

The Solidarity Report

Your weekly VUE Update

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Spotlight: Ms. Mallory Smith!



- * 2nd year working as a teacher for Volusia County Schools!
- * Currently teaching 3rd grade at South Daytona Elementary
- * VUE Steward
- * VUE FYRE (Florida's Young Remarkable Educators) Committee Member
- * Marine Discovery Center Summer Camp Volunteer
- * Favorite Quote: "Freedom never descends upon people. It is always bought with a price." ~ Harry T. Moore

Ms. Mallory Smith has the heart of an advocate. Mallory is on fire to change the world for the better and she is starting this work in our Volusia County public schools! Mallory is a confident and bold individual, who has lobbied elected officials in Tallahassee. Mallory knows that when working conditions are better for teachers and staff, the learning conditions are better for our students. Additionally, Mallory is an active member of VUE's FYRE committee and in collaboration with the Florida AFL-CIO's Florida Future Labor Leaders (FFLL), participated in the most recent Juneteenth Book Give-Away. The goal was to provide books and literature to the children and families in the Deland area. Mallory is also a first-year steward at South Daytona Elementary. She is jumping into the role with both feet, as she has already recruited several new members by participating in the New Teacher Academy at Mainland High. Thank you, Ms. Mallory Smith, for your dedication, energy, and vision for our union. We know that our future is bright due to your enthusiastic approach to making our union strong. Solidarity!

District Update

Administrative Walkthroughs: As a reminder, the VSET Handbook (available on MyPGS under the VSET Help tab) states that walkthroughs are not allowed during the first two weeks of school. We have been contacted by several members who have shared that walkthroughs were conducted last week. Since MyPGS is currently not available for the 23-24 year, we are curious about the intent of the visits. If your administrator has “walked through” your room and you observed the collection of evidence taking place, but you have not received feedback, we encourage you to speak with your administrator.

Feedback should always be provided if we are to be working toward improving our instructional practice. If you would prefer that your member representative make the call, we are happy to do so. We must ensure that we are all following the same process.

Digital ESE Paperwork Update: Last week we shared that the district was working to make improvements to the digital forms that have been created for our ESE personnel. However, it turns out that there was an issue with the online support facilitation logs and the PowerBI platform. The district ESE department is now directing SF teachers to use the paper copies of the logs. The logs entered into the system during the first two weeks of school have been saved, but effective immediately, paper copies are to be used until further notice.

Meeting limitations: As a reminder, the contractual language related to meetings includes the following: *“Teachers may be required to attend school related general faculty meetings, school department meetings, grade level meetings, and/or parent conferences outside of the regular workday, to last no longer than one (1) hour, without additional compensation. No teacher shall be required to attend more than two (2) of the meetings above per month outside of the regular workday, except in cases of emergency where the required after school meetings have already been conducted for the month.”* This language includes meetings scheduled in the morning for our middle schools. We are hearing about violations of this language from several schools. This language is intended to preserve your planning time outside of the student day. If you are being asked to attend more than 2 meetings before/after school during the month, please let us know.

Additionally, there is no prohibition on an administrator holding a faculty meeting during the same week that an ERPL is being held, however, we believe that to do so would create an undue hardship on the faculty and staff at the school. If this occurs, please be reminded that the number of allowable meetings for the month could be exhausted in one week. If this is occurring at your site, please contact your member representative. Finally, faculty meetings at the elementary and high school levels are to start no later than 15 minutes after dismissal time and are to last no longer than 1 hour. If your meeting starts late, that does not mean that you are required to stay beyond the hour.

Upcoming Dates to Remember: We are sharing important reminders below:

- **ERPL #1** (District- based, Performance Matters) is scheduled for Wednesday, August 30th.
- **Thursday, August 31st** – **1st ACH eDues deduction for the 23-24 school year** (please contact the office immediately if your account information has changed)
- **Monday, September 4th** is a teacher/student holiday in observance of Labor Day!
- **Week of September 4th** – Middle School Open House Week (Block Out week for MS meetings)

- **Week of September 11th** – Block Out week due to Interim Reports (Wed. 9-13), PLCs may occur on Thursday, 9-14.
- **Week of September 18th** – Elementary Open House Week (Block Out week for Elem. Meetings)
- **Friday, September 22nd** – Professional Development Day
- **Week of September 25th** – High School Open House Week (Block Out week for HS meetings)

Bargaining Update

VUE will return to the bargaining table to continue negotiations for support staff on Wednesday, August 30th from 2:30 -4:30. As a reminder, VUE has asked for a 3% increase to the salary schedule and a step, plus a retention supplement of \$50 per year of service for all support staff who have 5 or more years of VCS service. For support staff with 20 or more years of VCS service, we are proposing an additional \$500 be added to the retention supplement. Based upon our discussions with the district, we know that the BSA has the funds available to support what we are proposing. Now we will wait to determine if the district will agree. Please make sure to watch the video of the bargaining session on the district YouTube page. We will share the link in our update at the conclusion of the session.

