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**KIDS FIRST
CHICAGO**

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Most Chicago parents say keep schools open on May 1 and want a say in the decision

CHICAGO, Illinois — Chicago parents are sending a clear message on the May 1 decision: most want schools to remain open, and they expect to be part of decisions that directly affect their children.

Chicago Public Schools has [confirmed](#) that schools will remain open on May 1 following an agreement with the Chicago Teachers Union that will allow some students to participate in afternoon civic engagement activities.

The Executive Committee of Kids First Chicago’s Parent Advisory Board released the following statement:

“Chicago parents have a range of views on May 1. What unites them is frustration with being left out of the decision-making process on an issue that directly impacts their children and daily lives. Some families would face real challenges with childcare and work. Others welcome the opportunity to stand in solidarity. And some simply want clarity so they can plan.

As Chicago transitions to a fully elected school board, we implore board members to include parents in decisions that affect our children, not make them without us.”

To better understand the parent perspective on May 1, Kids First Chicago surveyed roughly 700 current CPS parents last week. The results show clear preferences and real impacts on families.

Most parents say schools should remain open on May 1

- 61% support keeping schools open (424 respondents)
- 34% support closing schools (239 respondents)
- 5% are not sure (35 respondents)

Parents hold strong views on the issue

Parents on both sides of the issue hold strong and deeply felt views, with clear conviction among those who support keeping schools open as well as those who support closing them.

- 85% of respondents said they feel very strongly about their position
- 13% feel somewhat strongly
- 2% do not feel strongly

- 91% of respondents who support keeping **schools open** feel **very strongly** about their stance.
- 83% of respondents who support **closing schools** feel **very strongly** about their stance.
- 26% of respondents who are **not sure** which option they support feel **very strongly** about their stance. 40% and 34% feel somewhat strongly and not strongly at all, respectively.

A closure would create real challenges for many families

Nearly 70% of parents said a school closure would disrupt their family, ranging from minor inconvenience to significant challenges.

- 40% said it would pose a significant challenge related to childcare, work, or logistics (278 respondents). 60% of parents who support keeping schools open indicate a closure would create significant challenges, compared to 7% who support a school closure.
- 28% said it would be a minor inconvenience (194 respondents). Similar proportions of parents – both who do and do not support a closure – indicate a closure would result in a minor inconvenience (28% who support keeping schools open, 26% who support a closure)
- 28% said it would have no impact (191 respondents). 7% of parents who support keeping schools open indicate a closure would not have any impact, compared to 62% who support a school closure.
- 4% were not sure (31 respondents)

For many families, keeping schools open is about learning, childcare, and stability

Among parents who support keeping schools open, the top reasons are maintaining instructional time, avoiding disruptions to childcare, and keeping family schedules predictable. Respondents were able to select up to two factors:

- 81% said keeping students in school for instruction and learning
- 38% cited avoiding disruption to family schedules and childcare
- 21% pointed to ensuring a safe, supervised environment during the school day
- 19% cited concern about short notice and lack of clear alternatives
- 13% said protecting important end-of-year events
- 9% pointed to access to meals and school-based supports

Support for closing schools is driven by civic engagement and solidarity

Among parents who support closing schools, motivations center on broader civic and community considerations. Respondents were able to select up to two factors:

- 57% said standing in solidarity with broader community issues
- 32% cited teaching students about civic engagement and social issues
- 25% cited supporting teachers and school staff
- 24% said allowing students to participate in civic action
- 23% said this is an important moment to take action
- 16% pointed to raising awareness about education funding and school resources

Parents overwhelmingly want a voice in decisions that affect their children

- 86% said CPS and the Board of Education should directly seek parent input before making decisions like this (597 respondents)
- 7% said they should not (48 respondents)
- 8% were unsure (53 respondents)

Additional Context

For more on the importance of including parent voice in decisions like this, see Kids First Chicago CEO Daniel Anello's recent blog post: [When will we ask parents about the May 1 Day of Action?](#)

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by Kids First Chicago from April 14 through April 18, 2026. The poll was distributed to parents in Kids First Chicago's network via text message and email. The survey was also distributed through Kids First Chicago partner organizations.

Participation was limited to current Chicago Public Schools (CPS) parents. Respondents who indicated they were not current CPS parents were not permitted to complete the survey.

To ensure data integrity, all respondents were required to provide their first and last name, email address, and phone number. Duplicate and invalid responses were also identified and removed.

The survey included the following background information to provide context and ensure respondents had a balanced understanding of the issue:

"Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is currently deciding whether to keep schools open on May 1 or close schools to allow students and staff to participate in a national 'Day of Action.'

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) has advocated for May 1 to be a non-instructional day focused on civic engagement, including issues such as labor rights, immigration, and education funding. The CTU has argued that its contract includes a jointly agreed-upon non-instructional professional development day and that May 1 was intended to serve that purpose, particularly in what it describes as 'unprecedented times.'

At the same time, CPS leadership, including CEO Dr. Macquiline King, has recommended that schools remain open on May 1. CPS has raised concerns about disruption to instruction, scheduled end-of-year events (such as prom, field trips, and sports), and the impact on families who rely on schools for childcare, supervision, and meals.

The Chicago Board of Education is expected to make a final decision soon."

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ABOUT KIDS FIRST CHICAGO

Kids First Chicago's mission is to dramatically improve education for Chicago's children by ensuring their families are the respected authorities on what their kids need and

decision-makers in their kids' education. Kids First Chicago (K1C) partners with families to support them in gaining the resources, access, and voice they need to achieve their vision for their children. K1C provides transparent and rigorous education analysis to families, educators, and policymakers alike to inform data-driven and inclusive decision-making about the future of Chicago's public schools. Visit kidsfirstchicago.org.