



Solidarity Report

“Things will go wrong at times. Your options are to complain..... or to look ahead and figure out how to make the situation better.”
~ Tony Dungy

HB 1473 Implementation

Today is the 20th day of school for students, and the 6th week of work for most teachers and staff. At the onset of the school year, we acknowledged the issues and complications associated with implementing HB 1473. The law requires:

- **Securely closed entrances and exits:** Schools must keep entrances and exits securely closed and locked when students are on campus.
- **Active staffing:** When entrances and exits are open or unlocked, they must be actively staffed unless there is an exception.
- **Reporting violations:** Violations of safety requirements must be reported to the appropriate school official or governing board.

The VCSB has amended Policy 511 to reflect the requirements of HB 1473, and has entered into an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with VUE to define the steps of Progressive Discipline should an allegation of a violation of Policy 511 be made against an employee.

The MOU sets forth the following:

- **For all occurrences/allegations of a violation of Policy 511, a thorough investigation will occur affording the individual due process**
- **1st occurrence** - a report of violation form is completed and retraining is provided by school administration
- **2nd occurrence**- a report of violation form is completed and a Letter of Caution issued from school administration
- **3rd occurrence** - a report of violation form is completed and Letter of Reprimand issued from Professional Standards
- **4th occurrence** - a report of violation form is completed, Letter of Reprimand, and 1 day suspension w/out pay issued from Professional Standards
- **5th occurrence**- a report of violation form is completed, Letter of Reprimand, and 3 day suspension w/out pay issued from Professional Standards
- **6th occurrence** - a report of violation form is completed, recommendation of termination from Professional Standards

VUE members are afforded representation should an allegation be made against you.

Furthermore, we continue to learn about the ongoing challenges many schools are facing as they attempt to work within this new law. As mentioned, the penalties for a violation of the law are serious and we all need to recognize the importance of maintaining a secure campus/classroom.

However, it is clear that after 6 weeks of work, some schools are figuring how to navigate this uncharted territory, while others are struggling. We also know that there are circumstances beyond our control that impact the best-laid plans.

Inclement weather is a significant issue right now. We have received calls from teachers who have been forced to stand outside during a lightning storm while they attempted to unlock the employee parking lot gate, move the gate, move their car, close the gate, and relock the gate. **This is unacceptable and extremely dangerous.** Also, as the seasons change, it will begin to get dark earlier. Many of our schools are located in neighborhoods where visibility from a main roadway is not possible. It is not safe to have teachers and staff outside in the dark trying to unlock/relock the parking lot gate without someone watching to ensure their safety.

We have reached out to the district and are waiting on a response. We believe that safety should be the priority, but safety should be afforded to ALL individuals on the campus/worksite.

We are recommending to all members who are working at a school or worksite where a reasonable and effective plan to mitigate the dangers of having to exit your vehicle to unlock/move/relock the parking lot gate has not been created; that you leave at the end of your contractual workday. We are making this recommendation until the district can work with administrators to create a plan that prioritizes your safety. Someone other than YOU, needs to be responsible for the parking lot gate.

We know that this is an inconvenience, but your safety is most important to us. We are hopeful that we will hear from district leaders this week and that a solution to these issues can be reached.



Ed Modified

VUE members, we hear you! As the September 11th date for the district-wide shift to Ed Modified draws closer, we know that many of you are struggling to utilize this platform.

Although we have always tracked progress, monitored interventions, provided accommodations, and identified our specially designed instruction, additional time has not been provided for you to do these tasks within the Ed. Modified program. While site-based support personnel have been trained and are to be provided time by administration to support colleagues, it seems that there are still gaps.

Additionally, due to the significant increase in class sizes, especially in electives, and non-core classes, the time it takes to track accommodations for gen ed teachers is well beyond the time allotted during planning.

Many of you have expressed feelings of frustration, being overwhelmed, and despair. Please know that we are continuing to work on this issue. We will be at Tuesday's school board meeting and we will speak to this issue. We continue to work with ESE district leaders and will look at creating an internal support system within VUE. Members helping members will be the way that we overcome this obstacle.

Remember, throughout the last year, we have endured threats from external operators and challenges from within VCS. However, we have overcome every threat and challenge and our union is moving in a positive and powerful direction. We will overcome the issues with Ed. Modified and we will continue to grow our power and influence. We are committed to your success and we will support each other through this. As the Kenyan Proverb states, "sticks in a bundle are unbreakable." Solidarity!



