

2020
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 2020

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

As of December 17, 2020

Dr. James F. Lane

Compact Commissioner, Council Chairman, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction

Senator Mamie E. Locke

Virginia State Senate, District 2, Senate Representative

Secretary Carlos Hopkins

Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs (Governor's Designee)

Delegate Nancy D. Guy

Virginia House of Delegates, 83rd District, House of Delegates Representative

Dr. Barry C. Brown

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Rear Admiral Charles W. Rock

USN, Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, Military Installation Representative

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Professor, Hampton University, Spouse of Military Veteran

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Retired School Superintendent, Active Duty Military Spouse and Parent, Military Parent Representative of Military Student Support Process Action Team

Ms. Trish Schnabel

Owner/ Board Certified Behavior Analyst, The Learning Ladder ABA, Military Spouse, Military Spouse Representative

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 December 17, 2020, the United States Defense Manpower Data Center estimated that there are 69,038 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’s) 2019-2020 Fall 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 2020 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 2020.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Virginia Council held two public meetings virtually in 2020. The meetings were attended by military school liaison officers, school representatives, students, parents, military officials, VDOE staff, and 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.

- *October 9, 2020 Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

During the October 9, 2020, meeting the Council welcomed seven new members. During the 2020 Virginia General Assembly session, the Governor approved a bill that requires the Council to include a parent of a military-connected student and a spouse of a military service member from members of the VDOE's Military Student Support Process Action Team (MSSPAT).

Dr. James Lane, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Mr. Daniel Dunham, Virginia Military Student and Family Specialist, provided an overview of VDOE's responses to the COVID-19 global epidemic. Mr. Dunham spoke to the challenges related to the hold-stop orders and the challenges of military families in securing childcare. Dr. Lane highlighted the VDOE's Recover, Redesign, Restart 2020 guidance document, and spoke to VDOE's coordinated response to support schools and their reopening. He also shared how schools are working with the logistical challenges resulting in the need for social distancing between students.

Mr. Dunham reported on Compact related cases providing information on those related to SEC. 501, Course Placement, SEC. 4.101, Graduation, and SEC. 3.101, Eligibility for Transfer and Enrollment. He also provided a review of notable interactions outside of the Compact related to enrollment, childcare, Purple Star, homeschooling, and Virginia Virtual Academy. He also provided updates on programs under development that support military-connected children, namely Project Search at NAS Oceana, The Governor's Suicide Challenge, Virginia Signing Day, VDOE's Military Symposium for Military Parents of Students with Special Needs, and the Virginia's Military Student Support Process Action Team (MSSPAT) participation in providing comment to the proposed VDOE redesign of the Virginia Mathematics Pathways. He wrapped up the update by supplying the Council with key takeaways from the national business meeting of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3). Mr. Dunham highlighted the report from the workgroup to investigate the need for Compact eligibility to include National Guard and Reserve forces under Title 15 and Title 32 orders and shared

comments those in attendance made concerning Virginia's expertise in providing support to military families.

The Council approved the Purple Star Designation of 23 public and private schools across the Commonwealth.

- *December 17, 2020 Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

During the December 17, 2020, meeting the Council voted to approve three additional schools for the Purple Star Designation on appeal. The Council also approved Dr. Lane's request that future approvals of Purple Star Designation appeals be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, thus eliminating the need for the Council to approve Purple Star Designation appeals received from schools. Additionally, the Council approved a request by the Council chair, Dr. Lane, to meet twice in 2021; once in April and again in October.

All presentations and meeting materials are available online at [Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children](#).

Military Family Education Liaison

Pursuant to § 22.1-361, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) 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 educational 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 educational 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 and 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 share critical information about state and local school laws, policies, and standards. The SLOs 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's 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 (EFMPs) serve to support military families who care for family members who have special needs. EFMPs 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, telephone, 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 [web pages dedicated to the Military Compact](#), 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, 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 that 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. This document was updated in March 2020;
- *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;
- *Guide for Parents, School Officials and Public Administrators*, provides information to families, military leaders, and educators about the Interstate Compact; and
- *VDOE Modules: Supporting Our Military-Connected Children in School Settings: Moving them from Risk to Resilience Module 1 and Module 2*, provides school staff online professional development on the unique needs of military-connected students and their families.

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.

In November 2020, the VDOE's Office of Family Engagement and Military Student and Families Specialist partnered to provide a Military Families Symposium for military families with students in special education. This online symposium provided attendees with an opportunity to learn more about state level support, self-advocacy, Due Process, the I'm Determined program, Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC), and Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Parent Involvement.

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 2019-2020 there were 75,902 military-connected students in 129 of the 132 school divisions. The Virginia Council and the VDOE 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.

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. The 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 2020 Annual Business Meeting (ABM) of the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunities for Military Children as the Virginia’s Commissioner’s designee. The ABM provided valuable opportunities for the VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist to dialogue with other state commissioners and designees about the implementation of the Interstate Compact and on best practices for navigating challenging issues. During the meeting, Commissioners approved the National Guard and Reserve work group to develop language that will expand Compact eligibility to members of the National Guard and Reserve Forces under titled 32 orders. This is an effort to support families of those service members who have experienced an increase in usage in the last decade to support military operations around the globe.

Conclusion

The year 2020 proved to be unlike any other in history for America. The United States Department of Defense instituted hold-stop orders around the world in an effort to protect service members and their families from the spread of COVID-19. This resulted in a delay for families poised to move during the spring and summer months. In addition, the closing of face-to-face instruction and the move to virtual learning was not without challenges for military-connected families. The VDOE worked quickly to assist schools with these and other challenges.

The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist made sure that military families, military SLOs, and military EFMP coordinators across the Commonwealth were provided specific guidance to help families navigate the changing educational landscape. This guidance paralleled guidance provided by the Department of Defense's Military One Source, VDOE, and the United States Department of Education. The VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist remained in close communication with other state Compact commissioners and state educational agencies. This worked to reduce the impact that the hold-stop order would have on the educational continuity of military-connected students.

Throughout 2020, 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 for serving military-connected students and their families. It continues to strengthen the partnership between schools and military installation school liaison officers. There are now 214 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 2020. The team helped to review Purple Star applications and added additional suggestions for the program's improvement. This group will continue to serve in an advisory capacity to VDOE as it works to improve transitional support of military families.

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 service men and women, their families, and their children.