

# Hundreds of Indiana students walk out of schools to protest ICE

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*Zak Cassel / WFYI*

Several hundred students from North Central High School walked off the campus and into a parking lot across from the school to continue their protest on Monday, Feb. 2, 2026.

Hundreds of students across Indianapolis and in nearby suburbs walked out of class Monday, bundled in winter coats and carrying handmade signs to join a growing national movement of young people protesting federal immigration enforcement.

The widespread walkouts represent a deepening tension between student-led political activism and state leaders' expectations for what goes on in school. As young protesters call for the removal of federal agents from their communities, school administrators and state officials are weighing the protection of First Amendment rights against the legal obligation to maintain academics and school safety.

However, students said they were not worried about missing tests or being marked truant because they believed speaking out in protest was more important.

The demonstration followed protests across the country that are calling on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers to leave cities in the wake of the fatal shootings of two Minneapolis residents.

The walkouts Monday drew participation from student bodies with markedly different backgrounds, including Noblesville High School in Hamilton County and North Central High School in Marion County. Nearly 61% of students at North Central are Black and Hispanic, compared to just 18% of students at Noblesville.

In northern Indianapolis, hundreds of students from North Central walked into 86th Street and caused traffic to be blocked and managed by police. Students held signs, hollered and gave speeches as passersby honked car horns in support.

██████ an 18-year-old North Central student, who helped organize the protest, said the school's diversity is why she is speaking out.

"The fact that we were able to do this today and show our immigrant students – it's really significant," she said.

WFYI is identifying minor students by their first names only because of the sensitive nature of the immigration debate.

In Noblesville, students carried signs with messages including "ICE kills" and "No one's illegal on stolen land."

██████, a 17-year-old Noblesville student, said he missed a test for the protest because he thinks it's important. He wants to see a major cut in ICE funding and reform in profiling the people they arrest and detain.

"I've seen all the videos of the violence committed against people – both immigrants and citizens alike – and it's disgusting to see people claiming to be law enforcement attack ... just everyday people doing nothing, just going about their lives," he said.

The students, including 16-year-old ██████ gathered outside Noblesville High School Monday morning, then marched around the middle school before heading to the city square, where they circled the old courthouse and chanted. A large presence of police officers monitored traffic and safety.



"I'm protesting because of how ICE has been treating people. The whole concept of ICE is to protect our country from criminals, yet all I have seen is all these ICE officers attacking children," ██████ said, referring to [a 5-year-old detained](#) in Minnesota. "I think they have been focusing on whoever they want to get and whoever they can get, and it's really been hurting our country and tearing us apart."

While the First Amendment protects the right to protest, Indiana schools can still issue consequences for missing instructional time. While students [have the right to protest](#) they are not exempt from school rules.

Noblesville Superintendent Dan Hile said in a community message that the district is "legally required to respect the First Amendment rights of students," but noted the district does not endorse political activism. He urged students to express beliefs in a way that is "not disruptive to other students or the operation of the school."

A district spokesperson confirmed the school will follow its "normal process" for attendance. "We respect the First Amendment rights of students and also must ensure the safe operation of our schools," she said. "As always, anyone who was not in class this morning will be addressed through the appropriate school policies and procedures."

Some supportive parents watched over the group after it left the school for downtown Noblesville. Katie Ohning said it was important for the students to see supportive adults but didn't see any counterprotesters.

"There's always concerns when you're dealing with kids, especially a mass amount of kids with a subject that's so highly problematic right now, so I was a little bit concerned about the reception ... and I haven't seen anything like that. There seems to be a lot of support for it, with cars honking," she said.

## State education leaders, lawmakers respond

The Indiana Department of Education sent a message to local superintendents Monday, clarifying that the state agency does not support or endorse student walkouts and expects schools to maintain an academic focus amidst the surge in student activism.

The IDOE reminded local districts of their "obligation to establish and enforce policies" regarding student conduct, attendance and discipline. The department stressed that student safety and parental authority are the primary concerns, stating that any student leaving a school building must have "explicit permission from their parents."

Some of the state's GOP leaders have called out schools and organizers of the protests. Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith said families and students deserve better.

"As some of our children in Indiana struggle to learn basic skills like math and reading, it's unacceptable to see so many schools in our state, funded by BILLIONS of Hoosier tax dollars, openly allow their students to walk out in protest of ICE," [he posted on X](#).

Rep. Jake Teshka (R-North Liberty) accused adults of orchestrating the student activism.

"In order to advance their radical political agenda, leftist adults are leading children into potential danger," he [wrote on social media](#). "What we are seeing across the nation in schools is highly orchestrated indoctrination at the expense of real education."

Students at other Indianapolis high schools are expected to hold walkouts this week.

## Student Political Activity



Noblesville High School

Janae Mobley

Jan 26 at 1:43 PM

NHS Students, Staff, and Families-

It has come to my attention that a student-initiated political protest walkout being planned for next week is being promoted online using Noblesville Schools' logos.

Please be aware that Noblesville Schools did not create this promotion and does not endorse, organize, encourage, or advertise any types of student political activism.

Sharing political views and values is a discussion between parents and their children, not the role of our school.

Having said that, we are required to respect students' First Amendment rights, and student walkouts of this nature do happen occasionally. We do not prohibit students' ability to express themselves peacefully, safely, and in a manner that is not disruptive to other students or the operation of the school. If those conditions are not met, then our staff will address it quickly and appropriately.

You may choose to discuss this issue as a family, including any expectations you may have regarding your child's participation in this event.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration for our schools and students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Janae Mobley

NHS Principal