The business of standardized assessment overtook what was a rich and happy experience for many students throughout the years. As families in Chicago and nationwide push back, educators long for a return to teaching—not testing.
Education as a way to resist

Historically, education was used for the suppression of non-European cultures. How do we liberate our students and help them get free—and stay that way?

Education can be used as a way to liberate students from the dominant white culture. Yet historically, education was used for the suppression of non-European cultures. For example, in the 1800s, boarding schools were created to colonize the minds of the indigenous youth who occupied them. The colonizers wanted to educate or “mold” the native children so that they would practice European ways of life. The intention was to sever non-European indigenous practices by conditioning the youth against their elders’ cultural practices.

It can be said that education has always played a role of resisting a then-popular way of thinking. Education can now be used to validate the oppositional identities of students of color. Latino educators can now empower Latino youth and resists a system that was meant to suppress communities of color.

The first way to use education as a form of resistance is for Latinos to choose education as a profession. Although white teachers can challenge students of color, they can never truly understand the cultural practices that may create oppositional identities for the students. Once Latino educators are certified, they must come back to communities of color and engage in the growth of those communities. Once engaged in the community, the educator must use what he or she has learned by appealing to the community and making culturally relevant studies for the students. This will give the students a sense of pride, ownership and may validate their oppositional identities.

Yet it is not just a Latino educator who shares the same linguistic and cultural background as their students that makes the difference. As Margaret J. Warner Bert-Avila states in “Critical Xicana/Xicano Educators. In Latinos and Education: A critical reader,” “Shaping a linguistic and cultural background but lacking a critical/consciousness perspective perpetuates oppressive structures many Xicana/Xicano educators work to counteract.” Bert-Avila is talking about how understanding the language and sharing the same cultural experience is not enough—students must be challenged by Latino educators sharing their critical/consciousness perspective. This leads to using education as a political act where students are informed with necessary information for independent thought.

Another way to use education as a way of resisting is by utilizing critical pedagogy in the classroom. Critical pedagogy is a framework for teaching where students can ask questions about why curriculum may be dogged down in Eurocentricity. They can also ask about who controls those societal structures and the curriculum itself. Critical pedagogy helps students develop a critical lens when looking at presented information. Bert-Avila describes critical pedagogy as “one perspective that educators of color have grounded their teaching in, in order to set up an environment where issues can be discussed to take action and create change.” This pedagogy challenges the students to see things from different perspectives and create ways to address issues of race, class, gender and all other “isms” that a Latino educator confronts with their students everyday as an act of agency. This way of teaching validates the students’ oppositional identities because it creates an environment where students also produce knowledge and contribute to the learning that is happening. The teacher learns from the student and the student learns from the teacher—it is a cyclical way of sharing knowledge as Bert-Avila states: Teachers learn from the student and vice versa; everyone has a voice, reflection is encouraged, all have positive self-image with respect to what is being taught, to what is being learned, and to the environment of the classroom.

Lastly, education can be used as a way of resisting to leverage positionality for agency to take place. Bert-Avila defines agency as “actions that offer an environment of choice, voice, understanding, reflection, dialogue, empowerment, access and power.” Agency takes place not in any isolated incident, but in the everyday practices and interactions the Latino educator has with their students. Agency gives students a head start when thinking of their own relation to dominant white culture. The teacher uses agency “as ways of preparing Raza (of Mexican origin) students to negotiate between their cultural existence and White society in order to excel academically and socially,” according to Bert-Avila. This agency is something that is unique to a Latino educator because they have had to grapple with their place within the dominant white culture. White educators that are inexperienced cannot state what that struggle is or how that struggle impacted their own life. Latino educators (for the most part) have an advantage in relating to those very real struggles that students of Latino origin are facing everyday as it pertains to identity, positionality and agency.

Each of the aforementioned are ways Latino teachers can use education as a way to resist against dominant culture. The irony is that the weapon used to condition non-European groups into the dominant white culture is now being used to expose non-European perspectives to the students. The role of the educator is to facilitate intrinsic motivation within the student, and by using relevant curricula, this can be achieved. It is the validation of the student’s oppositional identities that creates their interest in what is being taught. Too often students of color’s experiences are seen as being inferior to the dominant culture’s perspective. Relevant curricula, the use of critical pedagogy and agency can create a learning environment where critical thinking takes place. This way of teaching gives students a voice and validates their oppositional identities as valid in the realm of their own education.

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Chi­cago Union Teacher

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Sis­ters and Broth­ers,

Eve­ry March, I strug­gle with the need to shift from Blac­k His­tory Month into Women’s His­tory Month. I am old enough to re­mem­ber Blac­k His­tory Week worp into Blac­k His­tory Mon­th when the Unit­ed States cel­e­rated its bi­cen­ten­nial in 1976. By 1997, am­i­st dis­ap­point­ment of the fail­ure of the Equal Rights Amend­ment to meet the ra­tion­al­iza­tion thresh­old of 38 states. Women’s His­tory Month be­came a real­ity. But just like Blac­k His­tory does not be­gin with sla­very, women’s his­tory does not be­gin with the suf­frage­tes. The com­mon sto­ry is that all hu­man his­tory be­gins with Lucy, the oldest ex­am­ple of homo sapiens—our fore­mother whose re­mains were found in Af­ric­a.

Women’s his­tory cel­e­brates the con­tri­bu­tions women have made and con­tinue to make to the bet­ter­ment of hu­man­kind. From an­ cient queens to mod­ern women of sci­ence, and from the arts to pol­i­tics, women have a spe­cial re­spon­sibility to sup­port each oth­er in our con­tinued quest for eq­ui­ty, digni­ty and re­spect.

As edu­ca­tors, we share this same quest, even while work­ing with the dys­func­tion­ing that is Chi­cago Pub­lic Schools. Just like last year, the district has run out of funds and is re­ly­ing on the thaw­ing of the Illinois gov­ern­ment’s cold heart to equitably fund our schools. Rahm has the ability to fix the prob­lem him­self, but in­stead choos­es to en­gage in the­atri­cs while his in­ac­tion leaves our stu­dents—many of whom are traum­a­tized by unprece­dent­ed vio­lence and threats of de­porta­tion with­out safe­ty—out in the cold and sub­ject to even greater harm if the school year ends ear­ly.

This is the same longer school year, mind you, that he cam­paigned on in 2011 but our dis­trict clearly cannot af­ford.

The CTU will once again have to reach out to par­ents and Chi­cago’s com­mu­ni­ties and show how cut­ting three weeks from the school year and 10 per­cent of teach­er and PSRP salaries is not ac­cept­able, log­i­cal or pru­dent. We will have to use all or­ga­ni­za­tion­al means to fight against these at­tacks—work that starts with our dele­gates and their loy­al ser­vice to their schools and our mis­sion. We will also have to sup­port par­ents in our school com­mu­ni­ties who push back against cycles of stan­dard­ized test­ing that in­dus­tri­al­ize our class­rooms.

As we deal with a mayor and a CPS CEO who can­not be trusted, we will have to fight to en­force our agree­ment with the Board of Ed. In our view, furlough days vi­o­late the pro­vi­sions of our con­tract that guar­an­tee a set num­ber of pro­fes­sional de­vel­op­ment days, and we have filed a griev­ance ac­cord­ing­ly that has ad­vanced to ar­bi­tra­tion. We also have a case that argues the Board can­not un­ilat­er­ally alter our sal­ar­ies, which it has just done with fur­loughs. This is also be­ing ad­vanced to ar­bi­tra­tion.

