



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

RICHMOND

M. KIRKLAND "KIRK" COX
MAJORITY LEADER

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SIXTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
APPROPRIATIONS (VICE CHAIRMAN)
RULES

December 12, 2013

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Virginia General Assembly
Members of the Virginia General Assembly
General Assembly Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell and Members of the General Assembly:

As chairman of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and in accordance with § 22.1-361, *Code of Virginia*, I am pleased to submit an executive summary of the work of the Virginia Council for 2013.

The Virginia Council may consider any and all matters related to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children which seeks to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents. The executive summary provides information regarding the meetings of the Virginia Council, as well as other actions taken during 2013 to disseminate information regarding the Compact to school divisions, military families, and other affected entities.

The Virginia Council is grateful for the support the Governor and General Assembly give to the dependents of military families in the Commonwealth, especially as they transition in and out of our great public schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Kirkland Cox".

Delegate M. Kirkland Cox
Chair, Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact
on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Enclosure

2013

Annual Executive Summary of the
Interim Activity and Work of the

**Virginia Council on the Interstate
Compact on Educational Opportunity
for Military Children**

Presented to
the Governor
and the General Assembly

December 2013

**Members of the
Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact
on Educational Opportunity for Military Children**

as of December 1, 2013

Rear Admiral (Retired) David O. Anderson, Virginia Beach

Dr. William C. Boshier Jr., Distinguished professor of public policy at the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs of Virginia Commonwealth University

Professor Marlena E. Bremseth, Military spouse and mother

Dr. Bobby R. Browder, Superintendent of Prince George County Public Schools

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Virginia House of Delegates (Council Chairman)

The Honorable John C. Miller, Senate of Virginia

Mrs. Tammy Smith, School Liaison, Marine Corps Base Quantico

Dr. Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Statutory Requirements for the Executive Summary

The *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-361 states:

The chairman of the Virginia Council shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Virginia Council no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's Web site.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children was created in 2009 to consider any and all matters related to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The Military Compact seeks to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents. The Compact addresses such issues as timely enrollment and placement, on-time graduation, and sharing of information between states to ensure a smooth transition for dependents of military families as they move in and out of public schools in the Commonwealth.

In nearly every community in Virginia, there are children with parents or guardians on active duty with the armed forces. The average military student faces transition challenges more than twice during high school and most military children will attend six to nine different school systems in their lives from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The Compact therefore seeks to make transition easier for the children of military families so that they are afforded the same opportunities for educational success as other children and are not penalized or delayed in achieving their educational goals.

A continued focus of the Virginia Council in 2013 was providing training for educators and military families on the components of the Compact and resources available to assist military-connected students. The Virginia Council held three meetings in 2013, and has taken on many important issues related to the education of children of military families. The military family education liaison, on behalf of the Virginia Council, participated in numerous professional development events and trainings to spread the word about the Compact and answer questions about its implementation in the Commonwealth. This executive summary provides an overview of the work of the Council in 2013.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children held three public meetings in 2013. The meetings were attended by school liaison officers, school representatives, military officials, educational organizations, Virginia Department of Education (Department) staff, and other members of the public. The meetings are also streamed live on the Department's Web page and recorded for archival purposes. The meetings' agendas have covered a number of issues related to the education of children of military families in the Commonwealth. Additional detail about each meeting is included below:

- *April 10, 2013 Virginia Council Meeting*
Dr. Donna Poland, VDOE specialist, briefed Council members on navigating gifted education and governor's school programs as a military transfer student. Dr. Poland's presentation included the following main points:

Gifted Programs

- Virginia law allows school divisions to establish gifted education policies and procedures according to the needs and interests of the local division.
- School divisions that offer an enriched curriculum and instruction to all students may find that the regular curriculum meets the academic needs of a gifted child.
- Once a family has established residency, they should contact the new school division's gifted coordinator to determine the educational services that best meet the needs of the child based on the division's available service options.

Governor's School Programs

Academic Year Governor's Schools (AYGS) are established as joint schools by Virginia school law and, as such, they are managed by a regional governing board of representatives from the school boards of each participating division.