The ratification process for instructional personnel is moving forward. We have adjusted the date of the vote to Wednesday, September 6, 2023, to allow for greater access to due to the early release hour. Stewards will be trained on the ratification process this week.

Please be sure to review the signed Tentative Agreements. They are posted on the VUE website homepage, www.ourvue.net.

If you have any questions about bargaining for support or the TA's for instructional, please reach out.

VUE Membership Update

Many of our members have asked about our progress to meet the requirements of SB 256. As a reminder, on July 1, 2023, it became illegal for VCS to deduct union dues from paychecks, and our membership density is now required to be at least 60% of all eligible individuals in the bargaining unit in order for VUE to remain the bargaining agent for instructional and support professionals in VCS.

As of Sunday, August 27, 2023, at 4:30 pm, the data is as follows:

eDues completed enrollments = **2592**
 a. instructional – **2222** / support - **370**

Check pay memberships = **102**
 b. Instructional – **85** / Support - **17**
 Total confirmed members for 23-24 = **2694** / **5788** = **46.5%**
 Instructional – **2307 / **4436** = **52%**
for 60% = 2661, we need 354 more members by 9.15.23
 Support – **387 / **1352** = **28.6%**
for 60% - 811, we need 424 more members by 9.15.23
 Started eDues but not completed = **216**
 Instructional – **169** / Support - **47**
 No Action Taken- **675**
 Instructional – **562** / Support- **113**

We are closing in on our density goal, but we are not there yet. In order to recertify with PERC, we must reach 60% density by September 24, 2023. We have a little more than 2 weeks to get this done. Looking at the data, it is very likely that our instructional unit could make it if those who have started the process, finish, and those who have yet to act complete their conversion. If you are waiting to verify your microdeposit or if you have created your portal but not linked your account, we can help you finish the process. For our support unit, we will need to take an alternative approach.

The alternative way to maintain our position as the exclusive bargaining agent in Volusia County Schools is to call for an election from PERC. We are leaving nothing to chance and will use this process if needed.

We are currently collecting “Interest Cards” from instructional and support personnel. The yellow and blue forms simply state that the individual who signs the card wants the Volusia United Educators to continue to collectively bargain the contract. It is not a membership card, but a card that essentially shows the desire of the individual to keep our contract in place, and to keep our rights.

We cannot do this alone. We are asking for your help. If you have already converted to eDues, we thank you and want to remind you that the first ACH withdraw of the 23-24 school year will be made on Thursday, August 31st. Please prepare for this ACH transfer. If you have opted into the check pay method, we want to thank you, too.



Now is the time that we ask our colleagues, team members, friends, and the new members of team Volusia to join VUE. We can achieve great things when we work together. If you have not yet started or completed your eDues enrollment, there is no time to waste. Contact your steward, member representative, or the VUE office today (386) 238-1605.

You can also use the QR codes in the flyer to help your colleagues join for the first time or finish their enrollment. If you are interested in the check pay option, please contact Beth at (386) 238-1605 or beth.friedl@floridaea.org.

The Vultures are Circling

Anti-union groups, including millionaires from Washington State, are spending millions of dollars to try to convince teachers and support professionals that they do not need our union. They have begun whisper campaigns, sent postcard direct mailings, emails, and engineered social media messaging in order to plant a seed of doubt that our union is not strong. They so desperately want us to go away.

Why do you think they are doing this? Why would a millionaire care if you are a member of your local union? What do they gain by taking these actions? These groups from across the nation should have no interest in the goings on of Volusia County, Florida, yet they continue to attempt to disrupt and divide us and interrupt the work of our union.

They are doing this because we are strong. They are doing this because we fight for what we believe, and they are doing this because we stand in solidarity against challenges and obstacles that come our way. We have shown time and time again, that we will not relent, and that we will not be counted out.

Our union is being threatened like never before. So the question is, where will you stand in this moment? What will you say when the story is told of SB 256 and the consequences of its implementation?