We need to con­tinue go­ing af­ter TIF tar­gets and new re­venue streams by fo­cusing on wealth­y cor­po­ra­tions and in­di­vid­u­als who have helped Rahm beau­ti­fy down­town while leav­ing our dis­trict broke on pur­pose. By our es­ti­mates, an ad­di­tional TIF sur­plus and a cor­porate head tax would gen­er­ate more than the $129 mil­lion that CPS says it needs to ad­dress its de­ficit. Our ac­tion last year on April 1 jarred loose nearly $500 mil­lion in re­venue for the school dis­trict and set the stage for a re­cord $100 mil­lion TIF sur­plus decla­ra­tion. Those were great out­comes com­pared to what Clay­pool and Co. had planned for us—namely, the eli­mi­na­tion of our 7 per­cent pen­sion pay­up.

Our ac­tion last year av­oided bank­ruptcy (or worse) for our dis­trict, and this year will re­quire more of the same, in ad­di­tion to high­light­ing the need for san­ctu­ary schools and fund­ing to ad­dress the vio­lence, bud­get cuts and threats of de­porta­tion our stu­dents are ex­pe­ri­enc­ing. Tak­ing mil­i­tant ac­tion this year would not be de­signed to add to the near­ly four weeks of fur­loughs that Rahm and Clay­pool are tele­graph­ing—it would be to stop them from tak­ing those days. If we can bring full at­tention to alter­na­tives the mayor has to cut­ting his “longest” school year by a month, it will gal­va­nize the city and put us in a bet­ter po­si­tion to win state and city re­venue to ad­dress this crisis.

In so­lidar­i­ty,

Karen GJ Lewis, NBCT

The pres­i­dent’s mes­sage

Ou­r ac­tiv­i­ty last year av­oided bank­ruptcy for our dis­trict, and this year will re­quire more of the same, in ad­di­tion to high­light­ing the need for san­ctu­ary schools and fund­ing to ad­dress other ur­gent needs.
Letters

Testing zone

I am a fifth and sixth grade Language Arts teacher at James Ward Elementary School, and each spring my classes do a poetry zine project about a topic of my students’ choice centered on different perspectives. Last year, my former student Xiaolin Liu wrote her zine “Testing Zone” about standardized testing from different perspectives. It was an especially interesting piece for her because she generally is a strong test taker, but the pressure to get into academic centers and selective enrollment schools wears on many of my young students. Having previously taught at TEAM Englewood Community Academy High School, where there were few resources, I understand the unfortunate necessity of gaining entrance to a fully-resourced school.

I’ve kept Xiaolin’s zine as an exemplar for other students because it’s a great example of a poetry collection that explores different perspectives and because it brings up an interesting discussion in class around this time of year.

Rich Farrell, Ward Elementary

The impact of furlough days on professional learning

As an educator in Chicago Public Schools, when I heard our professional development days would be furloughed again, I was astonished, disheartened and discouraged! I was motivated to write this to share the impact of cancelled professional development (PD) days on my teaching practice and my students. I want to inform those not familiar with what educators do on PD days and the value of what has been taken away.

PD days directly impact the quality of the instruction and environment within our schools. These are the precious few hours we jam pack with opportunities to improve our own practice, collaborate with others to improve whole school initiatives, finish projects and planning, evaluate data and find valuable resources.

Here is a snapshot of what I had planned for professional development on the first furlough day mandated by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his handpicked CPS CEO, Forrest Claypool, on Feb. 3, 2017:

- Bilingual specialist presentation on Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State data to improve English Language Learners instruction.

- Chicago Teachers Union Foundation Quest Center collaboration with mentors provided by the Chicago Teachers Union to determine trends in my action research on implementation of new Next Generation Science Standards.

- Library curriculum planning with team leads to correlate standards with community resources such as Field Museum Primary Source Boxes, Donors Choose projects and other technological resources available to teachers in CPS.

- Grant writing with a professional writer to apply for funds to refurbish our library and implement a new, schoolwide science program.

- Peer review meeting with parents, colleagues and Northwestern graduate students to discuss outcomes of a pilot unit of study and provide feedback.

It is no surprise that academic journals have consistently published empirical studies that link professional development to student achievement. Personally, my experience supports these findings. The impact of missing my aforementioned PD will be significant—both immediately and long term for my practice and my colleagues’ work. Ultimately, the lost opportunities will impact our students academically and socially.

The content of my PD was meant to be immediately implemented as we are confronted with transgender issues within our school, we have lost our ESL mentor to budget cuts and we are held responsible to teach new standards that we do not yet fully understand (nor do we have the resources to implement with fidelity). These are all paramount issues we had planned to address.

The remaining furlough days will come and go, and so will the opportunities for us as teachers to hone our craft to improve and the quality of education we provide our students.

So, if you’re like me, you have definitely lost a lot more than four days of pay. Paula Wyatt, Beaumont Elementary

Testing while bilingual

Testing takes a particularly negative toll on culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students also known as English Language Learners (ELLs). They are often tested without knowing the language in which they are tested in. It’s like being assessed in painting while color blind.

There is plenty of research that indicates that learning a new academic language takes 5-7 years. Chicago Public Schools has mandated Northwest Evaluation Association™ Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) testing as early as second grade! Three years in school is not enough. CLD students need more time to master the language and culture in these tests. Many are immigrants and refugees who are new to this country and do not recognize American traditions and norms.

Some at CPS might say that students whose Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for ELLs proficiency level is below 3.5 are not required to take the test, but what about students whose proficiency levels are 3.6 and higher? They haven’t tested out of the bilingual program yet, so why should they test? Should their scores even count towards bilingual teachers’ evaluations? Furthermore, if CPS really wants to give a Seal of Biliteracy on high school diplomas, then why test CLD second graders in English? It discourages their bilingualism. CPS should delay MAP® testing in English until students completely test out of the bilingual program. There should be no rush to learn English. CLD students will learn English in time. (Trust me, English is my second language).

Additionally, we should teach more languages to all students—not reduce the number of languages they know. Did you know principals are evaluated by the number of CLD students who exit bilingual programs? Imagine if CPS gave credit to principals who increased the number of languages students learned.

Let’s continue to push for an elected school board, fight the Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act and never stop defending immigrants and refugees from atques de los tres bad hombres: Rahm, Rauner and Trump.

Carlos Carrillo, Southeast Area Elementary, CTU Bilingual Committee Chair
I teach because it matters

It’s hard to put into words the profound effect that the Trump campaign and election has had on me as a Latina educator leading a classroom of Black and brown students. For weeks, I had been looking forward to election night because it would mark the end of the tumultuous and emotionally taxing campaign season. As I watched the Electoral College map turn red, the reality and all the accompanying emotions of a Trump presidency were simply overwhelming.

I was angry and fearful, but I wasn’t necessarily surprised at the outcome. Trump had run a campaign of hate that relied on people’s racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia to win the vote. The politics of fear won, but every day in my classroom, my students remind me of the beauty and power of communities that Trump repeatedly attacked.

I teach middle school social studies on the West Side of Chicago, and my students embody tenacity in the face of adversity. They are resilient, not despite of who they are as Black and brown youth, but because of who they are as Black and brown youth. On our toughest days, they remind me that our work towards “freedom and justice for all” is a work in progress, and one which they will lead.

As a social justice educator, I am always looking for ways to uplift the voices in history that have historically been left out of textbooks. In the same way, we seek to understand the issues and conflicts that affect our communities the most, and students’ interests are driving the curriculum. In a roundabout way, the Trump campaign re-energized me because it reminded me that teaching and empowering students is not only necessary, but urgent.

People often ask me why I teach. The short answer is, “I teach because it matters.” Threats to our community’s stability and progress are much closer than Washington, D.C. On the same day that Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s handpicked Board of Education announced four forced furlough days for Chicago Public Schools teachers and staff members, the U.S. Department of Justice released a scathing report on Chicago policing practices. Both of these are examples that local leadership and institutions will not prioritize the needs and safety of our communities.

As an educator, I commit to fostering civic engagement and critical thinking in my classroom. To my fellow educators, remember that in a political climate that treats teachers and students in communities of color with disdain, teaching with love and joy is also an act of resistance. Stay mad. Keep loving. Resist. Organize. And as Solange Knowles sings, “Don’t let anyone steal your magic.”

