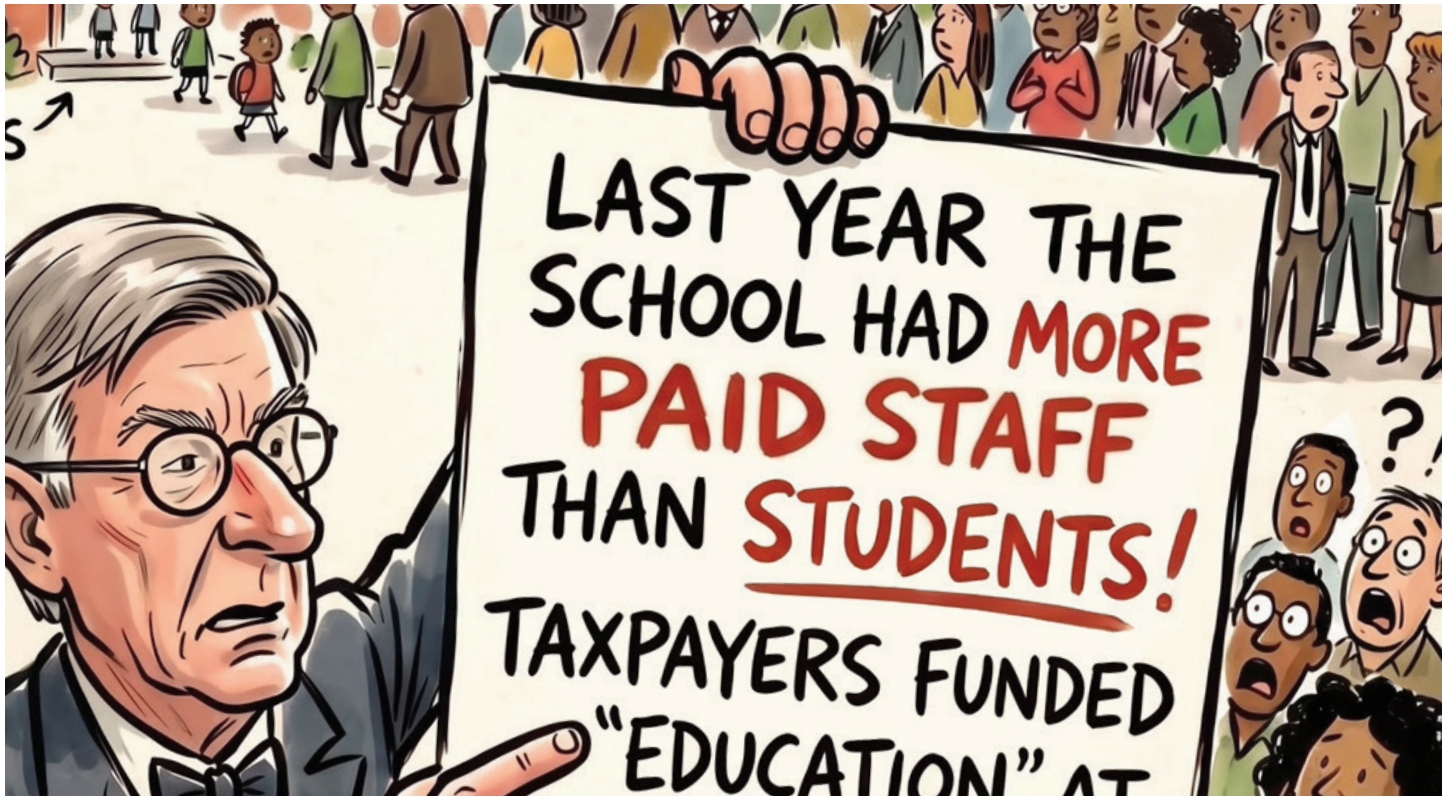




Patronage Over Pupils

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Frederick Douglass was a great man, so one might expect that a school named after him would also be great. But Chicago's Frederick Douglass Academy High School, sporting a nifty [web page](#), falls short.

In students.

The Illinois Policy Institute's Chicago Policy Center [reports](#) that, "Frederick Douglass Academy, with a capacity of 1,008, had just 27 students in 2025-2026."

Yet supporters and employees [boast](#) online how "loud and proud" they are about the school — while demanding more funding.

We're not supposed to notice that 981 shortfall in enrolled students.

Last year, [according](#) to columnist George F. Will, the school had more paid staff members than students! The year previous, taxpayers had funded "education" there to the tune of \$93,000 per pupil!

"But Douglass is not entirely an outlier," explains Mr. Will. "At more than 50 Chicago schools, the percent of students who achieve math proficiency is 0."

And the average over *all* the schools, last year, adds another clue: "43 percent of the city's teachers were absent 10 or more school days. Students similarly negligent produce the phenomenon called 'chronic absenteeism.' A quarter of Chicago high-school students missed more than a month of school, and 100 percent of Douglass's seniors were chronically absent. Yet the graduation rate remains high, at about 83 percent."

Will blames the teachers' union, which he calls "wicked."

Corruption festers up and down Chicago's K-12 hierarchy. There has been a moratorium on closing under-utilized schools, with near-empty schools better serving as union pork than as an efficient way to educate the young.

The Illinois Policy Institute [insists](#) that the first step out of this mess is to close failing schools.

We cannot keep passing along those who flunk out. Students and schools, both.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.