

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

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**I NEVER LIE
BECAUSE I DON'T FEAR
ANYONE.
YOU ONLY LIE
WHEN YOU ARE AFRAID.**
~JOHN GOTTI

#UnionStrong

Member Spotlight: Ms. Etsuko Woodbury!



- * 23rd year teaching in Volusia County Schools!
- * Currently teaching Japanese 1,2,3 and 4 at Mainland High School
- * Proud VUE Member since 2000!
- * Participant and Judge; Volusia County World Languages Festival
- * Presenter, Japanese Mini Lessons – Volusia Learns
- * Tai Chi student
- * Favorite Quote: “Shoshin.” ~ Japanese phrase meaning “Beginner’s Mind”, this phrase is used in Zen Buddhism teachings and reminds us to go back to the basics once in a while.

Ms. Etsuko Woodbury is an amazing lady. When you first meet Etsuko, her kindness and peaceful demeanor immediately put you at ease. She is a gentle soul who is dedicated to helping her students and colleagues learn more about the Japanese culture. As the only teacher of the Japanese language within VCS, Etsuko has spent the last two decades working to provide students with an experience that many will never have. Etsuko shared, *“I am very grateful to be a part of Volusia County Schools. For over 20 years at Mainland High School, the teachers, students, and community have allowed me to provide the unique course of Japanese Language. I aim to teach students about how learning about different languages and cultures will make them better, more tolerant, and respectful people.”* Ms. Woodbury is more than unique. She is also quite fun. She agreed to sing as a trio with two of her students who challenged her to a Japanese Karaoke Contest during the World Languages Festival! Etsuko has also shared her knowledge of the Japanese culture with members of the community through cooking demonstrations at a local health food store, and through cultural related programs conducted by the Volusia County library system. Thank you, Ms. Etsuko Woodbury for your commitment to our students and your community. We say “arigato” to YOU.

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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.
- **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.

Longevity Payments: Longevity payments for eligible instructional employees will be provided in the February 15th paycheck.

Labor Management Summary: Last week we met with the district to discuss items of importance and concern. Although we did not get through the entire agenda, we did discuss several topics. Please see the highlights below:

- **ESE Audit:** The audit occurs monthly, and it is a snapshot in time. A random drawing of a student with an IEP is done for each school in the district. Administrators are contacted with the alpha code of the student and asked to collect the required documentation. This is an administrative task, and no teacher should be required to collect all of the documentation. Administrators should have a process for receiving the documentation in place so that this monthly audit is not creating a hardship for teachers and/or staff. If you need support or additional training on providing documentation for ESE students, please let us know, and we will reach out to help get you trained. Please see the Facts from the Frontlines section of the SR for additional information on the importance of being appropriately trained.
- **SLP audits and missed minutes:** due to vacancies in the SLP department comp ed is owed to certain students. We were advised that SLPs have been given the opportunity to make up the minutes during the summer at their hourly rate of pay.
- **Outstanding Sub Pay Invoices:** We brought forward ongoing concerns about delayed payments for subbing. This includes individuals who are covering for vacancies in itinerant positions. The district shared that each payroll clerk has received a copy of the payroll handbook and that invoices are processed according to the policy as long as they are without error. We have worked with the district to identify a few schools who need support with this process. If you have provided substitute services and have not been paid, please reach out to us so that we can assist.
- **Displacements:** Displacements will be shared with teachers no later than April 5th. When discussing timelines with the HR department, we suggested moving the date forward to April 3rd, (the opening date for the Transfer Fair). Although we did not get a commitment from HR to officially move the date,

we will continue to work to get this done. Principals will know in advance of the Transfer Fair the number of allocations and if displacements will occur. We are hopeful that they will advise teachers as soon as the information is known, but it is always better to get an agreement on the expectations in advance. Additionally, due to the massive amount of rezoning that is occurring this year, we are preparing for shifts. Please be confident that your VUE staff will be working proactively to advocate for you and your rights as outlined in the contract.

VUE Membership Update

If we had to select one word or phrase to summarize the recruitment efforts of our stewards and members last week, that phrase would be... GAME ON!

Last week 27 new members were recruited into our VUE family. We want to give a special SHOUT OUT to the following schools who had significant recruitments:

- Beachside Elementary
- Freedom Elementary
- Highbanks Learning Center
- New Smyrna Beach Middle School
- River Springs Middle School
- Spirit Elementary
- Spruce Creek High School

We know that teachers, paras, and office specialists care about our profession, and they care about the students in our schools. As such, they deserve OUR UNION. With the recent developments from the school board, it is critical that we talk to every potential member on our campuses and in our worksites. WE MUST respond in a powerful way to the attacks that have been launched against us.

