



Chicago's Fight is Our Fight

This year Newark's education workers face increased pension and health care contributions, a new teacher evaluation system, the displacement of hundreds of education workers (labeled "EWP" – Educators without placement) and the third year without a new contract. As we continue to work hard, giving our students the best education possible, the conditions under which we live and work remain difficult. But we are not alone. These attacks are impacting education workers throughout the country. It has become crucial that we support those that are fighting back against the attacks. Chicago is one of these battlegrounds.

The Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU) is at war against the attacks by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Jean-Claude Brizard. As of July 1st the CTU contract expired. On June 11th, anticipating a struggle with CPS and Emmanuel, 98% of the CTU membership voted to approve a strike. As a result, CPS agreed to return over 400 previously laid off teachers back to the classroom. As we go to press, the CTU has announced a September 10th strike date if a contract isn't reached. CTU President Karen Lewis stated that teachers are "tired of being bullied, belittled and betrayed," citing issues of wages, job security, and a new evaluation system. The CTU's organizing of parents, students,

and teachers over the past two years has placed them in a great position to fight back.

The leadership of the current CTU leadership came out of a group called the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE). They were a group of educators concerned about the attacks of public education and the lack of a response from the local and national union. After demonstrations and protests that united teachers, students, and parents, they were able to take over the leadership in 2010.

We can learn a lot from this struggle. We are in a similar position as the CTU, if not worse. We have plenty of teachers, students and parents who are on our side and ready to fight. Why can't we do that here?

So what can we do? The NEW Caucus will be organizing strike support events, fundraisers, and petitions of support for the Chicago Teachers. Solidarity with these teachers is important since CPS will receive support from the Chicago business community which wants to pay less taxes and bust teachers unions. Strike support committees are being set up in cities all over the country. Talk to a NEW Caucus member or email us to get involved.

For more information on the Chicago Teachers' struggle visit our website and facebook page.

NEW CAUCUS IS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT-BASED CAUCUS COMPRISED OF MEMBERS OF THE NEWARK TEACHERS UNION (NTU) AND THE NEWARK COMMUNITY THAT IS DEDICATED TO THREE BIG GOALS:

- 1 The revitalization of the NTU as a force for social justice in Newark.
- 2 The defense of public education from privatization and the support of market-free solutions to transform public schools.
- 3 The establishment of genuine solidarity with education workers and the Newark community to improve living and working conditions in the city.

High Costs of Too Many Assistant Superintendents

Five assistant superintendents. Still four Regions? The numbers just don't add up. A parent justly questioned from the audience of the August Advisory Board meeting how the district could lose students yet gain an assistant superintendent. At the podium, Ora Davis, retired NPS educator and long-time community activist, admonished the Anderson administration for choosing to "load up the top"—six-figures is easily the salary for this position—rather than provide resources for students at the school level. Davis warned, "It's on the wheel. Everything you're doing to our children is coming back to you."

The community might not equate assistant superintendents with a loss of resources if there were transparency in terms of the responsibilities of these positions, or even just who

these individuals are. Over and over, advisory board members have requested an organizational chart of the district's administration but to no avail. Inaction fosters an environment of mistrust as easily as calculated acts of evil do. Turmoil, shock, and chaos have ushered in this transformation of NPS and continue to surround it.

Not only has a position been added, but the assistant superintendents are new to NPS. The cost of this: loss of institutional history. They come from outside of the district—New York City and New Orleans. No deep knowledge of the community or history of the district needed to apply. We must maintain an equilibrium of new and veteran staff so that we remember not only what decisions were made but why. Additionally, no matter what their official job descriptions say, there

is a primary task: transform NPS into a portfolio district. Under this model, entities go through an application process to acquire a contract with the district to manage one or more schools. Neighborhood schools will cease to exist, effectively eradicating the most important public institutions where the everyday person has a say.

Added altogether: through the deprivation of resources to most schools, the Newark Public Schools District is in the process of becoming a collection of boutique schools—the cost: the further disenfranchisement of the residents of Newark as they lose decision-making power over their schools. Is it worth it? Transform this district by investing in the people; build both the capacity within NPS and within Newark. That's worth it.

Top-Down School Reform: The Common Core Standards and A New Teacher Evaluation System

As the new school year begins, two related centerpieces of the corporate education reform agenda—the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and a new teacher evaluation system—are being imposed from the top-down by state-appointed superintendent Cami Anderson on all district schools and education workers. Both initiatives, Anderson contends, are aimed at significantly changing teacher preparation and practice in regards to instruction, content, materials, and assessments.

Last year, schools that received federal grant money were forced to pilot the new teacher evaluation system. There has yet to be a published study nor has there been a public discussion on the results of that pilot. The CCSS, an untested and corporate-funded set of national standards, was not an official part of the pilot. Yet, despite a lack of research and transparency, insufficient input from educators, and the absence of community dialogue, Anderson has decided to begin imposing the CCSS and the evaluation system for this school year.

