

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

1381 Educators Rd.

Daytona Beach, FL 32174

(386)238-1605

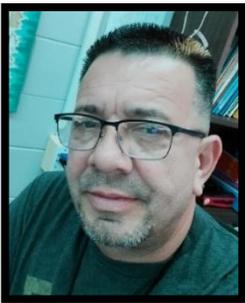
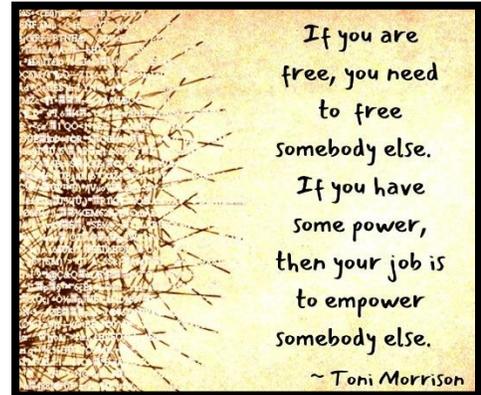
www.ourvue.net

Issue 21 Number 20

January 8, 2024

In This Issue:

- Member Spotlight
- District Update
- Membership Shout Outs!
- Reminders for the New Year
- VUE Elections!
- Upcoming VUE Professional Learning
- FEA Learning Opportunities



Member Spotlight: Mr. Fernando Cuevas!

- * 2nd year working in Volusia County!
- * Currently working as an EBD Paraprofessional at Forest Lake Elementary
- * VUE Steward
- * Secretary of the PTO at FLE
- * Favorite Quote: “Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”
~ Oscar Wilde

Mr. Fernando “Nando” Cuevas is a man of many talents. Nando has extensive experience working with children and adolescents who have been victims of human trafficking and the sex trade. Prior to working as a paraprofessional for VCS, Nando worked for nearly a decade in a mental health hospital in Orlando serving immigrant children who were victims of human trafficking. He also spent many years working for the Office of Refugee Resettlement and traveled across the United States to retrieve children from detention centers to reunify them with their families. Nando shared, “*it is the greatest feeling, better than any Christmas present, to see the smile on the face of a child when they are reunited with their family.*” He also shared, “*reflecting upon my experience has changed my perception of things. These students have a piece of my heart, and they have made me more empathetic by a million percent.*” Nando has also worked with minors convicted of sex crimes, children who have been kidnapped by Mexican Cartels, and as a Gang Awareness Officer. He is a man who has seen the most deplorable situations imaginable but continues to advocate for others in a positive and empowering way. Thank you, Mr. Fernando Cuevas, for your resolve to save our children. It takes a special person to do the work you do, and we cannot fully express our gratitude for all that you have given to keep our children safe and to let them know that there are adults who care for them. 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 10th** – ERPL #5 – District Based Content
- **Monday, January 15th** – MLK Day – teacher and student holiday

W-2s & Tax Documents: The Payroll Department has asked us to share the following information about W-2s and tax statements: **2023 W-2 Wage and Tax Statements will be coming soon!**

Please go to ePortal before January 10th and:

1. Make sure **ALL** of your personal information is correct. Verify your name is spelled correctly and your address is up to date.
 - Use the link below to access ePortal, sign in, and then click on the “Human Resources” tab and then “Personal Info” to see your address.
2. To receive your W-2 faster, please sign up for an electronic statement which you can then print from ePortal.
 - Use the link below to access ePortal, sign in, and then click on the “Payroll” tab and then “W2” to give consent.

Click here to go to ePortal: [ePortal Link](#)

Support Job Description Committee Update – The committee met last week to finalize the work to review roles and responsibilities for office specialists. The review for paraprofessionals was completed at an earlier meeting. The next step is to create a proposal to submit to the superintendent. We are working with the district to complete this process. If approved by the superintendent, any change that is to occur will not be implemented until the 2024-25 year at the earliest.

Meeting with Dr. Teron- Your VUE staff met with the Coordinator of REA to discuss concerns with testing. The conversation was collaborative and positive. Concerns were shared as received from members, including the amount of district assessments, the rigid testing schedule, amount of time spent testing, the testing environment, the negative impact to instructional time, the inability of teachers to cover all of the content included on the assessment prior to mandated testing dates, and the number of teaching days in a quarter. Dr. Teron shared data from assessments that evidenced the need to have assessments, but he was willing to work on researching the following:

- Average time spent testing in VCS compared to the state template (guidance). We want to know the actual percentage of time spent testing compared to the recommendation from the state.
- Number of assessments given at each grade level (are all of the assessments necessary or is there another way to obtain the data?)
- Curriculum pacing – is the pacing allowing for remediation *and* does it provide any flexibility for the things that occur everyday in our schools, such as absences, drills, field trips, etc., that reduce instructional minutes.
- Is a testing window feasible compared to our current practice of identified dates?