Roxana Gonzalez, Prieto Academy

The many challenges of teaching in the time of Trump

As a Latina educator who is a product of Chicago Public Schools and has parents, family members, friends and students who are immigrants, there are so many implications to teaching during a Trump presidency. I fell asleep before the results of the election were announced, and although Trump was in the lead at the time, I figured that when I woke up things would go back to “normal,” and this binaural that spews hate would not be given the highest office in the country. Yet, when I woke up and found out the news, I was stunned to learn that this racist and sexist extremist would be our next president.

The implications of this new era were further solidified in my mind when I had the first opportunity to see my students after the news broke. Imagine a group of K-2 special education students, the majority of whom are immigrants or come from immigrant families, sitting on the rug in front of me saying, “Ese hombre no me gusta, es malo.” (“I don’t like that man, he’s bad.”) How ironic, seeing that Trump is the one who called our brothers, uncles, fathers and grandfathers “bad hombres.” The concern and worry that my students voiced immediately fueled my fire to let my students know that I am their advocate, and their protector.

How can I do this? How can I let them know that our culture is beautiful? That our language is beautiful? That our brown skin and indigenous roots are beautiful? That the sacrifices and struggles that our parents face every single day are not in vain? I plan to do this with softness, with caring, with redness and with authentic connections. I will continue to cultivate a loving environment in my classroom in which the experiences of my students and their families are validated and valued. I will set the example to them as a Latina with a master’s degree, and show them that their teachers can look like them. I will help my students understand that the neighborhood of Little Village that they are being raised in is filled with hard-working, self-sacrificing and resourceful adults. My students have strong, powerful and brilliant young minds, and can fulfill every ounce of potential that they possess.

We, the Latinx community, make major contributions to our neighborhoods, our city, our state and the country as a whole, and although this new era will heighten and intensify the existing injustices that we face, we should not be frightened. We should see this as a push to personally begin, or continue, our fight to combat this oppression, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Linda Perales, Corkery Elementary

Roxana Gonzalez, Prieto Academy

March 2017
A delegate’s work is never done

Upcoming conference key to enforcing our contract and winning school fights that matter.

By Jackson Potter and Christel Williams-Hayes

Every school should have an elected delegate, who is a rank-and-file member acting as a liaison between the Chicago Teachers Union and its members. The duties of a delegate are not limited in this time where our professions are not respected, unions are under attack and our members have to defend their own families and responsibilities outside of the classroom. So we need delegates to be on the front lines for our members and leaders when there is a call to action and we have to protect our rights.

Along with their daily work of being the amazing educators that they are, delegates attend monthly House of Delegates meetings and share information with colleagues in their buildings when they host monthly union meetings. Delegates also chair the Professional Problems Committee (PPC) that meets once a month as a committee and with principals, if necessary.

We salute delegates for being CTU leaders and appreciate them for all the work they do to keep our union moving school-by-school. This month, delegate and school leader conferences are a critical part of the calendar for our members. While we won some critical and game-changing provisions from our 22-month contract battle with the Chicago Board of Education, CPS CEO Forrest Claypool and his boss, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, are already actively working to undermine those gains through furloughs and budget cuts. They have already put three furlough days and $50 million in cuts on the table with more furloughs and elimination of clerk positions likely in cuts on the table with more furloughs.

At Lindblom Math and Science Academy, students recently burst in on a Forrest Claypool press conference with a sit-in and chants of “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Forrest Claypool's got to go.” Instead of being disciplined, they won accolades from CPS Chief Education Officer Janice Jackson for civic pride and the promise of a meeting with Claypool to discuss their concerns. Simultaneously, Lindblom teachers and staff have begun a campaign of non-compliance with the new KRONOS self-service system to protect their clerk positions and eliminate further paperwork burdens on teachers.

On March 16 (delegates only) and March 18 (all members welcome), Union staff along with member leaders will provide key strategies and opportunities to share best practices for properly enforcing our new agreement—along the lines of what members are doing at Deneen and Lindblom. Our keynote speaker at the conference is Lois Weiner, a scholar and longtime member of the American Federation of Teachers who has written extensively about the CTU and social movement unionism. Weiner will share her thinking about challenges the CTU and all teachers unions face in the current political climate, and how we can win in a tough environment. Also, in one session, we will have new materials and “fight back” modules for areas of significant concern to members. These modules will include strategies to address special education cuts and paperwork concerns, new class size provisions and KRONOS self-service.

Another session will give you a chance to choose your own workshop and focus on different areas of interest such as evaluation, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel and clinicians, advanced grievance/contract enforcement management, new delegate training. Revenue 101, solidarity with unionized charter teachers, how to address threats to our health and safety at the workplace, among others.

Jackson Potter is the CTU staff coordinator, and Christel Williams-Hayes is a CTU organizer.

Rahm is devious.
Rauner is evil.
Trump is embarrassing.

The Trump administration will promote efforts to expand right to work (for less) to Illinois; continue attacks on public education with an aggressive push for vouchers and charter proliferation; rain down oppressive police tactics with federal support for stop-and-frisk programs; and attempt mass deportation of our undocumented students and their families.

Does this sound familiar? As a U.S. Congressman, Rahm Emanuel blocked efforts at immigration reform, and as mayor of Chicago, made our city ground zero for efforts to close the most schools in American history. The foundation of Emanuel’s mass school closings came with aggressive charter school expansion and the denial of affordable housing to low-income families. Illinois is where uber-rich Gov. Bruce Rauner has attempted to gut collective bargaining rights and eliminate our retirement security.

We will not let them drag us down!


**Furlough days are a poor budget decision**

Forrest Claypool and his boss, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, need to think like CPS teachers, principals and staff who do more with less to provide Chicago students the education they deserve.

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**GINA CANEVA**

On Feb. 3, I was forced to take a furlough day instead of entering my students’ grades, planning our second semester library program, and collaborating with colleagues to help improve our students’ literacy skills. Close to 30,000 Chicago Public Schools teachers, administrators and staff members were barred from their school buildings in the name of a misguided budget decision.

In his January email to all CPS faculty and staff, CPS CEO Forrest Claypool emphasized the importance of preserving instructional time with students by placing four furlough days on the remaining teacher institute days of the school year. Although I am grateful we are not losing vital instructional time with our students, his decision downplays the impact of teacher professional development and fair worker compensation.

For the last three consecutive years, CPS faculty and staff have missed out on key professional development days. In 2015, then-CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett took a day from us to make up for a snow day. Last year, Claypool took two days as furlough days. The four professional development days scheduled for elimination this year amount to the entirety of our teacher institute days for the rest of the school year. As a district, CPS sees the elimination of these days as a viable solution to fiscal problems and/or to use as make-up days.

For around 500 public schools in our district (charter schools are not affected), teacher institute days are the only times when the whole staff can meet and learn from each other. On these days, we look at student work together, discuss whole-school disciplinary issues, hold mentoring meetings between veteran and new teachers, and use data to determine the next steps for our students. We also collaborate to plan for the next semester.

There is ample evidence to show the impact professional development has on students. In 2000, the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education released survey results that concluded that U.S. teachers spend less time with their peers in professional development than teachers in countries where students outperform American students. Omitting 32 professional development hours for Chicago’s public school educators does little to help close the achievement gap between CPS and other districts in our state and across the country.

Unfair compensation and district instability, both effects of furlough days, add to teacher and principal turnover rates, which have a direct impact on our students. Last school year, during contentious contract negotiations, more than 50 principals left CPS. In 2014, Catalyst Chicago reported that Chicago’s annual teacher turnover rate is 18 percent, a rate higher than most districts in Illinois. Actions like furlough days cause teachers, staff, and principals to look to more stable districts outside of CPS. Fair compensation also comes into play as the four furlough days amount to around 2 percent pay cut. This is the exact raise amount promised to teachers through the contract upon which the Chicago Teachers Union and the Chicago Board of Education just agreed.

