



Solidarity Report

"You never know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice."

~Bob Marley

The 2025-26 Year in Review

It is hard to believe that in just a few short days, the 2025-26 school year will come to a close for more than 5,000 support and instructional staff and more than 50,000 students. Although we did not endure any natural disasters this year, and we are extremely thankful, we did endure many manmade issues that created disruptions, frustration, and harm to our members. This year tested our union in ways that none of us could have predicted. However, it also revealed the strength, determination, and grit of the members of VUE.

One of the most significant victories this year was the change in our process for negotiations. This year we committed to **Big, Open, and Transparent** bargaining. When the all call went out, VUE members and supporters from across the county showed up and participated in the process of bargaining their contract. Members packed rooms, asked questions, and gave direction to the bargaining team about the things that matter. This type of engagement is critical because our power increases when YOU, the members of VUE, are informed, involved and united in the work to make things better.

Our unity and power was on display at DAC when **more than 125 VUE members and friends** came together to fight back after VCS declared impasse and only offered a pitiful 1.5% increase to instructional staff. In a moment of power, VUE members stood shoulder to shoulder and shouted "*We Can't Survive On 1.5!*" Our rally was more than just a protest over salaries, it was a statement that the people who made this district an "A", are tired of being undervalued and disrespected.

At the same time, your union has continued to hold the district accountable for the ongoing **failures connected to the implementation of Focus**. It seemed like every month there was a new crisis that was described by VCS as a "glitch" or "error." To us, the failure to provide accurate paychecks, report taxes correctly, and post earned leave according to the contract are more than just glitches. They create hardships for employees, and we should not be expected to absorb the consequences of a system that continues to fail. This is why we are pursuing grievance actions and potential legal options in these areas. Our members have come out strong as they've stood in power during school board meetings to share the stories of how these district failures have impacted their families.

This year also exposed a growing disconnect between appointed and elected leaders and the realities faced by the employees who educate and support students every day. While district leadership continues unveiling grandiose plans to "enhance" district offerings and expand initiatives, they too often turn a blind eye to the basic needs of the employees doing the work.

The clearest example was the school board's failure to place a referendum on the ballot that could have generated more than \$50 million for employee salary enhancements and student programs. At a time when employees are struggling financially and schools are facing decreasing enrollment, refusing to allow voters the opportunity to invest in their neighborhood schools and those who care for their children was deeply disappointing and short-sighted. This is not how democracy works.

However, despite these challenges, this year also demonstrated something powerful: VUE members are engaged, energized, and unwilling to stay silent.

To date, YOU, have recruited **741 new members this year**: 343 Instructional, 128 Support, and 267 TSPs, and the numbers are still growing! We have experienced growth this year at every school, including the alternative ed programs. The top sites for recruitment based upon the potential for growth are:

- Turie T Small Elem - 38%
- Cypress Creek Elem - 33%
- Halifax Behavioral - 33%
- Southwestern MS - 32%
- Coronado Elem - 29%
- River Springs MS - 28%
- Mainland HS - 19%
- Pine Ridge HS - 18%

Recruitment like this does not happen by accident. It occurs when VUE members believe in the power of the collective. When we realize that we are stronger when we are united than we could ever be alone, and when we trust that standing together is more effective than waiting on the boss to suddenly prioritize our needs.

As we look toward the summer months, we hope each of you finds time to rest, recharge, and recover from the demands of an incredibly difficult year. Your VUE staff will continue to advocate for you as we plan and prepare for the upcoming year.

We know that the challenges are sure to continue, but this year proved something important: the strength of VUE comes from our members. Members who refuse to give up and who continue to fight for our students and each other. Which is why we believe in you and that fighting for the things that are right are worth it! Solidarity.



School Board Elections - Be Informed



In August, voters will have the opportunity to elect school board representatives in districts 1, 3, and 5. School board elections are often determined in the primary, which will be held on August 18, 2026. If a runoff is necessary, the election will occur on Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

The candidates who have filed to run for office are:

District 1-Pierson/Deland/Debary: Brenda Beery, Jaclyn Carrell, and Jamie Haynes (incumbent)

District 3 -Port Orange/Southeast Volusia: Grace Kellermeier, Cydney Reagan, and Jessie Thompson (incumbent)

District 5 -Deltona: Ruben Colon (incumbent)

Qualifying to run for office must be completed by June 12, 2026, so it is possible that additional candidates could enter to run for school board office.

If you or your family and friends live in one of the districts above, it is important to educate yourself about the candidates, their experience, and their priorities. It is also important to share information with eligible voters in these districts.

