

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

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We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed.

—
Martin Luther King Jr.

Member Spotlight: Mr. Tanner Norvell!



- * **11th year teaching in Volusia County Schools!**
- * **Currently teaching Cambridge AICE US History and AICE International History at Seabreeze High School**
- * **Seabreeze Surf Club Sponsor**
- * **The Ultimate Frisbee Club (Frizbreeze) Sponsor**
- * **SHS Spirit Club Sponsor**
- * **Favorite Quote: “Stay Stoked!” ~ Tanner Norvell**

Mr. Tanner Norvell is the definition of positivity. With his “stay stoked” attitude, it is no surprise that his students and colleagues have recognized him as one of the best of VCS. Tanner enjoys the little things in life and is focused on appreciating those around him. He is determined to spread joy and happiness and recommends taking your birthday off, as we only get so many in life! Tanner recently shared with the Ormond Observer, *“Every day is new and every day I get to tell stories and joke with my students.”* Tanner approaches teaching history in a manner that is engaging and empowering. He believes in making history come alive. *“If I can make a student appreciate history even a bit more when they leave my class, then that makes me happy,”* explained Tanner. Tanner is one of the five finalists for the VCS Teacher of the Year 2025. Thank you, Mr. Tanner Norvell, for your enthusiastic outlook on life. We are encouraged by your efforts to focus on the good things and your optimistic attitude. We should all practice “staying stoked” a bit more! Solidarity.



District Update

Mark Your Calendar:

- **There are NO before or after school meetings allowed to occur in January due to the ERPLs scheduled on January 10th & 24th.** This includes TEAM meetings at the middle school level. PLC meetings can occur during January.
- **Wednesday, January 24th** – School-based ERPL
- **Week of February 5th** is Interim Week only PLCs are allowed to occur on Thursday, Feb. 8th, no other meetings are allowed this week.
- **Wednesday, Feb. 7th** is NOT an Early Release day due to FTE.
- **Monday, Feb. 19th** – **Presidents Day** – Student/Teacher holiday.

DPP (spring) – As a reminder, the instructional evaluation is made up of three parts, the observation, DPP, and student growth measure. Twenty five percent of the Instructional Practice Score (IPS) is derived from the DPP (completed learning cycles), and the other forty percent is from the evaluation outcome. Teachers can decide to complete 1 or 2 learning cycles; one (1) completed learning cycle for proficient, or two (2) completed learning cycles for distinguished (a minimum of one learning cycle must have been completed by Jan. 5th). If you have not yet started working on your DPP, now is the time. The DPP must be the result of new learning and must include the implementation of a classroom strategy for 4-6 weeks. The spring DPP is due by 5:00 pm on March 8, 2024. If you have questions about how to begin your DPP, please contact your member representative immediately.

Wednesday's ERPL – Last week, the district ERPL was scheduled for all instructional personnel. We received many concerns about the process and expectations for the training. VUE reached out to the district to discuss the situation and to share concerns. We learned that the creation of the Nearpod was the result of survey feedback obtained by the district when trying to determine the best way to facilitate the training. It was shared with us that voice-over power points are not well received by most, and this was an effort to provide an alternative. Dr. Howard shared that in order to meet the diverse learning styles of adults, a variety of options should be provided. We know that there are not enough personnel to offer face-to-face trainings, but many teachers and staff prefer learning this way. Additionally, we discussed the three videos. We learned that only the MTSS training was mandatory. Administrators were told that the other videos, Behavior, and Intervention were created to provide support and it was their decision on how to utilize these resources, but they were not told that both videos had to be viewed. Teachers were to choose which video to watch based upon their needs. Also, there is no requirement for anyone to continue the training beyond the 2 hours afforded during Wednesday's ERPL. If you are being told that you must complete or redo the training from Wednesday, that is incorrect, and we need to hear from you. If you spent time beyond the contracted ERPL time watching the videos we need to hear from you. Finally, we addressed the mixed messages that were given by administrators. We are concerned that there are such extreme discrepancies from site to site. There is one more district based ERPL scheduled this year. It will occur at the end of February and the topic is ESE. We will work to ensure that the communication and expectations for this training are clearly and explicitly communicated in advance.

