

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

1381 Educators Rd.

Daytona Beach, FL 32174

(386)238-1605

www.ourvue.net

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You may not have the power to control all of the circumstances of your life, but you do have the power to control how you respond to them.

~unknown

Member Spotlight: Ms. Jennifer Miller!



- * **22nd year teaching in Volusia County Schools!**
- * **Currently working at the Juvenile Detention Center as an ESE Case Manager**
- * **VUE Steward**
- * **Member of the Alternative Residential Education (ARE) Leadership Team**
- * **Alternative Education SAC Chair**
- * **Favorite Quote: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” ~ The Serenity Prayer**

Ms. Jennifer Miller is a veteran teacher who has dedicated her career to supporting the educational needs of students with disabilities. Jennifer spent her first 20 years with VCS working with students identified with emotional/behavioral disorders. In 2022, Jennifer was presented with the opportunity to transfer to the Alternative Education program to provide support in science and math to students who are awaiting juvenile court hearings or placement in a rehabilitative program. Jennifer’s calm yet confident demeanor allows her to successfully navigate the challenges that arise when working in this specialized environment. Jennifer is also an early career steward, who has jumped in with both feet to advocate for the rights and contractual protections of our members working in the Alternative Education programs. As an Alt Ed steward, she represents multiple sites, yet she is always on top of her game and fully prepared to advocate for our members. Thank you, Ms. Jennifer Miller, for your dedication and compassion for others. We are inspired by your determination and courage to focus on the things that you can change to make life better for the members of VUE. 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.
CLARIFICATION: the meeting prohibitions include the planning time that occurs prior to the start of the student academic day. No meetings may occur from 7:30 - 7:50 (ES), 8:05-8:30 (HS), or 8:50-9:30 (MS). This time is considered planning time outside of the student day.
- **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.

School Recognition Money: the Florida DOE has once again provided funding for schools that received a grade of “A” and for schools that improved at least one performance grade or rating category and/or who sustained the improvement for the following year. These funds are to be distributed using a plan that is created by an elected committee working in collaboration with the school SAC Committee. There are state guidelines and district policy that set forth the process for creating a distribution plan. Decisions on the distribution of the funds must be completed prior to February 1, 2024. If you have questions about the process, please contact your steward as the district policy has been provided to them. We would like to congratulate the following teachers, staff, students, and administrators for a job well done. We know that it takes EVERYONE on the campus to ensure that our students are successful.

VOLUSIA	BLUE LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	TOMOKA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	CAMPBELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	PATHWAYS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	PINE TRAIL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	CHISHOLM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	ORMOND BEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	CORONADO BEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	DELTONA LAKES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	ENTERPRISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	OSTEEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	R. J. LONGSTREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	INDIAN RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	EDGEWATER PUBLIC SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	ORANGE CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	SPRUCE CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	BEACHSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	PIERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	PORT ORANGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	SWEETWATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	SEABREEZE HIGH SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	TURIE T. SMALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	TIMBERCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	SUNRISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	THE READING EDGE ACADEMY
VOLUSIA	IVY HAWN CHARTER SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
VOLUSIA	BURNS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CHARTER
VOLUSIA	DEBARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	FREEDOM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	CREEKSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	DAVID C. HINSON SR. MIDDLE SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	SPIRIT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	CYPRESS CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	PRIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
VOLUSIA	SAMSULA ACADEMY
VOLUSIA	CITRUS GROVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

We would like to send a special SHOUT OUT to our members and friends at Coronado Beach Elementary school. Coronado **received the highest score of all elementary schools in all Central Florida and the 3rd highest in the entire state receiving 93% of possible points!** We know that results like this just don't happen overnight, and we want to recognize and congratulate all of the educational professionals who have worked to support the students at this little beachside school throughout the years.

Support Para Logs: According to the district ESE department, as a part of the DOE oversight, 1:1 paraprofessionals are now required to maintain a daily log that documents the support provided to the student(s) to whom they are assigned. This log is to be handwritten, completed daily, and initialed by the para and the teacher(s). We recently participated in a training that provided guidance on the expectations for paras, but we still have a few questions about accountability and management of this process. Until we are able to obtain additional information, we recommend that any questions you have be directed to your administrator. We will provide additional information as soon as we receive it.

VUE Membership Update

As part of our ongoing push to prioritize recruitment, we want to be intentional about acknowledging the hard work of our members who are continually building our strength and power through increasing membership. The working conditions within our district are far from perfect, and the way to obtain the change we need is by increasing our membership. Our ability to advocate and negotiate better outcomes for our members is directly tied to our membership.

The following schools and worksites have had significant membership growth during the first semester, and we want to thank them for dedication, hard work, and organizing efforts.

Alternative Ed
Atlantic High
Beachside Elementary
Deland High
Friendship Elementary
Highbanks Learning Center
New Smyrna Beach Middle
River Springs Middle
R. J. Longstreet Elementary
Spirit Elementary
Volusia Online Learning
Westside Elementary

If you didn't see your school/worksites included above, the time is now to ask a colleague to join our union. 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. 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!



VUE Cares!

