Also in this issue...

Chicago chapter of the American Federation of Teachers Black Caucus categorically condemns school closings proposed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel

News and notes from the CTU Grievance Department regarding wins and enforcement of our contract with the Chicago Board of Education

Janus v. AFSCME: The case that could effectively force right-to-work laws on every public sector worker in the U.S.

Education justice is social justice

Our union has championed social justice movements for nearly a decade, and we do so with the understanding that education rights are civil rights for our members and the communities they serve.
Honest questions deserve honest answers.

The district’s inability to address enrollment, special education and more is a cause for grave concern for its future

BY GINA CANEVA

As a high school English teacher, I know that one of the biggest challenges for my students at the beginning of the school year is being sure about an answer to a question. Sometimes students meander and then finally get to an answer; other times, they only answer one part of the question. Lately, in reviewing my district’s answers to clear-cut questions about how our schools function, I realize that my students are not alone in struggling to come up with good answers.

And yes, the questions seem to be answerable—here are a few examples that I believe an effective school district should be able to handle.

How come my child’s name is on the equivalent of six years in name only and teach a full core classes or have the role of a teacher’s aide?

According to WBEZ, some schools had attendance rosters with the wrong names on them and they were turning away parents. A representative from the city’s Department of Family and Support Services, which coordinates with CPS to run the preschool program, blamed a switch in technology vendors and the usage of a less-than-finalized version of the technology system. This means there was no school-based backup plan and local schools had their hands tied because of a faulty centralized system.

At the beginning of the school year, the Tribune reported that 75 percent of CPS students wouldn’t have access to a school librarian, as CPS budgeted for only 139 school librarians for 646 schools this year. CPS explained that this number was “conservative” and doesn’t include other staff at schools who may monitor the library. The Chicago Teachers Union, in contrast, stated that the number was faulty because many school librarians also teach core classes or have the role in name only and teach a full slate of classes. So what is the actual number? It shouldn’t be difficult to calculate; yet even for this simple question of how many full-time librarians are in the district, CPS has an unclear answer.

Last month, as reported in the Chicago Sun-Times, CPS revealed that the number of schools with top ratings from last year declined by 5 percent. When media outlets pressed as to why, CPS officials said that many events during the last school year caused attendance declines that lowered their ratings. “The presidential election, the Day Without An Immigrant movement, labor strike uncertainty and [Chicago] Cubs playoffs” were the culprits. If this is true, what does it say about a school rating system that these types of events and/or absences can drop a school’s rating? In addition, several small elementary schools’ ratings decreased, and a slower growth rate in standardized test scores was to blame. But CPS did not lead with this information and implied that a few absences can tip the rating scales from the highest ranking to one ranking below.

Perhaps the most controversial story originally reported by WBEZ is whether or not CPS changed a set of guidelines for special education students, which in turn decreased their services. Former CPS CEO Forrest Claypool rejected the claim in his own letter to WBEZ, calling the information “erroneous” and conclusions “false.” WBEZ, however, stood by its anecdotes, facts and numbers. But after the accumulated mistrust of CPS, it is difficult to disregard a reputable news organization like WBEZ and the scores of parents of CPS special education students who spoke on record about how the decreased services fully exist and are harmful to their children and other children’s education.

The final question on my list—why CPS enrollment is consistently declining—generated a factual response, but one without any self-analysis. According to the Chicago Tribune, CPS attributes the loss of nearly 70,000 students in fifteen years to “falling birthrates, plus slower immigration patterns and the well-documented exodus of residents from the city’s South and West sides.” Although the census data may prove these numbers to be true, it doesn’t capture families’ attitudes or experiences with CPS that may be, in fact, a major factor in the exodus. Take the Austin neighborhood, where student populations are nearly all Black. Austin’s CPS enrollment declined by nearly 800 students in several schools in the area. Longtime Austin resident Dwayne Truss told the Austin Weekly News that the 2013 school closings left an “environment of chaos” in Austin. “We just have been spiraling downwards because again, there’s no stability when it comes to our schools,” Truss said. But CPS never mentioned the impact of school closings that created this lack of stability in neighborhoods like Austin on the West Side and Englewood and West Englewood on the South Side.

By the end of the school year, my students are masters at answering questions. They provide fully fleshed out responses with clear statements, logical evidence and convincing analysis. We deserve the same thoughtful responses from our district leaders. As teachers, we are asked often to reflect on our practices—it’s even a part of our evaluation. By consistently providing the public with cloudy responses, CPS gives us all of grave concern over its future directions. How many more families will choose to move away in order to not participate in the politics behind a CPS education? Only time will tell. But right now, it’s time for our district to reflect on its practices—both effective and harmful—in order to provide the best education for all children in Chicago.
Sisters and Brothers,

As we went to press on this issue of Chicago Union Teacher, you were voting in your schools on proposed changes to the Chicago Teachers Union Constitution and By-Laws. This vote came at a critical time when all unions have to get stronger, more creative and more nimble to fight attacks from the U.S. Supreme Court and our do-wrong leaders in the Oval Office, Springfield and Chicago City Hall. With the nation’s highest court poised to enact extreme anti-worker provisions in the Janus vs. AFSCME ruling this spring, we expect billionaire Gov. Bruce Rauner and the rabidly anti-worker Koch brothers to fund massive efforts to deterify unions and trick members into ending payment of their dues.

Their goal is to weaken our ability to fight for fair wages and rights on the job, so in addition to constitutional changes such as our merger with the Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff Local 4414, we’re currently in the process of re-carding every CTU member. These extremist are a lot less likely to spend their billions attacking our union if our 24,000 members have just filled out new cards that recommit us to union membership and prepare us to fight their anti-worker initiatives.

We’ve already seen Rauner—who initiated the Janus suit—along with Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Illinois General Assembly and the Koch/Rauner-funded Illinois Policy Institute push laws to limit workers’ rights, wages and benefits in Illinois. States like Wisconsin have already enacted these kinds of anti-union bargaining schemes, wiping out thousands of dollars in salaries and benefits for the average worker. We’re not going to let this happen to our members. In the face of the national Janus attack, we’re still in a strong position to fight back.

Janes will be a new fight, but it’s not our only fight. The CTU has embraced and embodied the work of social justice movements for nearly a decade, and it is for this reason that another constitutional change comes in the preamble of our Constitution and By-Laws, where our mission expands “to promote racial, economic and social justice in order to achieve educational justice and build community and labor coalitions to achieve that objective.” In this issue, you will learn that for our union, “racial, economic and social justice” is education justice, whether it be the struggle to save special education, an examination of the #MeToo movement, championing the evolution of restorative practices or our participation in the National Black Lives Matter at School Week, starting Feb. 5.

Right now, we’re battling yet another attack on our school communities from the mayor and his handpicked Board of Education. Level 1 elementary school National Teachers Academy (NTA), Hirsch High School and every high school in the Englewood community is slated for an attack detrimental to our members, and the students and families they serve. For NTA, our sisters and brothers that Bell High School in Cleveland has been attacked are not alone. Illinois schools like Englewood, students feel that they don’t have a vote or voice in plans to close all four high schools in their community—a community that long suffered from chronic disinvestment and neglect. At Hirsch, there are plans to hand the school over to a charter operator with ties to scandal-plagued SUPES Academy and a history of fiscal mismanagement.

So while some may not agree with our union’s pursuit of education justice, the decision to do so comes out of necessity, as powers that be such as Rahm, Rauner and Trump are hell bent on destroying us and everything for which we stand. Recognize our place as leaders in this movement, and understand that education rights are civil rights. As the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said:

“We are recognizing our place as leaders in this movement, and understand that education rights are civil rights.”

In solidarity,

Karen GJ Lewis, NBCT

In solidarity,
What #MeToo means in CPS

In a watershed moment, brave women sharing their stories about sexual assault, abuse and harassment have taken down some of the most powerful men in our society. Celebrities like Gabrielle Union, Gwyneth Paltrow and Alyssa Milano have used Tarana Burke’s #metoo hashtag to illustrate the “magnitude of the problem” and expose the deep underbelly of misogyny and patriarchy in everyday American life. President Donald Trump has so far avoided an ethics investigation for his reprehensible attacks on women, but you get the feeling that this movement has just begun to make its presence felt.

