

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

1381 Educators Rd.

Daytona Beach, FL 32174

(386)238-1605

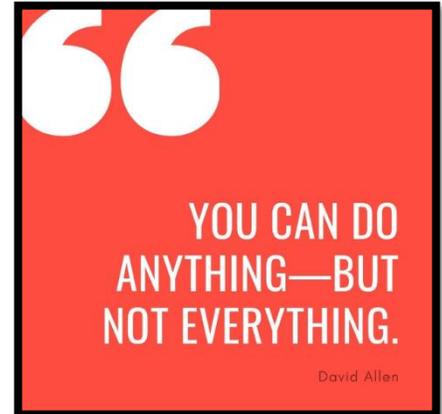
www.ourvue.net

Issue 21 Number 17

December 4, 2023

In This Issue:

- Member Spotlight
- District Update
- VAM Roster Verification Window Now Open!
- ESE Townhall
- Upcoming VUE Professional Learning



Member Spotlight: Mrs. Lori Strasser!



- * 22nd year teaching in Volusia County!
- * Currently teaching 2nd grade at Ormond Beach Elementary
- * Holly Hill Church of Christ Children's Church Ministry Volunteer
- * Central Florida Bible Camp K-5 Planning Coordinator
- * Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) Member
- * OBE PTA Member
- * OBE's Repertory Theater Sponsor
- * Favorite Quote: "Treat people better than they expect to be treated."
~ The Platinum Rule, Maverick Careers (credit to the Golden Rule)

Mrs. Lori Strasser is a veteran teacher who is dedicated to her students, colleagues, and her community. If Lori is not volunteering on a committee, working with students to put on an extravagant theatrical production, or creating the float for the Ormond Holiday parade, you will most likely find her lending a hand to help make life better for someone else. Lori is the type of person who rarely says no, and her colleagues describe her as "*the kindest soul I've ever known,*" and "*a generous and caring person.*" She is a relationship builder, and she knows the value of saying what you mean, and meaning what you say. Lori is a talented and creative teacher. She is well known for leading the tradition of writing songs for faculty and staff members who retire. She composes the songs and makes them unique to each individual's career. She is one in a million and we are so very blessed that she is a member of our union. Thank you, Mrs. Lori Strasser for your never ending willingness to help others, and for your dedication to those around you. You are a bright and shining star! Solidarity!

District Update

Mark Your Calendar: **NO MEETINGS ALLOWED BEFORE OR AFTER SCHOOL IN DECEMBER.**

- Wednesday, December 6th is scheduled as a site based ERPL. Due to the number of days in the month, there cannot be any other meetings scheduled. This includes Team meetings before the school day in our middle schools, faculty meetings, and parent conferences NOT scheduled by the individual teacher.
- IEP, 504, and PST meetings may occur, but must be limited. If you are a classroom teacher and are scheduled for more than one of the identified meetings above during the week, please reach out immediately.
- PLC meetings may take place this week but are NOT allowed during the week of 12-11.
- **Early Release will be FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15TH** due to winter break.
- Tuesday, January 2nd is a TDD, and report card grades are due by the end of the day. **Paras will report on this day as well.** This will be the final duty day for paras for the 23-24 academic year.

Elementary Math Optional Chapter Tests: On Friday, we were informed that the Elementary Math Department sent an email advising that new Optional District Chapter Tests are being created that better align with the benchmarks. It seems that a new scope and sequence has been developed due to issues with the instructional resources previously provided to teachers. While we are grateful that the district has course corrected for the second semester, we are concerned by the word “optional,” due to the reminder sent to teachers in at least one school that stated, “data will be pulled,” so are these tests truly optional? Additionally, we continue to wonder if there is any vetting of resources prior to making these documents available to all instructional personnel. We are constantly reminded that what looks good on paper doesn’t always work in the classroom.

Media Specialist Concerns: VUE met with Dr. Desiree Rybinski, Instructional Materials Coordinator, to discuss concerns about the inventory of classroom libraries. New Florida statutes that went into effect on July 1st made it the responsibility of media specialists to evaluate and approve all books that are available to students – including those in classroom libraries. Originally the district used the program Libib to catalogue classroom libraries, but because of the program’s limitations VCS switched to Beanstack. The switch was made because Libib did not have all the features needed to meet the requirements of the law. The book approval process has proved tedious and time consuming for media specialists and frustrating for classroom teachers. In our discussion, Dr. Rybinski showed us how media specialists evaluate a text for grade level appropriateness. It involves searching for the requested book on Title Wave and then using professional reviews to determine the grade levels for which a book is made available in classroom libraries. However, Dr. Rybinski shared that if a book is rejected, it doesn’t mean it’s the end of the conversation. There is a button on Beanstack where further review can be requested, and books can be brought to the media specialist directly for further review. During our conversation we also advocated for more support for media specialists to complete the task of inventorying books. In addition to the district providing two sub days for elementary school media specialists who have special area rotation, we have requested that principals provide protected time for media specialists to continue to chip away at the

list of books they need to approve. VUE will always advocate for what's best for teachers and students.

