

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

1381 Educators Rd.

Daytona Beach, FL 32174

(386)238-1605

www.ourvue.net

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Trust is what brings a relationship into being, and to pursue one, you must pursue the other.

~ M. Ali Kahn

Member Spotlight: Ms. Judy Picone!



- * More than 30 years teaching in Volusia County!
- * Currently teaching Physical Education at Sunrise Elementary
- * Sunrise Elementary TOTY Nominee!
- * VUE Steward
- * SES Special Area Team Leader
- * SES Safety and Security Team Member
- * SES Media Advisory Committee Member
- * VCS Mentor
- * United Humanitarians & Concerned Citizens for Animal Welfare Volunteer
- * Trap, Spay/Neuter, and Foster Mom to kittens in her community
- * Favorite Quote: "Always look on the bright side of life" ~ Monty Python's Life of Brian

Ms. Judy Picone is one in a million. Her kind and caring spirit, infused with a sense of humor that just will not stop, makes Judy the type of person you want in your circle. Judy has a "can-do" attitude which encourages those around her to persevere. As a veteran teacher and VUE steward, this mindset has served her well. Judy shared that her purpose is, *"to share and hopefully inspire the love of play and joyful interaction with others through games, sports, and fitness. That through one baby step at a time, new skills can be learned. For kids to learn to give themselves and others grace as we journey with each other."* Judy believes in holistic education and helping her students and colleagues to be the best that they can be. She believes that we are a team; parents, teachers, staff, admin, and students working together to achieve our goals. Although Judy is not afraid to ham it up to keep her students engaged, she is also very humble, and enjoys providing anonymous gifts and care packages to those in need. Thank you, Ms. Judy Picone for your dedication to humanity, your positive spirit, your constant smile, and your advocacy for the members of VUE. You truly are making each day better for those around you.

District Update

Mark Your Calendar:

- Today is a TDD, and report card grades are due by the end of the day. This is the final duty day for paras for the 23-24 academic year. According to the instructional contract, administration is allowed to use ½ of the day for meetings, trainings, curriculum meetings, etc., but the meeting shall be completed prior to lunch. Teachers are to receive an uninterrupted one-hour lunch.
- **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.

VSET Reminders: Please be reminded of the important VSET dates below.

- **January 5, 2024** – a minimum of one out of two DPP learning cycles must be successfully completed in MyPGS to be considered for a Distinguished DPP rating
- **January 5, 2024** – Optional Mid-Year Self-Evaluation due for category 2 teachers. Teachers may submit Domains 1 and 4 evidence to be considered for the year-end evaluation
- January 26, 2024 – Evaluator DPP feedback due
- March 8, 2024 – DPP learning cycle(s) must be completed in MyPGS
- March 15, 2024 – Last day for observation cycles
- March 22, 2024 – Evaluator DPP feedback due
- March 22, 2024 – Teacher evidence and required ratings for all 22 components must be submitted in the final self-assessment
- April 1-19, 2024 – End of the Year Evaluation Conferences

Support Job Description Committee- The committee tasked with evaluating the alignment of roles and responsibilities for support staff will reconvene this week to complete this process. The committee will determine if a reclassification of job descriptions is needed and submit a recommendation to the superintendent. According to the support staff contract, *“if the superintendent does not approve of the recommendation made by the committee, upon receipt of the feedback from the Superintendent, the committee shall be reconvened to address the Superintendent’s feedback for one additional session. Thereafter, the Superintendent’s decision shall be final.”* We will continue to keep you informed on this situation as this is an opportunity to make course corrections that will retain and improve the lives of our support personnel. It has been more than two decades since this work was done, and this reevaluation of support roles and responsibilities is long overdue.

VUE Goals for 2024

As we begin the work of setting goals for the second semester of this school year, it is important to reflect upon the successes that we have achieved by working together. We have successfully negotiated and ratified both contracts, made corrections to the negative impacts of the VAM calculations and proactively planned for the ongoing refinement of this work, created a forum for conversations with district leaders about issues with ESE paperwork and expectations, over testing and the rigid assessment schedule, identified and brought forward system flaws with the Performance Matters platform, pushed to complete the work of the Support Staff Job Description Committee, defended the contractual rights

of our members, represented and protected the rights of our members during investigations from Professional Standards, and much more. However, we cannot rest on these accomplishments as there is still more work to be done.

We know that there are still significant issues with ESE, student discipline/behavior, working conditions, salaries, and benefits. We also recognize that there have been statements made about potential changes to our VPK program, the contractual year for DPS and IEP Facilitators, and the massive attempt at rezoning of schools throughout the district.