But Burke originally created the platform to give voice to the experiences of ordinary women, particularly working class women, including women of color—not just the rich, white and famous among us. She warns that the trend so far minimizes at best, and ignores at worst, the most abused and marginalized women who target for sexual and domestic abuse.

More than 60 percent of American women report being sexually harassed, according to a recent Quinnipiac University poll, and of that 60 percent, 69 percent say they’ve experienced it at work. Yet conservatives like U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos are promoting policies that help males accused of sexual assault on college campuses dodge charges of misconduct and cast doubt on the veracity of their victims.

Some are calling for a “cultural revolution” to address the foundations of anti-female animus in our country, arguing that men must also challenge their dependency upon a social structure that puts them in positions of power over women—and rewards them for that power. According to a study by the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, none of 2014’s top 100 films starred a woman over the age of 45. In a study of 2,000 films produced in 2016, men held 88 percent of lead roles. Even cult classics like the original Star Wars trilogy show startling sexism. In those three movies, no woman other than Carrie Fisher’s Princess Leia character speaks more than 63 seconds—one-third of 1 percent—in the films’ 386 total minutes.

What does all of this mean for the Chicago Teachers Union? As a union led by members who are 75 percent female, we’re committed to challenging acts of sexism and abuse in our workplaces, curriculum and the way our city’s political establishment relates to issues of schooling. Our field representatives stand ready to help members who are targets of sexual harassment, mistreatment or abuse. If you are in need of any assistance, go to www.ctunet.com/for-members/contacts to find your rep or call 312-329-9100.

Jackson Potter
CTU Staff Coordinator

My students are my kids

“My students are my kids” is the motto that I recite to myself daily as I prepare for another workday. Every day, I come to work uncertain if I will see all of my students, wondering if they have had a proper night of rest, or wondering if they were somewhere warm enjoying a nice, hot meal. I know that my students face tremendous amounts of challenges outside of the four walls of our classroom. Many of my students have faced various forms of trauma, including poverty and homelessness. I have had students come to school late and say, “Miss Taylor, I’ve missed the school’s breakfast, I’m hungry and I want to eat.” I’ve spent numerous nights crying for students who are experiencing the emotional drainage of going through the Department of Child and Family Services and being removed from their homes.

Yet I wonder, “Where are the adequate services and resources to help support my students in their trauma? Where are the adequate services and resources to help support me as I help my students?”

I’ve waited for an answer for a long time. I realized early in my career, however, that I have to become an advocate for my kids and fight for their needs. Although I’m mandated to help my kids perform at or above grade level and help to improve data, I find it equally important to help nourish the social and emotional development of my kids. Although I aim to make them effectively prepared for their academic journeys, it is equally important for me to show them love. It doesn’t matter if we have a rough day with listening ears in kindergarten, my kids always know that Miss Taylor loves them, cares for them and will fight for them. I find myself spending my free time seeking out donations to help meet the basic needs of my kids. They deserve the best and it is my job to provide them with the best.

When they walk through the doors of our classroom, they forget about that trauma, even if it’s only for a little while. Our classroom has become a comfort for them—a haven to escape the realities of their young worlds. We are a community. I can’t tell what the future holds for me or for my kids. It is this moment that matters most—to help them through their trauma and to let them know that someone cares about them.

I care about them.

My students are my kids.

La’Tia Taylor
Hendricks Elementary
Growing our own

When I entered the classroom at the Chicago Teacher Union Foundation’s (CTUF) Quest Center facility for our monthly cohort meeting on a Saturday morning in November, it was unusually quiet, despite being full of Grow Your Own (GYO) candidates and graduates. This group is generally not quiet. I noticed everyone was in a circle in quiet contemplation, and in the center of the circle were items placed together in what looked to be a ceremonial fashion. This was my introduction to a restorative practice session provided by the amazing staff of the CTUF Quest Center for GYO candidates and graduates, and though it was brief, it was truly transformative. I witnessed teachers and future teachers begin to see their classroom roles slightly differently—to see what was possible and ways to create a new paradigm that was not just about new methods of classroom management, but rather an entirely new way of relating to their students through compassion, trust and a social justice lens. It was a not just a set of new practices to implement, but rather, it was a philosophy to transform ourselves, and our relationships to our students and classrooms. This one Saturday is just a snapshot of how transformative GYO’s deepening relationship with the Chicago Teachers Union and the CTUF Quest Center has been for us. As we began our work together a year ago to more intentionally recruit CTU PRSP members into our program, I had no idea it would have such a profound impact on the work we do. Our partners at the CTUF Quest Center have dug in deeply as we began once again to recruit and admit new candidates into our program. As we re-imagined the program during and after the budget impasse, our partners at the CTUF Quest Center have been part of the process every step of the way.

We are about to begin our second wave of new admissions to GYO, and our partners at the CTU and CTUF Quest Center will be at the table with us as we interview potential candidates. They have helped us craft an innovative and compelling curriculum for our monthly cohort meetings, which are critical in GYO’s process of developing social justice-minded teachers who will become agents of change within their classrooms, schools and communities. Our cohort meetings provide the additional community- and justice-focused education that makes GYO different. The restorative practices session from last fall was the first in a series of learnings the CTU and CTUF are providing for our candidates and graduates. During the 2017-2018 academic year, CTU will also provide a session titled “Race, Identity & Systems of Oppression” and another on the meaning and importance of union membership.

Our partnership with the CTU and CTUF Quest Center has not only helped us in very practical ways, like expanding our recruitment efforts to their membership, but also in very profound ways in terms of deepening and expanding a unique curriculum that shapes the type of teachers our candidates become.

Kate Van Winkle
Grow Your Own Illinois
Executive Director

We insist on equality for our schools

One of the saddest facts about Chicago public education is the imposed destruction of the district’s schools from within. From the days of segregation, to the days of money without condition in the post-civil rights era, those who ran Chicago Public Schools have messed over students, Black teachers and the economy in their neighborhoods, as well as how they have damaged the profession and affected how we do our jobs. As a result, we categorically condemn the school closings proposed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel in December. As in other sectors of the economy from the inception of this nation, history bears out that Black people have been used and targeted to increase the profits of those decision-makers who hold all of the power in society. We support members of the community who are fighting back against these and all attacks, and suggest that all testing contracts, requests for proposals for charters and vending contracts be suspended, and considered for termination if applicable. They have not served the students of Chicago well, and only the efforts of the remaining educators have improved or held fast the educational experience for our students. We also insist that those fired teachers—teachers who were put out of a job through the unscrupulous plans of the heads of Chicago and the CEOs who work underneath them—should at least have their credentials reinstated and their benefits available.

Lastly, we posit that only a school system where professional power lies with the people who have direct contact with the children is the hope of the future, and a bulwark against monetary waste and flighty trends that waste the hope of the future, and a bulwark against monetary waste and flighty trends that waste
How to be a good delegate

Fulton Elementary School delegate explains how to be a champion for your colleagues and your union.

By ANDREA PARKER

W e are still alive. Complaints flare. Workplace violations are rampant. PSRPs are not getting a lunch break. Teachers are forced to complete so much paperwork that they can’t clock out until 7 p.m. Members want change but have no direction.

Many members who thought standing up for their good deeds are underappreciated. The eventual rewards, however, outweigh all of this.

Let us help you become a REACH liaison for your school

By TINA FRANKLIN-BERTRAND, NBCT, AND THERESA INSALACO-DECICCO, NBCT

It is with great excitement that the Chicago Teachers Union Elementary School Steering Committee is re-launching the REACH liaison program. REACH liaisons are CTU members voluntarily trained to provide support to colleagues at their school in the REACH observation and evaluation process. They share evaluation support, best practice advice and advocate for the success of their fellow brothers and sisters who are evaluated using REACH at their school.