What is even more alarming is the fact that the Chicago Board of Education and CPS have earmarked $480 million from property taxes on unspecified construction projects. There are talks of building a new high school in Englewood for $75 million to combine four high schools with declining enrollment. CPS currently has close to 50 shuttered schools that the city has had difficulties selling or using. Why can’t CPS use $35 million from these “unspecified” projects to provide standard professional development to its staff?

Critics may argue that furlough days are better than layoffs or taking away student attendance days, but this argument is not solution-minded. All three actions are punitive to our staff and ultimately our students. Claypool and Mayor Rahm Emanuel need to think like CPS teachers, principals and staff who often go above and beyond for Chicago students with very few funds or resources at our disposal.

Across the city, my colleagues and I raise funds in innovative ways to provide our students with technology and textbooks for learning, obtain uniforms for our student-athletes, fill our library shelves with books, and create meaningful extracurricular events for students when faced with a shoestring budget. We have a sufficient and effective back-up plan when our copiers break down. During furlough days we work from home, unpaid when our school doors are closed.

Well-connected leaders like Claypool and Emanuel should use their connections to do the same for teachers as we do for our students. They must provide for professional development and compensation equal to that of staff members in other districts. I urge Claypool and Emanuel to be innovative rather than punitive when it comes to education funding. Re-instating our professional development days will help to stabilize our district and ensure that our educators have the time we need to work together for the improvement of Chicago students.

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**MICHELLE GUNDERSON**

Our school system is falling apart, and what solution does Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his appointed CPS CEO, Forrest Claypool, have? Firing us for four days.

It might seem like an extreme statement, but that is what we are experiencing. Chicago teachers have been furloughed for four days. Our work is no longer needed on these days, we are not entertaining buildings and spaces that have been put on hold at a point in time where the work of our city’s teachers is needed more than ever. We have been fired.

For several years, I have taught the inclusion classroom for first grade. This means I teach with special needs and general education students are taught in the same classroom with a variety of specialists and supports needed for everyone to learn. In this classroom, we work with one special education co-teacher, three paraprofessionals, an SLP, a speech therapist and an occupational therapist. We have additional help from our school psychologist and social worker. This is a huge team of people, but it is required to make sure that everyone learns.

So what do we do on days of professional development like the ones that Emanuel and Claypool have taken away from us? We plan, we work and we envision the work our students can and should be doing. These days are necessary for establishing the working platform that guides the lives of children. Losing these days is no small matter. It hurts us all.

Taking away these days and the pay that goes with them is wrong. There are those who argue that teachers are professional, salaried employees and should do whatever it takes to do our job. There are others who say that schools should run like businesses. I know of no business that runs without employees and flourishes on the amount of free labor our school system depends on from its teachers.

We all grade papers in the evening, create lesson plans on weekends and attend countless meetings, but there is certain work that cannot be done unless the given time and space to work together. Without professional development time, we are asked to do the impossible—create a learning environment dependent on the cooperation and collaboration of almost a dozen people. If my classroom is like a ballet, with people coming in and out of it to dance and perform their part, then being furloughed is like having no time for rehearsal.

I refuse to take this lying down. I was one of the leaders who encouraged the Chicago Teachers Union to hold a day of protest in opposition to the furloughs. I will join any protest of the decision to furlough teachers on professional development days. I will join my fellow workers in the city in refusing to upgrade grades and lesson plans into the school system’s framework.

My stance is personal and so is yours. I ask you to join me.

Michelle Gunderson is a teacher at Nettelhorst Elementary.

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**GINA CANEVA**

is a teacher-librarian at Lindblom Math and Science Academy. This article was originally published in the Huffington Post and has been updated for inclusion in Chicago Union Teacher magazine.
HOW THE RISE OF TESTING

“THE BEST WAY TO LEARN IS THROUGH A TEST!”

-SAI D NO
CHILD EVER!

UNDERMINED THE GOAL OF LEARNING

The opt-out movement is leading us toward the fulfilling education experience of an earlier time—and away from the business of for-profit data collection.

by GABRIEL SHERIDAN

Testing season is upon us again, and that means it is time for us to consider our collective stance on the issues involved with the testing industry. The next round of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers test begins in early March. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test in early elementary is ongoing, and the end-of-year Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress® (NWEA MAP®) tests are going to be here before you know it.

I have been teaching for Chicago Public Schools for 19 years. Some would consider me a dinosaur. As we head into this time of testing, however, I have been reflecting on my career and the experiences I have had with testing and the changes over time. Old-timers will recognize some of my musings here, yet newer teachers will find some of this hard to believe.

When I was hired at CPS, the teacher for whom I took over told me that when she was hired, the teacher for whom she was hired, and so on, until I was hired. There was a wealth of options that were integrated all sorts of art forms into our regular lesson planning because art was considered “best practice” at the time.

We were sent to programs such as the Chicago Artist & Teachers Collaborative, which was rich with talented artists who worked intensively with us teachers in weekend-long sessions. We worked with dancers, actors, comedians, painters, and writers. We used to teach art alongside math, science and social studies, and integrated all sorts of art forms into our regular lesson planning because art was considered background for all the subjects we taught.

When we taught writing, it was considered an art form that took patience and practice and often included fiction and fun, not just a response to a test question or an algorithm, or a conversion to fulfill a test requirement.

Back then, grades were simply a way for us to communicate with parents about students’ needs and celebrate their accomplishments. We did not even give letter grades below third grade then. We gave symbols to represent mastery or a need for more support.

Today, we spend an inordinate amount of time collecting and analyzing testing data as though this is helping our students’ learning experience, or as though it is informing our instruction. We allow others to evaluate and rate our schools and communities based on this data.

I understand how we got here. But there is another way.

There was a time when technology was used for projects, research, art and expression, but not lesson content. We did not have online programs teaching reading and math. Those subjects were always done hands-on with people interacting. And we assessed students’ understanding with tests that connected to the subjects we were addressing in class. We had complete control over the test materials. There was no testing industry—yet.

When I started teaching, there really was just one big state test we all gave, and it was not used in the same way that tests today profess to evaluate the strengths of a teacher, school or neighborhood. In those days, the standardized test was used to establish a sort of baseline for what kids ought to be able to do at each milestone. Teachers did not get the scores from those tests until the following school year, when they may be reviewed by the new teacher, but really, our emphasis was on the experience and not the score.

The attack on teachers and public schools had much to do with the rise of the testing industry. The money to be made from these tests and the online curriculum involved overtook what was a rich and happy experience for many, many students throughout the years.

Today, many of my colleagues and I get tripped up when the testing windows open. Small group work and attention to teaching things like the mechanics of language, sight words and comprehension of content go out the window. When I am struggling to administer these useless tests, I am lucky to be able to read a book aloud to my students.

All the work and study we do to become teachers and provide instruction for our students every day is insulted with the DIBELS test—a test, by the way, that is not actually used for what it was designed to assess. We do not need the data the DIBELS creates. Many of us know within the first week of school where our students are in reading ability, and we should be spending all of our time teaching small groups and individuals, and not testing them incessantly.

I call upon each of you to reflect on what the tests—required by outside sources—offer your ability to connect with your students and their families. What is it you need to help your kids build background knowledge? What will it take for that student you have, who may live in crisis and constant fear, to have an experience in which they will be inspired to push harder to gain more in a school atmosphere?

Then ask yourself if the time taken with these tests that you had no hand in creating and unrelated to what you may teach or have taught, is worth it. In fact, the test-taking process is stagnant in terms of student gain. This is not a learning moment, and for many of our students, may result in undue stress and feelings of failure. Also, consider that our private school counterparts do not take these tests.

