

Hands off immigrant children and parents! Build the Educators Rank-and-File Committee to defend democratic rights!

Educators Rank-and-File Committee
6 February 2025

The Educators Rank-and-File Committee calls for the broadest mobilization of teachers, school support staff, students, parents and wider sections of the working class to oppose Trump's anti-immigrant campaign and to defend the rights of all children to a safe and high quality public education.

We call for the development of neighborhood, school and workplace committees to prepare, educate and organize workers and their families. These committees will serve as hubs for the dissemination of information and as the platform for mobilizing the population against Trump's dictatorial efforts to break apart families and eviscerate democratic rights. This fight must be connected to the struggle to defend public education and every social and democratic right.

In his first days, Trump enacted policies terrorizing immigrant families, disrupting education, and threatening mass deportations. Advancing the big lie that the US is being "invaded" by migrants, Trump has reversed policies restricting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents from entering schools and sought to overturn birthright citizenship, which is guaranteed by the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution. He has deployed the military to the border, deported shackled immigrants in military aircraft and threatened to arrest anyone who interferes with ICE operations.

Republican-led states, like Florida and Oklahoma, are enforcing harsh immigration laws, demanding proof of citizenship for school attendance, and mandating teacher cooperation with deportations. These measures violate constitutional rights and the 1982 US Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler v. Doe*, which upheld the right to public education to every student regardless of immigration status.

Educators are deeply alarmed over this. They have protected their children from school shootings, the spread of COVID and other diseases, and are determined to protect them now. In discussions in schools and social media, educators say they are obligated to defend their immigrant children and families just like previous generations sought to protect Jewish children from the Nazis.

Opposition is growing. Already thousands of high school students have organized walkouts and protests across the country. Parents, students, and teachers have participated in sick-outs, and protests against the attack on immigrants are spreading across the country. This will only grow.

To organize a fightback, however, it is necessary to understand that the attack on immigrants is the spearhead of an assault on the whole working class. Its aim is to overturn democratic and social rights won and defended, literally, over the last two-and-a-half centuries.

The author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, argued in 1786 that "the diffusion of knowledge among the people" was the surest foundation for the "preservation of freedom and happiness." The public cost for such education, Jefferson insisted, "is not more than

thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance."

A corporate and financial oligarchy, the 21st century version of kings, priests and nobles, has now taken over the US government. There is nothing it fears more than an educated populace, conscious of its own social and class interests and organized to fight for them.

That is why the world's richest man, Elon Musk, has been tasked with destroying public education, Social Security, Medicaid and other vital social programs to further enrich the oligarchy and fund new wars for global conquest.

Trump's proposal to shut down the Department of Education would effectively upend billions of dollars in funds that many districts rely on including critical programs such as Title I, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Such a move would destabilize school districts from coast-to-coast and result in a tsunami of program and school closures. It would also impact millions of the most vulnerable students from low-income families and those with disabilities.

Trump has signed a series of executive orders, outlining massive defunding plans for public schools, the banning of historical truth, the scapegoating of immigrants, and the witch-hunting of oppositional teachers and students.

These include:

- The **"Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling"** order aims to censor curricula and transform schools from centers of learning to centers of fascist and religious indoctrination.
- **"Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families"** order significantly increases funding and scope for "school choice" and universal voucher programs diverting funds to private and religious schools, and siphoning off resources from already underfunded public schools. The order aims to open the floodgates to widespread privatization of schools and the proliferation of religious obscurantism to replace science and history.
- **"Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism"** order intensifies surveillance, abolishes free speech and opens up teachers and students in K12 schools and universities to criminal prosecution. It is based on the foul slander that those opposing Israel's US-backed genocide in Gaza and Trump's planned expulsion of the Palestinians are "antisemitic," when, in fact, his regime is filled with Nazi admirers and proponents of genocide.

The destruction of public education and similar policies have no popular support and cannot be imposed peacefully. This is what is behind the attack on immigrants, including stripping US-born children of immigrants of citizenship rights. It is a dry run for the suppression of all forms of popular resistance.

Build Rank-and-File Committees to defend immigrant families and public education!