As a REACH liaison, you advocate for your own practice as well as that of your colleagues. Additionally, knowing that there is in-house support for this sometimes stressful process increases staff solidarity in the building. Colleagues know and feel that they can build upon each other’s pedagogical and professional strengths to meet REACH with success.

From 2014-2016, there were almost 150 active REACH liaisons trained to liaise in schools throughout the district. While many of these liaisons continue to actively support teachers at their school, others have moved to different schools, retired or left the district. Because of this, the CTU Elementary School Steering Committee has decided to re-ignite the liaison program by inviting CTU members throughout the district to REACH liaison trainings. Additionally, the program will offer follow-up sessions to help maintain active support of REACH liaisons throughout the school year.

The vision of the Elementary Steering Committee is to begin training REACH liaisons for the 2018-2019 school year beginning in February of 2018. The goal is to have a minimum of one REACH liaison in every CPS school (both elementary and high schools by September of 2018), and for larger schools, having two REACH liaisons is highly recommended.

If you are interested in becoming a REACH liaison, please complete the REACH Liaison Interest Survey at https://tinyurl.com/REACH-liaison.

Tina Franklin-Bertrand, NBCT, is a teacher at Bouche Math and Science Academy, and Theresa Insalaco-Decisco, NBCT, is a CTU Foundation professional development facilitator.

You look around. No hands are raised. Some people are even sitting on them. Heads are even down as if everyone just heard they were being laid off. You think of competing, and it’s a race you know you can win because nobody really wants to run.

Being a delegate is like entering unchartered waters. And you know if you don’t raise your hand, then there will be no delegate or the principal will make a recommendation.

This was me seven years ago. I was at Curtis School of Excellence then, and I took the plunge and have no regrets. I read the contract, respected the contract, applied the contract and taught others how to do so as well. Because of that, I earned my staff $60,000 in back pay that they didn’t know they had coming, because being told to work for 15 minutes daily without proper approval from a delegate was a violation of our contract. I educated my colleagues, and once-timid staff who thought standing up for their rights meant hating the principal became proud, contract-carrying union educators.

Yes, at first things seemed dismal as a delegate. Most new teachers refused to come to my monthly union meetings. And if they did, the principal knew everything that was discussed and sent bulletins via email—before the meeting was even adjourned.

But that didn’t stop me. The more staff read the contract, they asked more questions and I was able to provide more clarity. They gained more confidence because they knew other teachers had their back, and not just me. This was why there were no strike breakers from my school during the historic 2012 strike.

As a delegate, you may be targeted by your principal. You may be shunned by some fearful colleagues.

You may have some sleepless nights wondering why your good deeds are underappreciated. The eventual rewards, however, outweigh all of this.

So, to delegates and potential delegates: Do you want to be a great representative? Here’s how.

Attend the monthly House of Delegates meetings. It is here where you will meet like-minded delegates and gain knowledge about CTU updates, contracts and events, and learn how to support other organizations with similar causes.

There are also important issues to vote on regarding the Union and your school. If you do not attend, then your school’s voice will not be heard.

Share information during monthly union meetings at your school. Having meetings shows your consistency, knowledge and concern for others. You can also answer questions and schedule one-on-one meetings with skeptics to gain more allies.

Attend the annual delegates’ training to learn the nuances of being a successful delegate—how to start committees at your school, motivate your colleagues and maintain a professional relationship with school-level administration without compromising Union principles.

Wear red on Fridays. Whether you are wearing a CTU shirt or other attire, by wearing red, you and your colleagues send a loud message to your school’s voice will not be heard.

Attend conferences and meetings during the historic 2012 strike. The eventual victory will always be ours.

Maintain a positive attitude and don’t give up. So many people are depending on you, so be flexible and keep a smile on your face. Don’t let anyone see you sweat.

I am not going to sugarcoat the truth. Sometimes, House of Delegates meetings run long. You may have to travel long distances. You may miss your favorite television show. You may be asked to rally on cold nights. You may have disagreements with leadership. The votes may not always go your way. Plus, our union is facing some challenging times. The threat of closing four Englewood high schools—John Hope (my alma mater), Harper, Robeson and TEAM Englewood—is brewing. There is the possibility of neighbor- hood schools being threatened by new charter schools with operators who will attempt to deceive community parents that their schools are the better choice. For example, CPS may be selling the Kohn Elementary building, closed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel in 2013, to a charter school—housed right between Hughes and Lavisco elementary schools on Chicago’s South Side.

As a delegate, how will you encourage your staff to support their colleagues? What hurts one of us, hurts all of us. In battle, however, you win some and you lose some, but the true victory will always be ours.

Delegate elections are coming up. If you are a delegate, will you stay on the winning team and be a conduit for your staff members? Let’s look at it in terms of the film, The Matrix. If you are thinking about answering the call, will you ignore the call and take the blue pill where people will tell you how to think? Or will you eagerly take the red pill and open your eyes to a new world of influence, reform and peace?

Andrea Parker is a CTU district supervisor and works at a middle school English Language Arts teacher at Robert Fulton Elementary.
An injury to one is an injury to all

Some news and notes related to enforcement of our contract with the Board of Ed

By THE CTU GRIEVANCE DEPARTMENT

Foreman delegate returns

Longtime CTU delegate Audrey Phelan was laid off from Foreman High School last summer. The school has seen large drops in enrollment over the past three years, so layoffs were expected. It was never expected, however, that Phelan would be impacted. She had been a vocal advocate for teachers—especially through her contract enforcement of teacher prep time.

It turned out that there were teachers with less seniority in positions that didn’t actually require a specific subject area endorsement. Courses that don’t count toward a high school grade 9-12 license. This was learned when Social Studies teachers at Washington High School were forced to teach Argumentative Literacy language arts classes. That same logic was applied to the positions where only One Goal, Online Learning and Senior Seminar were taught.

Phelan returned to Foreman and is very grateful to be back with her colleagues, saying:

Someone asked me if I was surprised a fellow displaced teacher didn’t win his grievance. I answered that I was surprised I won mine! I returned to my school amidst congratulations and hugs, but the real winner is our contract, those who fought hard to get it and those who fought hard to protect it.

Rights for counselors

The Union took another step toward getting relief for high school counselors who are teaching classes. In August of 2013, an arbitrator ruled that Clemente High School counselors had to be paid if they were given the extra duty of teaching classes for credit. The Chicago Board of Education fought this ruling, an unfair labor practice charge was filed and our union won. Eventually the Board had to pay out more than $100,000 in back pay and penalties.

That same school year (2013-2014), three high schools continued this practice, despite the arbitrator’s ruling for the Clemente counselors. The union filed three more separate grievances on behalf of counselors at Lincoln Park, Washington and Juarez high schools. The Board agreed to a settlement for the three schools in August 2016, and authorized payments worth more than $210,000 for the counselors.

This action is an important step to ensure that counselors can do the job they were trained to perform. Teaching courses for a grade and classroom management impact the confidential relationship between counselors and students. The counselor needs to be a person students can confide in, and not someone affected by the power dynamic of issuing a grade as a classroom teacher.

Mollison fights back

Sometimes we can enforce our rights without filing a grievance. Teachers have faced deplorable conditions due to the Aramark custodial contract with Chicago Public Schools. This has been an ongoing fight where the union has filed multiple grievances and is working to hold Aramark accountable.

Despite these cries for help, it was a video that went viral that brought much-needed attention to the filthy conditions in many classrooms. The teachers recorded a video of the mice, shared it with their union reps, who then called the Board and demanded immediate action (which turned out to be woefully insufficient). The videos were then posted on the CTU website, where the press took notice and the subsequent reporting led to public outrage and the Board was forced to address the cleanliness issues at the school.

Pushback against non-certified/non-CTU teachers

This magazine reported in a June 2016 article written by Darwin Elementary delegate Jackie Charles on an ongoing practice at the school where a union teacher was laid off and replaced with a non-certified karate instructor from a local academy. This was done to save $50,000. It is a shame that a school like Darwin, which has made such great progress and achieved great success, is forced to resort to such measures to meet its budget.

