


June 2013

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Recommended Citation

Hilgendorf, Kurt (2013) "Striking Back Against Corporate Education Reform: The 2012 Chicago Teachers Union Strike," *The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies*: Vol. 74 : No. 2 , Article 4.
Available at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/the_councilor/vol74/iss2/4

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Striking Back Against Corporate Education Reform: The 2012 Chicago Teachers Union Strike

Kurt Hilgendorf
Chicago Teachers Union

Soon after the Chicago Teachers Union's (CTU) House of Delegates voted to suspend the union's seven-day September 2012 strike, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel blanketed local television airwaves with \$1 million in paid advertising funded by Democrats for Education Reform, a New York-based "Astroturf" organization heavily financed by hedge fund operators. In the ad, Emanuel claims that though negotiations were difficult, "more accountability is the right deal for our kids."¹ Aside from being a mild nuisance to primetime TV viewers, the commercial became a conversation piece among Chicago residents. Common questions included "why is the mayor running a TV commercial?", "why did teachers go on strike if the district's offers were so great?", and "why is the mayor spending so much on a TV ad at the same time he claims the schools are broke?" The best answer for a famously poll driven politician such as Emanuel likely had to do with public opinion: during the union's first strike in twenty-five years, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) parents supported teachers 2-to-1 over the mayor.²

Emanuel's language was deliberate. Accountability is an intoxicating buzzword for supporters of a particular kind of educational reform and in the national imagination the 2012 Chicago teachers' strike was a test of this long-running education reform agenda. Under the accountability paradigm, teachers (especially teachers in urban schools) have neglected their students' best interests because tenure rules ensure lifetime job security. In the process, (urban) students to fall farther and farther behind their more affluent American peers and the entire U.S. education system suffers in international comparisons. The solution is to hold teachers accountable with a behaviorist reward system that rests on the logic of loss aversion. Teachers either push students' standardized test scores up or they face sanctions up to and including termination. Chicago's teachers challenged this logic through their resistance to key elements of corporate reform, as well as their questioning of whether non-educators were really best positioned to make decisions about how schools should be organized and operated.

The logic of teacher accountability has a veneer of what Antonio Gramsci termed "common sense", or a belief that policies that benefit society's elites are also optimal for all members of society.³ Deeper analysis of educational reform suggests that such uniform opinion is far from developed. Highly visible public challenges to common sense can provoke strong reactions, and the 2012 Chicago teachers strike sparked a national conversation on education reform. Every major TV news network had a significant presence on the strike's first days, and media across the country covered the action. Opinions on the strike dramatically differed. The

¹ YouTube. "Rahm Emanuel TV ad on CTU Strike." Accessed January 13, 2013.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDanfgZkie4>

² Miller, Rich. "No Hugo, they're not 'supremely unhappy...' Yet." *CapitolFax*, September 13, 2012. Accessed January 13, 2013. <http://capitolfax.com/2012/09/13/no-hugo-theyre-not-supremely-unhappy-yet/>

³ Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers. 2007.



Chicago *Tribune*, a noted supporter of both Emanuel and corporate-style educational governance, argued in a subtly-titled editorial (“Chicago Teachers Union Fighting Inevitability of Education Reform”) that the CTU was “denying the arc of history” and that “CPS isn’t pushing the envelope here. It’s playing catch up.”⁴ The *Tribune*’s perspective is hardly universal, though, and its attempt to establish a limited discourse points to a lack of consensus and a developing public debate about corporate school reform. Articles like one in *The Nation* (“Chicago Teachers Push Back Against Neoliberal Education Reform”) show a divergent viewpoint. “29,000 Chicago teachers and education professionals are on strike – demanding both a fair contract *and* a radically different vision of school reform” (emphasis original).⁵ That such a national discussion occurred in the first place speaks to the impact education reform policies have had primarily in low-income African American and Latino neighborhoods in cities across the country. It was especially interesting that such a conversation originated in Chicago, for two reasons: first, and most directly, a restrictive Illinois law restricts Chicago’s teachers’ legal strike issues to pay and benefits; second, and more powerfully, many of the current national reform policies proliferated outward from Chicago.

CTU President Karen Lewis repeatedly described the strike as “a battle for the soul of public education.” Her characterization describes a history of school governance conflicts in Chicago dating back to the late nineteenth century. While the contours of these issues have changed, the fundamental conflicts are still unresolved: who should control education in Chicago (and the country) and what should school look like? This essay examines the recent history of corporate education reform in Chicago from 1995 to the present, assesses the effectiveness of those reforms, and evaluates the strike’s impact on the current wave of corporate school reform. The CTU strike was the largest teacher-led challenge to date to the current wave of corporate school reform and served as a spark for further challenges to public education’s status quo. The strike directly challenged corporate school reform elements like the imposition of a narrow, basic skills curriculum for students of color and firing teachers based on student test scores, and inspired resistance to other elements of corporate reform like a myopic focus on testing, sorting, and ranking students and teachers, the national curriculum standards known as the Common Core, and the idea that non-educators’ ideas for education reform are superior to those who have done the hard work of teaching children.

I was far from an impartial observer during the strike. I taught history, economics, and psychology, and coached high school debate for more than six years in the Chicago Public Schools. I have witnessed the effects of corporate school reform first-hand. I spent the vast majority of my teaching career working in the Englewood neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side, an area known for economic disinvestment, gun violence, and challenging schools. I was laid-off from my first job

⁴ Dold, R. Bruce. “Chicago Teachers Union fighting inevitability of education reform” (editorial). *Chicago Tribune*. September 13, 2012. Accessed January 13, 2013. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-09-13/news/ct-edit-arc-0913-jm-20120913_1_education-reform-teacher-evaluations-student-growth