- Once residency has been established, a family should contact the school division's gifted coordinator regarding the student's interest in a governor's school. If the student has moved to the area after the application deadline, he/she will be allowed to complete an application and submit it to the AYGS director or participating school division coordinator for consideration in the AYGS program.
- If AYGS student selection has already been made, the student's application will be received, reviewed and, if deemed a viable candidate, their name will be placed on a waiting list in accordance with their ranking amongst the other waitlisted applicants.
- School division administration will work with all transferring students to assist in appropriate course placement in either an AYGS program or other high school service options.

Council members noted schools cannot hold open a slot for a student that may or may not come, so transfer student placement depends on space availability in the program or school. Dr. Wright noted that although a child may be gifted in another state or school division, the receiving school may not identify the student as gifted because the student's academic needs are met by the enriched curriculum and instruction offered to all students.

There is an appeals process for families related to gifted programs and governor's schools.

Prince George County Schools highlighted several initiatives underway in schools to assist military-connected children including:

- Student to student mentoring in middle and high schools
- Deployment support groups
- "Soldiers in our School" program, in which soldiers participate in physical education classes with students
- "Wall of Honor" in every school
- Memorial garden to honor military families
- Care packages and pen pals
- Fort Lee quarterly meetings with military leaders
- Fort Lee military and civilian council
- DoDEA Grants which have allowed Prince George to implement more professional development activities, after school tutoring, and intervention services to increase student achievement

The meeting also included a presentation from Melissa Luchau, military family education liaison. Mrs. Luchau discussed the celebrations surrounding April as the "Month of the Military Child," and encouraged school divisions to take time to recognize military families and children in the community.

- *September 19, 2013 Virginia Council Meeting*

Prince William County Schools discussed their initiatives as a military k-12 partner. The following initiatives to assist military-connected children were highlighted:

- Training for all school counselors grades k-12 on the Interstate Compact and unique needs of military-connected children
- Professional school counselor led support groups for students of deployed parents
- Military Pride Clubs and Military Appreciation Events
- Increasing access to Advanced Placement courses through the Virginia Advanced Study Strategies (VASS) grant
- Student to Student Ambassador
- Month of the Military Child Observances
- Military connections through JROTC programs, Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, and the National Museum of the Marine Corps

Jennifer Zinth, of the Education Commission of the States, presented key findings and recommendations of recent reports on assisting children of military families. She also highlighted k-12 policies including:

- Unique identifier for military students
- Open enrollment policies
- Charter school entry requirements
- Allowance for excused absences
- Mandatory training for educators
- Supplemental appropriations

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Mrs. Luchau noted that Virginia is, of course, a member of the Interstate Compact, and that in many cases school divisions are permitted to have such policies (open enrollment, identifier for military student, allowance for excused absences, training for educators), but it is their discretion and not required by the state.

- *December 6, 2012 Virginia Council Meeting*
Chesapeake Public Schools highlighted its initiatives as a military k-12 partner, including:
 - Professional development opportunities for school counselors related to the Interstate Compact
 - Welcome packets, tours, and lunch buddies for new students
 - “Lunch Bunch” where service members join students for lunch
 - Assemblies to honor service members
 - Honor Wall supporting service members
 - Honor Box filled with students’ activities throughout the school year, shared with service members during their deployment or when they return
 - Deployment small groups
 - Service members serving as volunteers in the school and classroom
 - Military student journals
 - Welcome banners
 - “Operation Purple” Camps
 - Stream graduation and student recognitions at school board meetings online
 - Veterans Day tribute video

Chris Dickson, Navy Regional Mid Atlantic school liaison, discussed the partnership between Hampton Roads commanding officers and division superintendents. Each military installation in the Hampton Roads area and all 12 school divisions are represented at an annual meeting where leaders discuss issues facing the military-connected children in their schools. Mr. Dickson highlighted the need for a unique military identifier so that military-connected children can be easily identified and given the appropriate services in school. Mr. Dickson also discussed the results of a survey conducted of Hampton Roads educators. The results of the survey are highlighted below:

- 41% indicated the number one challenge most critical to address is the education of personnel (registrars, counselors, administrators, etc.) on the Interstate Compact
- 35% noted the greatest challenge concerning the Interstate Compact is special education requirements and enrollment procedures
- 65% indicated the most reasonable expectation of school divisions is to provide opportunities to actively engage parents in their children’s education
- 53% noted the most reasonable expectation of military installations is to provide partnership support

Council members noted the word is spreading about the Interstate Compact, but there is a need to quantify how much is known about the Compact and by whom. Delegate Cox suggested devoting time at the next meeting to discuss a communications plan for

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increasing access to information about the Compact. Members also noted they wanted to continue hearing from school divisions about their initiatives to assist military families.

All presentations and meeting materials are available online at www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/va_council/.

Military Family Education Liaison

Pursuant to § 22.1-361, the Department of Education employs a military family education liaison to provide staff support to the Virginia Council and to assist military families and the state in facilitating the implementation of the Compact.

The military family education liaison provides for the coordination among state agencies of government, local education agencies, and military installations concerning the state's participation in, and compliance with, the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. A key function of the position is to assist military families and local education agencies in implementation of the Compact to ensure a smooth academic transition for military children in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The liaison works with families and school divisions to resolve problems related to educational records and enrollment, course placement, graduation requirements, and other important issues. The liaison also serves as a policy consultant on issues related to military transfer students, including drafting guidance documents for distribution to school divisions, maintains communication with school liaison officers, provides training on the Interstate Compact, and maintains the military resources' Web pages.

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Dissemination of Information

Through a variety of mediums, the Department of Education, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has disseminated timely and relevant information related to the education of military children to school divisions, school liaison officers, military organizations and other important stakeholders.

- *Dedicated Web pages* – The Department of Education, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has developed and maintained Web pages dedicated to the Military Compact (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/index.shtml) with resources for military families and educators. The Web pages were given a major facelift in 2013 - coinciding with the Month of the Military Child – to highlight the breadth of resources available. The site features guidance documents to help school divisions interpret key provisions of the Compact and training materials, including printable brochures and guides. The resource pages contain links to pertinent Virginia laws related to the 2013 Annual Executive Summary of the Interim Activity and Work of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

to the education of military children, as well as contact information for school liaisons. A new feature on the Web site highlights best practices of school divisions to assist military-connected children, and provides links to numerous military affiliated organizations for additional resources. The Department has also maintained a Web page dedicated to the Virginia Council which includes the Council's meeting schedule, agendas and minutes from previous meetings, and presentations given at Council meetings.

- *Training Opportunities* – The Department of Education, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has presented information about the Compact and the Virginia Council to hundreds of educators, military families, and other interested stakeholders throughout 2013. Professional development trainings were held for elementary and secondary school counselors in Chesapeake and Virginia Beach. The military family education liaison also attended Virginia College Access Network's annual conference and lead a breakout session on the Compact for high school counselors. School liaisons throughout Virginia frequently provide training on the Interstate Compact to educators in their region as well.
- *Communication with School Liaison Officers* – The military family education liaison is in regular communication with the school liaison officers via e-mail and the quarterly Virginia Council meetings. These communications serve as opportunities to discuss any issues with implementation of the Military Compact and share updated resources. The military family education liaison regularly participates in the Hampton Roads Commanding Officers and Division Superintendents meetings as well.

Partnerships with Other Organizations

The Department of Education, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has partnered with several organizations throughout 2013 to disseminate information about the Military Compact and resources provided by the military family education liaison, identify additional resources that are available to military families, and coordinate the assistance of children of military families.

- *Virginia Operation Military Kids* – The military family education liaison serves on the State Team for Operation Military Kids (OMK) in Virginia. OMK creates state and local community support networks for military youth when military parents are deployed, and delivers a wide range of recreational, social and educational programs for military youth.
- *Virginia Military and Community Connection (VMCC)* – VMCC is an extension of the initial work done by the *Serving Our Services Members (SOS)* Working Group in conjunction with the Office of the First Lady of Virginia. As part of Joining Community Forces, a national initiative launched to build resilience and foster a community network that is both sustainable and relevant, VMCC's purpose is to lead this effort in building a strong connection of all community resources that can support Virginia Military Service and Family Members, Veterans, and Wounded Warriors regardless of the military component they service or where they reside.