It appears as though that the Board is not fulfilling the commitment it made following the 2012 strike, when Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s longer school day was expected to include a well-rounded curriculum with arts, music and world language. Reports have been sent to the union of miscellaneous/seasonal teachers filling the full-time rolls of classroom teachers. Principals now use paraprofessionals and non-union employees to also teach full-time in classrooms. All of this is done by principals in order to meet their budget demands. Meanwhile, the longer school day is not living up to its promise of more instructional minutes with a diverse curriculum.

Success with the ratings appeals process

The appeals process for ratings issued during the 2016-2017 school year has been completed. Teachers rated Ununsatisfactory or Developing are allowed to challenge the merit of their rating through this process. The overall number of appeals was down this year, as well as the total number of low ratings in the district.

The reduction in lower ratings should be attributed to the hard work of teachers throughout the district. Many teachers have become familiar with the Danielson/REACH model and are better able to advocate for themselves. Now, it’s only a matter of time until the district calls for a new evaluation measurement—once teachers have learned how to demonstrate their proficiency using this assessment tool.

Grading guidelines

The Mireles Elementary School principal violated our new grading guidelines when she mandated three grades per week. The new guidelines allow for individual autonomy as long as the teacher enters one grade per week. The principal met with staff and asked if they objected to three per week. This was a problem, because the guidelines don’t allow for a school vote or for any side agreement between teachers and principals. Mandating the number of grades per week should be left up to individual teachers, as long as each teacher has enough entries to have a valid average at the end of the quarter.

Mireles teachers were not fully aware of their rights in the guidelines. They only found out after the principal disciplined a teacher for not having enough grades. The principal was belligerent when told that this mandate violated the new guidelines, and the Mireles teacher field representative then arranged a staff meeting where it was confirmed that the teachers never knew their rights when they “agreed” to the principal’s mandates.

The principal still refused to make any adjustments and rescind the discipline. This led to the Union’s first grievance related to grading guideline violation. The union also surveyed the staff and the results demonstrated that teachers prefer planning lessons rather than grading assignments. The teachers also demonstrated that they would rather grade meaningful work instead of issuing compliance-based grades in order to maintain three grades per week. This grievance is an important step to hold both principals and the Board accountable to honor their agreements with the Union.
“The impact on a child’s life should they be forced to change schools should not be underestimated.”

“Everything our students go through in Englewood, and now they have to go through this.”

“NTA students have come out in force to stand up for their community and have shown amazing knowledge, leadership and have demanded justice for our school.”

“The city is using school planning to shift demographics in neighborhoods like the South Loop...this is simply done for those with wealth and power, not for the sake of integration as CPS is telling the community.”

“It is very disheartening to me that CPS has proposed to close all four public high schools in Englewood.”

“My single concern is what is best for the children. This is the legal standard for most things in family law, and it should patently and unequivocally be the standard when it comes to closing a school.”

“I lived the life of a military wife for 20 years, and my children moved for most of those years. My eldest went to no fewer than eight schools, and she has stated that the moves were detrimental on the whole.”

“No one values educating and keeping students safe.”

“The truth is the wealthy and white elite have brokered a deal with the politicians of this city to get a high school that continues to allow them access to things others do not have.”

“Why is it that our students at NTA need to be used as political pawns to satisfy the needs of a select few in the neighborhood?”

“School closings in Englewood hurt the students for sure, but also, teachers are forced to leave a place where they may be impacting change for students and the community.”

“I question how reliable the information is that CPS provides to its stakeholders.”

“They’re destroying a sense of community when they close schools without considering how those impacted feel or are able to adjust.”
“This is my 15th year at Robeson. I really thought I was going to retire from there. Some alumni work there and I love hearing their stories. It makes me sad that all of that history is going to be gone, and eventually, probably forgotten.”

“Like most teachers, I’m more than a teacher to the students. I love them like I love my own children and they know it.”

“Closing all four high schools in Englewood will leave a gaping hole on the south side without any neighborhood high schools.”

“Closing the doors
School closings result in upheaval and damage that is often irreparable for a school community. Here are testimonials from CTU members who find themselves on the district’s latest chopping block

BY RONNIE REESE

Chicago Public Schools’ so-called ‘choice model’ purports to offer a variety of education options for students and their families, but instead, has benefitted a limited number of well-resourced magnet schools and a large number of charter schools, while defunding other schools using student-based budgeting. The reality is that the choice model has destabilized Black and Latino neighborhoods, driven families from Chicago, and left many neighborhood schools struggling to offer students a quality curriculum—starved of even the most basic resources.

CPS is proposing the closure of all four neighborhood high schools in Englewood—Hope, Robeson, Harper and TEAM Englewood. The district also plans to phase out National Teachers Academy in the South Loop, and co-locate a clout-heavy charter school whose operator is linked to scandal-ridden SUPES Academy (of Barbara Byrd-Bennett shame) into Hirsch High School.

Chicago Union Teacher asked members at these schools to share their stories, and under the condition of anonymity, provide a glimpse into what it feels like to be part of a school community under attack.

“The students at my school do not want Hope to be closed and their parents did not vote on the closing of the four public schools in Englewood as Board members have stated.”

“My students are mad that there will not be a neighborhood high school for them to go to and the new ‘neighborhood’ high schools are not near their neighborhood. They say it’s stupid to close all the high schools before the new one is open. They’re also not happy that they will not be able to go to the new school. They said, ‘How are they going to put us out of our school and we can’t go to the new school?”

The students are angry, confused and disappointed. No one from Central Office has come to talk with them.”

“Why is it that our students at NTA need to be used as political pawns to satisfy the needs of a select few in the neighborhood?”

“NTA presents an opportunity to show those in power that honesty, justice and fairness can prevail in our city.”
W hose fault is it when a neighborhood school is closed? The Chicago Board of Education sometimes blames the school itself, using test scores and other measures to label it as a “failing school.” Sometimes the Board cites declining enrollment to label the school as “under-utilized.” Sometimes the Board accepts arguments that nearby charter schools might do better than the neighborhood school.

Yet these “reasons” for closing a school ignore the crucial question of why the school is struggling. It is often the Board’s own fault. Neighborhood schools have been weak-ened by years of attacks and disinvest-ment. The closing of a school is usually the end result of many years of decisions by the Board. I witnessed one of these slow, insidious attacks. I am a former teacher at Hirsch Metropolitan High School in the Grand Crossing neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side. The dis-investment began years before my time there, and has continued since.

One indication of this was the school’s Olympic-sized swimming pool. When the school was built, the ability to swim was a high school graduation requirement. Yet by the time I arrived at Hirsch, physical education classes no longer taught swimming. Hirsch had a swim team, but the swimmers practiced and competed in a pool in a Chicago Park District field house. The school’s pool was unused because the Board of Edu-caction did not budget funds for pool maintenance and lifeguards.

Other amenities disappeared during my 10 years at Hirsch. Our foreign language program was cut, from offering a choice of French or Spanish, to Spanish only. Our mu-sic faculty was cut, so the principal could either keep the band director or the choir director, but not both.

Rooms that had been designed as dedicated science labs were con-vertd to ordinary classrooms, as the Bunsen burners, sinks and exhaust hoods for chemical experiments were no longer maintained. Science supplies that had filled floor-to-ceil-ing shelves and drawers were grad-ually used up, and science teachers had to go into their own pockets or use outside funding sources such as Donors Choose when they wanted to give students a chance to conduct hands-on experiments.

An especially harsh blow was the Board’s decision to close our well-equipped radio/TV studio. Until then, many Hirsch students pre-pared for careers in broadcasting as they created, filmed and edited their own documentaries, and an in-house news program that was shown in all our classrooms via closed circuit TV. Killing the radio/TV program was an attack on the very identity of the school, for our full name was Hirsch Metropolitan High School of Com-munications. The budget cuts continued. The school lost its librarianship. The journalism department lost funding, so there was no money to print our yearbook.

In a vicious cycle, the program cuts made it harder to recruit and retain students, and the ensuing enrollment drop led to further bud-get cuts. Five years ago, as Hirsch’s enrollment continued to drop, my special education teaching position was cut. More teaching positions have been cut since then.

At its highest, Hirsch’s student population was about 1,200, in a building designed to hold some 1,000 students. This was shortly after I started teaching there, when Hirsch still offered French classes and had its radio/TV studio. The jump in enrollment was due to one of the Board’s waves of poorly planned school closures, when the Board suddenly closed a number of schools at once, and Hirsch took in some of the displaced students.

In subsequent years, our enroll-ment of incoming freshmen gradu-ally declined as the Board allowed the opening of charter schools that aggressively recruited from our neighborhood elementary schools. One of the first to open nearby was Urban Prep, which placed a charter school inside the TEAM En-glewood building. Every year, Urban Prep proudly boasts that 100 per-cent of its senior class is graduating and going to college. Yet many of the students who started as Urban Prep freshmen would eventually come to Hirsch as sophomores or juniors, so they did not count in the statistics for Urban Prep’s senior class.

Thus, Hirsch and other neighbor-hood schools indirectly contribute to the “success” claimed by charter schools. It is easier to reach 100 percent college acceptance rates by pushing out struggling students than by giving them the continuing support they expect from a neighbor-hood school.

Charter schools have another ad-vantage that tends to help them post higher test scores. Even when they admit students on the basis of a lot-tery rather than selective enrollment criteria, they attract students whose families are motivated and organized enough to meet application dead-lines. Students from less supportive environments don’t apply, and go to their neighborhood school instead.

Yet perhaps the greatest advan-tage given to charter schools is that they have not suffered years of disin-verstment. They tend to be located in new or recently renovated buildings, equipped with the latest technology.

Neighborhood schools can suc-cceed if given their fair share of re-sources. Hirsch is not the only neigh-borhood school where the library has been closed, where teachers rely on Donors Choose for supplies and where special education teaching positions have been lost. Students at all such schools deserve better than being pushed out by a new charter school.

They should not need a char-ter school to get a library, or a swim-min pool.

Black Lives Matter at Schools

Black Lives Matter at Schools was first observed in 2015 by an organization called #BlackLivesMatter. Since then, the movement has grown to include millions of people around the world. The movement aims to bring attention to the systemic racism and violence faced by Black people in the United States.

Black Lives Matter advocates for a number of policies, including:

1. Ending systemic racism and violence against Black people
2. Establishing a Black history curriculum in schools
3. Hiring and retaining Black educators and staff
4. Supporting positive school climates
5. Reforming discipline policies
6. Preserving school resources

The movement has also been involved in organizing protests and rallies to demand justice for Black people who have been killed by police or seen as threats.

Black Lives Matter has been particularly active in Chicago, where they have organized a number of protests and demonstrations. The movement has also been involved in organizing a number of protests and demonstrations in other cities around the country.

In conclusion, Black Lives Matter is a powerful movement that is working to bring attention to the systemic racism and violence faced by Black people in the United States. They are advocating for positive change in schools and communities, and are demanding justice for Black people who have been killed by police or seen as threats.
Despite rhetoric calling for positive change in CPS special education services, there is still a long way to go before righting the wrongs of previous administrations.

**The CTU Special Education Task Force**

Chicago Public Schools recently announced that it will address dangerous shortages in staffing for special education students and diverse learners, which is welcome news and the result of months of lobbying and activism by teachers, parents and advocates. New CPS CEO Janice Jackson has also vowed to overhaul her predecessor’s disastrous scheme to gut special education for public school students, promising not to let non-negotiable policies, nor to let budget concerns trump receiving much-needed services they need and to restate a parent advisory committee and hire advocates to help parents get students what they need, according to media reports. It’s refreshing talk, but at this point, it’s just that—talk.

Last year, our union fought hard against the multitude of attacks against special education, when CPS launched an all-out offensive against special education in an attempt to save money on the backs of our most fragile learners. They began the year by cutting 4 percent from every special education budget, then demanding schools “appeal” for those funds to be returned. The appeals process proved to be exceptionally racist, with more than 60 percent of appeals being awarded for majority white schools, but only 14 percent for majority Latino schools and a disgusting 9 percent of schools serving African-American students. CPS also implemented new paperwork restrictions, such as the disaster that is the Paraprofessional Justification Form, which added 3.7 extra hours of work to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process. In addition, CPS combined special education and general education functions in districts which led to a complete lack of transparency on how special education dollars were allocated, as well as forced school administrations to steal from general education to pay for federally mandated special education, pitting our students and communities against one another.

Our union fought all of these attacks with actions at City Hall, holding multiple member and parent Know Your Rights sessions, meeting with elected representatives, conducting member surveys, participating in news reports, speaking at Chicago Board of Education meetings, and other member-driven work. Through our united union resistance, we were able to force CPS to separate the special and general education budgets, cut the Paraprofessional Justification Form in half, and stop CPS from pulling 4 percent of school budgets and mandating its vicious appeals process. We also made sure that no student would be denied a special education evaluation based on CPS’ mandate around 10 weeks of Multi-Tiered System of Supports data needed to refer a student for a Specific Learning Disability. That mandate is now gone.

But the fight continues.

This year, CPS found new, devious ways to undermine special education. Instead of having school-based personnel develop appropriate special education schedules with adequate numbers of special education teachers and classroom assistants, CPS had their Office of Diverse Learners Services and Supports (ODLSS) staff dictate how many special education positions were to be allocated to each school. The handbook of ODLSS representatives could not possibly have read each and every school’s needs, nor was their staff allocations woefully insufficient to meet school needs, once again forcing principals to appeal for more positions and cut strapped school budgets elsewhere. The positions themselves, instead of being funded based on actual salaries of members, were funded at a flat $300,000 per special education teacher and $50,000 per special education classroom assistant (SECA), a total which includes pay and benefits and is well below what a majority of CPS employees actually cost a school, harming our students and their teachers.

But most perhaps insidious of all, CPS began to roll out a campaign against the continuum of services mandated by federal special education law. This past summer, former ODLSS Chief Pat Baccellieri resigned suddenly, moving the Deputy Chief of ODLSS, Liz Keenan, to the top special education spot in the district. Keenan is known for decimating the special education services in St Paul, Minnesota. There, she fought to save the district money through dismantling specialized programs and dumping all children—regardless of individual need—into general education classes. Reports of violence, families flocking the district and children’s needs going unmet follow from her time overseeing St Paul’s Special Education Department. Keenan is now attempting the same program here in Chicago and we need to be ready.

Now that disgraced former CPS CEO Forrest Claypool is gone, it is important that we keep the pressure on the district to end all of its harmful policies. The Chicago City Council and Illinois State Board of Education have both expressed concerns over the handling of special education under Claypool’s scandal-filled tenure, and in light of those attacks, all CTU members must be prepared to defend our students’ rights to the services they need.

It is impossible to make a blanket statement about the needs of a school without looking at each and every individual IEP. Beware of outsiders who come in demanding that schools do “more inclusion,” denying paraprofessional services or blocking necessary cluster placements. Members should also be prepared to resist calls to move children into general education settings when the evidence does not support that placement, and be ready to work closely with parents of students with special needs to be sure they are aware of their rights and the services available for their children. We want members to be strong in special education law and contract language that protects the learning conditions of students with special needs, and to know how to resist district interference in the IEP process and what to do if services are being illegally blocked by administration or ODLSS/Network reps. Lastly, we want to encourage members to take the contract language around special education to their Professional Problems Committees to develop plans for IEP writing coverage, collaboration time with clinicians and to share tips on how to make our challenging jobs more manageable.

Most important, we ask that all members be sure to report any special education violations to your field reps, who have been trained on special education issues.

CPS will not destroy special education in our district. We will not allow it.

There is much more work to do to defend special education. If you are interested in becoming a part of the fight, please email SaveSpecialEducation@gmail.com.

**Taking time to practice self-care**

Educators don’t often spend much time treating ourselves with love, patience and care. Although we are surrounded by our students all day, teaching can be a very isolating experience. Many times, our interactions with co-workers are in passing in the hallway or during meetings. Unfortunately, those times don’t always lend themselves to discuss our needs as the first responders for our students. Over the course of my 18 years of teaching—15 of those in CPS—I have experienced school-based trauma, including student deaths, multiple times. Until recently, acknowledging the complex trauma our students experience has not been at the forefront of educational discourse.