Meanwhile, schools are being forced to align curriculum and tests to the CCSS and to evaluate teacher performance based on a new system that has yet to receive commentary or approval from the Newark Teachers Union (NTU).

In the rush to dictatorially implement reforms, the end result is lots of questions with no answers forthcoming.

Two of those questions involve the process of creation and the costs of implementation. Specific information regarding the creation process for both initiatives has been closely guarded by the Council for Chief State Schools Officers, the National Governors Association, the NJ Department of Education, NPS and its astroturf group, Newark Excels. In late August, a leadership workshop hosted by NPS on the CCSS and the new evaluation system strictly forbade participants from asking questions about process. Currently, only vague public information exists on how the CCSS was created; this is also true for how Newark Excels created the new

evaluation system.

What is clear is that these groups are acting in concert with Anderson, Governor Christie, and the corporate-drive for privatized education. Further, Anderson has hired new superintendents from the NYC Department of Education to follow marching orders of out-of-town interests who seek profit in Newark.

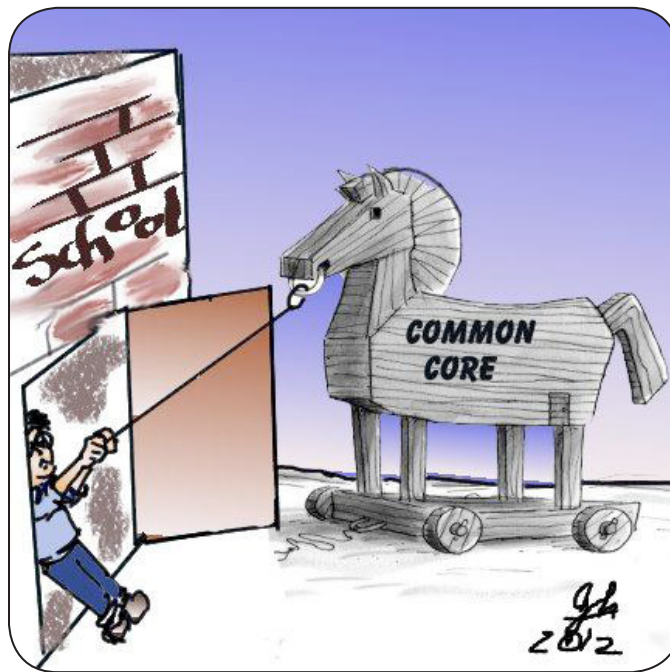
Costs of implementation—from newly hired reform “experts” and consultants at 2 Cedar, professional development to train teachers and administrators, necessary instructional materials, the time needed to create new units, and the required data systems needed

This “no new resources” approach is a serious problem. Our evaluations this year depend, NPS mandates, on proper implementation of the CCSS. Students are expected to master the skills dictated by the standards, yet with many schools being denied quality resources, especially new technologies available to charter and “renew” schools, both students and teachers are in extremely difficult positions. Combined with the new tenure rules, job security, teacher evaluation, fully staffed, and fully resourced schools are critical issues this year for educators, parents, and students.

In the years to come, we can expect continued attacks on public education and the NTU aimed at destroying both. The CCSS and the teacher evaluation system is a Trojan Horse that state and corporate forces will use to test-and-punish students and teachers. Anderson will continue to close struggling schools. They will be “renewed” by removing all staff and forcing them to reapply for their jobs or by replacing them with charter schools. In turn, public funds and city property will be transferred into private hands for profit and power.

Issues such as racial segregation, poverty, local control, progressive taxation, and the need for a federal jobs program will continue to be marginalized by corporate reformers and the state and local officials who follow their agenda. They pursue their own self-interest over the interests of children, parents, and educators. We need a social movement to revitalize our union, make our schools and city better, and to gain the necessary decision-making power over education and economic issues that affect our lives. Chicago is a great model. CTU shows what can be done through a student, parent, and union alliance. Join us at our September monthly meeting to discuss your views and help build for social justice in our neighborhoods, schools, city, and world. The time to act is now.

For more information, check out NEW Caucus’ Facebook page for articles and reports on the CCSS, the new teacher evaluation system, and other important information.



to connect student test scores to teacher evaluations, among others—are largely unknown. Researchers recently estimated that it could cost NJ between \$38 and \$450 million depending on the implementation approach taken by the state as well as the amount and type of resources purchased.

For this school year, Anderson has allocated no new resources for teachers and aides to use with students. Rather, as Anderson told workshop participants, the best approach is “unlocking the entrepreneurialism” within buildings. She wants us to do more with less. In reality, this means we are going to get less while being expected to do more. How is this going to fix struggling public schools and positively impact student development?

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Advisory Board Business Meeting Sept. 18th, 5:30pm
2 Cedar Street, 10th Floor Conference Room

Advisory Board Regular Meeting Sept. 25th, 6pm
Barringer High School

NEW Caucus Monthly Meeting Sept. 26th, 4:30pm
American History High School

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