

2019
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 2019

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

As of November 13, 2019

Dr. James F. Lane,	Compact Commissioner, Council Chairman, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction
Senator Mamie E. Locke,	Hampton, 2 nd District, Virginia Senator 2nd District, Senate Representative
Secretary Carlos Hopkins,	Virginia Secretary of Defense and Veterans Affairs (Governor's Designee)
Mr. Robert Thomas,	House of Delegates Representative, Delegate 28 th District
Mrs. Dorothy McAuliffe,	Former First Lady of Virginia
Captain Joey Frantzen,	USN, Installation Commander, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story (Military Installation Representative)
Dr. Aaron C. Spence,	Superintendent, Virginia Beach City Public Schools
Dr. Dede Bailer,	Coordinator of School Psychology Services, Fairfax County Public Schools
Mr. Brad Williams,	School Counseling Director, Tabb High School, York County Public Schools

Statutory Requirements for the Executive Summary

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

In accordance with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, there is hereby created the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, hereinafter referred to in this section as the "Virginia Council."... 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 website.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Virginia Council) was created in 2009 to consider any and all matters related to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The 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 educational transition for dependents of military families as they move from and to other states.

Virginia is home to some of the nation's largest and most important military installations, so it is not surprising that the Commonwealth's schools educate more military children than most states. As of September 2019, the United States Defense Manpower Data Center estimated that there are 70,060 school age military-associated children of active duty members ranging in age from 5 to 18 residing in Virginia. According to this data, Virginia is home to nearly 10,000 more children than Texas, the next highest State. According to the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) 2018-2019 End of Year military identifier count, public schools in Virginia serve over 80,000 military-connected students. These are students whose parents serve on active duty in the United States Armed Forces, United States Reserve Forces, or in the Virginia National Guard.

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 from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The Compact seeks to make transitions 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.

The continued focus for the Virginia Council in 2019 was identifying the needs of key stakeholders and working to ease the needs of military-connected children in our schools. The Council received feedback during all meetings held. This feedback enabled the Council and the VDOE to better prepare initiatives that will ultimately support professionals and agencies dedicated to easing the transitional challenges of military-connected children across the Commonwealth.

This executive summary provides an overview of the work of the Council in 2019.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Virginia Council held four public meetings in 2019. The meetings were attended by military school liaison officers, school representatives, students, parents, military officials, members of educational organizations, VDOE staff, and other members of the public. The meetings were streamed live on the Department's webpage and recorded for archival purposes. The meetings' agendas covered a number of issues related to the education of children of military families in the Commonwealth. Additional details about the meetings are included below.

- *February 13, 2019, Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

During the February 13, 2019 meeting the Council heard from two speakers, Mrs. Debbie Patch, Naval District Mid-Atlantic Regional School Liaison Officer, and Mr. Christopher St. Jean (Retired Army Colonel), Associate Director and Veterans Liaison, Office of Admissions, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Mrs. Patch provided an overview of the activities of Virginia School Liaison Officers (SLO's), Exceptional Family Member Program Case Managers (EFMP's), Tutor.com, and Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC's). She also highlighted the financial assistance that Virginia schools have received through recent Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) grants, Impact Aide, and from the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI).

Mr. St. Jean provided the Council with a better understanding of current admission practices used at Virginia Polytechnic University and other schools that utilized the Coalition application. The information presented was well received and appreciated by the Council. Mr. St. Jean emphasized that academic rigor and performance in advanced course work were important factors considered by admission reviewers and that course weights and/or GPA's were as likely to affect admissions as they had been previously. Those schools utilizing the Coalition Application were all quite similar in their approach to the application review. Council learned that the application provided ample opportunity for military-connected students to share details concerning the courses they took while in high school. Mr. St. Jean explained that this new process removes a lot of unconscious bias that existed previously.

The Council also voted and approved the addition of seven schools for Purple Star Designation.

Lastly, Mr. Dunham, VDOE's Military Student and Families Specialist, presented on activities out of his office and on matters that the Council wished to know more about during the October 24, 2018, meeting. He presented information on Compact-related interactions with families and schools out of his office, updated Council on implementation of the open enrollment policy in Accomack County, and on the number of federally connected students who would likely benefit from the possible expansion of Compact eligibility.

- *May 8, 2019, Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

During the May 8, 2019 Council meeting Ms. Carol Beville, Educational Specialist, United States Navy Recruiting District Richmond, and Master Chief Wayland, provided a presentation on the eligibility requirements for entering into the United States military. Ms. Beville specifically addressed those items that could impact military service eligibility for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and others who may have medical or cognitive conditions. In summary, Ms. Bevel indicated that having an IEP or graduating with a Virginia Applied Studies Diploma does not necessarily prevent a student from being eligible for service. The presentation also served to provide an overview of possible partnerships with educators to better inform students and staff of occupational pathways offered through service in the United States Military.