I wanted to take action beyond my school community to provide a place of support for staff dealing with school-based trauma. Through the responses of hundreds of Chicago Teachers Union members and the restorative practices work of the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation Quest Center, I was inspired to take this on with co-facilitator Jason Ware, an Austin College & Career Academy teacher and CTUF Quest Center Restorative Practice Specialist. Along with Westinghouse counselor Ryan Kinney, we decided that our first steps would be to create a time and space for members experiencing school-based trauma.

We will have two different sessions: The first will be about the caretaker/secondary trauma that many of us experience, and the second will be specifically for those of who have been impacted by the death of a student. Although professional development on trauma-informed practice is extremely important, it is equally important for us to consider how (and who) we are when we are working with our students. It is not easy to work in schools, but it becomes nearly impossible when staff is expected to not be fully realized human beings, who at times are hurting, overwhelmed and losing hope.

I am grateful and hopeful that these sessions will begin to provide CTU members and our colleagues an opportunity to build with others and focus on our own needs. When we show up to our schools emotionally healthy and practice self-care, we are also modeling these behaviors for our students.
Discussion surrounding the decline of African-American teachers in CPS should be expanded to address the issues faced by those who remain in the classroom

By PAVLYN JANKOV

Pay some attention to Chicago's public schools and it's clear that segregation plays a fundamental role in educational opportunity. This year, Chicago Public Schools continues to pile onto its record of segregationist policy, moving to close all four public high schools in Englewood, pushing to shut down a successful neighborhood school that serves students from both Bronzeville and the South Loop, and continuing to expand selective enrollment programming and open another charter school. CPS also slashed budgets from schools dealing with enrollment loss from communities struggling with housing instability and population decline due to gentrification.

Education segregation is so historically embedded that some may not see it as policy. "That's part of the history of Chicago," said CPS CEO Janice Jackson, "I don't think that's a CPS issue." Segregation, whether in schools or in housing, has always been a function of public policy. And an especially striking example of how policy affects segregation in CPS relates to the segregation of Black teachers. This year there are more than 60 schools without one Black teacher, and another 60 without one Latino teacher. Thirty years ago, in the aftermath of a consent decree on desegregation that CPS signed with the federal government, there was a Black teacher in nearly every CPS school—only a handful of schools had fewer than three. Black teachers predominated in schools with Black students, but they also taught across the North Side, even in schools where there were very few Black students.

The number of Black teachers in CPS started to decline rapidly in 2001 due to school closures, budget cuts, layoffs, turnovers and the district's failure to hire teachers of color. CPS has lost over 5,000 Black teachers in this time. Black teachers that have secured jobs in North Side schools are now sometimes isolated without the support of other teachers of color. Other Black teachers have formed solid bonds with principals and administrators who believe strongly in a shared vision. For teachers of color, teaching in North Side schools has many challenges. Some of the schools are in deeply segregated white communities, or have recent pasts of being predominantly white. The Chicago Teachers Union Education Policy Department spoke to several Black teachers about the segregation of CPS, including one who had taught at a variety of schools in CPS—including some North Side schools where she was the only Black teacher—and reflected on the stress and self-questioning that arises from teaching in environments where your worth is questioned because you are in the minority.

"That's one reason I'm terrified to apply to a suburb like at Lake-Grange," she said, "Not because I don't think I can be a good teacher, but because I'm afraid of how they'll receive me as an African American teacher."
The self-doubt was reinforced by another teacher's experience at a learning center in the suburbs. A student got into a debate with me about a question from a reading passage, and he had this air about him that he just wouldn't believe me. It wasn't until a white guy came by, then it was 'Oh yes, that's right.' It was the law then, once he said it! He just didn't believe me. Maybe because of who I was. Another Black teacher experienced more outright racism at a Northwest Side CPS school.

I had a student removed from my class because the parent didn't want her child to have a Black teacher. The parent didn't say that, but the student did. And she cried the day she was removed from my class.

The accountability system in CPS creates enormous stress for teachers working in segregated Black schools, so that Black teachers find their value challenged in different ways, whether in North Side or South Side schools. An African-American teacher who eventually found a stable position at a North Side school spoke about these differences in talking about a close friend who had spent her career at South Side schools, and subsequently subject to multiple rounds of turnarounds and threats of school closure.

"My friend has to do so much more to prove her worth than I do, I think, in my building," she said. "It doesn't sound like the same pressures exist in my school, which is on the Northwest Side of the city."

These complicated dynamics were captured in a remark by one teacher, who said getting to a North Side school was a lot like "treating north."

In addition to sometimes feeling unsupported and isolated without other teachers or administrators of color, teachers expressed how a curriculum that doesn't have a social justice lens can also make the space for real dialogue seem thin. For one teacher who had formerly taught at a school on the far Northwest Side, addressing racism and its history head-on are crucial steps—not just for larger society but for improving relations within the school.

We need to talk about race. We need to talk about white privilege. People not recognizing that even now, Black people go through things. The truth should be told in our history courses...because it hasn't been. Often when I've focused on our history and the injustices we've faced, the backlash has been, 'She talks about Black people too much.' No! We were left out. It's not Black history, this is all American history.

Indeed, this is what author Richard Rothstein referred to in the subtitle to his book, "The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America." In his research, Rothstein found that the history of government-sponsored discrimination and segregation was absent from the standard textbooks used in school curriculum. In one example from the book, "The Americans," the entire of "Discrimination in the North" was boiled down to one sentence that implied African-Americans simply "found themselves" pushed into segregated housing.

In reality, having fled the Jim Crow South, African-Americans found themselves in cities where systematic, state-sanctioned racism was a fine-tuned mechanism. When asked about the lack of support she felt when bracing racial issues and calling out racism in her former North Side school, one teacher cut straight to the chase.

Because it's America. It really goes deep. We as a country have not healed from our past. That's what it is. Until we have this dialogue of the past, we will always be divided.

While the textbooks left such facts out, those who continue to live through the experience haven't forgotten.}

Pavlyn. Jankov is a CTU education policy analyst. Stay tuned for more in this series on school segregation.
CPS teachers achieve National Board Certification

By LYNN CHERKASKY-DAVIS

Congratulations are in order, as we are excited to recognize Chicago Public Schools teachers, teacher-librarians and counselors for their achievement of National Board Certification. On December 16, 2017, 66 candidates learned they had joined more than 2,200 other National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) actively serving in CPS. In addition, 87 of our NBCTs renewed their certification this year, which gives CPS the third-highest number of NBCTs in the country.

Now in its 20th year, Nurturing Teacher Leadership (NTL), the CPS/Chicago Teachers Union partnership program that supports district teachers, counselors, and teacher-librarians in pursuing National Board Certification (NBC), happily celebrates the achievement of these new NBCTs. The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation Quest Center, with its 94 percent National Board Certification achievement rate, is proud to provide the professional development and candidate support programming for CPS’ NBC candidates.

“These teachers have proven that they teach to the highest standards, and they have put in the work to show their commitment to their practice and to their students,” said Peggy Broksins, NBCT and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). “It continues to be good for CPS to grow this professional group of educators, who have met the most rigorous standards of accomplished practice,” said CTU President Karen Lewis, also an NBCT. “The best part is how much our students benefit from teachers who have earned the highest credential an educator can attain.”

An increasing body of research shows that NBCTs are more likely to improve academic outcomes for students—up to one and a half months of additional learning in a year—as well as advance their careers. “Experiencing the process of becoming an NBCT also helps teachers master the REACH Framework,” said President Lewis, as they are observed and present and defend student achievement in their classrooms.

This year’s new NBCTs are the first to certify under a redesigned assessment system, organized around four key components: classroom-based portfolio entries and a set of computer-based written Assessment Center exams of content area knowledge. Teachers, counselors and teacher librarians who enroll in the NTL program receive a full scholarship for the NBPTS application fee and for the program’s two-year process, during which candidates demonstrate how they tailor instruction to drive individual academic gains, submit videos of classroom teaching with analysis of their practice and reflections on what went well and what didn’t, and provide examples of ways they’ve used data and school and community resources to improve outcomes for their students. They examine their learning environment and instructional practices to determine and highlight the best ways in which they address student needs. The CPS REACH teacher evaluation system aligns to the four components of NBC.