Sub Pay- If you are a non-rostered teacher and you are asked to sub, or if you are covering a class or taking students when a class is split, you are entitled to sub pay. If you are a school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist or other non-classroom

teacher and are subbing, you are entitled to additional pay. PLEASE contact the office if you believe that you have subbed and have not been paid. It is easier to intervene when we respond sooner rather than later. We are here to help, but we cannot if we are unaware that there is a problem. No one should be working for free. We have negotiated payment for these services, and you cannot be punished for asking for what you deserve. This is the power of our union.

Superintendent Meeting Summary

Last week, Elizabeth and Dr. Howard met with Dr. Balgobin, Dr. Hazel, and Mr. Todd Seis. The meeting included the following topics and outcomes.

- FOCUS Financial – Elizabeth requested that VCS consider moving to a cashless system due to the challenges that using FOCUS Financial has caused teachers and office specialists. Mr. Seis agreed but noted that there will always be a small percentage of individuals who need to pay with cash. We suggested that those individuals utilize the Central Cashier for cash payments. We know that the Central Cashier position/responsibilities still need to be clearly defined and supported, but the goal is to simplify the process of taking payments for all parties involved. This conversation will be ongoing as we work with schools to shift from taking cash and the need to provide receipts and deposits in FOCUS Financial, to creating QR codes to link payment options for fees, events, and items directly into the system.
- DPS Contractual year – We revisited the conversation about reducing the DPS contractual year from 11 months to a 10 month + 10 day position. We noted that the microscopic scrutiny placed upon all things ESE by the DOJ and DOE and wondered if this was the right time to make this change. Additionally, we asked if the workload was going to be reduced to align with the reduced work year. We were told that the change in the contractual year for DPS was part of the restructuring plan for the ESE department. The goal for the district is to provide more support at the school level and therefore reduce the caseloads for DPS. We then asked about caps for caseloads. We know that currently there is no cap, and there are vast differences in caseload numbers depending on the schools assigned, the side of the county the DPS is working, the level of instruction, and so forth. If this plan is to go forward, VUE will bargain the impacts of this decision to ensure that our DPS are provided a reasonable workload and protections. We were assured by Dr. Balgobin that DPS would not need to reapply for their positions.
- ESE concerns & communication – We shared approximately 9 pages of comment cards submitted from the ESE Townhalls to Dr. Balgobin. They will review and respond to concerns. We discussed the need to improve communication and were told that there is a Teams channel dedicated to ESE questions and concerns. We stressed the importance of ensuring that there are open lines of communication between VUE and the ESE district level leaders. We cannot continue to wait for extended periods of time to receive answers to questions and concerns. As a result

of the meeting with the Superintendent, we received a call from ESE leadership the following morning.

- ESE Goal Bank- During the Townhalls the discussion of an ESE IEP Goal bank occurred. This resource will benefit individuals when writing goals and objectives. The anticipated timeline for the release of the Goal Bank was January 2024, however, we have learned that it will not be available until next year.
- DPS – reapplying for their positions (see above)
- DJRF closing – We have received information that the DJRF facility within VCS will be closing. This site includes instructional personnel who work a 256-day contractual year. We are concerned about the displacement of our members and are advocating for the prioritizing of their placement for the 2024-25 school year. We were told that any personnel wishing to be considered for any available 256-day positions at the Detention facility will be given the priority. The contractual process for placing displaced instructional staff will be followed. This is the same assurance we received for our members working in the middle school at the HH K8.
- Reading Endorsement Incentive – A discussion occurred about concerns raised by teachers who have obtained their reading endorsement. We have been contacted by several teachers who have discovered a roster identified as “Basic Skills in Reading” when using the RVT tool from DOE. This roster does not always include students the teacher serves. When we shared this with the Superintendent, she directed her staff to look into it and agreed that if a teacher does not teach or provide interventions for a student, the child should not be included on the roster. A discussion occurred about providing an incentive to those teachers who have obtained their reading endorsement and to encourage others to obtain the endorsement. This discussion will be ongoing as there are changes occurring at the state level that will impact this process. However, we know that many teachers who have the credentials are feeling penalized by having it. We must find a way to create an environment where obtaining additional credentials that benefit VCS and our students does not become a liability for the individual.