⁵ Cunningham-Cook, Matthew. “Chicago Teachers Push Back Against Neoliberal Education Reform.” *The Nation*. September 11, 2012. Retrieved January 13, 2013. <http://www.thenation.com/article/169859/chicago-teachers-push-back-against-neoliberal-education-reform#>



at Englewood High School because it was a “failing school.” I then moved to John Hope High School. Hope was subjected to multiple corporate reform interventions, like the supplemental education services mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind law and an insulting scripted curriculum known as High School Transformation. In my fourth year at Hope, I was laid-off because of enrollment declines that stemmed in part from the proliferation of charter schools in the neighborhood. I was fortunately rehired at the end of the summer, and I would have been laid-off for a third time the following year had I not been hired at Von Steuben High School on the other side of the city. I became more directly involved with the CTU when I was appointed chair of the union’s school finance and taxation committee in 2010. I served on the CTU’s “big bargaining team” with forty other rank-and-file teachers during the most recent contract negotiations. While we were not involved in most of the direct negotiations, we regularly consulted with the primary bargaining team between February 2012 and the end of the strike. Since the summer of 2012 I have worked full-time for the CTU as a policy researcher and lobbyist. During the strike, I walked picket lines at schools, helped with strike logistics, organized demonstrations at elected officials’ offices, participated in a talk-radio call in show at Arizona State University, and actively discussed contract proposals during negotiating sessions. No history is objective, and my experiences clearly and necessarily impact my interpretation of the strike’s role in the wider education reform context.

Defining Corporate School Reform

In this essay, corporate school reform refers to a suite of changes in educational governance tied far more to labor management and proficiency targets than to improvements in the actual process of teaching and learning. Corporate school reform’s governance changes include the replacement of experienced educational administrators with business managers and executives, the establishment and refinement of predetermined educational standards, changes in decision-making (either centralization or decentralization, depending on the moment) that provide more authority to management, privatization of public assets and employment through the expansion of market-based school choice models (primarily charter schools and job outsourcing), policy making driven by quantitative data derived mainly through school statistics like attendance rates and test scores, punitive accountability measures for teachers and schools, and an attempt to de-skill the teaching profession through pre-packaged curricula and a push toward younger, inexperienced teachers.

It is important to note that corporate school reform is not a new education agenda but rather a creatively-messaged twist on century-old ideas. Dorothy Shipps calls this process managerialism:

a dominant business reform agenda – managerialism – emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and has been remarkably influential in shaping the structure of Chicago’s schools ever since. Business leaders brought their expertise as senior managers to the coalitions they joined or led, steering agendas toward a prominent role for executives who directed a hierarchy below them and adjusted accountability sanctions and rewards....



The idea that a large urban school system can be substantially improved through better management has remained essentially unchanged.⁶

Alternatively, this model has been called the “New Taylorism,” as teachers’ professional roles are limited to a narrow range of predictable, easily measured outputs usually tied to standardized testing. Instruction is directed toward increased scores, and success is measured only by a teacher’s effectiveness in this single task.⁷ Teachers oppose this reform model because it reduces professional autonomy, narrows the curriculum to what is tested, increases pressure to meet what many feel are dubious targets, increases teacher and student stress loads, actively rejects the impacts of wide disparities in family and school resources, and has yet to produce the promised results. That educational results are lacking is no surprise; fundamental gains in educational outcomes have not followed corporate school reform because the governance model does not directly address many out-of-school levers, often related to family income, that significantly impact student attainment, such as adequate mental and physical healthcare, a supportive and stable home environment, neighborhood safety, and enriching educational opportunities outside of school. Despite practitioners’ resistance, policymakers, buoyed (or swayed) by massive donations, intense lobbying, and the relative ease of making decisions based on snapshot quantitative measures of complex social interactions, have embraced the corporate model.

While the staying power of this particular iteration of corporate school reform is an open question, two additional elements define its specific contours and geography. First, the bulk of corporate school reform efforts are directed primarily at a small subset of public schools in urban areas: schools that serve primarily low-income African American and Latino students. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has called these schools the “bottom five percent.”⁸ The racial components of corporate school reforms are undeniable. Recent federal education policies No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT) were framed as a quest for racial justice, overcoming, in George W. Bush’s words, the “soft bigotry of low expectations”⁹ and serving as “the civil rights issue of our time”¹⁰ according to Duncan. Yet reform actions in Chicago have disproportionately harmed those students who were supposed to benefit. For instance, almost 90% of students affected by CPS school actions like school closures or turnarounds since 2001 are African American. The vast majority of those students landed in schools that were no better than

⁶ Shippo, Dorothy. *School Reform, Corporate Style*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 14.

⁷ Au, Wayne. “Teaching Under the New Taylorism: High-Stakes Testing and the Standardization of the 21st Century Curriculum.” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 43:1 (2011): 25-45.

⁸ Duncan, Arne. “Turning around the bottom five percent.” Presentation to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Conference, Washington, D.C., June 22, 2009. Retrieved January 16, 2013. <http://www2.ed.gov/news/speeches/2009/06/06222009.html>

⁹ Bush, George, W. Presentation to 91st Annual Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Baltimore, MD, July 10, 2000. Retrieved January 16, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/elections/bushtext071000.htm>

¹⁰ Duncan, Arne. “Statement by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on the Passing of Civil Rights Leader Fred Shuttlesworth.” October 6, 2011. Retrieved January 16, 2013. <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/statement-us-secretary-education-arne-duncan-passing-civil-rights-leader-fred-sh>



the ones they left.¹¹ Furthermore, the new Illinois teacher evaluation system mandated by a 2010 law passed in response to RTTT was first instituted in Chicago in 2012 (91% non-white student population, 87% free/reduced lunch¹²), while higher scoring (and more affluent) school districts do not have to implement the system until 2016.¹³

A second equally important element of this agenda is the persistent state of economic crisis that exists in urban areas that provides a powerful rhetorical opportunity for reform. Rather than focusing on structural poverty in urban neighborhoods resulting from decades of disinvestment and unemployment, news headlines tout school budget deficits. In Chicago, the budget elements of the crisis have been overstated, but reform has continued unabated. Though CPS has ended six of the last eight fiscal years with a budget surplus, the district again claimed a \$1 billion deficit for fiscal 2014. The last time the district claimed a \$1 billion deficit, in FY2011, the district ended the year with a more than \$300 million surplus.^{14,15} Given Mayor Emanuel's proclivity for capitalizing on crisis—"never let a serious crisis go to waste"¹⁶ Emanuel has said—corporate efficiency models steam forward and intensify even though the educational results lag. This approach has a long history in Chicago: "Agendas less likely to affect pedagogy and student performance are easier to bring to fruition because they require only narrow coalitions to sustain and draw on resources in the hands of an elite."¹⁷

The Legal Framework for Corporate School Reform in Chicago

Four specific legislative initiatives passed since 1995 provide the legal framework for the current Chicago reform model and help define the teaching and learning conditions against which Chicago's teachers struck. The first two laws were enacted during the only time in the past thirty years the Republican Party simultaneously held the Illinois Governor's office and majorities in the General Assembly. The second two passed in response to the conditions created by the Obama/Duncan Department of Education's RTTT initiative and a notable surge in corporate-funded educational advocacy groups.

