

Chicago Teachers take Action to Oppose the Closure of 61 Public Schools

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, April 08, 2013

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

by Dylan Murphy

On 27 March thousands of teachers, parents and school support staff flooded into central Chicago to protest against the plan to close 61 schools. Over 150 protestors were arrested for a sit-down protest during the demonstration which shut down traffic in the heart of the city. Karen Lewis, President of Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU) said at a recent [press conference](#):

“Rahm Emanuel has become the ‘murder mayor.’ He is murdering public services. Murdering our ability to maintain public sector jobs and now he has set his sights on our public schools. But we have news for him: We don’t intend to die. This is not Detroit. We are the city of big shoulders and so we intend to put up a fight. We don’t know if we can win, but if you don’t fight, you will never win at all.”

Mayor Rahm Emmanuel has said that the closures are necessary to prevent students being left trapped in failing schools. Meanwhile, Barabra Byrd-Bennet the CEO of Chicago Public Schools has said that the closure plans will help bridge a \$1 billion budget deficit and allow for increased investment in the remaining public schools.

Mayor Emmanuel's programme will see the largest number of public school's closed in one year in America's third largest school district. In the last decade over a hundred schools have been closed in Chicago. Opponents of the plans say the close programme will mean thousands of school staff losing their jobs, bigger class sizes for the remaining public schools which will increase to between 30-40 per class and the ending of many community services provided by the schools.

Many students and parents have joined the protests and complained that the closure of these schools will put many children at increased risk of violence as they will have to cross gang boundaries to get to their new schools. Hundreds of students held a protest outside city hall on 25 March calling for on the mayor to halt the programme of school closures and for increased spending on schools. Many expressed worries over student safety in a city where there was over 500 murders last year much of which was gang related.

Last September the CTU took strike action against Mayor Emmanuel's plans to privatize "poorly performing" schools and turn them into private charter schools. Many see his current closure plan as a mere variant on that plan.

Chicago's Board of Education will decide in May whether to approve the mayor's closure programme. The board members were all appointed by Mayor Emmanuel leaving few with any confidence that it will vote against the closure programme.

On the 27 March protest demonstrators expressed a determination to put up a massive fight against the school closure programme. Jackson Potter, staff coordinator for the CTU told Real News TV that the campaign against the school closures must include mass acts of [civil disobedience](#) "occupying school buildings" and even "hunger strikes" if necessary. The fight in Chicago has national significance. Success for the teacher's and parents there will be a major boost to all those across America who are campaigning against high stakes testing and the attendant privatization drive in public education.

Dylan Murphy is a historian, teacher and trade union activist.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Global Research News](#), Global Research, 2013

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Global Research News](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca