

# The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

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## Spotlight: Ms. Kristin Polizzi!



- \* 14th year working as a professional educator with VCS!
- \* Currently working as the AVID Coordinator & Elective Teacher at Creekside Middle School
- \* CMS SAC Chair
- \* Artistic Director & Choreographer for RAKR Dance Company
- \* Favorite Quote: “The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” ~ Pablo Picasso

Ms. Kristin Polizzi is a self-motivated high achiever. Kristin has dedicated her career to providing for the needs of her students in all areas. She is a dedicated teacher and also supports her student through her work as the Artistic Director of RAKR Dance Company. Kristin understands the power of relationships and through her work teaching at the secondary level of VCS and at Daytona State College, she has made connections that continue to positively impact our community. Kristin shared, “*having taught in the middle school, high school, and college arena I have had the opportunity to teach/reach so many incredible people, and I’m proud to still have so many of those student connections. I am truly fortunate to have 4 of my former students as colleagues now at Creekside Middle and have been blessed to have several of my former students as dance company members as well.*” It is impressive to note that Kristin’s students range from 11 years old to 45+ years. Thank you, Ms. Kristin Polizzi, for your dedication to your students, young and old, and your commitment to making a positive impact on those around you. We are grateful for your hard work and connections within our community! Solidarity.



## **District Update**

***ESE Expectations:*** On Friday, the ESE Department sent an email with several attachments to ESE personnel detailing the requirements needed to remain in compliance with IDEA and Federal Law. The email was long and filled with a lot of information. However, the bottom line is that ESE personnel need to make sure that the services being provided to our students are being documented. Additionally, the tools that have been developed and shared by Ms. Wiles and the ESE department are not mandatory. The email specifically stated, **"If you already have a system in place that meets the following criteria, we are not saying you must now use these tools. Please work with your administration if you have questions about the required items for documentation compliance."** It is our understanding after meeting with Ms. Wiles three times last week that the tools shared via this email are intended to support the identified curriculum, benchmarks, and standards, and they can be attached to the curriculum maps if an individual chooses to use them. Specifically designed instruction (SDI) and accommodations must be noted and there are fields within the new tools to record these notations. Please know that although the new tools have been provided, this is a work in progress. We are counting on YOU, the ESE professionals to provide feedback to us which we will share with Ms. Wiles and the ESE department. The goal is to remain in compliance but create an efficient method for completing this work. We are working to schedule a Townhall meeting hosted by VUE and the district ESE Department so that feedback and improvements can be made. Thank you for your patience as we work to make this process better.

***October 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>*** – Next week is a NO MEETING WEEK due to the Teacher Duty Day/Student Holiday scheduled for Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, no meetings can occur with the exception of IEP, 504, or PST meetings. First quarter grades are due on Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. If you have students who are not making sufficient progress, it is a good idea to make parent contact prior to the closing out of grades next week.

## **VAM Committee Meeting**

***"Ninety percent of leadership is the ability to communicate something people want"***  
***~Dianne Feinstein***

On Wednesday, the members of the VAM Committee will reconvene to review the outcome of the calculations of the 2022-23 district Value Added Model (VAM) scores. This is what the instructional personnel working within VCS want due to an overwhelmingly negative impact to instructional personnel summative evaluation scores.

The Volusia calculation of VAM, which is 35% of the overall summative score earned during an instructional evaluation cycle is statutorily required and must be submitted to DOE for approval. Additionally the following requirements are included in the performance evaluation statute:

- a performance evaluation must be conducted for each instructional employee and school administrator at least once a year, except that newly hired classroom

teachers must be observed and evaluated at least twice in their first year of teaching in the district.

- Each evaluation must include indicators of student performance
- The student performance component for instructional personnel and school administrators must be based on growth or achievement data of the students assigned to their classrooms or schools, as appropriate, over the course of at least three years. If less than three years of data are available, the years for which data are available must be used.