For me, what happens every day in my classroom is what is important for all of my students. It is this reflection I offer you to consider as the opt out movement grows. What will your part be in steering us toward a fulfilling experience, and not a for-profit, data-collecting machine?

Gabriel Sheridan is co-chair of the CTU Testing Committee and a teacher at Rag Elementary.
Building a stronger testing reform movement under ESSA

Understanding the potential—and pitfalls—of the Every Student Succeeds Act is key to creating significant change in how we view standardized testing.

By Monty Neill

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) takes effect as President Donald Trump and U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos promote their education agenda amid escalating resistance. ESSA presents significant opportunities and some dangers for the testing resistance and reform movement. How can the movement use the opportunities to win greater assessment reform victories?

The first task is to continue to build opposition to high-stakes standardized exams. One key is to expand the already large numbers of test refusals, which topped 40,000 in Illinois and 20,000 in Chicago in 2015. Next is to transform movement strength into winning state legislation and local regulations to cut back testing, end high stakes and implement high-quality assessments.

What does ESSA mandate? Unfortunately under ESSA, states must still test children in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school, as well as science in three grades. English language learners (ELLs) also must be tested for English proficiency in grades K-12. But ESSA fundamentally changes federal accountability mandates in a way that creates room for real improvement.

ESSA says state accountability systems must include test scores, a “growth” measure such as test score gains, progress by ELLs, high school graduation rates and at least one “school quality” indicator. These can include school climate, discipline practices, absenteeism, parent engagement and access to advanced placement courses or a rich curriculum including arts.

A state must use these indicators to “meaningfully differentiate” among schools and identify the lowest-performing five percent among those that receive Title I funds. When a school is identified, the district must implement a locally developed improvement plan. Unlike No Child Left Behind (NCLB), nowhere does ESSA say a state must fire anyone or close, privatize or take over any school. Nor does ESSA require states or districts to judge teachers by student test scores, which Illinois does and which has produced a huge increase in the number of tests students must take.

Illinois has a choice. It can continue NCLB-style punishments or it can collaborate with districts to improve teaching and learning. Unfortunately, Illinois and Chicago policy leaders appear intent on sticking with punishment and over-testing. It will take savvy, persistent organizing to win the needed policy changes.

What should teachers and other movement activists do?

The essential demands are to cut back testing to the federal limits, end punitive sanctions imposed on teachers, students and schools, and implement teacher-controlled, student-focused assessment. Chicago teachers and their allies can fight to win the following goals:

• End CPS requirements that students pass standardized exams to be promoted to the next grade, as New York and some states have recently done. These are not required by federal law or regulations.

• End Illinois’ requirement to judge educators by student test scores.

• Halt district- or school-mandated standardized interim, formative or other such tests, including those embedded in commercial, computer-based curricula. This includes tests used to judge teachers.

• Ban standardized testing in Pre-K through grade two, including mandates to use instruments such as Kindergarten Individual Development Surveys.

• Ensure transparency in the number and uses of tests and time spent on test preparation. Activists are using audits and surveys to expose over-testing. ESSA contains funding for states and districts to audit, evaluate and reduce their testing programs.

• Fight to limit the weight given to test scores in Illinois’ formula for evaluating schools. Ensure that other indicators are educationally sound and do not simply reproduce school rankings by poverty.

• Win a state opt-out law ensuring parents can refuse the tests without fear of state penalties for their child. Eight states now have such a law. ESSA mandates no penalties for opting out, and certainly no loss of Title I funds.

Blocking the spread of computerized test packages

ESSA allows states to use computer-based packaged curriculum and tests to replace current statewide tests as the measure of student learning. Corporations are peddling many such products, and many districts are buying them. They have all the same harmful consequences as regular standardized tests, but they are given more often, connected to packaged instruction and harder to refuse. They represent a serious danger to the quality of education.

Winning better assessment

If Illinois and CPS reduce the stakes and the number of tests, Chicago teachers will be under less pressure to test incessantly. They will have a greater chance to expand the use of performance assessments, though large class sizes and lack of resources make this difficult. Still, many teachers already use performance assessments. These can be a basis for developing teacher-determined, student-focused assessing. FairTest plans to work with Chicago educators, parents, students and community groups to lay the groundwork for a future transformation.

ESSA will initially allow up to seven states to participate in an Innovative Assessment pilot program; more can join later. Activists should push Illinois to join the pilot and overhaul its assessment system. Reformers must ensure that the overhaul includes primarily locally based, teacher-controlled assessments such as projects and portfolios. FairTest has a recent report on what this could look like based on ESSA requirements and concrete examples. The New York Performance Standards Consortium is the best U.S. example of educator-controlled performance assessments.

Assessment and evaluation should rest on what communities want their schools to be and do. Studies over the years have found they want schools that ensure basic skills and critical thinking, provide arts and physical education, and foster emotional health and positive social relationships. Testing has little or nothing positive to contribute to meeting any of these goals, but has come to control education. By fighting for the schools all our children and communities deserve, teachers and their allies can build a basis for sufficient funding, support and assessment rooted in high-quality learning.

Monty Neill is the Executive Director of FairTest, which works to end the misuses and flaws of standardized testing and ensure that evaluation of students, teachers and schools is fair, open, valid and educationally beneficial. Visit www.fairtest.org for more information.
The “new” SAT is a fail

How many more students will be made to feel academically inadequate before these tests are eliminated?

By CAROL CAREF, PH.D.

For Illinois high school students, the ACT/Prairie State Achievement Examination is no more. The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) is here. April 5 is the initial test date for the SAT, which all juniors must take (except some exempt special education students). The new SAT was designed to be more closely aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) than previous versions. David Coleman, known as an architect of the Common Core, was hired in 2012 as head of the College Board.

The SAT is a business, and as such, it needed to get its product up to speed to compete with the ACT. As Coleman himself said in an email to employees, the SAT and Practice SAT needed to be overhauled by March 2015, so that “College Board could win new business and counter the most popular college entrance exam in America, the ACT.” The SAT needed to be ready, even though, really, it wasn’t. Illinois was one of the states that fell for the hype and changed from ACT to SAT.

Internal documents examined by Reuters showed that “the makers of the new SAT knew the test was overloaded with wordy math problems.” One College Board test reviewer wrote to officials that he had “never encountered so many seriously flawed items” in the 20-plus years he had been screening math material for the organization. He asked “Why so many items with similar issues, especially for ELL (English language learner) students?”

Yet the race was on and the “not for profit” College Board put profits and marketing advantages above the need for test integrity. The College Board released the exam even though it did not meet its own design specifications for the math section. Its research on the test indicated that the gap between low and high scorers was much larger on the math section than the reading and writing sections. The math sections needed to have fewer long questions, but there wasn’t time to rewrite these questions and still meet the March 2015 deadline.

Among those disadvantaged by long test questions are recent immigrants, students whose native language isn’t English, test-takers with learning disabilities (diagnosed or not) and students who are prone to test anxiety. Students who have sold mathematics knowledge, but are hampered by the language of these word problems, will answer fewer math questions correctly. As research shows and math teachers experience, different problem contexts or reading levels impact math performance on word problems.

Coleman was not interested in talking about the flawed tests. In fact, College Board claims its test specifications protected equity and opportunity. He also had this to say about Betsy DeVos: “[She] is a remarkable citizen leader. She believes fiercely in our founding principles of liberty and equality of opportunity. We can’t wait to see what she does next as Secretary of Education.”

Right.

Coleman, who makes $900,000 a year in salary and benefits, is either totally out of touch with the reality of Betsy DeVos, a complete opportunist or sees himself as aligned with President Donald Trump’s administration. He should not be allowed to make decisions about tests that determine which of our students go to college.

How many more students will be made to feel academically inadequate before these tests are eliminated? Parents and students need to learn more about this so they can plan accordingly. SAT boycott, anyone?

Carol Caref, Ph.D., is the CTU Education Policy Director.