Mr. Dunham presented on Compact related engagements with schools, families, partners, and Virginia governmental agencies. He took time to highlight Month of the Military Child celebrations conducted around the Commonwealth and spoke about the presentation given at the recent Virginia Military Advisory Council meeting. Mr. Dunham also provided an overview of [Senate Bill 1249](#) and its sister bill, [House Bill 1623](#), pointing out how remote registration will work to ease the transition challenges military families face, especially those whose students receive special education services. He concluded his presentation by listing those trainings he had conducted and has scheduled for the months of June through August, 2019.

During the public comment period Ms. Christine Stiefel, school liaison officer with Fort Eustis, came forward to address the presentation made on military service eligibility for those with IEP's. She expressed as a parent how her son, a child with multiple disabilities, was approached by a recruiter and told to go off his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) medications. She is concerned that some recruiters are conducting themselves this way. This can be problematic to the student's health and of a great concern to the parents and other caregivers.

During open discussion Ms. Beville responded to the comments made by Ms. Stiefel. She re-emphasized how the military service does not wish to discourage anyone from seeking mental health services. She also re-emphasized how eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis both on the academic side and on the medical side. She appreciated the comments concerning inappropriate conduct by recruiters to suggest students not take their medications to improve their chances of being eligible for service.

- *October 2, 2019, Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

During the October 2, 2019, Council meeting Dr. Jennifer Drake-Patrick, Assistant Professor, Literacy, George Mason University (GMU), College of Education and Human Development, presented an overview of the recently developed online training module designed to educate school personnel and college students on the unique needs of military-connected students, their families, and supports available to assist them. She explained to the Council that the module will be housed on the Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) site <https://ttaonline.org/> and shared how module completion demographics would be tracked.

The Council was pleased with the overview and asked that a walk-through of the module be presented at a future meeting.

Mr. Dunham presented on Compact related engagements with schools, families, partners, and Virginia governmental agencies. He also took time to introduce the newly appointed Air Force School Liaison Officer, Mrs. Tammy Edwards. Ms. Edwards is assigned to serve the families attached to Langley Air Force Base.

The Council then met to vote on Purple Star Designations for schools. During this vote Council approved designation of 103 schools and later approved 20 additional schools following the review of appeals received. The final number of schools receiving the distinction for school year 2019-2020 came to 123.

- *December 19, 2019, Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

During the December 19, 2019, meeting the Council approved the addition of 21 schools for Purple Star Designation. In addition, Council was to discuss and consider the Purple Star timetable. Dr. Dede Bailer withdrew her request that Council consider changes to this window and so no action of the Council was required.

Mr. Dunham presented on Compact related engagements with schools, families, partners, and Virginia governmental agencies. He also took time to recognize the retirement of Mr. John Hammer, Navy School Liaison Officer at Naval Air Station Oceana, and the appointment of Mrs. Debbie Patch as his replacement. Mrs. Patch will vacate her position in the near future. Mr. Dunham then provided updates on the annual business meeting of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission and on proposed legislation for the Virginia 2020 General Assembly session related to the make-up of Council membership.

Council to action approval of a letter in support of legislation to expand Compact provisions to civilian military workers and federal employees serving under title 22 and title 50 orders.

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 Virginia 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, otherwise referred to as the VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist, 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, maintaining communication with school liaison officers, providing training on the Interstate Compact, and maintaining the military resources' webpages. The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist is:

Daniel L. Dunham
Military Student and Family Specialist
101 N.14th Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219
804-225-2157 (office)
Dan.Dunham@doe.virginia.gov

Dissemination of Information

Through a variety of mediums, VDOE, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has provided training, disseminated timely and relevant information related to the education of military children to school divisions, school liaison officers, exceptional family member program case managers, military organizations, and other important stakeholders.

Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps school liaison officers play an invaluable role in sharing information about the Interstate Compact with military families and Virginia educators. School Liaison Officers (SLOs) connect military families with educational opportunities and critical information about state and local school laws, policies, and standards. The SLO's work in partnership with local school divisions and the leaders of military commands and installations to enhance the public school experiences of military children. They equip school division staff with resources and information about the challenges faced by military children while working in partnership with schools and community organizations to raise awareness about the needs of these students. The SLOs promote parental involvement and assist parents, teachers, administrators, and commanders in troubleshooting and finding solutions to education-related problems.

Military Exceptional Family Member Program case managers (EFMP's) serve to support military families who care for family members with individuals who have special needs. These

individuals play a critical role in linking these families to military and community resources that can support the unique needs of these families.

The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist is in regular communication with the SLOs and EFMPs via email, phone, and at the Virginia Council meetings. These regular communications serve as opportunities to discuss issues with implementation of the Interstate Compact, share updated resources, and link families to local and state supports that often times fall outside the scope of the Compact.

The VDOE, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has developed and maintains webpages dedicated to the Military Compact (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/index.shtml), with resources for military families and educators. The site features guidance documents to help school divisions interpret key provisions of the Compact, including printable brochures and guides. The resource pages contain links to pertinent Virginia laws related to the education of military children, as well as contact information for military school liaisons officers. The website highlights best practices of school divisions to assist military-connected children, provides training materials, and contains links to numerous military-affiliated support organizations. The Department has also maintained a webpage dedicated to the Virginia Council that includes the Council's meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes from previous meetings and presentations given at Council meetings.