Your VUE staff are committed to advocating for improvements that will make your life better. We know that communication is the key to solving problems and have prioritized this work using the labor/management process and our meetings with the superintendent. Our commitment to you is to keep you fully informed as these meetings take place and to share the results of the discussions. Unfortunately the December meeting with the superintendent was cancelled but we are looking forward to our meeting on January 10th. The items above, the Focus Financial system, and the working conditions within the district will also be included on the agenda for this upcoming meeting. We will provide a summary of our discussion with the superintendent and her team after the meeting.

As members of VUE, we are counting on you to provide us with the information we need to advocate for the things that matter the most. We are beginning the process of planning for bargaining. This year we will tackle the whole contract for both bargaining units. Therefore, we are seeking your input. We are scheduled to meet with FEA for bargaining planning and prep on January 4th and the result will include a bargaining survey that we need you to complete. You are the experts, and we need to hear from you. Also, we need you to speak with your colleagues about joining VUE.

As your president, I am making a personal request to ask you to talk to your colleagues who are not members of OUR UNION and ask them to join today. If we are to achieve our goals and make the improvements that we all need, we can only do this by increasing our membership. For too long now, those who have not joined our union have benefited from our hard work. You have chosen to support VUE with your membership, but some teachers and support professionals who work with you each day have not; yet they have benefited from our work at the bargaining table.

Now, that the legislature has passed SB 256, our work has become more difficult and our right to continue as a union is under attack. We must organize and recruit like never before in order to protect our rights, our voice, and our contract. If keeping the rights and protections in our contract is important to you, and I believe that it is, I am asking you to talk to your colleagues who do not understand what is at stake. We have worked hard for many years to negotiate each article included in both contracts, and we cannot allow our ability to continue to advocate for improvements to be taken away.

If we all work together and each one help one teacher or support staff professional to understand the importance of OUR UNION, and to join with us in this work, we will ensure that we not only continue, but increase our strength and influence at the bargaining table and beyond. I believe in the power of us, and I know that when we work together, we can achieve greatly. **SOLIDARITY!**

DOE Instructional Materials Workgroup

The Florida Department of Education has recently released their decision to revise the Instructional Materials Selection Training. This training is required of all media specialists and others who are involved in materials selection. The FLDOE is seeking individuals with at least one of the following qualifications to participate in a workgroup to update the training:

- Hold a Florida Educator Certificate issued in Educational Media Specialist;
- Be a school or district staff member with experience working in library media centers or training others to do so;
- Have education experience in library media; or
- Be a parent of a K-12 public school student in Florida.

Once workgroup members are identified, workgroup meetings will be held either in person or virtually. Participation will be ongoing, and participants must be available for multiple meetings.

Individuals seeking to participate in this workgroup must email their interest including a resume with above qualifications to IMStaff@fldoe.org by January 5, 2024. <https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-10091/DPS-2023-225.pdf>. Let's share our collective voice as members of VUE into this work. If you have any questions about this opportunity, please be sure to contact the office at 386-238-1605.

Upcoming VUE Professional Learning

Your union continues to provide top notch professional development led by our members. These courses are free to VUE members.

ESOL: Language & Literacy

Course # 24241
Section #107713
Time:

Dates:

Tuesday's- Jan.9th- Mar. 12th
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESOL: Curriculum & Materials

Course # 23226
Section #107746
Time:

Dates:

Wed's- Jan.10th - Mar. 13th
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

FEA Learning Opportunities

Anti-LGBTQ+ Laws and their Impact on Education

Equality Florida and FEA bring you this webinar on:
January 25, 2024,
from 5:30 to 7:00 PM EST.

Over the past few years there have been numerous shifts in Florida's laws, many of which directly impact LGBTQ+ students, educators, and their families. This webinar will feature guest speakers who will delve into recent changes in state laws and rules. We'll discuss general best practices for educators operating within this hostile climate, and strategies for fostering inclusive and welcoming classroom environments. We hope you will plan to attend and share this with your members.

[Register here](#)



National Affiliate

NEA Micro-credentials



Additional Resources

[Share My Lesson: FEA Page](#)



[American Educator: A Journal of Educational Equity, Research, and Ideas](#)



[Reading Opens the World—AFT](#)



Elevating Successful Practices

for
Education Staff Professionals

January 18th, 2024

5:30—6:30 pm ET

Session Focus:

Professionalism, Ethics, and Etiquette

Any workplace is much bigger than the sum of its parts; we all arrive with our own ideas, backgrounds, and contributions. So then, how can we make sure that we are setting norms to make everyone feel comfortable, safe, and respected? What does 'professionalism' even mean?

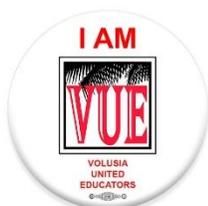
What conduct or behavior represents a breach of etiquette and ethics? What is our responsibility when it comes to behavior? This session will explore these questions and seek answers that empower us as unionists to take an active role in defining our workplaces for the better.

[Register here to attend!](#)



In Solidarity,

Elizabeth Albert
President



I'm sticking
with my union!

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!

