

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

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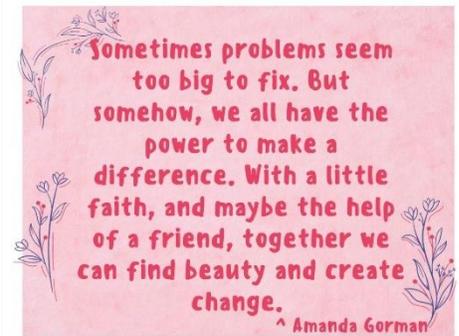
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Issue 21 Number 12

October 23, 2023

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Spotlight: Ms. Natalie Hage-Hassan!



- * **2nd year working as an educational support professional with VCS!**
- * **Currently working as a Paraprofessional at Champion Elementary**
- * **Member Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church**
- * **Volunteer/Supporter Immigration Form Completion Assistance**
- * **Favorite Quote: “The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.” ~ Khalil Gibran**

Ms. Natalie Hage-Hassan is the epitome of advocacy. Natalie began her work in education advocacy when she was in high school. She started her journey by volunteering with early literacy programs and refugee asylum education. While she was studying at the University of Michigan, she worked in the Women’s and Gender Studies program as an administrative assistant for the Women in Learning Leadership. She continued her advocacy work during an internship at the Arab American National Museum working with team members to research and create a program focused on the education of cultural and immigration understanding. Her skills are diverse as evidenced by her recent position as a human resource specialist at a charter school where she managed three facilities. She also has experience working as a paraprofessional at a Montessori Academy. Natalie shared, *“I love learning and education. There is no end to enlightenment, and I am always looking for more ways to be an involved community member.”* Thank you, Ms. Natalie Hage-Hassan for your dedication to others and for your desire to help bring understanding and kindness into our world. Your smile and joyful heart make each day special for your colleagues and the students at Champion Elementary. Solidarity!

District Update

VAM Scores recalculated: We have learned that the recalculated VAM scores for the 22-23 school year were released last week. Unfortunately, some members have experienced a negative impact by VAM in their summative score. We are asking members to reach out to us if your summative score has dropped due to the calculation of the 22-23 VAM. We will contact the REA department and ask for a review each individual's summative score and for an analysis of the VAM calculation to be provided. As we continue to review this situation, it has become apparent that we cannot allow any stone to remain unturned. We must verify our rosters at each opportunity provided to ensure that the calculation is only for students we teach. We have found issues for teachers working in Edgenuity and Credit Retrieval Labs. We are continuing to work on this situation and will keep you updated as new information is made available.

Focus Financial Update: We spoke with Dr. Balgobin about the receipting of funds within the Focus system last week. She was not familiar with the details and requirements that have been placed upon certain instructional personnel, and asked Dr. Hazel to look into it. We are scheduled to meet with Ms. Workman on Thursday to review the process. It is our position that while historically teachers have issued receipts when collecting money for field trips or certain fundraisers (dance tickets, t-shirt sales, candygrams, etc.) the process was easily managed by providing a paper receipt to the student and then turning the money in to the bookkeeper. Although we would like to believe that technology makes our lives easier, in this case it has not. The process is cumbersome and time consuming; requiring the number of coins or bills collected by denomination be entered into the system (i.e. five nickels, 3 dimes, 2 ones, etc.). Additionally, the instructional contract states in Article 9 section J, "*As much as practicable, non-teaching duties shall not be performed by teachers. These non-teaching duties include collecting money (except as in Section L of this Article); supervising cafeterias and buses; delivering books; taking inventories; distributing supplies; duplicating instructional materials; similar clerical and/or custodial duties.*" Article 9 section L states, "*Teachers shall not be required to collect general instructional fees of a school-wide nature beyond the second week of school. Teachers who fundraise shall receive annual training.*" We believe that the decision to ask teachers to continue to use the Focus Financial system in its current format is inappropriate. Teachers should be spending their time planning for instruction, not counting coins. We will provide additional information after our meeting this week. Please remember that any allegation of the mishandling of money by instructional or support personnel could potentially lead to sanctions to your certificate or possibly termination. If you have any questions about the process to follow when handling money, please email your administrator to ask for guidance and the school's policy.

VUE eDues Payments

As a reminder, now that payroll dues deductions are illegal courtesy of SB 256, there are two ways to pay your VUE dues. You can enroll in the eDues ACH automatic deductions or pay by check quarterly, bi-annually, or annually. If you have enrolled in eDues, the

dues deductions are scheduled to align with each VCS payday. Dues have always been collected from each of the 24/22/or 21 paychecks received by the members of the bargaining unit. eDues has been set up to follow the same process.

If you are planning to separate from VCS, take a leave of absence, or change bank accounts, it is your responsibility to inform our office. Otherwise, the only way that we will know that you have changed your employment status is to wait for the information to post in the personnel actions portion of the school board agenda. This sometimes causes a delay in processing and a deduction to occur in error. We will correct the error, but it is easier to avoid it if we can.

Additionally, if you are interested in shifting to a check pay membership instead of using the ACH eDues, we can assist you with this process. Many members have shared that it is easier for them to write a check and not worry about their dues for the remainder of the year. We understand that not everyone can afford to do this, but if this is something you are interested in discussing, we are available to provide you with the information to help make the decision.

Thank YOU for sticking with our union and for your support through this very challenging time. At some point, this process will become familiar and smooth, but until that time, we are here if you have questions or need information.

Did You Know? Overtime vs. Compensatory Time

Employees who are paid an hourly rate (rather than an annual salary) are afforded special protections under the Fair Labor Standards Act [FLSA] related to Compensatory Time and Overtime. These FLSA protections apply to support staff (teachers are specifically exempt from Compensatory Time and Overtime).

The contractual language for support professionals specific to Overtime can be found in Article 13, section 2. The contract states,

*When employees are directed to work overtime in addition to their regular hours, totaling more than forty (40) hours per work week, they shall be paid for the additional time at the rate of time and one-half (1 1/2) of the normal rate of pay for all hours beyond the regular work week. When the employee above works on Board designated holidays which they are scheduled to have off with pay, they shall be paid at double time, in addition to the holiday pay. In lieu of overtime pay an employee may choose **but may not be required** to take compensatory time on a time and one-half (1 1/2) basis (or double time if a holiday situation). Taking into consideration the organizational subdivisions of the School District, assignments and shifts, the willingness to accept compensatory time if requested, the Administrators concerned shall assign overtime among employees as equitably as practicable. Where practicable, employee wishes will be considered.*

If you are asked to work beyond your contractual workday it is your choice to take comp time in lieu of pay. As stated in the contractual language above, any hours worked beyond a 40 hour work week are to be paid at time and one-half (1 ½). We encourage our

members to think deeply about this prior to agreeing to work beyond the contractual day, as many times our members struggle to use the accumulated comp time and end up forfeiting the time, which results in no benefit on the additional hours worked.

For more information on the Federal Wage and Hour Law, please visit the U.S. Dept. of Labor's Wage and Hour Division website at: <http://www.wagehour.dol.gov>. or [Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act](#).

Support Staff Impasse Survey

VUE Support Staff met last week to discuss taking action to put pressure on the district to settle the impasse. A survey was created and sent to VUE support staff members. Here are the results.

- The participants were split roughly 50/50 between office specialists and paras.
- The majority of the individuals participating in the survey have worked for VCS between 2 – 5 years
- Approximately 50% of participants indicated that they work a second job to supplement their VCS income
- 85% of participants indicated that they use the VCS provided health insurance
- 85% of participants responded that they are not willing to accept the 2% salary increase offered by VCS
- More than 60% of the support staff who participated in the survey stated that they are considering only working their contract hours

We appreciate those of you who were able to participate in the survey. We know that the day to day demands of our work are becoming increasingly more difficult, which is why we need to end this impasse and settle the contract.

We are asking **ALL VUE MEMBERS to wear RED on Tuesday** to stand in Solidarity with our Support Staff. We are also encouraging instructional and support personnel to attend Tuesday's school board meeting beginning at 4:30 pm. Public participation begins at 6:00 pm if you are interested in speaking.

PERC Recertification

On Monday, October 16th, VUE filed our PERC recertification paperwork. We filed for instructional with a CPA verified density of 62.8% (using all members from last year who are currently working in VCS regardless of current membership status) and a density of 42% for support. We believe that we will be approved for instructional and rejected for support. Once rejected for support, we will immediately file with PERC to hold an election to remain the bargaining agent. We will submit the blue interest cards that we collected earlier this year to prove that the interest threshold has been met. As long as we

receive 50% plus 1 vote in the election, we will remain in place as the bargaining agent and the status quo will continue. No interruption to the contracts. However, we MUST make recruiting our top priority. We will not be granted the same considerations next year. If we do not reach 60% density in both bargaining units within the next year, we will be forced to call for an election and it will be problematic. We can prevent this by focusing on recruitment. We've done it before, and we will do it again!

I want to personally thank each of you for the work you are doing each day for our union. We are a family, and we fight for each other. We will not be beaten by Billionaires from across the country who have no right interfering with our ability to have a union. We will get this done and we will move forward in a powerful and productive way! 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.

ESE: Module #1 IEP/IDEA

Course # 72058
Section #107122
Time:

Dates:

October 30, 2023
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Module #2 Building Relationships: Adults

Course # 72061
Section #107123
Time:

Dates:

November 6, 2023
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Module #3 Building Relationships: Stdnts

Course # 72229
Section #107126
Time:

Dates:

November 13, 2023
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Module #4 Classroom Strategies

Course # 72059
Section #107159
Time:

Dates:

November 27, 2023
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Module #5 Student Behaviors

Course # 72060
Section #107160
Time:

Dates:

December 4, 2023
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

**NEW
COURSES
FOR 2023!**

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!