¹¹ De la Torre, Marisa and Julia Gwynne. *When Schools Close: Effects on Displaced Students in Chicago Public Schools*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2009. Accessed January 16, 2013.

<http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/CCSRSchoolClosings-Final.pdf>

¹² Chicago Public Schools. "Stats and facts." Accessed January 24, 2013. http://cps.edu/About_CPS/At-a-glance/Pages/Stats_and_facts.aspx

¹³ Performance Evaluation Advisory Council. "Timeline." Retrieved January 16, 2013. <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/peac/html/timeline.htm>

¹⁴ Ahmed, Azam. (2010). "CPS faces \$1 billion deficit, Huberman says." *Chicago Tribune*. February 25, 2010. Accessed January 15, 2013. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-02-25/news/ct-met-chicago-school-cuts-20100225_1_pension-system-pension-reform-furlough-days and

¹⁵ Chicago Public Schools. *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2011*. (Chicago: Chicago Public Schools), 81. Accessed January 15, 2013.

http://cps.edu/About_CPS/Financial_information/Documents/FY11_CAFR.pdf

¹⁶ YouTube. "Rahm Emanuel Says Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste." Accessed January 15, 2013.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs6TgitNIA>

¹⁷ Shipps, *School Reform Corporate Style*, 2.



The first major reform initiative of this period was the 1995 amendatory act to the school code, a move fully supported by then-Mayor Richard M. Daley. This amendatory act instituted broad changes to CPS governance, including full mayoral control over the schools,¹⁸ the appointment of a chief executive officer (CEO) who was “a person of recognized administrative ability and management experience” to run the district,¹⁹ significant limitation on the subjects of collective bargaining, changing items like service contracting (outsourcing), reduction-in-force, class size, and staffing levels from mandatory subjects of bargaining to permissive subjects of bargaining at “the sole discretion of the educational employer,”²⁰ an 18-month ban on CTU strikes,²¹ and the provision for the CEO to place schools on probation and recommend interventions that included replacing all school staff or closing the school.²²

The second major reform law was the 1996 charter school law. This law allowed for the creation of charter schools in Illinois with a specific focus on Chicago.²³ The law has been amended several times since its enactment to broaden its scope. Most charter schools are allocated to Chicago (75 out of 120),²⁴ despite the fact that the city educates only about one-fifth of the state’s students. Charter school teachers are forbidden by law from joining the Chicago Teachers Union and the district does not have to negotiate with the CTU over the creation of new charter schools.²⁵ In addition, charter schools are not required to have fully-certified staffs; initially, charter schools could hire 50 percent non-certified teachers, which was later raised to 75percent.²⁶ The 1995 amendatory act and 1996 charter law paved the way for the Daley era of corporate school reform.

Two additional laws establishing the reform framework were passed more recently. In January 2010, Illinois enacted the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) as a condition of the state’s (failed) RTTT application. PERA changed teachers’ and administrators’ evaluation process, requiring for the first time that “student performance data to be a significant factor in teacher or principal evaluations,” and defined “significant factor” as at least 30percent of a teacher’s evaluation. Districts and union locals that cannot agree to how much weighting student performance data should receive in teacher or principal evaluations default to the state model, which equally weights student growth and teacher practice.²⁷ PERA also requires that teachers receive one of four ratings: excellent, proficient, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory.

¹⁸ Illinois General Assembly. “Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS 5/34-3).” Accessed January 17, 2013. <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp>

¹⁹ ILCS 5/34-3.3

²⁰ ILCS 5/4.5

²¹ ILCS 5/13

²² ILCS 5/34-8.3

²³ ILCS 5/27A

²⁴ ILCS 5/27A-4

²⁵ ILCS 5/27A-4.J

²⁶ ILCS 5/27A-10

²⁷ Illinois General Assembly. “Illinois Public Act 096-0861.” Accessed January 17, 2013. <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/96/pdf/096-0861.pdf>



PERA itself does not have any real consequences for teachers or administrators. The law defines the parameters of new evaluation systems but does not contain any penalties for low ratings. However, with Senate Bill 7 (SB7) passed in 2011, the state legislature enacted sweeping school reform. SB7 enshrined several corporate governance goals in state law. First, SB7 tied high-stakes consequences to evaluations. Teachers who receive two unsatisfactory ratings within a seven-year period automatically lose their teaching license. Tenure acquisition was toughened, as new teachers must have at least two proficient ratings in their first four years to achieve tenure. Reductions-in-force are now tied to teachers' performance ratings rather than seniority.²⁸ The legislation also changed the collective bargaining process between teachers' unions and school boards. One major change was that both sides' final offers must be posted to the public for at least two weeks. The law also established a completely different negotiating process for CPS than the rest of the state. Under SB7, CTU and CPS are required to undertake a complex fact finding process if an impasse is declared, and CTU is required to get a vote of 75 percent of the entire active membership to be able to strike. Anyone who does not vote is automatically counted as a "no" vote. Under the old law, teachers could strike if 50 percent of those voting voted yes. Furthermore, SB7 gave Mayor Emanuel the unilateral right to extend the length of the school day and year.

