that same day, students from Community High School in Ann Arbor marched half a mile through the downtown area to the city’s federal building. One of the leaders of the protest, Rosie Meisler, spoke to local news outlets about the motivation behind the walkout.

The abductions carried out by ICE against immigrants across the United States—most recently the detention of four Ypsilanti residents—were, Meisler noted, “unacceptable. We saw it on the news, we’re seeing it in person and it’s time for us to act.”

Students from Community High School chanted, “Power to the people, no one is illegal” and “ICE out now.” They carried signs calling for the abolition of ICE and demanding due process for those facing deportation.

At a rally in front of the Federal Building in Ann Arbor, Meisler declared, “ICE has been committing atrocities against immigrants, documented and undocumented, and citizens alike.”

On Thursday, students at International Technology Academy in Pontiac staged a walkout of their own.

Nationwide walkouts

Along with the walkouts in Michigan, protests have occurred on a regular basis throughout the country. On Thursday, students walked out of high schools in Corpus Christi, Texas; Brentwood, Tennessee; and Baltimore,

Maryland.

School districts across the US have responded by warning students that these walkouts are not sanctioned school activities and that those who leave class without permission may face disciplinary consequences. Despite these threats, students have organized and participated in walkouts on January 30 or earlier this year in dozens of cities and schools across the country.

In Arizona, students walked out in large numbers. In the Phoenix metro area, participants included students from Arcadia High School, Camelback High School, Mesa High, Gilbert High, Shadow Ridge High and Tolleson Union High. Thousands walked out in Tucson, including from Rincon University High School, Catalina High School and Pueblo High School. In Flagstaff, students from Flagstaff High School and Coconino High School joined middle schoolers from Mt. Elden and Sinagua Middle Schools in a walkout on January 28.

California saw widespread participation. In Los Angeles, roughly 3,000 middle and high school students walked out under the slogan “ICE out of L.A.” Additional protests were held in the San Fernando Valley in early February. In Orange County, students at Capistrano Valley High, Godinez High, and Valley High participated.

In the Bay Area, hundreds walked out from San Lorenzo High, East Bay Arts High, Arroyo High, Royal Sunset High, Mt. Eden High, Berkeley High, Castro Valley High, East Side San Jose High and Overfelt High. In San Diego County, hundreds of students walked out at Point Loma High School and Grossmont High School in advance of January 30.

In Colorado, about half of the 766 students at Leshar Middle School in Fort Collins walked out. In Denver, both middle and high school students joined the national protests.

Florida students walked out in Brevard County (Viera High, Rockledge High and Satellite High), Tallahassee (Lincoln High School) and Port Orange (Atlantic High School).

In Georgia, students at Riverwood International Charter School and Norcross High School in Atlanta walked out on January 28. In Illinois, more than 200 students walked out at Oak Park and River Forest High School near Chicago.

In Missouri, 200–300 students at Staley High School in Kansas City participated in a walkout on January 20. In Nevada, students at Cheyenne High School, Rancho High School and Desert Rose High School in Las Vegas walked out on January 21.

Texas also saw significant participation, with more than 1,000 students walking out at Tyler High School and Legacy High School in East Texas on January 20.

In Utah, hundreds of students walked out from Bingham

High School, Kearns High School and West Jordan High School in the Salt Lake City area.

Wisconsin students in Milwaukee and surrounding areas staged walkouts, including at Rufus King International High School, Reagan High School, West Allis Central, Dominican High School and Shorewood High School. Over 300 students and some family members participated.

Despite intimidation and threats from school administrations, students have demonstrated remarkable courage and determination. These protests were organized independently by student groups, activist networks and community organizations, not by the political establishment.

Meanwhile, the official trade union bureaucracy, including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA), has worked to suppress any broader mobilization. These organizations have consistently steered teachers away from mass industrial action, effectively preventing them from engaging in the kinds of coordinated struggles that could protect students and improve public education.

As a result, students and workers alike are left to endure an underfunded public education system, collapsing infrastructure, overpoliced neighborhoods, rising homelessness and a job market offering little but insecurity and poverty. For millions of young people, there is no meaningful future under capitalism.

In Minneapolis and across the US, teachers are willing to strike to defend their students and themselves from ICE’s fascistic terror. But the unions have rushed to shut down such initiatives, citing “no-strike clauses” and other contractual mechanisms as excuses to keep workers on the job while state repression escalates.

Students must link their fight with the working class. They are a powerful social force and can serve as the spark for a broader movement against ICE, repression and dictatorship. We encourage all students who have participated in walkouts to join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).

The IYSSE encourages the formation of rank-and-file committees in every school, workplace, and community. These committees will prepare the ground for united strike action across industries, independent of the union apparatus and the political establishment, in defense of immigrants, democratic rights, and the future of an entire generation.



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