A day to remember

By NATALIA SEGURA

On a Wednesday Feb. 15, some of my students asked me if I was going to the “Day Without Immigrants” march and rally the next day. In a school with a Latino population of 80 percent, where some students have shared with me their personal stories of fear each day, I felt an urge to support my students and ask for a personal day. I then told students that if I was going to go to the march and rally, that when they were also thinking about it, I would meet them there.

When my students asked me why I was going, I explained to them that as an immigrant and as their teacher, I needed to go to be heard by marching, and missing work so that other teachers, Chicago Public Schools, the entire government and the whole country could see how things would work without immigrants.

The next day, I arrived at Union Park at 11 a.m. Thinking that maybe one or two students would make it there. I was so wrong. More than 45 of my students had talked among themselves to organize transportation to the march, and many of them met myself and two co-workers at the park. It was amazing. For most of my teenage students, this was maybe the first or second march that they had ever attended.

The crowd was relatively small at the beginning—around 100 or more—when the speaker from ARINE Chicago started his speech. The speech was done almost completely in Spanish and main ideas were: the need for unity between immigrants from different countries, how in the U.S. gainfully employed, immigrants, students need to learn academic skills and be allowed to make decisions about tests that determine which of our students go to college.

David Coleman, College Board CEO. Annual salary and benefits: $900,000.

Photo: Max Herman

Students who participated said they felt empowered, respected, heard, excited and surrounded by a community that understands and supports them.

Natalia Segura is a teacher at Spry Community Links High School.
Dear Mr. President,

You seem to have a strong dislike towards Chicago. Is it due to the fact that Chicago was the only city in the country, during your presidential campaign, where you were afraid to take the stage? Or is it because former President Barack Obama adopted Chicago as his hometown? I know you weren’t a fan of Obama since you called him “the Founder of ISIS” and declared for years that he wasn’t born in America.

I know you weren’t a fan of Obama’s policies prove he doesn’t. He refuses to listen, too. He likes to put on fuzzy sweaters and claim he cares about our city and our people, but his policies prove he doesn’t. I don’t want you to follow in his footsteps.

First, there are a few things to note. President Trump, and one of them is that Chicago is not the Wild West. There is no doubt that certain neighborhoods in our city have very high levels of violence (I will address that in more depth shortly), but it is important you know that while some neighborhoods have seen increases in violence, many other neighborhoods have seen decreases in violence. The parts of Chicago that are funded appropriately are beautiful, which is why Chicago is the third most visited city in the U.S. I mean, you should know downtown Chicago is beautiful because you own Trump Tower, which is right on the Chicago River.

In fact, contrary to what Attorney General Jeff Sessions and you say, crime is not up nationally, it is down. Chicago does not even make the top ten of the most violent cities per capita in the country. But sadly, violence is one issue in parts of our city, so let’s address it. There is no doubt that certain neighborhoods in our city are not anywhere as safe as they should be. As a Chicago Public Schools teacher for the past ten years, I have personally seen and experienced the impact that the violence has had on my students, their families and my colleagues.

But here is the thing about violence: Hardly anyone would choose to commit crimes or be violent if there were other options. The issue is that the amount of other options is extremely limited, in particular, in our most vulnerable and violent neighborhoods.

You yourself said Chicago’s violence is “very fixable,” so I hope that means you are willing to address the root causes of the violence.

Chicago, through the purposeful segregation policies of redlining, restrictive covenants and eminent domain over the years, has been divided into a city of “haves” and “have nots.” Generally, downtown and the North Side of the city are the “haves,” and the South and West sides are the “have nots.”

Those of us who live in Chicago know that jobs and investment in struggling communities—which includes public schools—are keys to stopping violence. The investment in these communities should improve the lives of the residents rather than push them out. As one Chicago writer says: “Want to fix Chicago? Invest in its people, embrace the idea that the rest of the city matters, [and] not just the North Side.” Chicago has also closed half of its mental health clinics which were primarily located on the South and West sides. Now the largest primary provider of mental health in the entire country is the Cook County Jail located here in Chicago.

We need to stop diverting money away from neighborhoods that need it the most—money that has been stolen from neighborhoods and used for things like new stadiums and the beautification of our already beautiful downtown. We need to fully fund our public schools and create new revenue options to do so. Another Chicago writer said we need to “talk about the systemic issues.” We need to talk about how people do not have job options in far too many neighborhoods in our city.

The way Chicago Public Schools is run is also terrible and contributes to the violence. The mayor has complete control over our schools. He closed the most schools in the history of our country and has continually cut school funding. He picks the members of the school board, who show their gratitude for being appointed by doing whatever he says—this includes opening new charter schools, even though charters have proven to be no more effective than traditional neighborhood schools. The person in charge of our school district has zero educational experience. None. All of these school closings, funding cuts and diversions of money to charter schools by our mayor have harmed and continue to harm our students and our city, which, in turn, is tied to the violence.

A Chicago organizer puts it clearly: “Poverty is violence, and it exacerbates violence… If you give people access to mental health care [and] education, you give them the opportunity to realize their full humanity. And we’re denied that.”

To put it simply, we do not need to give the police more power. We do not need more police. We need to create jobs and fund our public schools and our neighborhoods.

People need jobs.

Services need to be provided.

Schools need to be fully funded.

All neighborhoods need to be equitably funded.

I hope you appreciate the gift I am giving you. I am saving you some work on investigating the root causes of violence in our city. You don’t need to send the Feds to our city unless the purpose of them coming is to get rid of our mayor.

Just kidding…kind of.

But I guess all this to say, I would like to ask you to stop talking bad about our city.

Or, as the kids say, just take the name Chicago out of your mouth.

Sincerely,

An actual resident of Chicago

P.S. Release your tax returns.

Dave Stieber is a teacher at Chicago Vocational Career Academy. This article was originally published in the Huffington Post and has been updated for inclusion in Chicago Union Teacher magazine.

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You yourself said Chicago’s violence is “very fixable,” so I hope that means you are willing to address the root causes of the violence.
March 8, International Women's Day, began in New York City in 1909 to honor the women of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union who had bravely struck the year before. The next year, women from 17 countries held a conference, and by 1911, more than one million women were celebrating International Women's Day. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, International Women's Day (IWD) became a national holiday in the Soviet Union. In 1975, the United Nations acknowledged March 8 as an international day of recognition.

In the United States, women's labor was first officially recognized by President Jimmy Carter in 1980 when he declared March 8, International Women's Day, began in 1932 by the Chicago Federation of Agriculture and continued to this day—a victory for women and for feminism. So, what is feminism? Dictionary definitions are often unsatisfactory, but this one captures it pretty well: “the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes.” It's a definition that is simple in concept but much more complex in application. The history of U.S. feminism began with the women who took up the fight to abolish slavery and gain the right to vote the pre-Civil War era. After several generations of struggle, they won the right to vote with the 19th Amendment, which went into effect in 1920. That is considered the first wave of feminism.

The second wave, an outgrowth and expansion of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s, focused on equal rights for women, including the failed attempt to pass a national Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Other key issues were—and continue to be—reproductive rights such as birth control and abortion, access to affordable childcare and fights against gender violence in its many forms. Academic feminists also fought to have women written into the history books where they were so often missing.

The third or contemporary wave attempts to expand feminism to include women with a diverse set of identities and celebrating that women are of “many colors, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds.” It also opposes the concept of a “gender binary” and protests the way our culture and society impose gender and sexual identity categories. The third wave, while benefiting from some of the earlier fights, rejects the notion that women inherently all have the same interests and needs. It celebrates the intersection of women’s rights with other struggles such as anti-racism, disability rights, LBTQ, educational rights, etc.

The CTU Women’s Rights Committee was born of the 1960s and 1970s, focused on equal rights for women, including the failed attempt to pass a national Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Other key issues were—and continue to be—reproductive rights such as birth control and abortion, access to affordable childcare and fights against gender violence in its many forms. Academic feminists also fought to have women written into the history books where they were so often missing.

