

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

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No man can become a great leader of men unless he has the milk of human kindness in his own heart and leads by suggestion and kindness rather than by force.

~Napoleon Hill

Spotlight: Mrs. Patricia Troutman!



This week we are honored to recognize and celebrate Mrs. Patricia Troutman. On Sunday, Mrs. Troutman, reached a milestone in her teaching career. She has officially worked for VCS for **50 years!** Mrs. Troutman began her career with Volusia County Schools on November 5, 1973! Most of her colleagues at Palm Terrace Elementary had not even been born in 1973! Mrs. Troutman is a quiet and humble person.



She would not willingly allow us to feature her in the Member Spotlight and we hope that she will forgive us for doing this. She is a special person and a great influence on everyone she meets and we wanted to sing her praises. Thank you, Mrs. Patricia Troutman for all that you have given for the last 50 years to the students of VCS. We are so very grateful to you. We have gathered a few comments from her colleagues below.

A truly dynamic teacher is hard to find, but not difficult to notice. An amazing teacher is hard to find and impossible to forget. I admired your teacher elegance the first day I saw you grace the halls of PTE. Elegance isn't always about being noticed. It's also about being remembered and missed. #cheerstoto50years! ~ T. Filer

Mrs. Troutman is calm, cool, and collected. ~A. Jordan

Her meekness and gentleness ripples through the hallways and provides a bold calmness that is always welcomed. ~ L. Harkness-Jackson



District Update

Veterans Day Observed: on Friday, Volusia County Schools will be closed in observance of Veterans Day. The VUE office will also be closed to honor the men and women who served and are currently serving in our armed forces.

Mark Your Calendar: **only one (1) meeting before/after school is allowed this month.** If you are scheduled for team meetings or faculty meetings more than once in November, please contact your steward or VUE member representative. You cannot be mandated or pressured to attend a “voluntary” meeting and you must be provided the information shared in the meeting if you choose not to attend.

- Week of November 13th – NO MEETING WEEK due to interims (PLCs may occur on Thursday of this week only!)
- Week of November 20th – Thanksgiving Holiday – Schools Closed

Class Sizes: during the most recent labor management meeting we brought forward concerns with class sizes. We are hearing from our members that class sizes are so large that remediation and small group instruction is problematic and difficult to manage due to issues with physical space and student behavior. We know that during the last legislative session, penalties for exceeding class size restrictions were removed. Therefore, districts are able to increase the number of students in classes without fear of a penalty from DOE. However, we know that increased class sizes are not favorable environments for learning. When discussing this with the district, we were told that it is a master scheduling issue, that allocation meetings are ongoing, and if we have specific schools/classes to present, they will be reviewed. We shared what we had, but need to hear from you if your classes are too large to manage. Please contact your VUE member representative so that we can have your roster reviewed.

ESOL PLCs Cancelled: We were contacted recently and notified that the monthly district level ESOL PLCs have been cancelled for the remainder of the year. This is concerning for many reasons. ESOL teachers should be afforded the ability to collaborate and share best practices with each other. Since often there is only one ESOL teacher on a campus, it is important to provide an opportunity for them to meet with their role-alike colleagues. We will continue to work to get the district level PLCs reinstated for our ESOL teachers.

Support Ratification Vote- Tuesday

On Tuesday, support staff will vote to ratify the proposed contract agreement between VUE and VCS. All support staff (paraprofessionals and office specialists) are eligible to vote, regardless of membership in our union.

The secret ballot election will be conducted by the VUE steward. The time(s) and location(s) of the vote will be announced to staff once agreed upon with administration. Itinerant support staff are able to vote a convenient location. Identification must be provided in order to vote. Support staff working at alternative sites (Highbanks Elementary, Riverview Alternative Site at Herbert Street, etc.), are eligible to vote at Deltona Middle, Silver Sands, any other traditional school site or at the VUE office. The voting hours at the VUE office will be 8:30 -4:30.

At the conclusion of the last voting session, the votes will be publicly counted by the VUE steward. Once all of the sites have reported to the VUE office, the outcome will be shared.

If ratified, the agreement will be presented to the members of the school board for approval on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. If the board approves the agreement, the projected payment dates will be as follows:

- Longevity (to those who are eligible) – Friday, December 8, 2023
- Salary Increase – Friday, December 15, 2023
- Salary Retro – Friday, January 12, 2023

If the agreement is not ratified, the impasse status will remain, and we will continue to work toward an agreement. However, it is important to acknowledge that the impasse process will continue to move forward and if an agreement is not reached prior to the impasse hearing, the members of the school board will ultimately have the authority to impose a settlement for the period of one year. If this occurs, we will work to expedite the return to the table to reopen negotiations for the 24-25 contractual year.

If you have any questions about the Tentative Agreements, please contact your VUE member representative.

ESE Summary Clarifications

Last week, VUE staff met with Ms. Amanda Wiles, Executive Director of ESE. We posted a summary on our website that can be accessed here, <https://www.ourvue.net/hot-topics/index>.

It seems that there was some confusion regarding two statements made in the summary. First, Program Specialists are not limited to visiting classrooms only when invited by a teacher or administration. Program Specialists are to provide support and feedback to instructional personnel and can only do so by visiting classrooms and being directly involved with teachers, staff, and students. The comment about being invited by teachers and admin was made during part of the discussion that centered on providing support and training. While Program Specialists most certainly provide support; trainings are only offered when requested by teachers or administration.

