

The MEA Protects Its Members' Jobs

Teacher uncomfortable with “Hug Day” declines, but faces tenure charges after struggling with insistent students.

A teacher made it well-known that he would not participate in the February Hug Day events. However, a few high school students attempted to embrace him anyway and the popular high school teacher's job was left hanging in the balance after one of the students alleged he assaulted him.

After criminal charges were dropped two months before, the district board announced that a special meeting would be held for the purpose of “employee discipline/tenure matter.” A crowd of more than 200 avid supporters attended. As reported by a local television station, thunderous applause and cheers broke out when it was announced that he was not being fired after an agreement was reached between the board and the teacher's MEA-provided attorney.

A student is injured during a science experiment, the school tells the teacher she is covered by their insurance policy, but later settles its case and teacher is sued personally.

A teacher was conducting a science project for her physics class (a class for advanced students, where problems occur less often). The project involved moving the class to the gymnasium, pairing off and handing them kettle balls to toss to each other. One of the students' tosses was short and her partner lunged for the ball. The kettle ball ended up crushing the student's finger between the ball and the floor and the hospital had to amputate at the first joint. The teacher was told by the school district that she was covered under their SET SEG insurance policy and that she wouldn't be harmed personally. The teacher's UniServ Director insisted that the member complete a Criminal Investigation Packet and EEL. The parents later settled with the school district and filed a suit for emotional damages against the teacher for \$250,000. The teacher is protected by the MEA million dollar liability insurance policy.

A teacher is laid off and replaced with a substitute employed by a private company.

A teacher with a clean disciplinary record is was laid off after 12 years. Two other teachers retired but the district replaced both with substitute teachers employed by a private company. It refused to bring back the laid off teacher. The MEA local grieved the decision, represented the teacher in arbitration and then filed a claim with the Tenure Commission. The Commission agreed with the MEA attorneys, that:

“The good order and the welfare of the State and of the school system [is served] by preventing removal of capable and experienced teachers at the personal whims of changing office holders... free from political and personal arbitrary interference.”

A professor is sued for sexual harassment after comforting a student.

A university professor was sued by a student for sexual harassment. After the student arrived late to class, the professor informed him that his grade would be affected. The student became upset and told the professor that he had just found out that his grandfather died. The professor apologized and gave the student a hug. The classroom had to be called as witnesses to the professor's defense.

A parent covers up abuse by blaming paraprofessional.

A paraprofessional was accused by a parent of dislocating her child's arm. The UniServ Director had the member fill out a Criminal Investigation packet, EEL form, and the MEA released \$1,000 so the member could retain a lawyer. The investigation determined that the parent dislocated the child's arm and blamed the paraprofessional. The investigation also revealed that the mother had a history of child abuse and had moved from district to district blaming school district employees at each school.

A bus driver is fired for using excessive force but MEA shows student lied.

A Grandville bus driver was fired for using excessive physical force against a student on her bus. She grieved her termination and MEA represented her in arbitration. It was shown during the arbitration hearing that the student had lied about being assaulted. The arbitrator reinstated the driver.

Teacher accused of making lurid gestures and "I love you" hand signs to his female students, MEA Legal proves them to be Taylor Swift fan customs.

A new teacher was accused of asking his students to play a game where they "slipped their tongue in and out" and for made "I love you" hand signs at the girls in his class. The sheriff was called. The school's attorney brought in a lawyer, and the teacher was immediately suspended. The MEA retained an attorney who revealed that the students were interviewed by the school's lawyer without the permission of their parents and were asked leading questions. Their full answers were truncated. The investigation revealed that the teacher was also the middle school volleyball coach where the players had a tradition of playing the Hokey Pokey after a win. The teacher decided that rather than "Put your hips in, Put your hips out," players should instead do the same with their tongues. The "I love you" hand signs were Taylor Swift fan symbols (forefingers and thumbs together in the symbol of a heart). The school district later brought the teacher back and returned most of his lost pay.

A teacher is arrested after school video shows her forcefully escorting student to the front office.

A teacher was arrested for assault after being observed on video forcefully escorting a student to the office. The MEA attorney hired a private investigator to locate other students shown in the video who were not interviewed by police. The students testified to the threats and curses used by the complaining student. After several weeks of trial, the member was found not guilty.