The Chicago Teachers Union strongly opposes all forms of discrimination, racism and sexism. The fight for resources and quality schools for all is, by its nature, a feminist demand.

The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation for Education (CFE) recognizes Kat Henry, special education teacher at Pulaski International School, as the Jannotta-Jaffee Teacher of the Year.

The Chicago Foundation for Education (CFE) recognizes Kat Henry, special education teacher at Pulaski International School, as the Jannotta-Jaffee Teacher of the Year. The recognition was presented by Katie Palmer, daughter of the late Debby Jannotta, and Michael Jaffee Patterson, the grandson of the late Shirley Jaffee.

The recognition was presented by Katie Palmer, daughter of the late Debby Jannotta, and Michael Jaffee Patterson, the grandson of the late Shirley Jaffee. (Photo: Colleen Mullin/XChicago Foundation for Education)
The Chicago Teachers Union Human Rights Committee would like to thank the Chicago Teachers Union, the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation and Operation Warm for the coats donated to our committee to distribute to our Chicago Public Schools students.

Members of the CTU Human Rights Committee saw that there was a great need for some CPS students from preschool to 12th grade to be provided with a warm coat. Many of our teachers and paraprofessionals have already personally supplied coats, shoes and clothing in addition to purchasing classroom supplies such as paper, pens, pencils and book bags. This has become very costly to our members over the years.

The CTU Human Rights Committee plans to share in this compassionate and enduring task of assisting our students and supporting our educators in our schools.

Our educators are on the front line in schools everyday and they know the needs of their students. A child cannot learn if they are hungry or cold. Our educators spend many dollars to stop this from happening to our children, but we have a growing problem of poverty in our schools. There is great concern from teachers when you have three to four children in a class who do not have a coat, and this is where our educators step up and do what is needed. Even though it can become very costly over time, they still do what is needed to ensure that a child is prepared for class.

We cannot fix the needs of everyone right now, but as a committee, we can start with a modest offering to our students most in need. Our committee, with the assistance of CTU paraprofessionals, teachers and retirees, has already given away almost 200 coats and has just received a second shipment of another 400 coats for continued distribution.

Human Rights Committee members along with other CTU retirees and member volunteers have come in after work and in their spare time to help complete orders for school pickups. They have even personally delivered orders to schools for our students.

Our hearts are warmed when we see children who have nice, warm coats, but this is just the beginning, because there is more that our committee plans to do. CPS students often come in on Monday mornings hungry because they haven’t had enough food to eat.

The CTU Human Rights Committee will next host a fundraiser for a pilot program called Feed the Children. This program will reach out to at least 100 of our students from four neighboring schools to share a perishable food to help carry them over a long holiday weekend. The Committee has partnered with Mt. Carmel Church at 2976 S. Wabash to use its location for distribution and to store the food.

The pilot will begin at Drake, Haines, Healy and Sheridan elementary schools. For more information, contact Charlotte Sanders, chairperson of the CTU Human Rights Committee at cssanders7@aol.com.
2017 Student Scholarship Awards

The Chicago Teachers Union and Chicago Teachers Union Foundation are presenting regular, vocational and special education awards this year in the amount of $1,000. Applicants must be a high school senior who will graduate this year before August 31, 2017, as well as a son or daughter of a currently active member in good standing of the Chicago Teachers Union or a son or daughter of a deceased member who was in good standing with the Chicago Teachers Union at the time of death.

Special education students are eligible for all scholarships and apply as well.

For more information, please contact www.ctunet.com/awards/scholarships to download the application.

When: TBA. Must complete nine full days of training over the summer (four days in July and five days in August)

Time: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm with a lunch hour in between.

How Much: All participants receive a stipend of $10/day plus paid mileage. Breakfast and lunch are provided.

Location: Chicago Teachers Union Center, 1901 W. Carroll Ave., Chicago, IL 60612-2420

What: The OSHA Outreach Training program provides training for workers and employers on the recognition, avoidance, abatement, and prevention of safety and health hazards in workplaces. The program also provides information regarding workers’ rights, employer responsibilities, and how to file a complaint. This course is designed for individuals interested in teaching in the 10- and 30-hour general industry safety and health Outreach training program to their employees and other interested groups. Using the OSHA General Industry Standards as a guide, special emphasis is placed on those topics required in the 10- and 30-hour programs as well as those which are most hazardous. Students trained in this course help our student to become a trainer in the OSHA Outreach Training Program, to conduct both 10- and 30-hour General Industry Outreach classes, and to issue cards to participants after verifying course completion. Persons successfully completing this course will receive an “Authorized General Industry Trainer Card.”

Contact: Email Dr. John Kugler at johnkugler@ctulocal1.com to reserve your spot in this training with “OSHA 2017” and your name and school in the subject line

We Need Your Vote!

The CTU Elementary Steering Committee is looking for CTU members who teach kindergarten through 8th grade and are active as Voting Members of the committee. Learn more about how you can get involved and use your voice to impact elementary education. Our next meeting is on Tuesday, April 10th at the Chicago Teachers Union Center from 4:30 p.m. for more information, contact an email to TheresaSaldaña-Decio@ctulocal1.com

Crowdsource Scholarship Application

DECEMBER 18 – DECEMBER 29

In memoriam

December 18

In memoriam

December 24

In memoriam

December 26

In memoriam

December 29

In memoriam

January 3

In memoriam

January 8

In memoriam

January 11

In memoriam

January 14

In memoriam

January 17

In memoriam

January 21

In memoriam

January 24

In memoriam

January 26

The deadline for submissions is May 5, 2017. Please go to www.ctunet.com/awards/scholarships to download the application.
The essay contest was open to all Chicago Public Schools students in grades six through 12. The student who won the essay contest responded to the following question “How do we end racism?” and received a $100 gift card with her work featured here in the CUT. The art contest was open to all CPS students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The student who won the art contest illustrated a picture that captured the idea of creating a sanctuary/safe space for all. The winning artist received a $50 gift card and has her work depicted here in the CUT.

The teachers of the winning students were provided a CTUF Quest Center voucher that entitles them to a free workshop, learning series or course of their choosing.

T
o think that racism has been embedded into American history, culture, and society ever since mankind existed makes us question where it originated from. However, racism has co-existed with humans far too long so that it has been instilled deeply into modern culture and society. Although compared to the 1600s when slavery and racism in America was at its peak in popularity, racism existed behind the shadows of modern society. Racism has decreased tremendously throughout the years, especially in 1865 when Congress ratified the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery or when it passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. However, this does not mean that racism has ended in America. So, how do we end racism? Although the topic of ending racism itself is subjective, there is a solution that can help America gradually end racism and racial oppression of minorities.

To begin with, we must first understand the issue in order to combat it. In this case, we must understand how and why racism still continues to exist within our society. One of the well-known origins of racism in America is during colonial times when Dutch traders who had seized Africans from a captured Spanish slave ship brought them to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. This is the start to the slavery system in America of capturing Africans in Africa and bringing them back only to be used as slaves for labor in plantations. This eventually built up overtime and created a racial barrier so even when the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, racism towards African Americans still exists. Not only that, the environment can also be a factor in the cause of ongoing racism. Since America is known to be a diverse country with many different ethnic groups and races immigrating, they are bound to bring their culture and traditions as well. Children of immigrants end up being taught from a young age of only their family’s culture. This results in children who grow up close-minded because they lack exposure to diversity and different cultures and traditions. These children will grow up looking down on others, and will end up oppressing other races, and the endless cycle of oppression will continue as these children will start teaching their own children the same thing that they were taught. Racism in America can also be seen as systemic, as embedded in every aspect of our social system. It is a system that grants privileges and benefits to the whites at the expense of others, the minorities. It is the unjust costs of racism born by people of color, like denial of education and employment, incarceration, mental and physical illness, and even death. It is a racist ideology that rationalizes and justifies racial oppression, like the media narratives that criminalize victims of police and vigilante violence, like Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, and Freddie Gray, as well as many others.