Performance Matters Writing Assessment: As mentioned in the update that was sent last Thursday, we have received a confirmation from Ms. Heather Norris, K-12 ELA Coordinator, that the deadline to determine how to utilize the writing sample obtained from the recent PM Assessment has been extended to Friday, December 15, 2023. Please be reminded that it is a PLC decision on whether to grade the piece in its entirety, grade for a specific item (hook, elaboration, conventions), or to use this as a diagnostic to provide feedback to the students.

VAM Roster Verification Window Now Open!

The Department of Education has opened the window for teachers to verify student course enrollment (rosters) for the purpose of school scores and individual State VAM calculations. The District REA department has communicated with principals and asked that a point of contact for REA and classroom teachers be identified. This individual will support teachers in submitting or adjusting rosters and with accepting or rejecting any changes made prior to the final submission to the state.

Next week a communication from the REA department will be sent directly to teachers which will include the following:

- Teacher FAQ
- Teacher Roster Verification Tool (RVT) Guide
- Presentation/Overview of the process

It is extremely important that we take the roster verification opportunity seriously as this process has the potential to impact school scores and an individual's State VAM. If you have any questions, please reach out to your steward or member representative.

ESE Concerns & Tomorrow's Townhall

As we eagerly await the ESE townhalls, we continuously work to obtain clarity and direction from the District ESE department on issues that need immediate answers. Late last week we submitted a few questions to the District, and we wanted to share the answers we received. Please take a moment to read the questions and answers below.

1. Can you please provide an update on the ESE Walkthroughs we are hearing about? We already have district walk throughs and this seems like one more thing. What will the walkers be looking for and has any information been shared with the ESE personnel? **We do specific ESE walkthroughs every year using an ESE specific tool designed for the program being observed. This is not evaluative. This is an extension of the observations and supports that our program specialists already provide. This is done because ESE classrooms are not always included in the other District walkthroughs and if they are the tool is not specific to their program.**

2. Can you please provide guidance on discipline expectations for students with disabilities? The myth is that ESE students are not allowed to receive referrals. All students, including students with disabilities are bound by the student code of conduct. That said, reasonable modifications are made for students with disabilities. When a student with a disability violates the student code of conduct, it is necessary to determine whether the behavior was a manifestation of the disability. If the behavior is found to be a manifestation of the disability, additional supports and services have to be put in place to proactively address the behavior. If proactive steps cannot be taken that will minimize or eliminate the behavior, the student's learning environment is reviewed to determine whether it is the most appropriate and least restrictive. If the behavior is not a manifestation of the student's disability, the student receives meaningful discipline aligned with the consequences that a student without a disability would receive. It should be considered if writing a referral for a behavior that is a manifestation of a disability would or would not bring about behavior change. It is the tracking of the behavior, according to the student's BIP, to see how often each day or week the behavior is occurring, that allows the IEP team to determine whether the student is in the most appropriate and least restrictive learning environment. If there are no supports or services available to allow the student to safely remain in the setting, due to behaviors, even if manifestations of the student's disability, the learning environment should be reviewed and reconsidered. It is important to note that offenses where a crime is committed, or an injury occurs may result in the need for the behavior to be reflected in behavior tracking AND the referral system.
3. Can you please tell me about the frequency for reporting goal progress? I know that tracking the goal progress is based upon how the goal is written in the IEP, but my question is about the reporting. It used to be quarterly, which is the same as reporting progress for all other students, but it seems that with the shift to the monthly random pulling of data for ESE students, some ESE APs are now requiring goal progress reporting weekly. Please advise. This is quickly becoming too much for many of our teachers. Progress monitoring/ "reporting" is quarterly. I think there is confusion over this and what goal data tracking is and requires.

Our hope is that these answers are helpful to you, and that it will also help frame your questions for the upcoming townhalls. We are looking forward to these opportunities to speak directly with Ms. Wiles and her team. It is important that we have a good showing at these events. If you have questions, concerns, and suggestions for improvement, we need you to attend the townhall.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to our office.

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 #5 Student Behaviors

Course # 72060
Section #107160
Time:

Dates:

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

ESOL: Language & Literacy

Course # 24241
Section #107713
Time:

Dates:

Mondays- Jan. 7th- Mar. 12th
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

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!

