



Chicago Teachers Union Bullied Teachers Into One-Day Strike

On Friday, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) staged a one-day walkout, giving over 400,000 students a day off from school that will not be made up. Though a number of teachers were adamantly opposed to the walkout, DNAInfo reports that teachers not complying with the strike would face consequences by the union.



The union claims that the strike is to protest plans by the district that involve “school closings, furloughs and layoffs for next school year,” an assertion that has been denied by the district.

Last week, 80 percent of the Chicago Teachers Union delegates voted to approve the “Day of Action,” according to the *Washington Examiner*, while 20 percent of the delegates were opposed. Opposing teachers contend that the walkout needlessly hurts students.

“At the end of the day I think this [one-day strike] hurts kids,” one teacher told DNAInfo Chicago. “I’m very disappointed.... The only thing I’ve gotten out of the union is a pocket calendar.”

Unfortunately, those who are against the walkout are forced to speak on the condition of anonymity because of fear of retribution, as the union has reportedly threatened to kick teachers out of the union if they refused to engage in the “Day of Action.”

A South Side school teacher asserted, “It was said to me as a matter of fact that the consequence of choosing to come to school is being kicked out of the union. I’m furious about the whole thing.”

CTU financial secretary Kristine Mayle states that teachers considering going to work on April 1 were directed to provisions in the union bylaws that relate to “strike breakers,” dating back to the 1970s.

“We put out information in response to questions but we are not trying to threaten members. But if someone crosses the picket line they undermine the union. We have to do this together or it doesn’t work,” Mayle said.

Some teachers feel that they have been put in an unfair position of having to violate their own ethics in order to avoid union retribution.

A South Side grade-school teacher told DNAInfo that she felt “morally and ethically” opposed to the walkout and that she is aware of other teachers who felt the same way.

“How do I get out of being part of this debacle?” is a question being asked in teacher lounges at schools across the city,” the grade-school teacher said.

But the union defends its stance, insisting that the teachers must show solidarity.

“I would submit that we have an obligation to side with the majority,” CTU vice president Jesse Sharkey said on a conference call with members before last week’s delegate vote. “If you personally disagree,



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you have to stick with them ... it's something we all have to do together.”

For teachers who chose the teaching profession because they care about students, however, solidarity is a far less compelling motivation than the students.

An anonymous teacher pointed out, “It sends the wrong message to the kids. We’re there to teach and set a good example. This sets a horrible example. I think we are being used as pawns to get legislation passed.”

DNAInfo obtained a 2012 memo sent to a teacher who had crossed the picket line during the 2012 teachers’ strike which stated that teachers who are removed from the unions would still be required to pay union dues since they would continue to reap the so-called benefits of collective bargaining. Those same people lose their other benefits, however, including union-provided liability insurance.

Furthermore, union rules state that those who cross the picket line are fined the amount of salary they receive from the district during the strike.

“We are following the constitution. If you cross the picket line you are considered a strikebreaker,” CTU’s Mayle said. “Once that is reported to the office ... we have a series of meetings and the committee determines whether to revoke your union membership.”

For some teachers, this experience has proven to be an eye-opener into the true nature of teachers unions.

“I’d rather just be out of the union unless there’s some major turnaround where [union action] wasn’t such a battle of egos with a political agenda,” a South Side high-school teacher told DNAInfo.

After spending Friday morning on the picket lines, strikers moved to college campuses in the afternoon to continue their protest against budget cuts.

District CEO Forrest Claypool states that the district did not have enough time to pursue an injunction against Friday’s walkout, or it would have, though it’s not likely that an injunction would have stopped the union. “The leader of the CTU announced on television this week that her members would not honor a court-ordered injunction anyway from a judge, which again, just, I think, sort of magnifies the lawlessness of this action,” he said.

District officials in Chicago announced on Thursday that they would launch a legal challenge to the unlawful walkout by the Chicago Teachers Union, the *Chicago Tribune* reported.


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