



# Solidarity Report

“ Sí se puede! ” ~ Dolores Huerta

## We The People

When we speak truth to power, it is never easy. It is not easy for the brave and bold individual who steps forward, nor is it easy for the recipient of the message. However, if VCS is going to be a district that is committed to meeting the needs of all stakeholders, which includes the teachers, paras, and office specialists, we must be able to have honest, yet uncomfortable conversations.

To be fair, there are many great things happening within our schools. We have students who are excelling and teachers and staff who love what they do and the students with whom they work. But as with most things, there are always areas in need of improvement.

For example, the switch to Ed Modified. You and your colleagues have done an excellent job of sharing concerns and bringing solutions forward. Thanks to the collaborative mindset of Ms. Copeland, we are making improvements weekly with Ed Modified. It’s not perfect, but it is getting better. This commitment to collaboration and shared problem solving is what is needed in other areas.

During Tuesday’s board meeting five of your VUE sisters spoke up about issues that are impacting them and their colleagues. They discussed class size, displacements, student behaviors/violence, the overwhelming workload, and the lack of time to get everything done. They were brave and took the first step to make things better. If we stay silent the only guarantee we have is that nothing will get better.

Although some district leaders seemed to misinterpret the statements of our sisters as criticism; the members of the board understood the intent, which was to ask for help. We would like to thank Ms. Haynes for her statements about students who continuously disrupt and impede the learning of the other students in the class and for expressing her concern for the teachers and staff who have been physically attacked by students. We appreciate Mr. Colon’s comments and acknowledgement of unacceptable behaviors of a few students who are creating havoc for others and traumatizing their peers, Mrs. Burnette’s statements about accountability and reminder to record these events, Ms. Thompson’s statements encouraging parents to have conversations with their children about what is and is not allowed in school and the everlasting consequences of certain behaviors. We also acknowledge the support provided by law enforcement as stated by Mr. Persis.

The schools who were represented at the board meeting included Seabreeze High, University High, Taylor Middle/High, Beachside Elem., Discovery Elem., Forest Lake Elem., T. T. Small Elem., and Osteen Elem.

Please take a moment to listen to the comments from the fantastic five pictured below, and consider joining us at the next board meeting which is scheduled for Tuesday, October 8th. The time is now to move from sitting on the sidelines to getting in the game. It’s time to take a bold step to engage in the work of making YOUR life better. Solidarity.

Click the following link to listen to public participation.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Qb1HbHKR6o&t=7445s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Qb1HbHKR6o&t=7445s)



# Important Salary Update

On Tuesday, September 24th, the members of the school board voted unanimously to approve the contracts for 2024-25. The timeline for salary increases, and other payments is listed below. If you have any questions, please contact the VUE office at (386) 238-1605.

- Salary adjustments - 10-15-24
- Retro payments - 10-31-24
- Inst. Retention - 11-22-24
- Longevity - 12-20-24
- Summer School Retro- November
- Invoice Retro - January

## Mandatory Reporting

All school board employees are **mandatory reporters** of child abuse. As a school board employee, you can protect yourself by taking note of the following abuse reporting tips:

- The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) is not the only entity having jurisdiction over failure to report child abuse. Your school district and the Florida Department of Education (DOE) are authorized to take disciplinary action as well.
- In addition, criminal liability for failure to report child abuse has been elevated from a misdemeanor to a third degree felony in recent years. Fifteen years imprisonment is now the maximum sentence for failing to report child abuse.
- The Florida Retirement System may also seek the forfeiture of benefits of those who fail for failure to report child abuse.
- The duty to report is not just for child abuse, but also includes any child abandonment or child neglect by a parent, guardian, or school employee.
- The threshold test is whether you have “reasonable cause to suspect” abuse, abandonment or neglect. In other words: err on the side of caution; always make a report!
- When reporting to the DCF abuse hotline, the duty to report is immediate, not within 48 hours like other criminal reporting requirements for school district employees.
- By law, the following employees must disclose their name when calling the DCF abuse hotline: School teacher or other school official or personnel. (§ 39.201, Florida Statutes). Anonymous reporting is no longer allowed. However, the reporter’s name remains confidential in DCF’s records. (§ 39.201, F.S.)
- You cannot discharge your duty to report abuse by asking a colleague or administrator to report it instead. If you are too busy, obtain permission to have your duties covered by a co-worker momentarily. Do not wait until the end of the school day to report abuse.
- You do not need permission from your administrator to report to DCF. This is a mandatory requirement and even if your administrator directs you not to report child abuse, you are required by law to immediately call the DCF hotline anyway.

- You are not required to inform your principal prior to reporting the suspected abuse to DCF. Informing your principal is a best practice but it is not required.
- All abuse must now be reported through the DCF’s hotline at 1-800-962-2873, or through the DCF’s updated online reporting tool at: myflfamilies.com
- Even if your knowledge of child abuse is just hearsay through the grapevine, you still should report it.
- Even if you know that the DCF has already received the same abuse report from others, report it anyway. It doesn’t matter if your DCF report is redundant. You must abide by the law and protect yourself.
- After an abuse report is made by you or someone else, you might be contacted by DCF for an investigative interview. Your participation is voluntary, unlike an investigative interview by your employer.

Reporting suspected abuse, neglect or abandonment is a mandatory obligation that each of us share. Our first and most important priority is to keep our students safe. If you have any questions about this, please contact the office at (386) 238-1605.

## Sick Leave Bank

Don’t wait until you need it, join now!

You don’t have to be a member of the VUE to join the SLB. All you need is to have worked for VCS for at least 1 year, have 5 days of accrued sick leave with a willingness to donate 1 day.

This is a benefit for those who want to have a back up plan for unexpected medical crisis when your days are running low. Reach out to Dr. Howard at [lekita.howard@floridaea.org](mailto:lekita.howard@floridaea.org) if you have questions or if you are ready to join.



# VUE Professional Learning

If you need ESE points for recertification, register today using MyPGS for the following course. VUE courses are developed by members for members. Take advantage of these no cost, high quality workshops that are sure to help improve your practice. If you have questions, please contact Dr. Howard at [lekita.howard@floridaea.org](mailto:lekita.howard@floridaea.org).



**ESE Classroom Strategies  
Professional Learning**  
Presented by Volusia United Educators  
Facilitator: Paulette McKibbins-Shed & Jeffrey Turner



**Course# 72059 Session# 111058 Format: Face2Face**  
**Monday September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024 5:00pm – 8:00pm**

The participants in this course will learn the requirements of establishing a quality learning environment essential for all students more especially ESE. Components include classroom structure, consistent procedures and environmental accommodations to promote learning along with other ways the environment can be tailored for ESE students.

**4 Inservice Points**



One day soon maybe people will realize that “the union” doesn’t organize workers. The workers ARE the union

Talk with a friend today about why you are a member of your union. Share your story and encourage them to join. Share the QR code or link below.

If they complete their application process and join our VUE family, we will send you an appreciation gift.



[www.ourvue.net/membership/index](http://www.ourvue.net/membership/index)

# FEA Professional Learning

**FEA PD COURSES ARE  
FREE FOR ALL MEMBERS  
AND UNION STAFF**

**SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER  
TO RECEIVE COURSE  
REGISTRATION LINKS**



**EDUCATION STAFF  
PROFESSIONAL ACADEMY**

**OCTOBER 10TH**

**BASICS FOR ESP PERSONAL SAFETY  
IN THE WORKPLACE**

**6:00–7:00 PM ET VIA ZOOM**