“National Board Certification is about helping teachers become great, it is about elevating the teaching profession and it is about helping children achieve at a higher rate,” Broksins said. “The certification process impacts teaching and learning well beyond an individual teacher’s classroom.”

The rewards of this predominantly performance-based process also reflect this impact beyond the classroom. CPS NBCTs are the first to be considered for leadership and advocacy opportunities at the district, union, university and state level, such as Framework Specialists, Consulting Teachers, ISBE licensure board membership, mentoring of new teachers, adjunct professorships and more.

Financial rewards for CPS NBCTs include an annual stipend of more than $1,960. As they go through the process, candidates can earn graduate credit (leading to an optional master’s degree) as well as CPS Lane Placement credit, enabling them to advance on the CPS salary schedule.

We invite you to join this challenging process. Nurturing Teacher Leadership, with its 94 percent achievement rate, is now recruiting candidates for the 2018-20 certification cycle.

Lynn Cherkasky-Davis is the CTU Quest Center Director of Teacher Leadership/National Board Certification. Please visit www.ctauf.org/QuestCenter/NTL for more information about National Board Certification and www.ncte.org/2017nbcts for a list of all new National Board Certified Teachers.

Re-card and resist (right-to-work)

By CAROL CAREF, PH.D., AND CHRIS GEOVANIS

Anti-union school privatizers thought they could undermine the Chicago Teachers Union by requiring that 75 percent of our members vote “yes” to strike. Then, more than 90 percent of members voted to go on strike—twice. The bad guys are still at it. As early as this April, the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule against unions in the Janus v. AFSCME case, a case that right-wing billionaire Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner first instigated. The day after that ruling, all agency fee payers stop funding the union, and any “free-riders” can stop paying dues but still get all of the benefits of membership. The opposition’s goal is to defund, and ultimately destroy, fighting unions like the CTU.

Janus will effectively force “right to work (for less)” policies on every public sector worker in the nation. States with right-to-work laws today are states where people have no rights at work, with low wages, few benefits, no health insurance and no job protection when they’re singled out for punishment—just a few of the things the CTU has fought for and won.

We can beat back the right wing by re-carding every single union member, and we’re well on our way, as close to 60 percent of members have re-carded, renewed their support for the Union and pledged to keep us strong in the face of right-wing attacks.

Contact your field rep or organizer to get cards, and volunteer to help your delegate distribute them to members in your building. Then collect the signed cards and turn them in at union headquarters. You can also drop off cards at the union’s House of Delegate meetings, or at our upcoming Delegates, Building Representatives and School Leaders Training, scheduled for Thursday, March 8 and Saturday, March 10 at CTU headquarters.

We can do this. We will do this. Show Rahm, Rauner, Trump and all their cronies what union power looks like, and join this campaign to re-card, resist and build our power!

Carol Caref, Ph.D., is director of the CTU Education Policy Department and Chris Geovanis is director of the CTU Communications Department.
Lists of deceased members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) are provided to the Chicago Union Teacher by the office of the Teachers Pension Fund (CTPF) and are printed as received. If you notice an error or omission, please first contact the CTPF at 312.641.4464 or via email at memberservices@ctpf.org to report the information. Please contact the CTU Financial Dept. as well by phoning 312.329.9100. Both the CTPF and CTU disburse death benefits to a member’s designated beneficiaries.

November 14
November 9
October 21

In memoriam
Pinson, /Th ofo W.; Soto, Karen J.; Toomey, Hopkins, Anne; Pedersen, Christian E.; Flanagin, Eleanor D.; Lancaster, Elizabeth Victor; Westfall, Michael F.; uni
L.; Maeda, Ann T.; Manesis, Nick G.; Ochoa, Ehrenberg, Jody; Gould, Derek J.; Gryglak, Wozniak Francis, Erika B. /uni
Blaszczyk, Diane L.; Erzrumly, Layla; Hill, /uni
Davis, Stephanie A.; Demeros, Aspasia

November 16
November 18
November 24

November 30
November 29
December 3
December 3
December 2
December 1
November 30
November 30

Merritt, L.; Bures, Robert F.; Christensen, William E.; Smith, Cynthia Y.; Warner, Kimberly A.; Smith, Sylvia; Garcia, Chandra D.; Diaz, Sara R.; Renteria, Greco-Serwa, Sandra M. /uni
Bowling, Alex B.; Doe, Darrin L.; Robinson, Tracy Y. /NETWORK
Almen, Robert; Bobo, Jennifer L.; Bright, Janine M.; Moss, Batia L.; Milton, Wilsoue; Miller, Tankoe S.; Speir, Nicholas; Walton, Jennifer B.; Whithhead, Sheryl F. /NETWORK 10B Collina, Jason E.; Fane, Mariel H.; Axt, Tyrone T.; Nofdy, Maria J.; Silva, Sofia R. /NETWORK 13C

Dooley, Barbara J.; Bullocks, Latonya

Write for Chicago Union Teacher

L
ove? Hate? Agree? Disagree? Send Chicago Union Teacher your feedback, comments, and letters. Send letters to the editor to leadership@ctuloa1.com or Chicago Union Teacher, 100 W. Carroll St., Chicago, Illinois, 60610.

Letters to the editor should not exceed 400 words and may be edited for length and clarity.

Inclusion is at the discretion of Chicago Teachers Union leadership and Chicago

Write for us Chicago Union Teacher is published for the members of the Chicago Teachers Union. It is your magazine. Members can—and should—submit articles about whatever topics they consider relevant to our overall mission of advancing and promoting quality public education, teaching and improving learning and teaching conditions, and protecting members’ rights. The magazine consists of three primary types of articles—letters to the editor (explained above), short-form content and long-form content. Examples of short-form content are reviews, announcements, event recaps and campaign updates, which are not to exceed 400 words. Examples of long-form content are op-eds and feature stories. Op-eds should not exceed 800 words, while feature stories should be between 1,200-2,000 words.

All work, but especially features, must be submitted with artwork and/or images. All graphics must be high-resolution and in full color, and be submitted with photography credit and captions where applicable.

Email all submissions for consideration to leadership@ctuloa1.com with the subject line, “For CUT.” Articles may be edited for length and clarity, and inclusion is at the discretion of Chicago Teachers Union leadership and Chicago Union Teacher editors.

Advertise with us Chicago Union Teacher accepts classified advertisements from CTU members at a discounted rate, and from outside organizations for a reasonable cost. For more information, contact Advertising Manager April Stigger at aprilstigger@ctuloa1.com or 312-329-6225.
The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation (CTUF) is dedicated to building a stronger and more connected educational community in Chicago, and I am privileged to have been able to serve in this mission for the past few months as a restorative justice practitioner. Through the support of the CTUF Quest Center, I lent my support to multiple community events promoting peace and youth leadership.

Over the summer, the CTUF partnered with #OurStoryChi, a project led by members of the Black Lives Matter Chicago chapter to center youth-led activism and youth voice in their neighborhood. This collaboration helped spread knowledge and practices of peacemaking and restorative justice to a group of youth leaders and community members in Bronzeville. Our dedication to community and youth-based work has not ended there, however, as the Quest Center has set its sights on supporting the Austin community with a sustained effort of resources and program development in an array of areas.

My main role in Austin has been to partner with Austin Coming Together (ACT), a member-based community organization with a specialty in coalition building, to assist in developing and building its restorative justice hub. ACT has been coordinating peace circle trainings around the Austin community for well over a year. I had the great pleasure last summer and fall to help put together ACT’s youth-based “I Love Austin” summit at the historic Austin town hall where a group of students from the high school where I currently teach, Austin College & Career Academy, shared their knowledge and interest for restorative justice and its practices. My students were able to close out the event by leading and facilitating peace circles for all in attendance.

