



Solidarity Report

"If not now, when?"

~Hillel the Elder

Not the Right Time, or Not the Right Leaders?

Have you ever wondered about the role and responsibilities of the school board members? A quick Google search provided the following information.

"Florida school board members are elected officials responsible for governing local public schools, setting policies, adopting budgets, and hiring/evaluating the superintendent to ensure student success. They act as a bridge between the community and the school system, overseeing curriculum, property, and district operations." The information also stated that a core responsibility of the board is to, "act as a liaison between the community and the school system to ensure schools reflect local values and needs." If you've worked in VCS for any length of time, you might wonder if some of the board members fully understand the assignment.

During the March school board meeting it was shared that we have had ongoing conversations with the Superintendent and a variety of district leaders about putting a referendum to fund salary increases and programs on the ballot in November. This conversation began in August and has continued throughout the year. Listed below are a few important facts about a referendum.

- 33 of the 67 counties in Florida have a referendum to provide additional money for employees salaries.
- There has not been a referendum or renewal of a referendum for teacher and staff salaries that has failed in any of the 33 districts.
- The potential revenue that a referendum would generate is approximately **\$70 million**.
- Polling data collected from voters in Volusia County (largely retired citizens) overwhelmingly showed that the voters support a referendum.
- The members of the board would not be "raising taxes", but would be asking the voters to decide for themselves if they want to support our public school employees.
- If approved, the referendum money would be split 80/20 between employee salary increases and school programs.
- The identified employees to receive the referendum money would include all employees in the bargaining units (all 3) and site-based administration. The money would not go to district-level administration.

Sounds like a great idea, right? Well, we thought so too, and at last month's board meeting, we were told by Chair Ruben Colon that the item would be placed on the April board agenda for a formal discussion. We were asked to provide sample resolution language that would be sent to the members of the County Council to be placed on the ballot. We sent a draft resolution to the superintendent and members of the board as requested.

HOWEVER.....

When we reviewed the agenda for Tuesday's board meeting, what do you think was not there? You guessed it, the agenda item to discuss a referendum.

After sending an email about the missing agenda item, Mr. Colon called and informed me that the reason the item was not on the agenda was, "*we don't feel like it is the right time.*" Honestly, some of you might not be surprised by this, but as someone who is trying desperately to be optimistic and to take people at their word, I was extremely disappointed and angry.

As the conversation continued with Mr. Colon, this is what I learned.

- The "we" who don't feel this is the right time is Dr. Balgobin and Mr. Colon. Mr. Colon is prohibited from communicating with the other members of the board on agenda items (Sunshine Law), so he and the superintendent are making a decision that takes away the voice and ability to vote on a referendum from the other board members.
- You, teachers and staff, have earned an "A" rating for VCS, but it isn't the right time for a referendum.
- The budget from the state is not completed, but preliminary data shows only meager increases from both the House and Senate, but it isn't the right time for a referendum.
- Vouchers continue to drain students and money away from VCS, but it isn't the right time for a referendum.
- Surrounding Central Florida districts offer higher salaries to employees, but it isn't the right time for a referendum.
- Charter schools compete with VCS by offering unique programs to draw students away, but it isn't the right time for a referendum.
- The employees in VCS have struggled with low wages and increased cost of benefits, but it isn't the right time for a referendum.
- VCS is the largest employer in Volusia County and increases for employees result in increases in revenues for small business in our community, but it isn't the right time for a referendum.

Do I need to continue? Perhaps not.

At some point, "*not the right time*" stops being an explanation and starts being an excuse. If it's not the right time when employees have delivered results, when competition is increasing, when funding is uncertain, and when people are already struggling—then when, exactly, is the right time?



Not the Right Time..., cont.

Leadership requires more than making excuses and kicking the can down the road. It requires action. Action when it's difficult, when it's uncomfortable, and when the people are struggling.

Right now, employees are doing their part every single day. The question is whether those in positions of authority are willing to do theirs.

Because here's the truth: if we do nothing, that's exactly what we will get.

