

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

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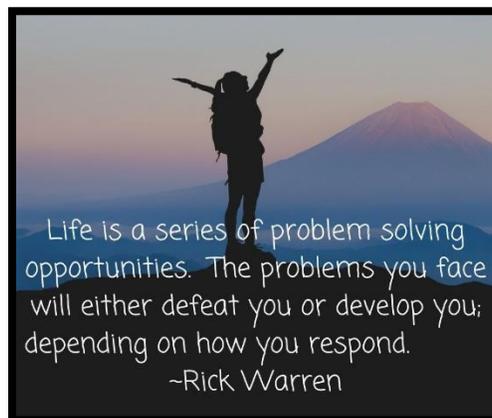
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Member Spotlight: Ms. Rebecca Priddy!



- * **24th year teaching; 11th year teaching in Volusia County Schools!**
- * **Currently teaching 1st grade at Blue Lake Elementary School**
- * **FEA Retired Innovation Grant Winner 2024**
- * **Favorite Quote: “Teamwork makes the dreamwork” ~ John C. Maxwell**
- * **“Work smarter not harder” ~ Allen F. Morgenstern**

Ms. Rebecca Priddy is a fascinating lady. Rebecca is a veteran teacher who taught in another Florida district prior to coming to VCS. She is a team player who wants to work with her colleagues at BLE to make life better for the students. Rebecca recently won the FEA Retired Innovation Grant for her submission to enhance the BLE Butterfly Garden. Rebecca wants to add to the garden by including Sunflowers. She wants the students to be able to harvest the seeds as a yummy treat, and then replant the leftovers to continue to make the garden sustainable. Ms. Priddy also has a passion for organizing and participating in car shows for good causes like the Girl Scouts of America, Breast Cancer Awareness, and Autism Awareness. We are very impressed with “Lucille” and can’t wait to see you out and about! Thank you, Ms. Rebecca Priddy, for your creative thinking, your dedication to your students, and your desire to make improvements to the world around you. We are excited that you are a member of VUE and are eager to learn about your first harvest of Sunflower seeds!



District Update

Mark Your Calendar: Due to the ERPL this month, only one additional meeting is allowed to occur in February. This applies to meetings before school and after school. PLCs follow a different standard. At the middle school level, this applies to the PSP time that is provided before the student academic day. If you have questions, please reach out.

- **Week of February 5th** is Interim Week only PLCs are allowed to occur on Thursday, Feb. 8th, no other meetings are allowed this week.
- **Wednesday, Feb. 7th** is **NOT an Early Release** day due to FTE. **Due to the loss of early release time during interim week due to the FTE reporting deadline, we have reached out to the district and asked that an extension be provided for the completion of interim grades. We know that interims are a snapshot in time, however, having the additional hour on Wednesday to ensure that grades are updated is important. We will let you know if the district is willing to move the timeline for pulling the interim grades.**
- **Monday, Feb. 19th** – **Presidents Day** – Student/Teacher holiday.
- **Wednesday, Feb. 21** – **ERPL #7** – This district-based early release learning is scheduled to share additional information from the ESE Department.

Longevity Payments: Longevity payments for eligible instructional employees will be provided in the February 15th paycheck.

2024-2025 Calendar- The members of the 2024-25 Calendar Committee will reconvene on Tuesday to make an adjustment to the calendar for the upcoming school year. An error was found which resulted in only 179 student days. We are required by the DOE to have 180 days for students; therefore we need to find an additional day. We are working with the district to find a creative solution to this problem that will be the least intrusive to students and adults. We will share the recommendation from the committee on Tuesday evening. However, please remember that the members of the school board will vote to accept or reject the recommendation.

VUE Membership Update

We had more OUTSTANDING results with recruitment last week. We were able to add **26** new members to the VUE Family. There are also approximately 10 individuals who started their enrollment but who are still working to complete the process. We are so very impressed by the efforts of our members to share the good news about VUE with their colleagues. We have added approximately 60 new members in two weeks! If we are able to maintain this momentum, we will reach our second semester membership goal in no time.

We want to give a special SHOUT OUT to the following schools who added new members to their VUE family last week:

Champion Elementary School
Citrus Grove Elementary
Deltona High School
Edith I. Starke Elementary School- X2
ESE/Atlantic HS

Facilities Operation
Freedom Elementary School
Galaxy Middle School- x2
George W. Marks Elementary School - x2
Holly Hill School
Mainland High School
Manatee Cove Elem
Palm Terrace Elementary School- X3
Pathways Elementary- X2
Pine Ridge High School - X2
Pine Trail Elementary School
Silver Sands Middle
South Daytona Elementary
Southwestern Middle School- X2
Sugar Mill Elementary School
Sunrise Elementary - X3
Sweetwater Elementary School
Timbercrest Elementary School
Transportation
Turie T. Small Elementary School
Volusia Online Learning- x2
Volusia Pines Elementary School
Westside Elementary School

To quote Bob Marley, ***“Get up, stand up; stand up for your right. Get up, stand up; don't give up the fight.”*** We are in the fight of our lives right now and we cannot relent.

We have been accused of wrongdoing by our own school board. They have submitted documentation to the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) that calls into question our integrity and character. OUR UNION has been established for decades. We have been known as the Volusia County Association of Office Personnel (VCOP), Volusia Association of Educational Secretaries (VAES), the Volusia Educators Association (VEA), Volusia Teachers Organization (VTO), Volusia Educational Support Association (VESA), and now as the Volusia United Educators, or VUE. Regardless of the name of our organization, we are a group of likeminded individuals who believe in the power of unity, our voice, our expertise, and our contract.

We know that the rights, privileges, and protections that we have fought for are worth saving, and therefore, we must continue to talk with our fellow teachers, paras, and office specialists who have benefited from our hard work, without getting in the game.

The time is now for everyone who believes in what we do to join VUE. We know that AFSCME is no longer available to protect and represent bus drivers, SWC workers, guardians, campus advisors, and our maintenance workers. They are without an advocate and representatives to help during a time of need. We cannot allow this to happen to VUE. We must stand together and push back against a school board who is actively working to see us gone. As of the writing of this Solidarity Report, not ONE of the board

members has reached out to me to discuss this situation, nor have they returned calls from FEA President, Andrew Spar. This has got to tell you something.

The way to overcome this challenge is to have a strong membership. We can do this by continuing to recruit.

Ask a colleague to join today. All they need to do is click the QR code and complete the online application. **THIS IS NOT A DRILL!**



Facts from the Front Lines!

As we have been reporting, last week continued to be a busy week in the office. Unfortunately, additional accusations continue to be lodged against our members. We also continue to see heavy handed discipline dispensed from the Professional Standards Committee. Here are a few reminders to help eliminate any potential accusation or the perception of wrongdoing. Please make sure that you contact your steward or member representative if you have any questions about a situation at school or in the workplace.

- Never communicate one-to-one with a student using your phone or social media. There is **NO REASON** why you should be doing this. If you are a coach or sponsor a club, send a group message. Social media is a huge vulnerability. **DO NOT** engage with your students or recent students on social media. It only takes the **PERCEPTION** of inappropriateness to lead to an allegation or accusation.
- Additionally, we recommend that you **NEVER** use your personal phone for the purpose of work. We know that it is convenient to do so, but this creates a vulnerability for you as a public school employee. The multifaceted authentication confirmation text to confirm your credentials to access the VCS server should be the extent of the use of your personal phone. ***We have seen personal cell phones seized by law enforcement in extreme cases.*** Please avoid using your phone for work.
- Do not deny a student access to the clinic or the restroom. If you believe that the student is asking to use the restroom or go to the clinic in order to avoid a non-preferred task, schedule a parent conference. Failure to allow a student to use the bathroom or go to the clinic could result in a visit from Professional Standards, or even DCF.
- Make sure to appropriately supervise your students. Planning and preparing a system to know where your students are and what they are doing is critical. Every year we represent several members who are accused of failing to supervise their students. Make sure that you have a plan in place to protect yourself from this accusation.
- Refrain from using profanity or language that could be considered derogatory, demeaning, or discriminatory. VCS has taken a hard line on profanity. Time and time again, we have seen Letters of Reprimand issued for a simple slip of the tongue. Please be mindful about how you talk with your students and colleagues.

In a he said/she said, we are finding that VCS considers employees guilty until proven innocent. Discipline often includes a reprimand and suspension.

As you know, your VUE staff will be there for you if/when an accusation is made against you. Your staff is fluent in the contract and will fight for you during an investigation. If discipline results from an investigation, we will also work through the grievance process if you want to fight the outcome. Please be aware that discipline given at the district level is automatically sent to DOE for review. If this occurs, we will contact FEA to assign an attorney to work through any investigation by DOE.

We are here to help, but being informed and educated about what is occurring in our district is powerful. If you have questions, please make sure to contact the office, (386) 238-1605.

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: IDEA/IEP

Course # 72058
Section #108190
Time:

Dates:

Monday, February 26, 2024
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Building Relationships w/ Adults

Course # 72061
Section #108191
Time:

Dates:

Monday, March 4, 2024
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

Managing Behaviors in the School Community

Course # 71630
Section #108379
Time:

Dates:

Monday, Mar. 4, 11, 18, 2024
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Building Relationships w/ Students

Course # 72229
Section #108374
Time:

Dates:

Monday, March 11, 2024
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Classroom Strategies

Course # 72059
Section #108375
Time:

Dates:

Monday, March 18, 2024
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

ESE: Student Behavior

Course # 72060
Section #108376
Time:

Dates:

Monday, April 1, 2024
VUE Office
5:00 pm –8:00 pm

VUE Black History Month Contest.

The poster features a vibrant, abstract background with swirling colors of red, orange, green, and purple. At the top, the text "African American History Contest 2024" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below this, "Sponsored by Volusia United Educators" is written in a smaller white font. A central black box with a yellow border contains the word "THEME" in yellow, followed by the theme text in white: "African Americans Contributing Positively through Performing Arts". Below the theme box, the text "Win a \$50.00 Gift Card" is written in a yellow, outlined font. The bottom section of the poster contains several lines of white text providing details about the contest, including the theme, categories, submission rules, and contact information for Dr. Lekita Howard.

African American History Contest 2024
Sponsored by Volusia United Educators

THEME
"African Americans
Contributing Positively
through
Performing Arts"

Win a \$50.00 Gift Card

In honor of Black History Month Volusia United Educators is sponsoring a contest. The theme is "African Americans Contributing Positively through Performing Arts" (music, singing, dance, acting, recitation, etc.). There are two categories: Essay and Virtual Art. One winner will be chosen in each category(2) for elementary, middle, and high.

-Original work only
-Essays must be typed
-Submission deadline February 23rd

-Must address the theme
-500 word minimum
-Winners announced February 29th

Submit entries to: Dr. Lekita Howard
1381 Educators Road
Daytona Beach, Florida 32124
lekita.howard@floridaea.org

In honor of Black History Month, the Volusia United Educators are sponsoring a contest open to all Volusia County Schools students.

Two (2) winners will be selected at each level of instruction (elementary, middle, and high school).

Students are eligible to win a \$50 gift card.

The topic of this year's contest is "African Americans Contributing Positively through Performing Arts."

The categories include visual arts and essay. For more information, please contact Dr. Lekita Howard at Lekita.howard@floridaea.org .

VUE Visits

Last week VUE visited several sites. We are having so much fun connecting and talking with our members and potential members about the issues that are important to you.

Before we left South Daytona Elementary, we were able to snap the picture below.

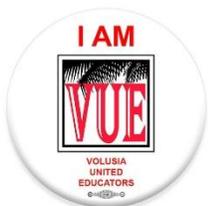


Next week, we will be in the schools listed below. If we are scheduled to visit your school, please make sure to stop by to say hello! 😊

- Monday: Orange City Elementary and University High
- Tuesday: Seabreeze High, Deltona High
- Wednesday: Ormond Beach Middle, Westside Elementary
- Thursday: George Marks Elementary, River Springs Middle
- Friday: Tomoka Elementary

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 Fasttrack form to become a member today!