A hall monitor accused of rape after inadvertently touching student's breast.

A hall monitor motioning to students in cafeteria inadvertently touches a seventh grader's breast. The member goes on trial. The principal and several students testify on his behalf that any touching would be accidental due to the press of the crowd inside the lunch room. The member was acquitted of all Criminal Sexual Conduct charges.

Other Stories

A paraprofessional was accused of grabbing an elementary school student by the face. The parapro had an exemplary employment record and was on the verge of retirement before being criminally investigated and placed on administrative leave. Although there was no corroboration of the assault there was heightened scrutiny on the member due to an unrelated lawsuit in the District. The member was not charged based on the MEA investigation that was presented to the police.

A bus driver assistant with an exemplary record was accused of inappropriately touching the private area of a 23 yr. old student. An MEA attorney met with the Northville Police and provided them with proof, not found in school files, indicating the student involved had a history of making outrageous allegations. The matter was dropped without charges.

A special ed teacher was accused of picking up autistic students in their chairs and dropping them, along with other equally serious allegations. The students could not communicate. The "witnesses" were actually two paraprofessionals brand new to autistic instruction who did not like the teacher. When confronted with exculpatory evidence, the Prosecutor's Office still proceeded to trial due to community pressure. A key witness was an expert in the field who had observed the member in the same class when she was being certified.

A teacher assistant was accused of leaving a mark on a child's back by forcibly placing him in a chair. The MEA's attorney investigation revealed that the allegations came from a parent with a history of issues and not the child. No charges were brought and the matter was closed out quickly.

A Davison bus driver was fired after bumping a car in the parking lot. The MEA UniServ director filed for arbitration and represented the member through the process. The arbitrator ordered her reinstated, the member lost only 10 days pay.

Member Testimonials

Teacher in her 5th year is punished for opposing the administration.

"I wanted to be a teacher since I was in the 5th grade. I just always knew I was meant to be a teacher. My first job was in 1987 everything was fabulous and I loved my job and students.

"In my 5th year of teaching I received a bad evaluation. It had nothing to do with my teaching; I had gone against the grain when I challenged the administration and they did not like it. I was put on a teaching improvement plan and handed a bad evaluation.

“This was the first time I asked for assistance from the MEA. An Mea UniServ Director was by my side to help and got me through this shocking ordeal!

“I was jaded for the first time as an educator and my eyes were wide open to the notion that the administration can, with little effort, make your career disappear at a blink of an eye. Had it not been for the MEA my career would have ended at year five.”

A gay teacher’s computer is confiscated, his Facebook account is inspected, and police investigate him as a pedophile.

“One day after school I was approached by an administrator and told that I would need my building representative to be present. Upon his arrival, my computer was confiscated with no explanation. It wasn’t until much later and through my UniServ Director that I found out that a Facebook post between me and a graduate was the cause of the seizure. My UD called me into the MEA office and had me fill out paperwork for an MEA attorney.

“I was personally devastated at hearing such news, and thought my career and reputation were going to be destroyed. The attorney determined that the police found nothing incriminating on my computer, but also that the entire police case had been closed almost two months prior.

[A meeting was later convened with the administration.] “The meeting itself was brutal, and I could not have handled it without my UD’s presence ... and I really don’t think that I would still be a teacher today if I wouldn’t have had it ... She never once made me feel as if I was just another case. She made me feel as if I were her only case, and it was that kind of interaction that I needed. Every day I went into school for months on end I felt as if a noose was being slipped around my neck, but my UD was always there to assure me that everything would be okay and work out in the end.

“Thankfully, it did, without any kind of write up or letter in my file. ... I have since had the best year of my career, have joined numerous committees that I serve on with the Superintendent, and have redefined myself as an educator – and I owe it all to my UD and the MEA.”

A college professor is harassed and bullied by another professor.

“I just wanted to say thank you. I cannot express how grateful I am for your support through everything. It is nice to know that someone has my back out there. This is the first time that I have had to use my union for something and I now understand the amazing support and need for the union and people like you. Again, I truly appreciate your support. It means more than you know.”