To prepare for this meeting your VUE staff are reviewing the documents presented to the committee last year and have submitted public records requests that will allow a for an analysis of the scores over the last two years. We have contacted members of the board and spoke about concerns with VAM scores during the most recent school board meeting. We are confident that at least three (3) members of the board are concerned about this issue and are interested in determining what happened and how to make corrections. To listen to the discussion from the members of the school board, click this link, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxcApMIAY\\_o&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxcApMIAY_o&t=2s) (extended conversation beginning at 1:05:39)

We are mindful that a “negative impact” has yet to be officially defined and are concerned that the only aspect being considered is the result of the TSIA salary provision. We believe that while the TSIA salary increase is absolutely important, our teachers deserve to be recognized appropriately for the work that they have done to improve student academic achievement. Tenured teachers (or those on the grandfathered salary schedule) can only receive a salary increase that is in between the amount provided for and highly effective and effective annual contract personnel according to the TSIA legislation, but the VAM score reflects an individual’s instructional practice and competence as a teacher and that is why this is important and must be addressed.

We know that options are available if it is determined that a correction or amendment needs to be made to the calculation methodology created last year. We have learned that an amendment to the value added model can be submitted to DOE for approval. We are hopeful that as a result of Wednesday’s meeting, we will be able to find a way to more accurately reflect the achievement that has been gained by our students and truly measure the hard work of each individual teacher.

We will send an update upon the conclusion of Wednesday’s meeting.

### **Ethics Reminder**

It is important to remember that as an educational professional working in Volusia County Schools, you are held to a higher standard. This means that by default, when you are recognized as an employee of VCS, the things that you say and do will be viewed differently from individuals who work in other fields and industries. As educational professionals we spend more waking hours with other people’s children than they do, and that is a big responsibility. We wanted to remind you of a few important facts that will

help you remain free from the possibility of an ethics violation or investigation of inappropriate behavior.

1. Our first and most important obligation is to the student. As such, it is our responsibility to protect students from anything that could be harmful to them mentally, physically, or educationally. We must commit ourselves to creating an environment of academic openness, honesty, and fairness. We must consider the diverse learners in our care and provide access to the content for all students.
2. Supervision: We must be mindful of where our students are and what they are doing at all times. Supervision is critical and a key to keeping our students safe.
3. Mandatory Reporter: As a public school employee, you are mandated by law to report any suspected abuse, neglect, or abandonment of a child. You must report to the Department of Children and Family Services the facts as you know them. You can contact DCF at [www.myflfamilies.com](http://www.myflfamilies.com) or 800- 962-2873. Once the report is made, DCF will determine if an investigation will be opened. It is not up to you or VCS to determine how to move forward. Failure to report could result in a third degree felony charge. If you have reasonable suspicion that a student is being abused or neglected, it is always better to report the facts, and allow the professionals to make the determination to investigate. A third degree felony is a serious matter and should not be taken lightly. You do not need permission from your administrator to file a report of abuse, neglect, or abandonment to DCF.

For a full review of the Principles of Professional Conduct for The Education Profession in Florida, please click the link below.

<https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/professional-practices/code-of-ethics-principles-of-professio.stml>

## **Instructional Increases & Payments**

The timeline for the application of salary increases (TSIA) has been amended. Due to the issues and research that needs to take place regarding the VAM scores and the impacts to the overall Summative ratings, the adjustments to salaries have been paused. This decision was made out of an abundance of caution, as more than 2/3 of teachers in VCS are annual contract teachers and their increase is determined by the Summative rating. We want to ensure that these ratings are correct before the salary increases are distributed.

The Retention supplement will be paid to those eligible on October 31<sup>st</sup> as one lump sum, and the longevity supplement will be paid to those who are eligible in the February 29<sup>th</sup> paycheck. The longevity payment will also be a lump sum. Both supplements are included as part of your annual earnings and are retirement eligible.

We anticipate that the salary increases will be paid in November, pending a quick resolution from the work of the VAM Committee.