Be on the LOOKOUT!
The VUE website will have
a fresh new look coming
soon!

2024-25 Contract Ratification Votes

The 2024-25 Contract Ratification votes for support and instructional staff will be held as follows:

- Monday, September 16, 2024 -- Support Staff Ratification
- Tuesday, September 17, 2024 -- Instructional Ratification

Stewards or their designee will be trained on the process of facilitating the election this week. If you will not be at your worksite to vote, the VUE office will also be available to voters. If you are an itinerant employee, you may vote at a site closest to you, but you will need to show a photo id and sign an attestation form.

If the contracts are ratified, they will be presented to the members of the school board for approval on September 24, 2024.

A FAQ and Calculate Your Increase sheet has been sent to stewards. If you have any questions or need assistance to determine your increase, please contact the VUE office at (386) 238-1605.



Information Update

As we work to refine and update our membership database, we have found that there have been many changes this summer. We are asking for your help to keep our records updated.

PLEASE CONTACT THE VUE OFFICE IF

- If you have changed your last name
- If you have moved during the last year
- If you have changed your cell phone number in the last year
- If you have changed your personal email address
- If you are using eDues and you have changed your bank account information
- If you have changed your job role or work location

The ability to contact our members is critical to the ability to share information. It is always a best practice to review your contact information annually to ensure that it is up to date. Thank you.



Our Public Schools

As a veteran employee of the Volusia County School system, I have lived through the good times and bad times. I have seen site and district-level leaders come and go. School board members elected by an overwhelming majority and those who have been elected by the narrowest of margins. Yet through it all, I have never lost my hope that those who sought election to a seat on the school board were driven by the desire to improve academic outcomes for our children and a commitment to making improvements to our district .

However, I now find myself wondering if my hope is still justified or if our public schools have now become weapons for agendas that have nothing to do with student success or improvements for those working within the system. It is concerning to me that an undercurrent of vitriol has surfaced during this election cycle. It has drawn our focus away from the real issues within our schools, and instead degraded into juvenile antics and tactics intended to besmirch others.

Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate our expectations. Perhaps we should recognize that politics will always play a role in our schools, but we must never allow it to overshadow our commitment to providing the best possible education for our students and the best quality of life for our employees.

~ Elizabeth Albert



" I truly believe our students, staff and school district need a school board member who has educational experience k-12 and has an optimistic vision regarding our public schools. Carl Persis is that individual.

As an experienced educator, I know open communication is very important when there are areas of concern. I also know that political agendas that promote division will get us nowhere. We need a leader who will step up and move us forward. This is why I am endorsing Carl Persis for School Board District 4.

I stand behind this decision after reflecting on conversations, debates and doing thorough research on both candidates running."

Sarah Marzilli
Former candidate for School Board district 4

Student Loan Debt Relief

REGISTER NOW for the NEA webinar to help VUE members create a strategic plan to tackle student loan debt. Empower yourself with knowledge and take control of your financial future!

Scan the QR Code to register. The webinar will be held on Wednesday, September 18th beginning at 5:00 pm.

NEA Student Debt Navigator powered by Savi

Find Student Loan Debt Relief.

Find information about any forgiveness or cancellation programs you may qualify for, along with how much you can save.

Get Started

September 18th
5:00 PM

**SCAN OR
CLICK HERE
TO
REGISTER**



FEA RETIREES INNOVATION GRANT!

Do you have an innovative and creative idea to enhance student learning? Need a few dollars to make it a reality?

Applications are now available for the FEA Retired Innovation Grant.

Contact the VUE office today or click the following link, <https://www.vueretired.org/new-grants-2024-25.html>

All grant paperwork must be submitted by Sept. 25 at midnight.

VCS SCHOOL BOARD MEETING!

Tuesday, Sept. 10th starting at 4:30pm

Come and engage in the work of your union.

If you are interested in speaking with the board, please contact elizabeth.albert@floridaea.org

COMING SOON!!

Florida Education Association-Retired \$150 INNOVATIVE GRANTS

Are you an FEA 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 Building Rep or contact your FEA-Retired District Director for a quick and simple application!