Next, it seems that the statement made about keeping our Outlook Calendars up to date when we are absent, attend trainings or IEP meetings in order to provide documentation when/if a Support Facilitator does not meet with a group has caused a bit of frustration for SF teachers. The suggestion to utilize the calendar was made by Elizabeth due to concerns that have been brought forward from members about accountability. The concern is that if SF teachers are prohibited from writing the reason for not meeting with the group (absent, training, IEP meeting) directly in the SF log, it looks like they just decided not to meet with the students. Because so much of what we do each day in the VUE office focuses on documentation and evidence to disprove an allegation of wrongdoing, it seemed reasonable to track time away from the group via the Outlook calendar. However, we have learned that most of our members do not use their Outlook calendar in this manner, and after thinking about this further, we realize that missing the

group would be documented in different systems, such as SEMS . We apologize for any stress or frustration that this statement has caused. It was not intentional, and truly an effort to protect our hard working members from any claim of failure to provide service to students. However, if you are comfortable using your Outlook calendar to track when you do not meet with your groups, it will be another layer of protection if an allegation is made against you.

The tentative dates for the Town Hall meeting with Ms. Wiles are the first week of December. We are working to confirm them this week and secure the meeting space. We are planning to hold meetings on both sides of the county. This is an opportunity for teachers and staff to speak directly with Ms. Wiles and her team about issues and concerns. We highly encourage you to attend. We know that if we do not engage in working toward a solution, a solution will never come. It is important to be a part of the process. Effecting change in VCS is difficult at best, and it takes ALL OF US working together to make improvements in our working conditions. Solidarity!

Focus Financial Update

The VUE staff recently met with personnel from the Finance Department for a demonstration of the Focus Financial System. The very nice and accommodating ladies from Finance demonstrated the process for issuing a receipt when a student brings in cash or a check to pay for a field trip, lab fees, fundraiser, etc. We learned that there are many steps involved including contacting the site-based bookkeeper in advance to have the activity for which the money is being collected set up in the Focus system. As we observed the process it seemed cumbersome and time consuming, including the process for “cashing out” the “drawer” which included the itemization of the denominations of bills and coins on the final invoice.

As we discussed this process, our questions included the following:

- On average, how long does this process take?
- How many steps are involved to complete the process?
- How many instructional minutes are being sacrificed in order to complete this process?
- Has the training been thorough and are there supports if teachers have questions?
- What are the students doing while the teacher is working as a cashier?

We were reminded that teachers were trained how to complete this process during their PLC the first week of school. A training video was provided, and a Click Sheet made available for support. Hmmm.

As we continued to ask questions, we learned that there are some expenses that are paid through the Central Cashier at the school. Expenses that are not connected to individual teachers or grade levels. These items are found in the “Community Store.” Additionally, we learned that this process is not completed for the students whose parents use the parent portal and pay online.

At the conclusion of the meeting, we still had many questions. One of which is why doesn't VCS consider moving to a cashless system. If VCS did this, it would remove this task altogether and streamline the process. This way, teachers could focus on teaching and not being cashiers. We know that some schools have started to move in this direction. We are aware of several schools who advertise their fundraisers using a QR code that takes the parents to the portal and directs them to the online payment option. With a little advanced planning and proper messaging and communication, we believe that this issue could be corrected by educating and guiding our parents towards cashless options for payment of fees, field trips, and fundraisers.

We will continue to push in this direction, and we encourage each of you to explore creating a QR code for any field trip or fundraiser that you are considering. If you need assistance with this, please contact your VUE member representative.

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 #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

FEA Professional Learning Opportunities



FEA'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

UPCOMING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
NOVEMBER 2023

Wellness Wednesday
November 1st
5:30–6:30 pm EST

Wellness Wednesday is an informal virtual gathering one Wednesday a month. The main goal of these sessions are to remind you to take care of yourself and the importance of positivity, well-being, and mental health! Join us as we create a healing space together.

 [Register here!](#)

Educators of Color
November 28th
5:30–7:00 pm EST

Weaving Our Wisdom
Celebrating American Indian Heritage with Kathryn Fairbanks of Education Minnesota.

 [Register here.](#)

Elevating Successful Practices
for
Education Staff Professionals
November 9th
5:30–7:00 pm EST

Session Focus: Grief Sensitive Educator

Social-emotional supports are more important than ever. While bereavement is a common childhood experience, few educators have been trained to support grieving students. Yet we have an important role to play in supporting learning through grief. Join FEA for a 90-minute session via Zoom to learn five strategies of a Grief-Sensitive Educator, grounded in content AFT developed as part of the national Coalition to Support Grieving Students.

 [Register here!](#)

K-12 Reading Exam Review Course
October 28 & November 4th, 2023
10:00 am–4:00 pm EST

Until June 2024, Florida legislation allows teachers to take and pass the K12 Reading exam to earn their reading endorsement (in lieu of the five reading competencies). This course offers a basic overview of the knowledge and skills for Reading instruction and application in all subject area classrooms while also reviewing the competencies covered in the FTCE K-12 Reading Exam. Sign up today!

[Registration Link—Click Here](#)
Deadline: October 24th



The FEA PD Department is here to support our local unions and members!

Director: Dr. Primrose Cameron, **North:** Blanca Sotelo, **Central/South:** Dr. Sarah Falk
Email: feaprodev@floridafea.org

[Sign up here for the PD Newsletter!](#)


National Affiliate PD

NEA Micro-credentials



Additional Resources

Share My Lesson FEA Page



American Educator: A Journal of Educational Equity, Research, and Ideas



Reading Opens the World—AFT



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!

