

30 January 2021
CTU/CPS Conflict Briefs
Chicago Democratic Socialists of America
Strike Bulletin Team & Erick Sherman

CTU continues to fight for safety in the classroom

Intro:

Welcome to the Red Star Bulletin, a project of the Political Education and Policy Committee of Chicago Democratic Socialists of America (CDSA). This bulletin aims to bring CDSA members a regular round-up of important legislation, committee meetings, and other updates from City Hall, as well as an analysis of what this means for our organizing as socialists.

You might have already been receiving the bulletin, but for many, this will be the first time. Remaining informed on what's happening in the city helps us hold our elected leaders accountable and be better socialists in Chicago. As such, the entire membership of CDSA will receive all future issues (though you can opt-out below).

Today's issue is a *Red Star Strike Update*, which will provide context to the looming CTU strike. Each issue will provide recent events, contract bargaining updates, background on the unions' efforts, and information about how to be active in the coming days.

Strikes are the sledgehammer in the toolbox of the working class. It is imperative that CDSA show solidarity with CTU as they [strike for the safety of students, staff, and teachers](#).

CTU Demands

- Chicago Teachers Union's (CTU) [demands](#) are listed here, as well as an on-going record of Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) response. The following is a list of **CTU's demands** followed by the present state of *CPS' Response*.
 - **[HEALTH METRICS]** Below 3% positivity to reopen district; close schools based on neighborhood transmission rates. CPS' current position is to close a given district if it is above 3% positivity from "surveillance testing" of CPS staff. There are rules about suspending operations at a school based on three unrelated positive cases in two weeks.
 - **[VACCINES]** Offer all staff opportunity to be fully vaccinated before required to return in-person. CPS has offered to prioritize certain groups when the vaccine is available but offers no specifics.
 - **[ACCOMODATIONS]** Telework for all staff in a COVID-19 high-risk category themselves, or with a household member in a high-risk category. Telework for 20% of staff with a household member in a COVID-19 high-risk category.
 - **[TESTING]** Baseline testing. Test all staff every week, test students in 40 schools in neighborhoods with the highest rates. Test 50% of staff/week, test 25% of students in ten zip codes with highest rates.

- **[VENTILATION]** CPS must audit ventilation, comply with ASHRAE standards. CPS conducted an audit, commitment to five air changes/hr, addition of portable air purifiers, the ability for staff to self-check effectiveness, and non-compliant rooms will not be used.
- **[WORKSPACES]** Workspaces for clinicians and nurses, shall meet therapeutic, instructional, and safety needs. CPS continues to propose no improvements for the over 80% of families choosing remote learning.
- **[REMOTE LEARNING IMPROVEMENTS]** Reduce student screen time by 1 hour, increase prep by one hour. Provide additional tech support to families. CPS continues to propose no improvements for the over 80% of families choosing remote learning.
- **[PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT]** “Appropriate PPE” including N95 respirators, gloves, gowns, and other equipment as required for specific jobs. “Appropriate PPE” including N95 respirators, gloves, gowns, and other equipment as required for specific jobs.
- **[SAFETY COMMITTEE]** Building- and district-level safety committees empowered to enforce health and safety protocols, including ordering a school return to full remote for serious or repeated violations. Building- and district-level safety committees empowered to enforce health and safety protocols. Violations must be remedied as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours.
- **[STUDENT/PARENT SUPPORT]** Additional Supports for STLS students during the pandemic. Hire 100 new counselors and social workers for trauma support. Nothing to increase support to CPS students and families facing the greatest needs during the pandemic.
- **[SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS]** Release \$2M in unused SCS funds from 19-20 to SCS schools for COVID relief and mutual aid. No plan to release \$2m that should have supported these schools.
- **[SPECIALS]** Place limitations on the number of cohorts for specials. No plan.
- **[SIMULTANEOUS INSTRUCTION]** Reject simultaneous instruction. No plan.
- **[RENT ABATEMENT]** CPS should support the call for rent abatement. No plan.
- **[HOLD PRE-K & CLUSTER STAFF, CLERKS; & TECH COs HARMLESS]** Make whole all Pre-K and cluster staff, clerks, and tech-cos who exercised right to work remotely against whom CPS took adverse action. No plan.

