



Now More Than Ever!

ME A REPORTER

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Lessons from Those Who Came Before Us

In February our Union will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first and only state-wide teacher walk out not only in Florida but in the United States.

50 years ago teachers in Florida were growing more and more concerned about the lack of funding provided by the Florida Legislature for Public Schools. There were huge disparities in what local school districts could provide for their students. The teaching and learning conditions in all counties were a problem but some were deplorable due to the lack of funding.

In spite of the best efforts of lobbyists at the state and local level, there was no progress being made to improve funding which in turn could improve the conditions for students and teachers.

In February of 1968 35,000 teachers did not just walk away from their classrooms, they resigned from their jobs because they saw no other way to have their voices heard. They had tried talking and reasoning with then Governor, Claude Kirk and the Legislative leaders to no avail.

Many teachers who participated in that job action lost a lot. Some never got their jobs back. Some were even drafted and sent to fight in Vietnam. However, all who participated knew that what they did was necessary if anything was to get better for their profession and for their students.

In the end there were many Legislative victories won because of those brave teachers who stood together. Funding for schools improved and became equalized through the FEFP, Florida went from 22nd to 13th in salaries nationally, and collective bargaining for Public Employees was not only put in Florida Statute but also in the Florida Constitution.

There are many things happening in our Legislature that are similar to the conditions that lead up to the 1968 Walkout. Teachers and paraprofessionals still have the power to make a difference if they will stand together by joining their Union and standing together when they are called upon to take action such as writing their Legislators, calling School Board members, coming to meetings, etc.

We thank you for your membership in MEA and hope you will talk to your colleagues about the difference we can make if we stand together for our profession and for our students. We owe it to those who came before us to continue their legacy.

Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season.

In Solidarity,

Pat Barber, President and Dawn Walker, Vice President

ME A Takes Action on Behalf of Members

Student Learning Growth Grievance Filed

Since concerns about student learning growth scores continued, MEA has filed an Association grievance on behalf of all teachers regarding the inability of teachers to access data related to their student learning growth scores.

The grievance was filed at the Superintendent's level and will be going to Arbitration next. At the time of publication a date for the arbitration had not been set. MEA will keep members informed as more information becomes available.

Data Breach Suit Moves Forward

Morgan and Morgan have filed a suit on behalf of members related to last year's data breach.

The lawsuit, supported by the Manatee Education Association, alleges that the School District was negligent in failing to provide employees who had the responsibility to protect district data with even basic cybersecurity training and to provide for the encryption of sensitive data, even after the IRS warned of schemes, just like the one which the District fell for, and even after State audits, on three occasions, warned of cybersecurity deficiencies in the District.

The so-called "phishing" scheme caused the District to disclose Social Security Numbers, names, addresses and similar private, sensitive information relating to all 7,700 plus District employees thereby creating the likelihood of misuse of the information for years to come. John Yanchunis with Morgan and Morgan, P.A. is lead counsel in the case. Yanchunis has vast experience in class action litigation and data breach cases.