We need **YOU** at DAC on Tuesday, April 14th. We need **YOU** to wear **RED** and be in the room during public participation when we speak about how the actions of two individuals are denying members of the board and our community, **US**, the right to vote on a referendum that will improve the lives of thousands of employees in our district. We need **YOU** to hold our elected board members accountable and demand that they take actionable steps to help the employees in VCS. They ask a whole lot from **US**, we must now ask for something from them.

If you are interested in speaking to the board about this issue or anything else, please contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.albert@floridaea.org.

District Update

Your VUE staff continues to attempt to work with the district to find solutions to issues and answers to the questions you send us. However, with the recent resignation of several key leaders within VCS, it has significantly slowed down the response time from our district contacts. Also, due to the lack of institutional knowledge and experience of some of the newly appointed personnel, it often takes several interactions to receive an answer as "others" must be consulted prior to providing a response.

As we push forward and continue to advocate, we need to share that the labor management process has also been delayed. We mutually agreed to meet last Friday, but the district contacted us on Thursday to cancel. It is extremely frustrating to take one step forward and two steps back.

Listed below are several items we are working on for you.

- Retro pay for summer school and other invoice work - we have asked for a date certain but the district is not able to provide one. They are working with IT and Focus to pay the retro and will let us know ASAP when payment can be expected.
- Sub Pay for SSS when covering meetings - we have provided the requested data to the district and are waiting on a response. SSS are not mandated to cover, and we've been told that coverage should not be needed as the mentor SSS are assigned to sub. We have asked for a caseload review for SSS.
- Sub pay for elementary special area teachers when taking additional students due to splitting classes
- Fingerprint do-overs- VCS should provide leave time to complete this process. Employees should not bear the cost or responsibility to complete this process.
- Expectations for ED Modified reporting for SF when providing testing accommodations or when participating in an IEP meeting. There are mixed messages and inconsistent expectations across the district.

District Update, cont.

- Multiple ongoing payroll issues
- Clear and consistent consequences for students who record or video their teachers
- Retro on overtime pay for transportation employees
- Multiple issues with Curative

We will provide a detailed update on these issues after we meet with the district.

Employee Evaluations

We have entered the evaluation season and we want to provide a few important reminders.

Instructional Personnel:

Please make sure to include evidence in all components in Domains 1 and 4. Administration should provide evidence in Domains 2 & 3, and you can also add evidence, but it is critical to remember that the VSET handbook states, **no evidence in Domains 1 & 4 will result in an unsatisfactory rating for those components**. You are also able to upload five (5) artifacts to capture components not observed via Walk-Through(s) or Observation(s). This is not a portfolio, and a portfolio is not one artifact.

Support Staff:

Please consider taking advantage of the Year End Self-Assessment tool. This tool (in MyPGS) allows you to highlight contributions and evidence of job performance that might not have been observed by your evaluator. This self-assessment is not mandatory, but we encourage you to consider this opportunity to add your insight into your evaluation.

Trades & Service Personnel:

TSP employees shall be evaluated by their supervisors at least once annually no later than May 22, 2026. According to the handbook, the evaluation is considered the professional judgement of the evaluator. TSPs shall be provided with a conference to acknowledge the evaluation using the MyPGS system. Acknowledgement of the evaluation does not mean that the employee agrees with the evaluation. TSPs have the right to provide a written response at the evaluation conference in the MyPGS evaluation platform within the employee acknowledgment action or submit a written reply within ten (10) work days. The written response shall be signed, dated, and sent to the Office of Employee Performance to be attached to the evaluation record. An overall performance rating of Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory shall result in a conference between the immediate supervisor and the employee to establish a timeline and strategies for improvement. If you receive an overall Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory, please contact the VUE office at 386-238-1605.

Update Your Information



Have you recently moved or changed your phone number? If so, we need you to update your contact information.

Since we have not reached the required 60% membership density in any of the bargaining units, we must participate in a PERC election. VCS will send address information to PERC for all eligible voters. With the implementation of SB 1296 it is critical that your correct address is on file with the district. We also need to have good contact information for our members. Please let us know if your address, phone number, and/or personal email information has changed.