- *Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) and the Quality of Life Subcommittee* – Department staff, on behalf of the Virginia Council, attend the quarterly VMAC meetings and participate on the Quality of Life subcommittee. The Quality of Life subcommittee discusses issues such as education, child care, and employment which are important to the quality of life for all military families.
- *Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) Advisory Committee* – the military family education liaison serves on this interagency advisory committee comprised of senior staff from several health and human services agencies in Virginia as well as the Virginia Department of Corrections and the Virginia National Guard. The committee is focused on increasing outreach to military and veteran families.

Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission

The Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission (MIC3) is the national organization that oversees the implementation of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. Each state in the Compact is represented by a Compact commissioner at its annual meeting and subcommittee meetings. The Department of Education, on behalf of the Virginia Council, is in regular communication with MIC3 to disseminate policy information related to the Military Compact. The military family education liaison also works with Commission staff in some cases where a military family’s transfer in or out of Virginia schools needs assistance.

Department staff was unable to attend the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunities for Military Children. Thirty-nine of the forty-six member states attended the Annual Meeting. Issues discussed at the meeting included:

- How to ensure continuity when new state commissioners are appointed
- Compliance with the Interstate Compact, particularly the provisions related to educational program placement
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and transition issues for students with disabilities
- Increasing the training and communications function of the commission.

Hot Issues

Throughout 2013, several issues related to the transition of military-connected students surfaced as reoccurring concerns. The Council will continue to discuss these important issues with its partners, and provide leadership in finding solutions to these challenges.

While professional development opportunities and training on the Interstate Compact continued throughout the year, there is still a need for more training due to high turnover and the range of educators who work with military-connected children. The Council is focusing its efforts on trainings for educators who interact directly with military-connected children - school counselors and teachers.

In 2012, the Virginia Council acknowledged the challenge of identifying military-connected children in Virginia schools, as the enrollment paperwork varies from school division to school division. Identifying these children is important in connecting military-connected children with counselors and services for academic, social, and emotional support. This year, the Council continued its research and discussion on this important issue. A representative from the Education Commission of the States presented research to the Council on six states which have adopted a unique identifier for military-connected children – South Carolina, Texas, Nevada, Maine, Michigan, and Illinois. Council members discussed the benefits, such as accurate provision of services for these children, and drawbacks, such as adding additional records collection requirement for school divisions.

Awarding of verified credit for assessments completed successfully in the sending state also continues to be a big issue for many military families. The Department has issued guidance that if a military-connected student has taken and passed an exit or end-of-course test for graduation or accountability purposes in their sending state, they should be awarded the corresponding verified credit in Virginia and not be required to take the Standards of Learning (SOL) for that course. Despite this guidance, many students are told they must take multiple SOL tests when they transition to Virginia schools. The Council and Department will continue to get information out to school counselors regarding this issue so that counselors know to ask students about any previous assessments taken, and families come to school armed with the pertinent information. Dr. Wright also noted that the Board of Education had proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation that would treat all transfer students the same in terms of acceptance of out-of-state assessments used for accountability purposes. Right now, school divisions can accept out-of-state assessments for military students, but not other students. This revision would result in less confusion for school counselors and would benefit all students.

Conclusion

Throughout 2013, the Virginia Council has taken on many important issues related to the education of children of military families. The Council provided numerous training opportunities to educators and military families on the provisions of the Compact. Additional guidance was given to school personnel and school liaison officers regarding gifted programs and Governor's Schools. The Council also shared best practices of outreach initiatives for military-connected children, and researched hot topics such as a unique military identifier.

In nearly every community in Virginia, there are children with parents or guardians on active duty with the armed forces. While their parents honorably serve our nation and our Commonwealth, we should recognize military children's contributions and celebrate their spirit. The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children is proud to recognize the service of our military servicemen and women, their families and their children.