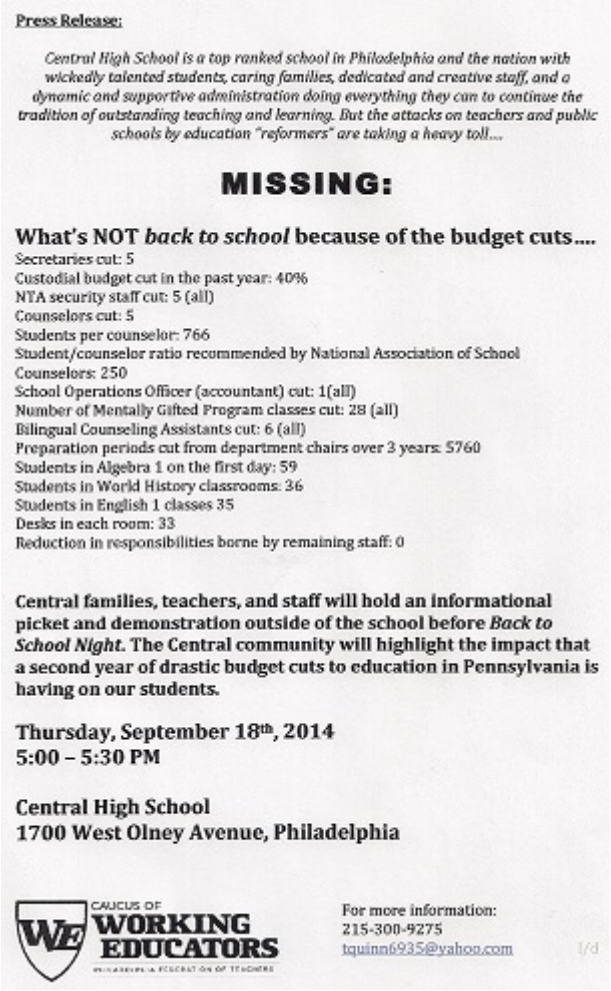
A snapshot you won't see in the media

written by Lois Weiner | September 17, 2014



Press Release:

Central High School is a top ranked school in Philadelphia and the nation with wickedly talented students, caring families, dedicated and creative staff, and a dynamic and supportive administration doing everything they can to continue the tradition of outstanding teaching and learning. But the attacks on teachers and public schools by education "reformers" are taking a heavy toll....

MISSING:

What's NOT *back to school* because of the budget cuts....

Secretaries cut: 5
Custodial budget cut in the past year: 40%
NTA security staff cut: 5 (all)
Counselors cut: 5
Students per counselor: 766
Student/counselor ratio recommended by National Association of School Counselors: 250
School Operations Officer (accountant) cut: 1(all)
Number of Mentally Gifted Program classes cut: 28 (all)
Bilingual Counseling Assistants cut: 6 (all)
Preparation periods cut from department chairs over 3 years: 5760
Students in Algebra 1 on the first day: 59
Students in World History classrooms: 36
Students in English 1 classes 35
Desks in each room: 33
Reduction in responsibilities borne by remaining staff: 0

Central families, teachers, and staff will hold an informational picket and demonstration outside of the school before *Back to School Night*. The Central community will highlight the impact that a second year of drastic budget cuts to education in Pennsylvania is having on our students.

Thursday, September 18th, 2014
5:00 – 5:30 PM

Central High School
1700 West Olney Avenue, Philadelphia

CAUCUS OF WORKING EDUCATORS

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I've written about a new wave of reform in teachers unions that's still under the radar of the corporate media and much of the Left press. It's hard for these caucuses to get media attention, which is understandable when the outlets are owned by Rupert Murdoch or the like. They have no interest in publicizing teachers' efforts to replace the tired, unsuccessful business unionism that dominates with a vibrant, democratic social movement. The mainstream Left media's confusion about education reform is another story, one I explain elsewhere. One effect of the media ignoring these growing grassroots efforts is that activists can feel isolated.

To illustrate what's happening in many, many places, I'm posting a flyer being distributed in Philadelphia high school. In forming a caucus based on principles of social justice, committed to union democracy and a militant fight for the teaching profession and public education along with parent, student, and community allies, activists create the nucleus of a different kind of union. They prepare themselves to be a different kind of leadership of a different kind of union. This kind of organizing is typical of what CORE (Caucus of Rank and File Educators) did – and does – in Chicago. It's a model that has inspired teachers and labor activists around the world. This process has to take on the union apparatus but it's rooted in each school where teachers build trust and develop networks. This flyer gives us a snapshot of the process happening in Central High School and in Philadelphia.

Union officials are responding to this new movement by adopting a more militant tone in their speeches and taking positions on social justice concerns that were previously taboo. These shifts show the new movement is having a significant impact on the unions, and we should welcome them –

while realizing that a mobilized membership and a democratic union are the essentials we need to build the unions we must have, pronto.