SB7 resulted from serious pressure by corporate reform organizations, especially Stand for Children (SFC). SFC was founded by Jonah Edelman, son of the well-known founder of the Children Defense Fund. Initially, SFC was an Oregon-based grassroots education advocacy organization, but as the organization expanded, it morphed into a corporate school reform proponent. SFC's method in Illinois was to dole out millions of dollars in campaign contributions in state House and Senate races and then use those contributions to influence education policy, as evidenced by SB7. Edelman boasted at a 2011 Aspen Institute panel that SB7 effectively rendered unions powerless on education policy:

Our proposal was a very high threshold for strikes. For whatever reason, a tactical miscalculation on [Karen Lewis'] part, was palatable. Rahm pushed it.... The threshold we were arguing for was three-quarters. So in effect, they wouldn't have the ability to strike even though the right was maintained. And so in the end-game the Chicago Teachers Union took that deal, probably not knowing the statistics about voting history.... It's going to allow the new mayor to lengthen the day and year as much as they want. The unions in Chicago cannot strike.²⁹

Ultimately, it was Edelman who made a tactical miscalculation.

Corporate School Reform in Practice during the Daley and Emanuel Administrations

²⁸ Illinois Association of School Boards. "SB7/SB630 Analysis." Accessed January 17, 2013. www.iasb.com/govrel/sb7analysis.pdf

²⁹ YouTube. "Billionaire J. Crown (Obama's Senate Campaign Financier) 'We Got Money' 2 privatize education." Retrieved April 25, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2koz78pj7Y>



Chicago's school policymakers capitalized on this legal framework to reshape CPS governance and sold these changes with the rhetoric of education reform. Mayoral control as practiced during Richard M. Daley's tenure became the blueprint for mayoral control in cities across the country, standardized testing expanded, "failing" schools became subject to dramatic actions like closure or turnaround, and charter schools proliferated at a startling rate. In short, Chicago became a national model for school reform, even though the academic results are mixed at best.³⁰

The Daley Years

Mayor Daley was granted full decision-making power over CPS in 1995. While Chicago was not the origin of mayoral control, the Chicago model did spread to other cities, notably Baltimore, New York, and Washington, D.C.³¹ Three CEOs led CPS during Daley's tenure, none of whom had any experience as a teacher or school administrator prior to assuming the post. Paul Vallas was Daley's former budget director and was considered "decisive."³² Arne Duncan was a former professional basketball player in Australia and was Vallas' chief of staff.³³ Ron Huberman had been a Chicago police officer, Daley's chief of staff, the head of the Chicago Transit Authority, and was considered a data expert.³⁴ Despite their dearth of experience in education, Daley sold his CEOs as expert managers of large organizations. Most teachers on the ground viewed them as unqualified "pinstripe patronage" hires: they were there to implement Daley's vision of school reform.

Several key governance changes that later had national implications were implemented and refined during this period. Vallas introduced a "no excuses" framework of punitive accountability that persists today. This model links student promotion and school probation to high stakes tests and permits the "reconstitution" of failing schools deemed to be in crisis. These policies set the stage for further expansion and intensification of punitive accountability measures in subsequent CPS administrations, and today's national reform culture germinated during this period. First, Vallas instituted a "back-to-basics" curriculum measured by standardized tests as the key accountability measure for students. Students who did not reach a passing score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills could be denied promotion and were forced to attend summer school. Failure of summer school, as measured by the test score, resulted in grade retention.³⁵ Scripted curricula and test-prep were common, especially for students who had failed the promotion test. Failed eighth graders who were too old for elementary schools were sent to "transition centers"; 98.5percent of

³⁰ Woestehoff, Julie and Monty Neill. *Chicago School Reform: Lessons for the Nation*. Chicago: Parents United for Responsible Education, 2007. Accessed April 25, 2013. <http://pureparents.org/data/files/Final%20report.pdf>

³¹ Haney, Leviis. "The 1995 Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act and the CPS CEO: A Historical Examination of the Administration of CEOs Paul Vallas and Arne Duncan." PhD. diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2011. Accessed January 24, 2013. http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/62

³² Woestehoff and Neill, *Chicago School Reform*, 12.

³³ Leviis, "The 1995 Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act."

³⁴ Blitstein, Ryan. "Numbers Man." *Chicago Magazine*. August 2009. Accessed January 24, 2013. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/August-2009/Numbers-Man/>

³⁵ Leviis, "The 1995 Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act."



those students were African American or Latino.³⁶ Second, test scores were used to punish entire schools by placing them on probation, which meant more basic skills training and more testing for students. When the first probation list was published in 1996, 109 of 557 CPS schools were on it.³⁷ For schools with fewer than 15percent of students scoring as proficient, Vallas proposed reconstitution, or the dismissal of *all* school staff who then had to reapply for their jobs. Seven high schools were reconstituted in 1997: DuSable, Englewood, Harper, King, Orr, Phillips, and Robeson.³⁸ Portending the future pattern of school actions, all of those schools met the definition of what UCLA professor Gary Orfield terms highly-segregated “Apartheid schools” – schools made up of 99percent or more students of color (in these cases, almost all African American).³⁹ Despite the reconstitutions, the schools continued to struggle, and every single school on this list would later face another intensive intervention. In short, Vallas developed and implemented the school testing and school sanction elements of corporate school reform in Chicago.

Arne Duncan intensified these elements, added charter school proliferation to the mix, and turned over policy decision-making to corporate interests. Duncan was appointed CPS CEO in June 2001 after Vallas left the position. His tenure was marked by several corporate reform efforts named Renaissance 2010 (Ren10). This reform was a two-pronged approach that combined school closures with rapid charter school expansion: 60 public schools would be closed and 100 new schools would be opened, two-thirds of which would be privately operated charter and contract schools.⁴⁰ Ren10 emerged from the Civic Committee’s 2003 report *Left Behind*. The report lambasted low test scores in Chicago’s schools and declared the system an outright failure. While the report acknowledged the high level of poverty in the city, it downplayed the clear role poverty plays in student test scores and recommended as a solution to Chicago’s educational problems competition between schools that could only occur through a massive expansion of “choice”: 100 new charter schools in inner city neighborhoods and the end of union contracts that obstructed progress.⁴¹ Omitted from *Left Behind* was an admission of the Civic Committee’s century-old role in Chicago educational governance.⁴² Indeed, the report’s signatories included the CEO of Exelon, the former chairman of LaSalle Bank, the former CEO of Illinois Tool Works, and the chairman and CEO of the Chicago Board Options Exchange. Ren10 effectively gave these corporate executives intensive sway over education policy in Chicago.