Trump's dictatorial policies can only be opposed by a united movement of educators, parents, students and the broadest sections of the working class. This requires the building of networks of rank-and-file committees at school sites and neighborhoods that are open to all teachers, support staff, students, and parents who want to organize collective action to defend democratic and social rights.

The committees will plan lawful public responses to attacks on members of the community under the principle: "An injury to one is an injury to all." They will share information and alert each other of ICE raids. Basing themselves on the methods of the class struggle, these committees will plan demonstrations and joint strike action with industrial, health care, logistics, public sector and other workers to defend our families from deportation and prevent the victimization of those opposing Trump's policies.

These committees, which will be associated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), will be the means through which the genuine aspirations and needs of the working class can be fought for. In order for these committees to be genuinely democratic, power and decision making must be in the hands of rank-and-file educators, not the executives who run the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and other unions.

Hundreds of billions for public education, not for war or attacks at home!

The lack of resources for public schools and other critical services is not caused by immigrants. Society's resources have been looted by the corporate and financial oligarchs, who control both big-business parties. The Democrats and Republicans have spent decades diverting resources from schools, public health, housing and other vital programs to fund bank bailouts, corporate tax cuts and war.

The ill-gotten gains of the oligarchs must be expropriated so the wealth created by the collective labor of the working class can be used to meet social needs, eradicate poverty and guarantee a high living standard for all.

The estimated \$86 billion to fund Trump's initial deportation plans translates to building 8,000 elementary schools, or 16,380 full HVAC overhauls (the 41 percent of all US schools needing HVAC updates could be addressed twice over), or school site remediations for 4,095 contaminated schools. It would also fund 3.4 million K-12 arts programs for years.

Trump's attack on immigrants is aimed at creating a climate of fear, dividing the working class along ethnic lines, and facilitating the wholesale destruction of public education and other core democratic rights. This can only be opposed by a united movement of educators, parents, students and the broadest sections of the working class.

The role of the trade union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party

A blunt warning must be made: the leaders of the teachers unions cannot be trusted to lead any fight against these attacks. In response to the lifting of any restrictions on ICE agents raiding schools and hospitals, AFT

President Randi Weingarten penned a letter to Trump that legitimizes the president's fascist lies about an immigrant "invasion" and "border crisis." "The AFT agrees that our immigration system is broken and badly in need of reform," Weingarten writes before politely requesting that Trump "step in and rescind this new policy while continuing to press for immigration reforms that make sense and share bipartisan support."

Faced with growing demands by educators for action to oppose planned ICE raids in schools, AFT President Randi Weingarten hosted an "urgent town hall meeting," on January 30, "We protect kids in an era of escalating immigration enforcement."

But the union official did not propose a single action to mobilize the millions of AFT and NEA members to protect children. Instead, all she could do was urge educators to write letters to legislators and join her in literally "begging" the fascist president to keep ICE out of schools.

Writing letters to Congress is worse than useless. Weingarten, a leading member of the Democratic National Committee, wants workers to forget that it was the Democrats' pro-corporate and warmongering policies that paved the way for Trump's return to power. The Democrats and the trade union bureaucracy fear fascism far less than they do a mass movement of the working class, which got out of their control and challenged the economic and political domination of the capitalist oligarchy.

Weingarten (yearly salary \$443,551) and NEA President Becky Pringle (\$449,305) are part of the top 5 percent in "income earners" and are entirely detached from the struggles educators face daily in the schools. While educators face a historic battle against this government of, by and for the super-rich, both union executives have signaled their willingness to work with Trump and his administration, including his nominees for the secretary of education and labor.

The initiative of the working class

The defense of democratic rights depends entirely on the working class. The continued existence of an oligarchy, which exercises complete control over economic and political life, is completely incompatible with democracy.

The Educators Rank-and-File Committee is fighting to mobilize the working class: the gigantic, world-wide social force, which, if organized and politically conscious, is far more powerful than the criminal oligarchy sitting atop society. Our committees, affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, will strive to connect the fight to defend immigrants and the right to public education with the political struggle to abolish the dictatorship of the oligarchy and replace it with the democratic rule of working people and social equality.

To join the Educators Rank-and-File Committee, fill out the form below.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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