VUE Membership Shout Outs!

Our number one priority in 2024 is recruitment. We must rebuild our membership density for both the instructional and support bargaining units. We are required by law (SB 256) to have membership density of 60%. As we work toward this goal, we want to recognize the schools and members who are making strides to prioritize recruitment.

This week we want to recognize the following schools/worksites who have hit targets for member density:

- **70% CLUB**
 - ❖ Alternative Ed

- ❖ Forest Lake Elementary
- ❖ Port Orange Elementary

- **60% CLUB**

- ❖ Highbanks Learning Center
- ❖ Spruce Creek Elementary
- ❖ Sugar Mill Elementary
- ❖ McInnis Elementary
- ❖ Coronado Elementary
- ❖ Cypress Creek Elementary
- ❖ New Smyrna Beach Middle
- ❖ Volusia Online Learning
- ❖ River Springs Middle



We have set a goal of reaching a minimum of 50% membership density in all schools and worksites. This goal is achievable if we continue to focus on the importance of our union. Having a voice, an advocate, and an organization that will stand beside you during the tough times is vitally important. Every employee within our district does not have the opportunity to belong to a union, and we frequently hear that they wish they did. There is strength in organizing, and it is time to ask our colleagues to join VUE. For each new member you recruit, you will receive an incentive. Schools and worksites who reach certain growth goals will also receive a special recognition.

Ask a colleague to join today. All they need to do is click the QR code and complete the online application. Don't delay, ask someone to join today!



Did You Know?

Most educators will go through their entire career without facing disciplinary action. However, it is still important to know and be familiar with your rights should you or your coworkers need to exercise them.

BE PREPARED: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Being called into a meeting with your supervisor or administrator can seem frightening. It is important to stay calm and remember that you have the **RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION**, also known as the "Weingarten Rights".

1. **Remember:** If a reasonable person would believe that discipline could result from the meeting, you have the right to representation. Just because a supervisor/administrator says the meeting is not disciplinary doesn't mean that it cannot end that way. It is YOUR decision, not theirs.
2. **Ask:** "What is the purpose of the meeting?" Could discipline result from the meeting? If so.....
3. **State:** "I want union representation." You can ask for representation at any time during the meeting.

IF YOU ARE DENIED REPRESENTATION:

DO NOT be insubordinate if denied representation.

- Attend the meeting.
- Keep asking for union representation.
- Take good notes AND continue to ask for representation. Note the time of request and the time of denial of request.

DO NOT sign or agree to anything. **DO NOT** make or write statements. **CALL** the VUE office immediately for assistance.

Dos and don'ts when facing possible disciplinary action.

1. **DO** remain calm.
2. **DO** contact your local union office.
3. **DO** keep notes and retain letters, documents, notes, etc. on the matter.
4. **DO** get preliminary details.
5. **DON'T** make or write statements.
6. **DON'T** attend meetings without representation.
7. **DON'T** agree to a change in job status.

Insubordination: insubordination is defined in part as, disobedience toward authority. In the workplace, it means the purposeful, willful, and deliberate failure to follow a clearly stated directive provided by a supervisor. The intent to disregard and disobey a directive. Do not ever be insubordinate to your supervisor or administrator. We can always grieve a contract violation within 10 days of the occurrence, but insubordination is a serious offense, and it should be avoided at all costs. The only situations where a refusal to follow a directive is allowed is if the directive is immoral, illegal, or unsafe.

VUE Officer, NEA, AFT and FEA Delegate Elections!