Summer School Positions

VCS is hiring for Summer School. To be considered for employment, teachers must meet the following criteria:

- current VCS certified teacher
- reappointed for the 2026-27 school year
- FL. teaching certificate is current or has been renewed if expiring on June 30, 2026
- temporary teachers (hired on or after 1/6/26) are not eligible
- must be certified in the subject area hired to teach (summer program)

VCS is currently hiring in the following areas:

- Elementary K-6
- Prekindergarten /Primary Education (3 yrs - grade 3)
- Hearing Impaired (K-12)
- Reading (K-12)
- Driver Education Endorsement
- DELAP
- Exceptional Student Education (K-12)
- Middle Grades Integrated Curriculum
- Secondary Subject Areas - (English, Math, Science or Social Studies)
- Speech & Language Impaired (K-12)
- Speech & Language Pathology and SLP Assistant
- Engineering and Technology Education (6-12)
- Visually Impaired (K-12)

For specific Summer Program questions please email esenez@volusia.k12.fl.us or call extension 23349.

Take Action Now!

Being a part of a union means that we are never alone. It means that when times get tough, there is always someone to lean on.

Our brothers and sisters in Palm Beach County need our help. They have not yet settled their contract for the 25-26 school year. They have been at impasse with their district for an extended period of time. They have prevailed at the hearing with the Special Magistrate, however, the members of their school board, are not willing to comply with the recommendation of awarding a 3.5% salary increase to the teachers of Palm Beach County.

The president of Palm Beach County Classroom Teacher's Association is asking for your help. He has asked if union members across the state would click the link below and send the members of the PBC board an email urging them to honor the decision of the Special Magistrate.

We are very familiar with the stress of impasse, so I am asking you to please help our union siblings by sending an email FROM YOUR PERSONAL EMAIL. Just one click could make a huge difference for our union brothers and sisters. Solidarity.

<https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-the-palm-beach-county-school-board-honor-the-special-magistrates-ruling-on-teacher-pay/>



Curative Corner

CURATIVE CORNER

April is Stress Awareness Month

Stress is.. Stressful!
Combat stress with simple, wellness-based tools such as:

- Meditation - purposeful, peaceful, and focused thoughts.
- Movement - even a 10-minute walk can help!
- Journaling - let it all out!
- Food - fuel your body wisely!
- Talk it out with a friend, family member, or a professional.

How can Curative help?
Explore the many stress-reducing resources available through the Curative portal and their programs page at curative.com/programs. This includes **FREE** therapy! (EPO Value Members, you will need a pass for that!)

Need a new PCP?
Try Curative Primary Care Today!
You can schedule an appointment through your Curative member portal!

TELE HEALTH
Available 24/7
Skip the waiting room!
Access through your member portal today!

EPO Value Members
YOU NEED A PASS FOR THAT!

- Doctor appointments - yes, even your primary provider!
- Radiology Centers - you know, for X-rays & the like!
- Surgery? Yep, you need a pass for that too!

Log in to your Curative portal today to ensure you have the passes you need.

NEWS FLASH! - This is also where you can renew **expiring** passes!

You do not need a pass for urgent care or the emergency room.

Need help? Call Curative @ 855-322-8272.

Got the App?
The Curative Health app has landed in the Apple App Store (Android folks, you're next in line!).

Have Curative Concerns?
You have a VCS advocate for that!
Contact Kimberly Atkins @ kmatkins@volusia.k12.fl.us

NOTICE - PRIOR AUTHIS!
While most in-network services with Curative are \$0.00, some may still require a prior authorization. If you are having a procedure, check in with your Care Navigator, who can assist with this process.

Reminder: if you have the EPO Value plan, you will need an active **Curative Pass** for any non-emergent care received.

JOIN THE CURATIVE CORNER TEAMS CHANNEL:

VUE Visits

The VUE staff is hitting the road and working hard to visit every school and worksite in the district before the end of the year. We are scheduling 10-minute meetings to keep you updated and to listen to concerns. Of course, we are working to recruit new members as well.

Please make sure to attend the 10-minute meeting at your school or worksite and **BRING A FRIEND!**

A BIG thanks to Deland High for hosting a fantastic meeting last week. 😊