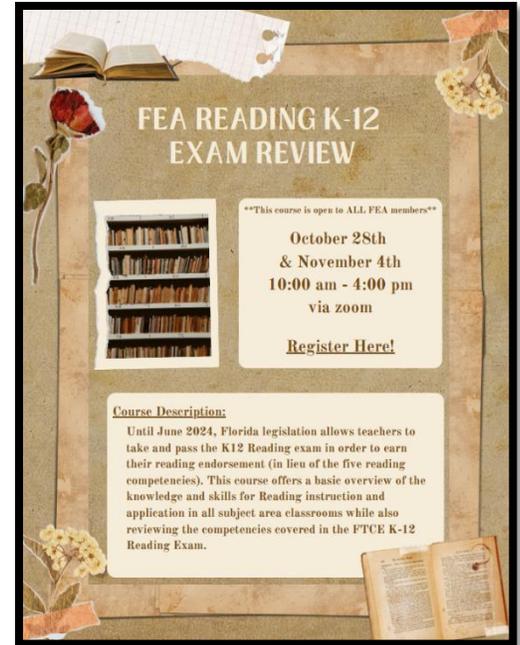
## FEA Reading Exam Review

Attention!!! Attention!!! Are you looking to pass the Reading K-12 Exam?? Need a little refresher/support to prep for the test?

If so, register below to join us on October 28th, and November 4, 2023, for the Reading K-12 Exam Review. This course will provide an overview of the knowledge and skills you needed to pass this exam.

Don't delay, register today! The registration deadline is October 24<sup>th</sup>.

<https://forms.gle/ZxXOck8bemgzjXLd8>



## Volunteers Needed: Book Giveaway w/ FEA

**Reading Opens the World Family Literacy and Book Fair**  
**20,000+ Free Books for Families and Educators!**

- Books are available on a first-come, first served basis, so arrive early!
- Parents and guardians are welcome to choose up to 10 FREE books per child for home libraries, with a 30 books maximum limit per family.
- Educators and school staff may choose up to 50 FREE books for their classrooms.
- Pick up literacy information for parents in English and Spanish, professional development information for educators and how to help make books more accessible on banned bookmobile.
- Enjoy fun family-friendly activities: DJ, facepainting, hot dogs, Italian ices, a bouncy house and more!

For more information, please contact Dr. Primrose Cameron at [primrose.cameron@floridaaea.org](mailto:primrose.cameron@floridaaea.org)

To volunteer, please go to:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FAIpQLSc8MBeSoZ885kvDTAgrhEFjCXI0YCmeW\\_rpeA-5MHM5ba4TTOg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FAIpQLSc8MBeSoZ885kvDTAgrhEFjCXI0YCmeW_rpeA-5MHM5ba4TTOg/viewform)

School and community program staff must be registered with First Book to receive free books. Registration is free and on-site registration will be available. To register in advance, please go to [www.firstbook.org/US](http://www.firstbook.org/US)

The Florida Education Association and the Volusia United Educators have an opportunity to bring 40,000 books to Volusia county to share with our children and families.

This large scale book giveaway/community-family festival for students, families, community members and educators is taking place in Volusia County on Oct 7, 2023. This event is part of the AFTs' *Reading Opens the World* initiative. The corporate partners include FEA, VUE, and Mayor Derrick Henry's Literacy Initiative. The location of the event is John H. Dickerson Community Center, 308 Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd., Daytona Beach, FL 32114

If you are able to volunteer to assist with the distribution of books, please respond using the link below. All volunteers will be gifted up to 30 books. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Primrose Cameron at [primrose.cameron@floridaaea.org](mailto:primrose.cameron@floridaaea.org).

To volunteer:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc8MBeSoZ885kvDTAgrhEFjCXI0YCmeW\\_rpeA-5MHM5ba4TTOg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc8MBeSoZ885kvDTAgrhEFjCXI0YCmeW_rpeA-5MHM5ba4TTOg/viewform) .

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!*

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