The VUE Constitution and Bylaws requires officers to be elected by secret ballot every three years. The three year term in office is from July 1 through June 30. Stewards are elected annually. Elections for officers and stewards will be held this year in May. The

VUE Elections Committee has been established and will meet to determine the timeline for the elections. This year, we will elect the following officers:

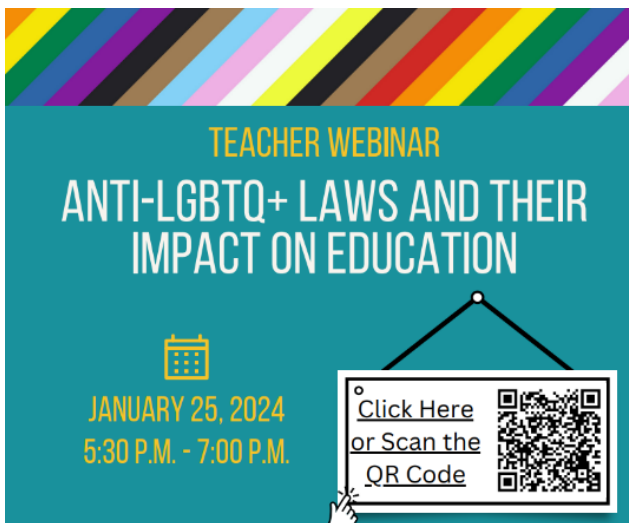
- President
- Executive Vice President for Instructional Staff
- Executive Vice President for Support Staff
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Membership Vice President
- At-large Vice President for Support Staff
- 10 Constituent Vice Presidents

Additionally, we will elect delegates to the AFT, NEA and FEA Delegate Assemblies.

To qualify as a candidate for one of the officer positions, members must be in good standing for at least two years prior to the beginning of the term in office. Each officer shall be a member of the bargaining unit, or a full-time release incumbent.

If you are interested in running for an elected position within VUE and have questions, please contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.albert@floridaea.org. Please remember, our union is by the members for the members. WE are VUE, and we must invest our time, energy, talents, and skills in our union in order to reach our goals. If you believe that you are ready to take a step forward and take on a leadership position within our union, please reach out. We would love to speak with you. **SOLIDARITY!**

FEA & Equality Florida Institute Webinar




Over the past few years there have been numerous shifts in Florida's laws, many of which directly impact LGBTQ+ students, teachers, and their families. This webinar will feature guest speakers who will delve into recent changes in state laws and rules.

The discussion will include general best practices for educators operating within our public schools, and strategies for fostering inclusive and welcoming classroom environments.

The webinar will take place on January 25th, 2024, at 5:30pm environments. You may [RSVP HERE](#), or by clicking the QR code in the flier.

Human Civil Rights Committee




VUE Presents

SIPPING "T" WITH THE HCRC


What we do:

- **Advocacy:** We actively engage in advocating for human and civil rights at local and regional levels.
- **Education:** We organize informative sessions and workshops to raise awareness about important issues.
- **Community Outreach:** Join us in community events and initiatives to make a positive impact where it matters most.



**ADVOCATING FOR EQUALITY,
EMPOWERING VOICES**

Join us!
DATE: February 12, 2024
Time: 5:30-6:30
Where: VUE Office or Zoom:



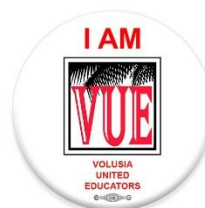
SCAN ME

What We Need:

- **Committee Chair:** School Supply Drive
- **Committee Chair:** Travel to schools to advocate and listen
- **Committee Chair:** Workshops/ Guest Speakers
- **Committee Chair:** Socials
- **Reporter:** Keep us updated and record meetings

In Solidarity,

Elizabeth Albert
President



SOLIDARITY, UNITY, AND STRENGTH!

As a member of the **Volusia United Educators** you will join with your colleagues to share your voice and expertise to shape the future of our profession.

Through **Solidarity, Unity, and Strength** of our membership, **VUE**:

- Is a leader in our schools and community on Public Education issues
- Fights to improve working conditions and pay for teachers and educational support professionals in Volusia County
- Provides top notch professional development and training for members
- Communicates weekly with our membership
- Stands for high quality Public Schools

Additionally, when you join **VUE**, you will receive many benefits from our **VUE** office and our state and national affiliates such as:

- Discount auto insurance
- Discounts on credit cards, cell phone service, car rentals, etc.
- Discount legal services
- And much, much more

In Florida you have a choice to make; you can unite with your colleagues as we make our Public Schools the best they can be, or you can stand alone.

The Volusia United Educators; Teaching Today's Children for Tomorrow's Future!

To join VUE, click the QR code below and complete the VUE Fastrack form to become a member today!

