



Solidarity Report

“The future doesn’t belong to the fainthearted, it belongs to the brave.”

~President Ronald Regan

VCS Group Medical Insurance

At Tuesday’s board workshop, the five members of the school board will listen to a presentation from the Employee Benefits Department detailing the reasons and rationale behind the proposal to engage with a new carrier for the employee group medical benefits. The workshop begins at 12:30 pm and the discussion is second on the agenda. You can listen to the workshop [here](#).

The VCS presentation and supporting documents can be found [here](#). Scroll to item 3.01 to find the attachments.

The lack of communication and specific information about the potential change by VCS has created an opportunity for misinformation and confusion to spread throughout the district and on social media. The documents that have been uploaded to Board Docs only tell part of the story. As with any change, each individual needs to review the plans to make decisions that meet their needs and the needs of their families.

If you are currently on the FHCP HMO plan, it may be cost effective for you to move to the Curative EPO Value plan. The differences between the two EPO plans needs to be explained in detail during the workshop. If you are only covering yourself, the EPO Value plan is available at no cost. That means; *ZERO PREMIUM, ZERO COST TO USE THE PLAN.*

Regardless of who you are covering, as long as the initial Baseline visit is completed, the Curative plans offer the following services at no cost:

- Doctors visits
- Specialists
- Extended Care Clinics
- Chiropractic Copay
- Emergency Services
- Inpatient Hospital Per Admission Copay
- Emergency Room | ER Physician
- Urgent Care Copay
- Outpatient Surgical Facility Copay
- Ambulatory Surgery Center
- Diagnostic Services Lab & X-Ray Outpatient:
Advanced Imaging Services (MRI, MRA, PET, CT)
- Prescription Drug

The Curative base plan (EPO Value) offers lower premiums for dependents compared to the FHC HMO2 plan. Individuals should consider what each plan has to offer, how they use their plan, and if switching to another plan would result in the same or better services at a lower cost.

We know that the information on this potential change was not shared in a way that builds confidence. We also know it is scary to think about changing plans and the potential ripple effects of moving to a new company. We know that the thought of having to change doctors is unsettling and it creates a sense of vulnerability. However, we also know that the members of our union cannot continue to endure the negative impacts of the rising cost of health insurance. Until the members of the board decide to make the salaries of teachers and support staff a priority, we must take a hard look at ways to provide quality benefits that we can afford to use.

If you would like to share your thoughts, concerns, and questions about the proposed change to the medical insurance, we encourage you to either email the members of the school board (from your personal email account), or plan to attend the board meeting on Tuesday. If you would like to speak, you will need to complete a green speaker card (agenda items, not public participation) and should plan to arrive at the Deland Administrative Complex by 6:00 pm. The speakers cards are available in the boardroom. The agenda item is #19.01 and it is the first action item that the board will discuss.

Please contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.albert@floridaea.org if you have any questions, or if you need assistance with your talking points.

The email addresses of the members of the school board can be found [here](#).



Sheriff Mike Chitwood: A Friend of Teachers and Staff



Student behaviors and violence are a huge concern and an issue that has been brought to district leadership time and time again. Earlier this year, we began receiving calls informing us that when students with IEPs were causing bodily harm and injury to teachers and staff, the SRO or responding law enforcement officer would not allow the individual to press charges. After reaching out to the ESE Director, we learned that the DOJ settlement agreement contained language that prohibited the individual from pressing charges if the behaviors were found to be a “manifestation” of the student’s disability.

We know that the law (Fl Statute 1006.13 (4)(a) sets forth the ability of individuals who have been assaulted, battered, or received bodily harm or injury by a student to press charges. Furthermore, section 1006.147 of the Early Learning -20 Education Code, also known as the *Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act*, prohibits bullying or harassment of any student or employee of a public K-12 educational institution. Its definition of bullying includes threat, intimidation, physical violence, as well as racial harassment. We believe that an individual’s rights do not cease to exist during the contractual work day. We took our concerns to the district, yet they went unanswered and no visible action occurred to address these concerns. It seemed that the district was content to say, “we have to follow the guidelines of the DOJ settlement.” VUE and our members were not party to the DOJ settlement as it was being negotiated, and we do not believe that a settlement agreement supersedes the law.

We felt like we were getting nowhere, so we took a big step and reached out to the Sheriff and asked for a meeting. He agreed.

We met with Sheriff Chitwood on April 9th. During the meeting we explained the situation as stated above and shared several examples of student violence in our schools.

Two reoccurring questions emerged:

- If a teacher/staff receives bodily harm or injury from a student with a disability during the contractual day and is prohibited from filing charges at school, are they prohibited from going to the police station after the contractual day ends and pressing charges?
- If a student with an IEP inflicts bodily harm/injury to a teacher/staff at school and it is determined to be a manifestation of the disability, what is the expectation if the same behavior or injuries are inflicted on someone outside of the school setting, for example at a public park or Walmart?

The Sheriff stated that he was interested in helping to provide clarity on this issue and suggested that a meeting occur with his team, VUE and VCS. He suggested that we reach out to the State’s Attorney to further research this very important issue.

Last Wednesday, VUE, VCS, Sheriff Chitwood and his team met at DAC to continue this discussion.

It was apparent that VCS takes meeting with Sheriff Chitwood seriously. The room was filled with district leaders and the district’s contracted attorney, Ms. Dyson was participating via Teams.

The discussion was centered on finding solutions, while also being compliant with the DOJ settlement. We learned that VCSB policy 510 now sets forth the guidelines for safety and security of students, personnel, and property. You can find the VCSB policies [here](#). This policy articulates the steps that must be taken during certain crisis situations.

After a discussion about how to protect teachers and staff, it was determined that any adjustment needs to be made via policy 510.

Dr. Balgobin suggested that VCS and VUE work together to draft proposed changes that will subsequently be submitted to the DOJ for review. If the DOJ rejects the proposed language changes, we will need to reconvene.

This is a positive first step. Dr. Balgobin agreed that teachers and staff need to know that they are safe at work. We also agreed that IEPs, BIPs, 504 plans and other supports must be provided to our students with disabilities. De-escalation training must be provided to all individuals who work with students with disabilities and our intent is not to have students sitting in the back of police cars, but to have protections in place for our educational professionals.

At the conclusion of the meeting, we felt that your voice had been heard and that there is a genuine interest in making improvements in this area. Additionally, an email was sent by VCS the following day to announce that policy 510 will be reviewed and revised.

We are extremely grateful to Sheriff Chitwood and his team. Without his assistance we would not have this opportunity to make these much needed improvements to our working conditions.

We will continue to provide updates as this process moves forward.



Retiring or Resigning from VCS?

If you are planning to retire, resign or otherwise separate from VCS at the end of this year, we need to know. We need to update our membership files to reflect this change.

Our VUE policy states that it is the member’s responsibility to inform the VUE office of any change in membership status.

If you are leaving, please contact Beth at beth.friedl@floridaea.org or call the office at 386-238-1605.




VUE Summer Professional Learning

Do you need to take an ESOL course? Are you interested in getting a head start on planning for the 2025-2026 academic year?

If so, please consider registering for one of the VUE PD courses below. VUE PD is offered at no cost for VUE members. Potential members can attend pending availability but must pay for the course.

DON'T DELAY, REGISTER TODAY! SEATS WILL FILL UP QUICKLY!



ESOL Culture

Presented by Volusia United Educators

Facilitated by
Dr. Teresa McMillan Ward


June 2nd - 5th, 2025 @ 8:30am - 4:30pm

Course# 12552 Session# 113715 Format: F2F

Note: This course is one of the five courses needed to meet the Category 1 ESOL requirement and to obtain the ESOL Endorsement. Teachers will build cultural competence to enhance classroom interactions, instructional effectiveness and create a foundation for optimal learning.

60 In-Service Points
A Combination of Contact and Independent Hours

Please register through Volusia County Schools MyPGS. If there are any questions, contact Dr. Lekita Howard at lekita.howard@floridaea.org or call the VUE Office at 386-238-1605 for registration. Non-VUE/VESA members will be required to pay a registration fee.



Managing Behaviors in the School Community



Presented by Volusia United Educators
Facilitator: Amy Hawkins

June 2nd—5th @ 8:30am until 11:30am
Course# 71630 Session# 113755 Format: F2F

Spend the summer planning a new approach to managing student behaviors in the school community. Build a foundation of knowledge for problem solving and cultivating an effective instructional environment for optimal learning.

60 In-Service Points
A Combination of Contact and Independent Hours

Please register through Volusia County Schools MyPGS. If there are any questions, contact Dr. Lekita Howard at lekita.howard@floridaea.org or call the VUE Office at 386-238-1605 for registration. Non-VUE/VESA members will be required to pay a registration fee.



Launch 0% Interest Loan!

Once again our friends at Launch Credit Union are offering their 0% Educators Loan to VUE members.

Eligible employees can borrow up to \$750 to be paid over a 6-month period. Apply between July 1st - August 31st. For more information, call 800-662-5257 or visit, www.launchcu.com.



Back To Class is EASY

With a Zero Percent Loan Special!

Educators' Loan Special

EXCLUSIVELY FOR VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS EMPLOYEES
JULY AND AUGUST 2025 ONLY

0% Interest

Educator's Loan!

- Borrow up to \$750
- 6 Month Maximum Term
- Apply July 1ST – August 31ST, 2025

The Volusia County School Board is not affiliated with these events/programs in any manner, nor does it endorse or assume any responsibility for any activities which may occur in connection with them.

Apply online at launchcu.com, at a branch, or call us at 800-662-5257, option 5

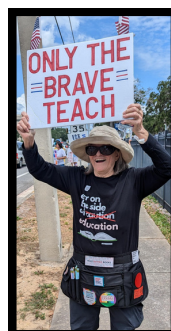
*APR: Annual Percentage Rate. Loan requires credit approval and credit report. Savings account required for loan. Term of loan limited to a maximum of 6 months; maximum loan amount \$750. (Payment example: payments on a loan with a term of 6 months at 0.00% APR would be approximately \$16.67 per \$100 borrowed.) For loans funded from July 1st through August 31st, 2025. Must show proof of employment with Volusia County Schools when applying, and must be a current employee. Only a \$5 minimum deposit required to open account and become a Launch CU member. You can open an account if you live, work, worship, or attend school in the counties we serve.
Please use Purpose Code: AtoZVolusia



Retiring Soon? Join VUE Retirees!

Retiring soon or know someone who is? Come join us at VUE-Retired. We meet monthly during the school calendar year to share inspirational informational presentations and socialization as we support our fellow educators.

Membership is open to all retired educators/support staff from Florida as well as those from out of state. Explore our website: www.vueretired.org or contact CJ Allen cj-english@msn.com 386.212.4245 txt ok. We look forward to hearing from you!



Public Schools Matter!

Field Day Fun at Spruce Creek Elementary!