In the words of Phil Constans, NEA Secretary (1968) before the Florida teacher strike:

“We are frightened of the unknown. Everyone is. Rare indeed is the moment of truth, and yet we are at the moment of truth. There is no middle ground, there is no neutral corner. To fail to decide is a decision in and of itself. More information won’t help you. More time won’t help you. The moment of truth is now. Where will you stand in this moment?”

For me, I am standing with OUR UNION. The antidote to the vitriol and divisiveness is VUE. We are the experts on what the students of Volusia county need to be successful. We are the experts on how to run our schools and worksites properly. We are The Volusia UNITED Educators, and our voice will be heard. The only place we are going is FORWARD!

We will keep marching forward, we will keep speaking up and fighting for every student in Volusia County to receive a high quality public education, from a certificated educator, in a well-run, efficient, and effective learning environment. We won’t back down from the challenges of SB 256, and united, we will overcome.

It is easy to stand on the sidelines and wish for a different circumstance, but as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, *“the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy.”*

So I will ask again, where will you stand in this moment?

0% Interest Loan from LAUNCH: **LAST CALL**



WELCOME Back To Class!

We know you have a lot to think about. Setting up your workspace shouldn't be one of them.

Ask About Our
0% Interest Educators' Loan Special!
EXCLUSIVELY FOR VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS EMPLOYEES
AUGUST 2023 ONLY

0% INTEREST! ■ Zero Down Payment
Borrow up to \$600 ■ 6 Month Maximum Term
For loans funded from August 1st – 31st, 2023

The Launch CU interest-free educators' loan, exclusively for Volusia County Schools employees, can help with the extra expenses it takes to get your workspace ready.

Borrow up to \$600 interest free, with six months to pay it back.
Credit qualifications are required.
Must show proof of employment when applying online, over the phone, or at a branch.

Apply online at launchcu.com, use our online appointment tool to make an appointment at a branch, or call us at 321-455-9400 or 800-662-5257, option 5

*APR - Annual Percentage Rate. Loan requires credit approval and credit report. Savings account required for loan. Term of loan limited to a maximum of 6 months, maximum loan amount \$600. Payment example: payments on a loan with a term of 6 months at 0% APR would be approximately \$100 per \$600 borrowed. The funds funded from August 1st through 31st, 2023. Must be a current employee of Volusia County Schools. Only a \$3 minimum deposit required to open accounts and become a Launch CU member. You can spend an amount of your fee, work, savings, or federal school at the location we serve. Federally insured by the NCUA. Please see Terms, Conditions.

Once again, our friends at Launch Credit Union are offering the 0% Interest Loan to VUE members. This loan is so very helpful for those last-minute items that you need for yourself or your classroom.

This exclusive interest free loan is for VUE members only. You can borrow up to \$600 and take up to 6 months to pay it back. Credit qualifications are required. Call Launch today, at 800-662-5257, option 3, or apply online at www.launchcu.com.

Do not delay, act now in order to take advantage of this offer. If you need proof of your VUE membership, you can take a screenshot of a pay stub showing your dues deduction or ask the loan professional to contact our office, (386) 238-1605.

VUE's Membership Committee



Do you enjoy networking? Do you enjoy talking to your colleagues about the things you love about teaching or working in our district? Do you enjoy being a part of our union and sharing the positive impacts that VUE has on the lives of our members?

If you've answered yes to any of these questions, then we have an opportunity for YOU!

The VUE Membership Committee is looking for a few guys and gals to help recruit new members. The members of the committee work to make connections and establish communication with our new employees to inform them of the benefits of membership in our union. If you are interested in joining the VUE Membership Committee, please contact Sheila Butchart at sbutchal@gmail.com.

FEA Retirees Innovation Grant



COMING SOON!!

**Florida Education Association-Retired
\$150 INNOVATIVE GRANTS**

Are you an VUE member? Do you have an idea that would benefit your students? Is there a project you would like to do in your classroom that you otherwise cannot afford?

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE AUGUST 1

See your Steward or contact the VUE Office for a quick and simple application!



Are you looking for a way to fund an exciting and innovative lesson or project? If so, FEA Retirees can help!

Each year our fantastic retirees union provides financial assistance to educators across the state. They understand first-hand that power of creativity and exploration.

Don't delay, apply today!

For more information or an application, Please contact CJ Allen at **CJ Allen, President VUE Retired**, 386.212.4245 or cj-english@msn.com

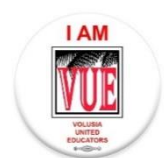


In observance of Labor Day, the VUE office will be closed on Monday, September 4th. We will reopen on Tuesday, September 5th at 8:30 am.

SOLIDARITY!

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!