Since then, I have been fortunate to continue training a small group of youth in Austin in restorative practices and supporting the development of monthly community talking circles. It has been an honor thus far working with the support of the CTUF Quest Center to invest in our youth and school communities in ways that transcend the classroom.

Jason Ware is a teacher at Austin College & Career Academy and a CTUF Quest Center restorative practice specialist.

Charter operations in question

Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund files suit against Prologue, Inc., for failure to report teachers and make pension contributions

The Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund (CTPF) filed a lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court in December against Prologue, Inc., the operator of the now-closed Joshua Johnston Charter School for Fine Art and Design (Johnston). The suit alleges that between at least January 2013 and June 2016, Prologue failed to report the employment of licensed teachers and to pay pension contributions on behalf of Johnston to determine if there was additional non-reporting of licensed teachers and non-payment of pension contributions on their behalf. Additionally, the lawsuit alleges breach of fiduciary duty, fraud, unjust enrichment, trover and conversion, and violation of the Illinois Wage Payment and Collection Act in connection with the defendants’ failure to accurately report and pay contributions on behalf of teachers.

The CTPF filed the suit after an audit of Prologue’s finances by a CTPF-engaged outside accounting firm, for the period January 1, 2013, through June 30, 2016, revealed widespread underreporting of pensionable wages and a failure to pay required contributions on behalf of licensed personnel at Johnston. The school received more than $8.3 million in public funds from the Board of Education between 2013 and 2016. The audit found more than $1.4 million in underreported wages and more than $830,000 in unpaid pension contributions during the audited period.

Chicago’s licensed teachers do not participate in Social Security. Instead, the Illinois Pension Code requires a payment of 9 percent of salary to fund pensions. Prologue agreed to pay 6.2 percent of the required employee contribution (the same as the required contribution for employees participating in Social Security), and the employees were to pay the remaining 2.8 percent of the contribution. Prologue violated the Illinois Pension Code by failing to report the employment of licensed teachers, and failing to report and remit employee contributions deducted from salaries of teachers or to pay its 6.2 percent employer share.

The Chicago Board of Education rescinded its charter agreement with Prologue to operate Johnston in August 2016. The Board filed a separate lawsuit against Prologue on March 3, 2017, (City of Chicago v. Prologue Inc., No. 2017–CH–03181 in the Circuit Court of Cook County) alleging breach of contract and demanding financial accountability after Prologue refused to provide adequate financial records and information following the termination of its contracts with CPS.

Established by the Illinois state legislature in 1895, the Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund manages members’ assets and administers benefits. The $10.5 billion pension fund serves more than 63,000 active and retired educators, and provides pension and health insurance benefits to approximately 28,258 beneficiaries.

Peace gods

By JASON WARE

The Chicago Teachers Union Foundation (CTUF) is dedicated to building a stronger and more connected educational community in Chicago, and I am privileged to have been able to serve in this mission for the past few months as a restorative justice practitioner. Through the support of the CTUF Quest Center, I lent my support to multiple community events promoting peace and youth leadership.

Over the summer, the CTUF partnered with #OurStoryChi, a project led by members of the Black Lives Matter Chicago chapter to center youth-led activism and youth voice in their neighborhood. This collaboration helped spread knowledge and practices of peacemaking and restorative justice to a group of youth leaders and community members in Bronzeville. Our dedication to community and youth-based work has not ended there, however, as the Quest Center has set its sights on supporting the Austin community with a sustained effort of resources and program development in an array of areas.

My main role in Austin has been to partner with Austin Coming Together (ACT), a member-based community organization with a specialty in coalition building, to assist in developing and building its restorative justice hub. ACT has been coordinating peace circle trainings around the Austin community for well over a year. I had the great pleasure last summer and fall to help put together ACT’s youth-based “I Love Austin” summit at the historic Austin town hall where a group of students from the high school where I currently teach, Austin College & Career Academy, shared their knowledge and interest for restorative justice and its practices. My students were able to close out the event by leading and facilitating peace circles for all in attendance.

Since then, I have been fortunate to continue training a small group of youth in Austin in restorative practices and supporting the development of monthly community talking circles. It has been an honor thus far working with the support of the CTUF Quest Center to invest in our youth and school communities in ways that transcend the classroom.

Jason Ware is a teacher at Austin College & Career Academy and a CTUF Quest Center restorative practice specialist.
National Board Certification – 2018-20 Cohort

Recruitment is beginning for 2018–20 Nurturing Teacher Leadership cohort.
Attend the February 26th informational meeting.

Nurturing Teacher Leadership
The CPS/CTU’s 2-year FREE professional development & candidate support program, prepares CPS teachers, counselors, & librarians for National Board Certification (NBC). If you will have completed at least 3 years of teaching in your certificate area by June, 2018, you qualify to participate in NBC & earn this advanced certification, the highest credential a teacher can achieve, as well as:
- advance on the CPS salary scale
- fulfill your state re-licensure requirements
- earn financial incentives including an annual stipend of more than $1950
- receive contractual and other leadership opportunities including 1st consideration for Consulting Teacher & Framework Specialist roles
- qualify for a full scholarship
- earn an optional Master’s Degree &/or graduate & CPS Lane Placement salary credits
- attain the Illinois NBPTS Master Certification Endorsement in only 2 years

Nurturing Teacher Leadership boasts a 94% achievement rate, twice the national average. It includes:

Benefits
- Weekly Professional Development & small group facilitation
- Collaboration with a cohort of other CPS teachers going through the NBC process
- Preparation for rigorous content knowledge Assessment Center exercises
- Individual coaching & mentoring by CPS National Board Certified Teachers
- Assistance with writing required for the National Board portfolio
- 4-day Summer Institute (1st two weeks in August, 2018 & 2019)
- 36 Graduate Credits/Optional Master's degree
- 15 CPS Lane Placement Credits
- Annual Pensionable Stipend
- Membership in the most highly regarded professional learning community
- Paid coaching roles upon National Board Certification
- Joining the ranks of more than 2200 current CPS National Board Certified Teachers, including CTU President, Karen GJ Lewis
- Becoming a better teacher!

For more information or to register for the 2018-20 cohort recruitment meeting on February 28, 2018, go to CTU.org/NTL

Restorative Practices Learning Intensive
10.5 ISBE PD Hours
This 3-session Learning Intensive is designed to support K – 12th grade teachers and school support staff in creating a positive learning environment by developing healthy and nurturing relationships with students. Participants will analyze videos, articles and their own and each other’s teaching to determine why and how to integrate specific restorative practices such as reflective bellringers, check ins/check outs, and mediation, into their practice. Attendees will also engage in the practices of restoration: classroom community building, talking circles, restorative conversations, peer conferences, and conflict, healing and re-entry circles. This Intensive will support teachers and school support staff in cultivating their classroom cultures and honing classroom management skills.
Dates: 2/20, 2/21, 2/22, Time: 5:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Differentiated Instruction
12 ISBE PD Hours
This hybrid (face-to-face and online) offering introduces teachers to the approach of differentiated instruction and provides them with research based readings, practical ideas and hands-on practice that enables them to create a differentiated learning environment in their own context. Participants will learn how to utilize learning contracts, learning centers/stations, tiered assignments, choices boards, and learning menus.
Dates: 2/21, 2/22 (online), 2/26 (in-person), 2/27, Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM

CPS Framework for Teaching Domain 1 Webinshop
5 ISBE PD Hours
This Webinshop will introduce teachers who are currently evaluating the CPS Framework for Teaching (FFT) with tools, strategies, and techniques for aligning their practice to the “Distinguished” level. Teachers will be able to log on to the Quest Center's online learning system and view instructor-led video sessions, reflect upon their practice, and respond to assignments aligned to reviewing the FFT. Participants will respond to relevant questions about their practice, upload or create supporting documentation that can later be used for their professional development portfolio and/or uploaded to the CPS Reflect and Learn system. In addition, participants will receive feedback and advice from the Webinshop instructor, to support their practice.
Webinshop Dates: Rolling Sections (open dates), Asynchronous Access (all online)

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

c turf.org/questcenter