School board members are constitutionally and statutorily tasked with operating, controlling, and supervising all free public schools within their respective county school districts. This includes superintendent oversight, policy making, fiscal management, personnel approval, ensuring student safety and welfare, and property and facility management.

As district employees, tax payers, parents, and voters, we have a responsibility to engage in the election of school board members. We know first hand whether the board is working for the people who put them in office and for the children of our community. Who better to carry the message of what our district needs in order to recruit and retain quality employees, strengthen our schools, and ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed?

I encourage each of you to get involved in the upcoming election. The outcome will determine the future of our profession, our schools, and our communities!

Bargaining Survey

If you have not yet done so, please take a moment to complete this short [survey](#). The responses from the survey will guide the work of the Bargaining Committees and the team. An ALL CALL to form the committees and teams will occur once the state completes the budget.



VUE Leadership Opportunities

Are you interested in taking a more active role in your union? If so, we encourage you to explore a leadership position. VUE has many opportunities for you to share your experience and voice in the decisions that are made for our union. These include membership on a committee, stewardship, or perhaps a seat on the Executive Board.

VUE committees include:

- Bargaining
- Government Relations- GRC
- Membership
- Florida's Young Remarkable Educators - FYRE

There are many schools and worksites that have openings for stewards. Steward positions are determined by the number of employees at a site. We also have a few vacancies on the Executive Board.

If you are interested in joining a committee or becoming a steward or E-board member, please contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.albert@floridaea.org, there is a place for everyone in our union!

Calendar Updates: May, June, & July

May:

Thurs. 5/28 - ER & last day for students and Paraprofessionals
Thurs. 5/28 - **Payday** - All Employees
Fri. 5/29 - Post Planning - Report Card Grades due

June:

Mon. 6/1 - **Payday** - 10 month instructional - multi checks
Mon. 6/1 - Post Planning - Final day 10 month inst.
Mon. 6/8- Thurs. 6/11 -VUE PD (ESOL & Reading/ESE)
Mon. 6/15 - **Payday**- final check 10 month inst.
Tues. 6/30 - **Payday** - final check paras, multi checks. - 11 & 12 month personnel

July:

Thurs. July 30 - **Payday** - 12 month personnel
Mon. July 27 - New Teacher Academy- Mainland

Union Only Benefits

Don't forget to take advantage of your Union Only member benefits this summer. Make sure to check out:

- **MemberAssist** - your personal assistant who will help you with the things you don't have time to do. Click [HERE](#) to sign up today!
- **Union Plus** - learn about travel, legal, home & auto, and so many more benefits available to you by clicking [HERE](#)
- **NEA Member Benefits** - visit the [NEAMB site](#) to view all that is available to you through the National Education Association.



VUE Summer PD- LAST CALL!

There are still a few seats left in our summer ESOL course. This course will provide the curriculum you need to satisfy your annual ESOL requirement in just ONE WEEK! The course is offered at no cost to members. Register TODAY using MyPGS.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Howard at lekita.howard@floridaea.org.

Summer Learning
Communication: An Understanding for English Language Learners
(Formerly entitled ESOL Culture)

June 15—18, 2026 8:30am—3:30pm

Course #12552 Section#118271 Format: F2F

Fun, fun, fun in the summertime! The objective of this course is to immerse teachers in the cultural characteristics that will enhance classroom interactions, increase instructional effectiveness and create a foundation for optimal learning.

In-Service Points
30 Contact Hours
30 Independent Hours
60 Total In-Service Hours

Note: This course is one of the five courses needed to meet the Category 1 ESOL requirement and to obtain the ESOL Endorsement. Non-Vue members will be required to pay a registration fee. Register through MyPGS and contact Dr. Lekita Howard if you have any questions at Lekita.howard@floridaea.org

0% Interest Loan for VUE Members!

Our great friends at Launch Credit Union are once again offering VUE members a 0% interest loan. This year they have made this unbelievable opportunity available before summer break.

If you have unexpected expenses or need a little boost during the summer months, please take advantage of this no interest loan. Please contact a branch near you or apply online today!

We love our partners!

LAUNCH
CREDIT UNION

No INTEREST. All APPRECIATION.

0% Interest Educator's Loan!

- Borrow up to \$750
- 6 Month Maximum Term
- Apply May 1ST – August 31ST, 2026

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 May 1st through August 31st, 2026. 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 A to ZVolusia

Federally insured by the NCUA.

VUE Summer Office Hours

The VUE office will convert to summer hours beginning on Monday, June 1, 2026. The office will be open Monday - Thursday from 7:30 am - 5:30 pm., with the exception of:

- Monday, June 22nd - Juneteenth observance
- Monday, July 6th - Independence Day observance