³⁶ Woestehoff and Neill, *Chicago School Reform*, 13

³⁷ Leviis, “The 1995 Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act.”

³⁸ Schmidt, George. “Duncan Scapegoats city’s poorest children, most dedicated teachers.” *Substance News*. May 2002. Accessed January 24, 2013. <http://substancenews.com/archive/May02/scapegoat.htm>

³⁹ Orfield, Gary, John Kuscera, and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley. *E Pluribus... Separation*. Los Angeles: Civil Rights Project at UCLA, 2012. Accessed January 24, 2013. http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/e-pluribus...separation-deepening-double-segregation-for-more-students/orfield_epluribus_revised_omplete_2012.pdf

⁴⁰ Lipman, Pauline, and Nathan Haines. “From Accountability to Privatization and African American Exclusion.” *Educational Policy* 21(3): 471 – 502.

⁴¹ Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago. (2003). *Left Behind*. Available at http://civiccommittee.org/initiatives/education/LEFT_BEHIND.pdf

⁴² Shipp, *School Reform, Corporate Style*.



Ren10 fundamentally changed CPS's governance structure: it privatized a major portion of the district in mainly African American parts of the city, it stratified the district by adding large numbers of selective schools, and it more directly linked standardized test performance to school actions. The privatization program was part of a larger attempt to gentrify the city, especially areas around former Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) public housing complexes.⁴³ For instance, 20 of 22 schools near the CHA's demolished State Street corridor in Bronzeville were slated for closure.⁴⁴ Major residential developments were planned for these same areas, with starting home prices significantly outside the range of the then-residents' affordability.⁴⁵ Many closed public schools were deliberately replaced with selective, non-union charters where students were admitted by lottery and union contracts could not limit the length of day or year.⁴⁶ To finance this massive expansion of private charters, the Civic Committee founded New Schools for Chicago and pumped \$50 million into charter start-ups.⁴⁷

The Ren10 plan for school expansion would have lost much of its expansionary justification if not for school actions like closures, phase-outs, and turnarounds. In order to radically reshape school governance, Duncan needed a measure and a method, and for this he turned to Vallas. Federal NCLB guidelines based on actions pioneered during the Vallas years allowed Duncan to take drastic actions against schools that did not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). Duncan used the law's various provisions like a hammer against allegedly failing schools. The first actions occurred in 2002, when Duncan closed three elementary schools. The students were practically all African American and predominately low income. Two schools were located in the CHA's State Street corridor, while the third was near a demolished West Side public housing complex.⁴⁸ This experience became the test case for closures under Ren10, and in many cases the same schools that had been on probation and subject to intervention during the Vallas years were subject to further experimentation during the Duncan years. For instance, Englewood High School was deemed a failure and was "phased out" beginning in 2005. Teachers (including this author) were laid-off over a period of three years. The building was renovated and then turned over to an all-boys charter school. Another Vallas retreat, reconstitution, was renamed turnaround, with the same conditions: all employees would be fired and forced to reapply for their jobs. Harper, Orr, and Philips high schools went through the turnaround process about a decade after they had been reconstituted. Almost two dozen other schools have gone through the process through 2013. The predominantly veteran, African American staffs were replaced with significantly younger, and significantly whiter, teachers. An analysis of CPS seniority lists showed that in turnarounds completed after the 2011-12 school year the average age of teachers in the ten schools dropped from 45 to 32, and the average experience dropped from 12 years to under 4 years. Fifty-six percent of teachers in those schools were African American before the turnarounds; 38percent

⁴³ Lipman and Haines, "From Accountability."

⁴⁴ Leviis, "The 1995 Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act."

⁴⁵ Lipman and Haines, "From Accountability."

⁴⁶ Leviis, "The 1995 Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act."

⁴⁷ Lipman and Haines, "From Accountability."

⁴⁸ Schmidt, "Duncan Scapegoats."



were African American after the turnarounds.⁴⁹ Despite the policy's negative impacts, turnaround became a main intervention option in RTTT.

Another Duncan “innovation” was to further turn over district decision-making to corporate interests. Spurred by large contributions, CPS undertook two Gates Foundation-sponsored reforms in the early and mid-2000s: multiple small high schools in one building and “high school transformation.” Reconstituted high schools DuSable and Orr were two of several high schools turned into “multiplex” campuses with multiple small schools in one building. The Gates Foundation worked from the premise that small schools would foster tighter relationships among students, teachers, and parents and drive better test results. Gates funding was eliminated after a few years and small schools were abandoned when results did not follow. The Gates Foundation's other Duncan-era reform, High School Transformation, theorized that a robust, dynamic, and engaging curriculum would dramatically improve high school students' performance. Once-reconstituted Robeson was one of more than 40 schools subjected to the highly-scripted instructional development system (IDS) curriculum.⁵⁰ Results did not match expectations, however, and a Gates-funded assessment of High School Transformation found that inconsistent student attendance, classroom disruptions, technology outages, and poor central office implementation were significant impediments to success.⁵¹ Left out of the report was the fact that the district had eliminated truant officers almost a decade prior, as were any discussions of other causes of student absenteeism.

Two pieces of evidence point to the fact that Ren10 did not markedly change school results. First, Ren10's flimsy academic justification demonstrated that the Vallas governance changes were ineffective – new school actions were undertaken soon after the initial actions occurred, even though the new actions were practically the same as the old ones. Second, the Civic Committee released its own report, entitled *Still Left Behind*, and argued that CPS' performance remained dismal. The Civic Committee's solution? A more intensified version of Ren10, particularly an expansion of school choice through the rapid creation of additional charter schools.⁵² Clearly, the corporate reform model was not driving dramatic education improvements, but Ren10 did rapidly expand privatization of public assets, and given Ren10's biggest proponents' own statements of the need for competition and choice, privatization was the goal.⁵³ By the end of

⁴⁹ Internal CTU analysis.