We want to thank Dr. Teron for his willingness to meet with us and listen to the concerns of our members. We are encouraged to partner with Dr. Teron to help improve this situation for our teachers, staff, and students. We will continue to provide updates on testing as new information is made available.

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 recruited new members:

- Alternative Education
- Palm Terrace Elementary
- Volusia Online Learning
- Champion Elementary
- Spruce Creek Elementary
- Pride Elementary
- Osteen Elementary
- River Springs Middle



We also have new members who are working to complete the eDues enrollment process from Deltona Lakes, Pine Ridge High, Pathways, New Smyrna Beach High, and Forest Lake Elementary. We must keep the positive momentum going! If your school or worksite was not listed this week, make it a goal to recruit a new member and be recognized for your contribution to the overall strength of our union. Incentives are provided to those who are identified as the recruiter on the membership application.

Reminders for the New Year

Every so often it is important to stop and review best practices to ensure that we are meeting expectations and minimizing the opportunity for anyone to allege that we are doing something inappropriate. The following reminders are being provided to you in an effort to keep you informed and aware of the do's and don'ts of our profession.

- As an employee of the public school system, you are held to a higher standard. Therefore, what you say and do will be viewed differently by the public. Your social media posts are not protected by the same freedom of speech protections as individuals working in the private sector. *Adams v. State of Florida Professional Practices Council* 406 So. 2d 1170 Fla. 1st DCA (1981), is the legal case that set this standard.
- As educational professionals our first priority/obligation is to the student. We must protect our students from anything that could be harmful to them mentally, physically, or educationally. We must commit to creating learning environments that are fair, open, honest, and inclusive of the diverse needs of all students.
- Supervision of students must be a priority. Failure to appropriately supervise your students could result in a professional standards investigation.

- If you are asked to attend a meeting by your administrator/supervisor, the contract states that you are required to receive 24 hours advanced notice. You are also to be told the reason for the meeting.
- If you are asked to attend a meeting with your administrator/supervisor and YOU have a reasonable belief (it does not matter if your admin/supervisor tells you differently) that discipline could result, as a member of VUE you are entitled to representation. Do not engage in a conversation or write anything for your admin/supervisor until you have spoken with your steward or member representative. It can and will be used against you. The Supreme Court case NLRB v. J. Weingarten, 420 U.S. 251 (1975) created this protection for union members.
- Please keep your classroom doors locked. This is non-negotiable.
- As an educational professional you are also a mandatory reporter. If you have reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused, neglected, or has been abandoned, you MUST contact DCF to report your observations. You can contact DCF at 800-96- ABUSE or at www.myflfamilies.com. **Failure to report could result in a third degree felony. If you have any suspicions, make the report!**
- Do not text or call your students. If you must communicate with students, use a group communication tool, and use your district approved communication methods to send the message. Avoid direct messaging, texting, or chatting one-to-one with students.
- Do not “friend” your students or their parents on social media platforms.

The bullets above are not an exhaustive list of the best practices for educational professionals but are meant as reminders to raise your awareness of how to minimize your vulnerability. Anyone at anytime can make an allegation against us, but if we are mindful of the expectations for educational professionals, the chances of an allegation are reduced.

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!**

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

NFA Micro-credentials



Additional Resources

[Share My Lesson: FEA Page](#)



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



[Reading Opens the World—AET](#)



Elevating Successful Practices

for
Education Staff Professionals

January 18th, 2024

5:30–6:30 pm ET

Session Focus:

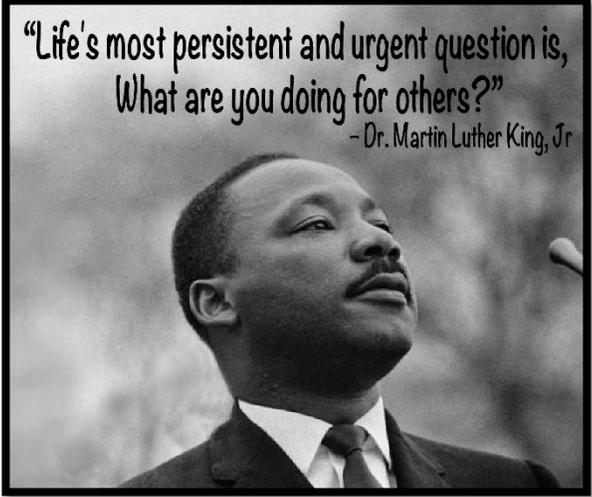
Professionalism, Ethics, and Etiquette

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!](#)

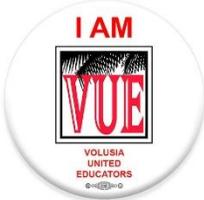


In observance of Martin Luther King Day, the VUE office will be closed on Monday, January 15, 2024. We will reopen on Tuesday, January 16th at 8:00 am.



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!