Fully knowing how racism has persistently survived in our society gives us the knowledge to combat it. Just like George Yancy’s article, “Dear White America,” we must confront the racism in ourselves before seeking to help ending racism in others, as Yancy puts it: “I’m asking that you open yourself up; to speak to, to admit to, the racist poison that is inside of you.” To allow yourself to admit to your own flaws not only empowers you to face it, but to also empower others to confront their flaws. Even I admit to being a racist. I sometimes catch myself unconsciously judging a person based on their skin color and not their individuality. However, by admitting to it, I have the confidence of confronting it and, ultimately, defeating it. This becomes an inner battle for many people because racism is, after all, subjective. It is a matter of how the person interprets racism, therefore, can only be ended with ourselves.

To end racism, we must combat it everywhere it lives and thrives. We must confront it in ourselves, in our communities, and in our nation. With the help of each other, breaking racial stereotypes or spreading awareness can have a major impact on society. No one person can do it all or do it alone, but we can all do things to help, and in doing so, work collectively to end racism.
3.5 ISBE PD Hours
This workshop is designed to support K – 12th grade teachers and school support staff in building a positive learning environment by developing healthy and nurturing relationships with students, and as a result, lessening the amount of detentions, suspensions, and expulsions in their schools. Attendees will learn the historical context of restorative practices and learn what restorative practices are and are not.
Session Date: 3/21/2017

CPS Framework for Teaching Conversations
3.5 ISBE PD Hours per session
The CTUF Quest Center presents CPS Framework for Teaching (FFT) Conversations, a 3.5-hour session of FFT round table discussion and analysis of each of the Four Domains at the element level. Participants will collaborate and focus on what they are already doing in the classroom to improve and to determine best practices to meet the “Distinguished” level for the domains and components discussed. Teachers will share past evaluation experiences, provide advice to each other, and troubleshoot ideas for meeting expectations in the FFT.
Session Dates: 3/23, 3/28, 4/18, and 4/25/2017

Restorative Practices Learning Series Intensive
10.5 ISBE PD Hours
This 3-session Learning Series is designed to support K-12 grade teachers and school support staff in creating a positive learning environment by developing healthy and nurturing relationships with their students. During this 3-session Learning Series, attendees will engage in the practices of restoration: classroom community building; talking circles; restorative conversations; peer conferences; and conflict, healing and re-entry circles. This Learning Series will support teachers and school support staff in cultivating their classroom cultures and honing classroom management skills.
Session Dates: 3/28, 3/29, and 3/30/2017

Family and Community Involvement
3.5 ISBE PD Hours
This professional development offering, for currently practicing K – 12th grade teachers, examines the framework for 6 Types of Family/Community Involvement (Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision-Making, and Collaborating) and how to utilize it in their practice. Attendees will learn how and why to involve family members (and guardians and caregivers) as partners with both school and home-based activities; strategies for 2-way communication with families to advance student learning; and, why and how to be responsive to families and their cultures and needs.
Session Date: 4/4/2017

Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Learning Environment
17.5 ISBE PD Hours and/or one lane placement credit
This 5-session course examines how teachers can support and nurture their students’ emotional well-being, before, during, and after traumatic events in order to mitigate the impact of complex childhood trauma. This course will focus on: identifying psychological and behavioral symptoms of complex childhood trauma, the role of the teacher after a traumatic event, how to develop support systems and safe spaces for students to cope with grief, teacher self-care to prevent secondary traumatic stress, and developing a trauma-informed school community.
Session Dates: 4/17, 4/24, 5/1, 5/8, and 5/15/2017

Writing Across the Disciplines for Elementary School (K–5th Grade)
15 hours and/or one lane placement credit
This 3-session professional development offering focuses on teaching young children how to write across the disciplines. Participants will learn how to design instruction to teach elementary level students how to write “like” a historian, mathematician, and scientist. Teachers will learn what resources work best for supporting this type of writing, and how to create exemplar pieces for students to analyze. Participants will be encouraged to use what they have learned in between session meetings, in their own classrooms, and bring their student examples back to the class for analysis, reflection, and discussion.
Session Dates: 4/26, 5/3, and 5/10/2017

Writing Across the Disciplines for Grades 6–12
15 hours and/or one lane placement credit
This 3-session professional development offering focuses on teaching middle school and high school students how to write in various disciplines. Participants will learn how to incorporate writing into the subjects they teach, and make it part of their regular curriculum. Teachers will investigate the writing style specific to their discipline, and create their own exemplar pieces to use as models for student writing assignments. They will use the time in between session meetings to practice writing lessons with their students, collect written pieces, and bring them back to the class for analysis, reflection, and discussion.
Session Dates: 6/10, 6/24, and 6/14/2017

National Board Certification
Register to attend our informational meeting on Tuesday, March 28, 2017, 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm
Nurturing Teacher Leadership, the CPS/CTU’s 2-year Leadership Professional development and candidate support program, prepares CPS teachers, counselors, and librarians for National Board Certification (NBC). If you have completed at least 3 years of teaching in your certificate area by this June, attend the March 28 recruitment meeting to learn about how you can earn this advanced certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the highest credential a teacher can achieve.
We look forward to informing you about financial and contractual incentives, including an annual stipend of more than $1,930, full scholarship opportunities, program requirements, and how you can earn an optional Master’s Degree and/or graduate and CPS Lane Placement salary credits, and attain the Illinois NBPTS Master Certification Endorsement in only two years. Attend the meeting to learn about the union’s role in supporting National Board candidates, and how you can increase student achievement and make yourself more marketable by joining our 2017-2019 cohort.

ESL/Bilingual Endorsement Cohort
Begins March 20, 2017
The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation Quest Center and Roosevelt University are partnering to prepare teachers to earn the ESL/Bilingual endorsement. The cohort will complete the six courses needed to earn the ESL and Bilingual endorsements taking two courses at a time (one online and one face-to-face) over three consecutive semesters (Spring, Summer, and Fall) ending December, 2017. Cohort students pay only $6,080 for each course—this is only $360 per credit hour!
Face-to-face meetings take place Saturdays (April 1, 8, 15, 29, and May 20) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the CTU Center, 1901 W. Carroll Ave.
ISBE requires 100 clinical hours in bilingual or ESL settings.
For more information, go to www.ctuf.org/quest-center-partnerships/roosevelt-university. For questions, or to enroll, contact Ms. Laura Lag at 312-852-4753 or llag@roosevelt.edu.

Learning Behavior Specialist I Endorsement
Enrolling Now for April 5 Start
The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation Quest Center is partnering with National Louis University to offer a Learning Behavior Specialist I (LBS I) Endorsement to provide high-quality, career-focused curricula, in a convenient, affordable format. This LBS I Endorsement program gives you the knowledge and skills to work in inclusive settings, using Universal Design for Learning strategies to effectively reach all students.
Earn your LBS I Endorsement from NLU! If you want to:
• Learn from research-based instruction in differentiated curricular design, assessment, delivery strategies, and collaborative practice with families, school colleagues, and the school community
• Attend a blended program— with classes held both online and on campus—that provides the flexibility you need as a teacher
Study with your colleagues in a special Chicago Teachers Union Foundation Quest Center Cohort
In this cohort, you will earn your LBS I Endorsement at a 40% discount over average NLU tuition rates. This means you will increase your knowledge and employability for less than $6,000. Plus, there is no application or graduation fee.
For more information go to: www.nlu.edu/partners/ctuf. For questions, or to enroll, contact Nina Stlap at 800-443-5522 x3926 or nstlap@nlu.edu

GO TO THE QUEST CENTER WEBSITE FOR PRICING OPTIONS, TIMES, AND TO REGISTER.