⁵⁰ Karp, Sarah, and John Myers. “Transformation Fails to Spark Improvement in Chicago High Schools, say Researchers”. *Catalyst Chicago*, August 20, 2009. Accessed January 25, 2013. <http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/notebook/2009/08/20/transformation-fails-spark-improvement-in-chicago-high-schools-say-researchers>

⁵¹ Spote, Susan E., Macarena Correa, Holly M. Hart, and Marjorie E. Wechsler. *High School Reform in Chicago Public Schools: Instructional Development Systems*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 2009. Accessed January 25, 2013. http://policyweb.sri.com/cep/publications/IDS_final.pdf

⁵² Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago. *Still Left Behind: Student Learning in Chicago's Public Schools*. Chicago: Commercial Club of Chicago, 2009. Accessed January 25, 2013. <http://www.civiccommittee.org/Still%20Left%20Behind%20v2.pdf>

⁵³ Lipman, Pauline. “Making sense of Renaissance 2010 School Policy in Chicago: Race, Class, and the Cultural Politics of Neoliberal Urban Restructuring.” Great Cities Institute Publication GCP-09-02. January 2009. Accessed January 25, 2013. http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/publications/workingpaperseries/pdfs/GCP-09-02_Lipman.pdf



Duncan's term, dozens of public schools had been closed and dozens of privately-run charters had been opened, standardized testing had been expanded, and hundreds of jobs had been outsourced. It was on this record that Arne Duncan was promoted to US Secretary of Education in January 2009.

Despite massive political and corporate support, Ren10's expansion was not guaranteed. Ren10 was devastating for thousands of students and families across the city, and parents, teachers, and community organizations protested vigorously. Particularly poignant was testimony and actions that occurred at the legally-required hearings for each school action. A teacher from Whittier elementary on Chicago's Southwest Side explained the real-world implications of seemingly innocuous school changes:

In your maps, Finkl seems like a very close school. But in reality, some of our students will have to walk up to a mile to be able to get there. In your maps that you see CPS, you do not see all the gang signs and all the gang boundaries that our kids are going to have to walk through to get to Finkl. You have to put a face to that. Our kids are going to be walking through very, very dangerous areas just to be able to get to a new school.⁵⁴

Conspicuously absent from the Ren10 protests was a consistently organized response from the CTU. The union's leadership did little during that time to challenge the policy. Teachers worked outside the union's official structure to oppose school actions. It was not until the current union leadership was elected in June 2010 that the union began to more actively oppose corporate school reform policies.

Ron Huberman's tenure as CPS CEO differed little from the Duncan era. Ren10 school action policies continued and intensified, but two initiatives particularly frustrated and outraged teachers. The first was a major intensification of data collection and sorting. Labeled performance management, Huberman was convinced that data-driven decision making could radically improve schools.⁵⁵ Performance management included the development of a wide array of measurements and the attempted quantification of as many educational processes as possible. Huberman was keen on sharing rankings and ratings. His method also involved regular meetings where principals and teachers would be intensively grilled about particular data points. Teachers and administrators viewed performance management meetings as a trap rather than a tool of school improvement, as the outcomes were often harsh rebukes rather than constructive feedback. The second Huberman policy was a major reduction in the teaching staff. In 2010, Huberman claimed that a massive budget deficit necessitated cutting 2,700 teaching positions and raising class sizes to 35 students. Teachers would be laid off by performance instead of seniority, in violation of the existing union

⁵⁴ Board of Education of the City of Chicago. *De La Cruz School Closing Hearing Report*. (Chicago: Chicago Public Schools, 2008), 28.

⁵⁵ Harris, Rebecca. "Huberman to Chicago Principals: Do Performance Management, School Improvement Will Follow." *Catalyst Chicago*, February 5, 2010. Accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/notebook/2010/02/05/huberman-chicago-principals-do-performance-management-school-improvement-will>



contract.⁵⁶ The mass layoffs served as the first major test for the CTU leadership. The union immediately litigated and ultimately won, but 1,300 teachers were still laid off and not all were rehired.⁵⁷ Huberman's tenure was short-lived compared to the previous CEOs; he announced his resignation soon after Daley announced his retirement as mayor.

The Emanuel Administration

Rahm Emanuel was elected mayor of Chicago in February of 2011. Emanuel forged tight ties to corporate interests during his time as an investment banker, and his campaign advisors included executives like Bruce Rauner, a private-equity manager, charter school namesake, and Republican candidate in the 2014 Illinois Gubernatorial election. Emanuel's education platform was basically a continuation of the Daley years and contained one main talking point: because of an overly short school day and school year, Chicago students were in school almost four fewer years than comparable students in Houston.⁵⁸ Emanuel pledged to end this travesty in two ways: lengthen the school day and year, and force Chicago's teachers to work this extra time for no additional pay. In June 2011, soon after taking office, Emanuel appointed a new school board and one of their first acts was to deny teachers a contractually-agreed four percent raise. Teachers were outraged, and the status of the raise was the first major conflict between teachers and the mayor. In July 2011, the truth behind Emanuel's Houston statement came to light. In the same speech as he bragged the CTU could not strike Jonah Edelman, SFC executive director, admitted that he had made up the statistic.⁵⁹ The mayor nonetheless pushed forward with his plan, and the longer school day became the second major conflict between Emanuel and the CTU. The union sued the district when thirteen "Pioneer Schools" were tricked into accepting a longer day in violation of the union contract. The mayor settled in early November, but conflict only intensified when contract negotiations between Emanuel's hand-picked school board and the CTU began later that month.