With resources provided by the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3), VDOE, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has distributed guidance documents to school liaison officers and school divisions that can be used in trainings for school division staff and in meetings with military families. The resources include:

- *Guidance for Military Families with Students in Special Education*, a 16-page document provides information and answers to questions that military families with school-aged children might have about special education programs in Virginia public schools. Topics include enrollment, special education services, parental consent in Virginia, Section 504, dispute resolution, and procedural safeguards.
- *Desk Reference for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children: Compact Rules*, is shared with school liaison officers as they work with educators in implementing the provisions of the Interstate Compact; and
- *Guide for Parents, School Officials and Public Administrators*, provides information to families, military leaders, and educators about the Interstate Compact

The VDOE, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has provided training on the Compact and the Virginia Council to thousands of educators, military families, and other interested stakeholders

since its creation in 2009. The SLOs throughout Virginia frequently provide training on the Interstate Compact to educators in their region as well.

Military Student Identifier

In 2014, the Virginia Council unanimously adopted a statement in support of a military student identifier:

The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children supports the implementation of a military student identifier in Virginia as a means for local school divisions to collect information on military-connected children enrolled in the school division, beginning with the 2015-2016 school year. Further, the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children encourages the use of such data by local, state, and federal entities to enhance the funding and quality of services provided to serve the unique needs of military-connected children residing in the Commonwealth.

The 2015 Virginia General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed, legislation (HB 2373 and SB 1354) to require the “identification of newly enrolled uniformed services-connected students by local school divisions.” School divisions were provided flexibility in how they identify the students and collect the data. The data is collected three times per year, via VDOE’s Student Record Collection. The VDOE communicated with school divisions about implementing the military student identifier through Superintendent’s Memorandums and webinars hosted by the VDOE Office of Educational Information Management. Students are “coded” as either not military connected, active duty connected, or reserve connected.

According to the End of Year Military Identifier Count for SY 2018-2019 there were military connected students in 129 of the 132 school divisions. The Virginia Council and the Virginia Department of Education will continue encouraging school divisions to identify and reach out to the military-connected students in their schools. The identifier serves as an important tool in connecting military-connected children with the counselors, services, and resources for academic, social, and emotional support. The identifier also provides data for becoming eligible for critical funds for schools to further meet the needs of uniformed services-connected students residing in the Commonwealth.

Notables

Throughout 2019, many schools demonstrated a continued interest in the Purple Star Designation program first launched in 2018. This interest continues to serve as a catalyst for the surge in professional development requests on the Compact and serving military-connected students and their families. It continues to strengthen the partnership between schools and military installation school liaison officers. There are now 189 schools, public and private, that hold the distinction of being Purple Star Designated schools. This is a testament to the willingness of schools and their divisions to insure these students and their families remain supported.

The Military Student Support Process Action Team continued to be a valuable resource in 2019. The body helped to add clarity on issues of importance to military families and assisted in the revision of the *Guidance for Military Families with Students in Special Education*, and in the reviews of Purple Star School applications. This group will continue to serve in an advisory capacity to the VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist to improve transitional support of military families.

The Military Student and Family Specialist continues to see an increase in the numbers of calls from military families seeking Special Needs navigation support. The placement of the Military Student and Family Specialist in the Department of Special Education and Student Services has proven to be very beneficial to both schools and military parents.

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. VDOE on behalf of the Virginia Council, is in regular communication with MIC3 to disseminate policy information related to the Military Compact. The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist also works with Commission staff in some cases where a military family's transfer in or out of Virginia schools needs assistance.

The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist attended the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunities for Military Children as Virginia's Commissioner's designee. The Annual Meeting provided valuable opportunities for the VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist to dialogue with other state commissioners / designees about the implementation of the Interstate Compact and on best practices for navigating challenging issues. The Executive Committee of the Commission has formed a National Guard and Reserve work group to explore the unique transitional challenges these families are facing given the nation's increased reliance on National Guard and Reserve Forces to support military operations around the globe. The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist will be tracking the recommendations of this work group in order to prepare the Virginia Council and VDOE on any changes to the Compact that may occur.

Conclusion

Throughout 2019, the Virginia Council took on many important issues related to the education of children of military families. The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist provided numerous training opportunities and resources to educators and military families on the provisions of the Compact. The Purple Star Designation program is now entering its third year. This initiative has been credited with great gains in building awareness and knowledge of the Compact on other supports for military-connected students and their families. The effort to strengthen professional development opportunities is ongoing. The launching of the *Supporting Our Military-Connected Children in School Settings: Moving them from Risk to Resilience* online training module will provide school personnel across Virginia a deeper understanding of what is required to ensure military-connected students' transition to and from the Commonwealth is as seamless as possible.

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 the contributions of military-connect students 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.