Nature of the Conflict

- After months of Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s hasty and [reckless push to return to in-person education](#), forty-two Aldermen formally supported CTU in their struggle against CPS bad faith efforts to return students and staff to unsafe locations. This week alone the return date backpedaled from Monday, January 25th to Wednesday the 27th to Monday, February 1st. The Mayor is set on in-person education in order to use teachers as babysitters to put parents back in the workplace to jump-start the economy. Presently 71,000 students in grades K-8 (only 19% of the 191,000 enrolled in those grades) have expressed interest in returning to in-person school. These numbers are largely represented by higher income, whiter areas where parents want schools to reopen for their role of child care.
- The legality of a strike is currently in a gray area - [Illinois House Bill 2275](#) which could restore full bargaining and striking rights to CTU currently sits on Governor Pritzker’s desk. Under the present agreement, a strike is not allowed; however, that is predicated on the (presently unfulfilled) guarantee of a safe workplace.

Language of the Aggressor

- The Mayor and CPS CEO Janice Jackson repeatedly use language that characterizes CTU’s approach as overly aggressive and ignores the fact that CTU has been systematic and principled in its protection of everyone’s safety. While this charade is

broadcast in press conferences, Jackson and Lightfoot talk around the fact that teachers are continuing to do their jobs remotely. [CPS is positioning itself as the aggressor](#). If educators are locked out by CPS and pay is withheld, CTU will in fact strike, but only as a defense against corporate aggression.

Review of Actions This Week

- Saturday Morning, January 30th, at [nine locations around Chicago](#), CTU Members and supporters caravanned in demonstration of their solidarity for CTU's position in the conflict. Additionally, a [virtual rally](#) was held that included local labor leaders, elected officials, and community members directly involved with the conflict. Mayor Lightfoot and CPS CEO Janice Jackson's negligent mishandling of the situation was made clear.

Ways CDSA Members Can Support the Effort

This conflict is developing continuously, as are ways to help.

- Stay strike ready! Today is the decisive day, CTU members are refusing to enter unsafe buildings and continuing to teach remote. If CPS retaliates, it will trigger CTU's strike authorization and their House of Delegates will vote on a date. DSA Strike Captains will be out at picket lines across the city where you can join in and show your solidarity. [Find the map of our adopted picket lines here](#). Our picket locations are below:
 - **Eugene Field Elementary School**
7019 N Ashland Blvd, Rogers Park
 - **Hibbard Elementary School**
3244 W Ainslie St, Albany Park
 - **Brentano Elementary**
2723 N Fairfield, Logan Square
 - **John T. McCutcheon Elementary**
4865 N Sheridan Rd, Uptown
 - **John A Walsh Public School**
2015 S Peoria St, Pilsen
 - **McClellan Elementary School**
3527 S Wallace St, Bridgeport
 - **Kershaw Elementary School**
In collaboration with AfroSoc
6450 S Lowe Ave, Englewood
- You can't make it to picket lines in-person, on Tuesday from 8:00am-3:00pm join our #SafeReturnOrNoReturn Social Media Blitz and Phone Zap to put pressure on the city to support workers. Find and share the event on Facebook [here](#) and use the [toolkit here](#).
- Support the solidarity fund. CTU has raised over [\\$55,000 of their \\$300,000 goal](#) to assist those workers affected by CPS' retaliation. Contributions are essential and encouraged.
- Text **SOLIDARITY to 77222** for rapid updates and [sign-up to volunteer here](#).

Credits

The Red Star Bulletin was conceived by Ramsin Canon and is a project of the Political Education & Policy Committee. This issue was drafted by CDSA members. Special contributions were made by Brent Glass, Charlotte Kissinger, Taylor Martin, Erick Sherman, Sveta Stoytcheva, and Jordan Weber. Graphics were contributed by Patrick O'Connell and Jon Lyons. If you would like to contribute to the Red Star Bulletin or have any feedback, email politicaleducation@chicagodsa.org.