Given these initial conflicts, CTU prepared for a protracted contract struggle. The union built connections with community and parent organizations across Chicago by defending public schools, opposing charter expansion, and advocating for full school supports like smaller class sizes, a reduction in testing, non-scripted, engaging curricula, wrap-around services like counseling and healthcare, and capital improvements like a library and air conditioning in every school. The union appealed to communities that saw fifteen years of negative reform effects and actively opposed all corporate-backed school actions. The union also undertook an internal reorganization

⁵⁶ Karp, Sarah and Rebecca Harris. "Huberman Moves to Lay Off 'Unsatisfactory' Teachers First". *Catalyst Chicago*, June 23, 2010. Accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/notebook/2010/06/23/huberman-moves-lay-unsatisfactory-teachers-first>

⁵⁷ Ahmed, Azam. "Judge Sides With Union in Chicago Teacher Layoffs." *Chicago Tribune*, October 4, 2010. Accessed January 30, 2013. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-10-04/news/ct-met-cps-teacher-lawsuit-1005-20101004_1_teacher-layoffs-union-and-district-officials-tenured-teachers

⁵⁸ WBEZ. "Education questionnaire: Rahm Emanuel." Accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.wbez.org/page/education-questionnaire-rahm-emanuel>

⁵⁹ Klonsky, Mike. "Who fed Rahm his Longer-School-Day Talking Points?" *Mike Klonsky's SmallTalk Blog*, July 13, 2011. Accessed January 24, 2013. <http://michaelklonsky.blogspot.com/2011/07/who-fed-rahm-his-longer-school-day.html>



that included the creation of organizing and research departments to develop the capacity for a strike.

Negotiations

The negotiating climate was intense throughout 2012. Chicago's school board and mayor, in conjunction with aforementioned reform groups, attempted to vilify Chicago's teachers. The mayor and his allies even went so far as to pay protestors to testify in support of school closings.⁶⁰ Bargaining table tactics were equally cutthroat. The school board's first contract offer in February 2012 gutted the existing contract, as the board proposed a 25-page contract to replace a 250-page contract developed over four decades of negotiations. The proposed contract would have eliminated all contractual protections, did not explain how the longer day and year would work, and contained a pay offer with a one-time raise of 2 percent for a 20 percent increase in work. While contract proposals tend to be more aggressive early in the process and eventually move to a mutually agreeable position, bargaining team members felt that the Board's initial offer was an insult. Despite multiple negotiating sessions, little about the contract had changed by May. Late that month, the CTU held a rally and march of more than 10,000 teachers and supporters through downtown Chicago. After the march, the district began to move – a little. Negotiations moved a bit further in early June, after the union took its strike authorization vote. Far exceeding SB7's minimum threshold, CTU got more than 90 percent of the entire membership to vote in favor of going on strike; 98 percent of those who voted said they would strike. CPS opposed the vote's timing, but the law did not specify when a vote had to occur. In July, a fact finder's report included a verdict that rejected the Board's pay proposals and recommended teacher pay raises of 16% for the proposed new calendar. A minor breakthrough happened in late July, when the Board agreed to hire hundreds of additional teachers to staff physical education, music, and art classes to staff the longer school day, but high stakes teacher evaluations and teacher retention in the event of school closings remained major sticking points through August. Late that month, CTU's house of delegates overwhelmingly voted to authorize a strike date. CTU officers set that date for September 10th. On Labor Day, a rally expected to draw a few thousand actually drew 18,000 people. Labor and community organizations came out to support Chicago's teachers. School started the following day, and the board and union continued to negotiate through that week. These intense negotiations did not generate the required contract terms, however, and late September 9th, CTU president Karen Lewis announced that Chicago's teachers would strike for the first time since 1987.

The Strike

By 6:30am on September 10th, teachers were walking picket lines at almost 600 schools across the city. Rather than have students attend every school, CPS designated about 140 schools

⁶⁰ Rossi, Rosalind. "School Watchdog Probes Reports of Paid Protestors." *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 25, 2012. Accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.suntimes.com/news/cityhall/10235691-418/school-watchdog-probes-reports-of-paid-protesters.html>



as student holding centers. Student attendance at these locations was very low, and many students (including some of my former students at John Hope High School) walked picket lines rather than enter the buildings. That afternoon, CTU staged the first of four major demonstrations. 20,000 teachers and supporters, the vast majority in red t-shirts, marched through the streets of Chicago's central business district, snarling traffic and drawing nationwide media attention. Unlike many demonstrations in recent years that featured an adversarial relationship between Chicago police and protesters, the marches during the teachers strike were fully supported by police. Many officers I spoke with were glad that someone was willing to challenge the mayor, especially since the police and fire fighters' contracts were the next ones to be negotiated. A similar scene played out on Tuesday and Wednesday that week. Rather than picket each school, teachers picketed at the student holding centers in the morning and then held huge demonstrations downtown. Many schools' staffs further took their grievances directly to their elected officials. Teachers picketed outside at least thirty aldermen's offices that week, and those officials who signed a letter against the strike were particularly targeted. One school staff protested their alderman multiple times after he disparaged the strike during an appearance on Fox News.

The mood during both morning pickets and afternoon marches was upbeat, determined, and even festive. For thousands of teachers, the strike was the first public expression of their political beliefs. Those teachers learned from the hundreds who had participated in the last Chicago teachers strike. One father even carried a sign with a picture of him and his son during the 1987 strike. That son is now a CPS teacher and the two were on strike together. Regardless of experience, the strike was an opportunity for teachers to express their frustration with years of corporate school reform. A widely circulated blog post from a CPS teacher described multiple reasons for his striking and represented thousands of teachers' motivations: under-resourced schools, weeks of instruction lost to testing, the longer school day without sufficient supports, destructive school turnarounds, diversion of public education funds to private interests, and understaffing of schools.⁶¹ Homemade signs and strike chants, as well as thousands of Facebook and Twitter posts, also pointed toward teachers' reasons for striking. Some emphasized general disrespect shown toward teachers, some spoke toward specific policy decisions, some cited the history of protest in the U.S. Many targeted the mayor directly. Furthermore, the strike's message resonated beyond teachers. In an era where major strikes are exceedingly rare, the CTU strike enjoyed broad and deep support. At some picket locations, seemingly every passing car honked in support. National and international support poured in, as the CTU received messages of solidarity from teachers unions in New York, Paris, China, Canada, and cities across the U.S., and hundreds of people and organizations made monetary contributions to the CTU's solidarity fund. And despite the hassle and inconvenience the strike created, a majority of Chicagoans and a two-thirds majority of CPS parents, supported the CTU's strike. Such an outpouring of support helped fuel teachers' resolve, as only about 20 people scabbed, or crossed picket lines, over the seven-day strike.