You have chosen to support VUE with your membership, yet some of the teachers, paras, and OS who work with you have not. Even as potential members they have benefited from the working conditions, benefits, and salary VUE negotiates. Now that SB 256 is the law, and now that our board is actively attempting to cast doubt on the integrity of the information we sent to PERC, which could lead to our decertification, we cannot sit idly by and wait and see how it all works out.

If keeping your rights under the contract is important to you and I feel sure it is, I am asking you to talk to your colleagues who do not yet understand what is at stake if we lose the right to represent teachers, paraprofessionals, and office specialists in the Volusia County schools. All the rights people take for granted because they have always had them will no longer be guaranteed.

No teacher or para can continue to sit back and reap the rewards of the negotiated agreement without joining VUE. **The fact is...without their support there may be no negotiated contract or VUE to stand up for their rights!**

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. **THIS IS NOT A DRILL!**



Facts from the Front Lines!

At VUE we are committed to making your life better. Part of our commitment involves keeping you informed and educated about issues that could lead to disciplinary action.

In this new year, we have noticed an increase in the number of investigations from Professional Standards, and unfortunately, in some cases, the discipline has resulted in a recommendation from the superintendent to terminate employment.

It is extremely important to be mindful of the expectations for ESE documentation. While we continue to work for reasonableness with the expectations of the workload and for the district/administration to provide time for teachers and staff to complete the mandated documentation, we have been called to represent several members during the last few weeks due to allegations and accusations related to ESE paperwork, and accommodations.

First, when you sign your name to a document that states you have been informed about ESE services or accommodations, make sure that you understand what you are being asked to do or the supports you are to provide. If you sign the document, Professional Standards investigators or the ADA Compliance Officer is going to believe that you understood **FLUENTLY** what you were signing. If you don't understand something; **DON'T SIGN IT** and ask for additional support or training **in writing**.

Also, make sure that you are documenting the accommodations you are providing to your students with disabilities. If you need support in understanding how to use the log, or if you have never been trained on how to use the log, or if you have never received the log, **ASK FOR ASSISTANCE**. Do not assume that no one will check your logs, because they are checking, and there could be negative consequences if your logs are inaccurate or misrepresent what you are doing to provide support to your students.

Finally, **DO NOT BACK DATE** your documentation. If you are being told by your administration to back date these official documents, we need you to contact us immediately. This is a big deal, and it could lead to a meeting with PS or the ADA Compliance Officer.

We know that the issues and concerns with ESE paperwork, documentation, and the everchanging expectations are causing frustration and anxiety. We will host a Zoom meeting to discuss these issues and create a plan of action on Monday, February 5th beginning at 4:30 pm. A text message with the registration link will be sent to all identified ESE instructional and support personnel. After the Zoom meeting, we will share the specifics of the escalation plan. Additionally, we are asking anyone who has concerns with the changes in the expectations for serving our students with disabilities to plan to attend the school board meeting on Tuesday, February 13, 2024.

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:

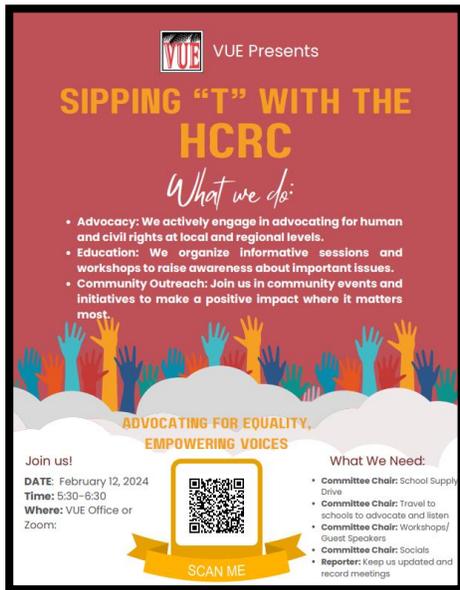
Monday, March 4, 2024
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

VUE Member Small Business

Small business owners are everywhere. Believe it or not, there are even members of our VUE family who own small businesses. We are interested in spreading the word about the products and services our members offer. The businesses below are owned and operated by our members. Please consider contacting a union brother or sister the next time you are shopping or need a service. Solidarity!



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

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.

Fun Friday at Horizon



VUE visited Horizon Elementary last Friday to say “Thank You” to teachers and staff for their hard work and dedication.

We had a great visit and a really fun time. While we were there, we snapped a few photos of the AMAZING door decorations for Literacy Week. It will definitely be difficult to select a winner. Thank you to all who were able to attend, and please stop in and enjoy lunch with VUE if we are scheduled to visit your school. Holly Hill K8, we will see you on Friday!



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!