As of today, we have worked 13 days in 2024. Believe it or not, during that time, VUE has received at least 10 requests for representation due to investigations from the Office of Professional Standards. Please know that allegations of inappropriate behavior, and investigations into alleged misconduct are occurring at what seems to be an accelerated rate.

Because our sole purpose is to make life better for our members, we have determined that it is important to share information that will help minimize the chances that you will be accused of misconduct or inappropriate behaviors. Therefore, we will share tips and experiences from the field to help you avoid an investigation from PS.

This week our focus is on money, money, money, **MONEY!**

First, before you collect money or participate in a fundraiser, **YOU MUST BE TRAINED!** If you have not been trained, you should not handle or accept money. Additionally, you need to know that the inappropriate handling of money can and does often result in an employee termination.

The district has established Fiscal Management Policies (found on Board Docs, <https://go.boarddocs.com/fla/vcsfl/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=8XGQE568E30D#>). Policy #707 and #719 are important to acknowledge as they set forth the expectations for fundraising and the collection and management of monies within our schools.

We encourage you to review the policies, but we wanted to point out a few important highlights.

- All monies received shall be promptly deposited in a qualified public depository and provisions shall be made for the adequate safekeeping of all monies and other financial assets that may come into possession of the school. **NEVER** leave money in your desk, room, or take it home. If you collect money during the day, take it to the bookkeeper or other identified individual and turn it in. The mishandling of money can get you terminated. This is a big deal.
- Fundraisers must be approved in advance by administration. If an employee participates in fundraising activities without the approval of administration, this could lead to an investigation by Professional Standards.

The bottom line is that this is an area of vulnerability for teachers and staff. We know that the FOCUS Financial system was supposed to make the receipting of money easier and more efficient, but it has actually done the opposite. Almost every teacher we speak with is confused about how to correctly use this system or has expressed frustration about the cumbersome process and amount of time it takes away the responsibilities of teaching. Additionally, we know teachers who have tried to follow the process, but have been unable to “balance their ledgers,” and subsequently the money has not been accepted when they attempt to turn it in. We are also hearing about issues in our secondary schools where the planning period of the teacher does not align with the availability of the bookkeeper and/or the individual tasked with taking money. Finally, we know that our office specialists have raised concerns with the lack of training, and that they are being asked to do multiple jobs and it is impossible to complete any task when they are constantly pulled to address issues with FOCUS Financial.

The failure to adequately train and provide support to teachers and staff on the FOCUS Financial system has resulted in a series of unfortunate events and decisions that has resulted in the dismissal of personnel. During a time of sustained vacancies and critical shortages of qualified individuals who want to work in our public schools, we wonder why VCS has not been more willing to respond to our repeated concerns about this situation. VUE continues to advocate for change and has suggested multiple times to a variety of district leaders that VCS move to a cashless system. We understand that we will never have 100% compliance, but if we move in this direction, we believe it will be a win/win for everyone involved.

Until we are able to find a solution, please remember to always provide receipts for any money you collect, to turn the money in on the same day you receive it, and do not ever take money home with you. The risks are too high, and the price to pay is too great.

Upcoming VUE Professional Learning

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

ESE: IDEA/IEP

Course # 72058

Section #108190

Time:

Dates:

Monday, February 26, 2024

VUE Office

5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Building Relationships w/ Adults

Course # 72061

Section #108191

Time:

Dates:

Monday, March 4, 2024

VUE Office

5:00 pm –8:00 pm

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.

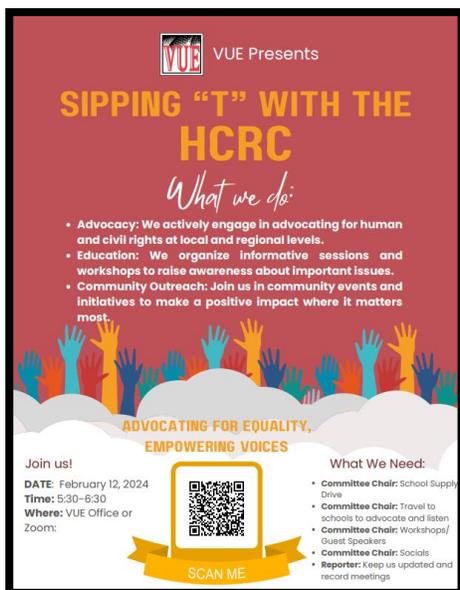
The discussion will include general best practices for educators operating within our public schools, and strategies for fostering inclusive and welcoming classroom environments.

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.

The Benefits of Membership

Do you have a small business? If so, have you considered sharing your information with VUE to promote your products or services? Members supporting members is a win/win for everyone. Instead of contacting someone you don’t know when you are looking to get something done or make a purchase, contact a fellow VUE member and support your union family!

Human Civil Rights Committee



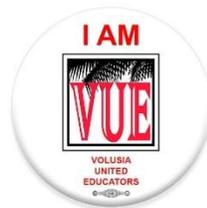
The HCRC is hosting their next meeting on February 12, 2024, at the VUE office beginning at 5:30 pm.

The HCRC is actively seeking to engage VUE members in advocating for human and civil rights at the local, state, and national level.

Our advocacy is focused on ensuring that the diversity, equity, and inclusion of all people is provided to ensure the fair treatment and full participation of our stakeholders.

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!