⁶¹ Barrett, Xian. "Why I'm Striking, JCB". *Teacher X*. September 9, 2012. Accessed January 25, 2013. <http://chiteacherx.blogspot.com/2012/09/why-im-striking-jcb.html>



On Friday of the strike's first week, after teachers led five days of strong pickets, huge demonstrations, and a day of canvassing neighborhoods most impacted by education reform, the Board finally presented an offer that the union's officers felt comfortable putting to a vote. CTU held another rally and march the following day on the city's West Side, and on Sunday the offer was presented to the union's House of Delegates. After heated discussion, the House voted to stay on strike to provide teachers the opportunity to read and discuss the proposed terms. This delay outraged city leaders, and the Mayor brought an injunction to the Cook County circuit court. The judge, however, refused to hear the city's arguments. Teachers walked picket lines Monday and Tuesday. After pickets were done for the day, strike captains led contract discussion meetings in churches, parks, and other public places across the city. On September 18th, after those citywide discussions, the House of Delegates voted overwhelmingly to suspend the strike. Chicago's teachers challenged a powerful discourse of education reform that was fully supported by the city's political and business establishment, and won.

Going Forward?

The strike did not end corporate school reform in Chicago. Teachers won important provisions in the contract, but they also made key concessions. While the school day and year were not as long as the mayor would like, the school day and year were extended. The district agreed to hire additional art and music teachers to implement the longer school day, but the district did not hire additional school psychologists, social workers, and other clinicians. Teachers will follow students in school consolidations, but tenured teachers who lose their jobs to turnarounds receive significantly reduced benefits. CTU was able to limit the standardized testing component of teacher evaluations to the state minimum, but cut scores for excellent and proficient ratings are relatively high, which means many tenured teachers could face high-stakes sanctions and new teachers will have a much harder time receiving tenure. The Board would not negotiate class size reductions or restrictions on standardized testing. The Board also retains the power to undertake school actions, and in May 2013 the Board authorized the largest single group of school closings in U.S. history. Contract enforcement has also been a challenge; some principals have claimed that the new contract does not exist until they receive a finalized printed book. On the balance, however, the strike and the resulting contract were clear victories for teachers and students.

A key question remains: why did the strike open a national conversation about corporate school reform? Cities across the country had been subjected to reforms for so long that a better description might be "corporate status quo." A major part of the answer has to do with the CTU's message that the strike was a challenge to a reform model that had failed and harmed thousands of urban students across the country. The strike was the first teacher work stoppage directly related to the unfair effects of corporate school policy, and this challenge involved the active participation of a coalition of community and parent groups who backed the teachers' vision for what school could and should be. Directly related to this message is the clear chasm between school for the affluent and school for the poor. Contrast the corporate reform model to the University of Chicago Lab Schools' approach. According to the Lab Schools' mission statement:



The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools provide an experience-centered, rigorous and well-rounded education for a diverse community. Recognizing that students have a variety of needs at each developmental stage and learn in different ways, the Schools are committed to help each student:

- Learn to think critically and creatively
- Cultivate a passion for excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics
- Master important subject matter
- Achieve a sense of emotional and physical well-being
- Celebrate both our cultural differences and our common humanity
- Gain a sense of personal and community responsibility
- Develop a life-long love of learning⁶²

Mayor Emanuel's children, President Obama's children, and US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan all currently attend or previously attended the Lab Schools. Yearly tuition at the Lab Schools is more than \$25,000. In other words, affluent children are spared the experimentation and harm that flows from the reform agenda at the same time their parents push it for others.

Another part of the answer was a sense that governance reforms like NCLB and RTTT are intensifying, despite the reforms' questionable record. A major problem for corporate reformers is that reforms pushed by perceived outsiders, especially when the changes have little educational benefit, face intense skepticism and high barriers to implementation. Corporate school reforms have been imposed on those students and families that have been systematically denied resources and supports for decades even though the "achievement gap" was reduced most dramatically during the period of desegregation and anti-poverty efforts during the 1970s and early 1980s.⁶³ Yet, even with the clear success of integration and investment, no similar program is proposed today. Reform supporters are beginning to question the current approach, too. The American Enterprise Institute's Rick Hess wrote, "After failing miserably to convince suburban and middle-class voters that reforms designed for dysfunctional urban systems and at-risk kids are good for their children and their schools, Common Core advocates now evince an eerie confidence that they can *scare* these voters into embracing the 'reform' agenda" (emphasis original).⁶⁴ Stories of corporate reform success have omitted these larger trends and obfuscated reforms' negative consequences. Absent from the reform discussion of public education is that public school has worked for millions of people, and it can work for millions more when done effectively.

⁶² University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. "Mission Statement." Accessed January 24, 2013.

<http://www.ucls.uchicago.edu/about-lab/mission-statement/index.aspx>

⁶³ Orfield, Gary. (2006). Foreword to *Tracking achievement gaps and assessing the impact of NCLB on the gaps: An in-depth look into national and state reading and math outcome trends* by Jaekyung Lee, 5-9. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. Accessed January 25, 2013. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED491807.pdf>

⁶⁴ Hess, Frederick. "The Common Core Kool-Aid." *Rick Hess Straight Up*, November 30, 2012. Retrieved 12/6/12 from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2012/11/the_common_core_kool-aid.html



The national push back against corporate reform has spread quickly since last fall. Teachers in several suburban Chicago districts struck in the months following the CTU strike. Teachers at Garfield High School in Seattle refused to give a standardized test they viewed as unfair, and their boycott spread to other cities. The Texas State House of Representatives zeroed-out the 2013 budget line for standardized testing in order to challenge its continued use. California Governor Jerry Brown used his 2013 State of the State speech to decry labyrinthine accountability systems and unequal school funding. The CTU strike and subsequent efforts have by no means settled the battle over corporate school reform, but reformers' momentum has been notably slowed as people across the country have context, models, and inspiration for defending the true soul of public education. George Washington, in his first address to Congress in 1790, said that it was crucial to teach people "to value their own rights" and "to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority." Scripted curricula and test prep usually do not teach those concepts, but having experienced the strike first-hand, walking a picket line does.