

2018 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA) ◆

Rosena J. Willis Memorial Award



Governor Scott Walker sought to silence the collective voice of educators and all public workers in Wisconsin with the 2011 Wisconsin Act 10, but the members of the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA) fought back, year after year. MTEA increased its commitment of time and resources to developing leaders of color and activism within the union. In the 2016-2017 school year, this commitment

yielded impactful results for students, educators and the community.

MTEA released the Educational Assistant President from classroom duties on a half-time basis during the term of office to carry on MTEA's mission for the bargaining unit with the largest population of members of color. The newly released position increased educational assistant activism and leadership within the union, and gave more members of color a stronger voice. MTEA also took steps to strengthen the Black Caucus, an incubator for leadership and an open space to address issues confronting educators and students of color.

With MTEA members in the lead, collaborating with students, allies and community members, they won important victories for all Milwaukee students. When the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) Administration sought to cut 120 frontline staff positions, MTEA led the fight with parents, students and educators for a resolution that guarantees class sizes no larger than 22 students without extra support in grades K-3. When students were not getting the opportunity to engage in developmentally appropriate physical activity, MTEA members fought for and won an additional 15-minute recess for all MPS grades K-5 students. And when Wisconsin legislators proposed anti-immigrant legislation, MTEA joined together with students at rallies and daylong general strikes to fight back. In collaboration with MTEA, the student group Youth Empowered in the Struggle (affiliated with Voces de la Frontera) members successfully organized and won a Sanctuary District resolution for MPS which passed the School Board with unanimous support.

In this current climate, students of color, immigrant students and those of a different religion feel threatened and turn to educators for support. To meet the needs of MTEA members responding to these issues, the union has expanded the Center for Teaching and Learning member course offerings to include: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Welcoming Schools Series, Supporting Muslim Students, Achieving success with English Language Learners, Supporting undocumented Students, Constructing Relationships for schools and Cultural Competence.

Despite the politically motivated attacks by Governor Walker, educators remain steadfast in their commitment as advocates for MPS students. And MTEA's commitment to advancing and developing minority leaders ensures that both children and educators thrive.