

2021 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 Virginia General Assembly**

December 2021

*Virginia Department of Education
P. O. Box 2120
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Members of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

as of December 3, 2021

Dr. James F. Lane	Compact Commissioner, Council Chairman Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction
Senator Mamie E. Locke	Hampton, 2nd District, Virginia Senator 2nd District Senate Representative
Secretary Carlos Hopkins	Virginia Secretary of Defense and Veterans Affairs Governor's Designee
Ms. Nancy Guy	Delegate 83rd District House of Delegates Representative
Dr. Barry Brown	Principal, Deep Creek Elementary Chesapeake Public Schools
Rear Admiral Charles Rock	USN, Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Military Installation Representative
Dr. Aaron C. Spence	Superintendent Virginia Beach City Public Schools
Dr. Dede Bailer	Retired School Psychologist Spouse of Military Veteran
Mr. Brad Williams	School Counseling Director, Tabb High School York County Public Schools
Dr. Martha Jallim-Hall	Professor, Spouse of Military Veteran Hampton University

Mr. Mychael Willon

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

Ms. Trish Schnabel

Military Spouse Representative
Owner/Board Certified Behavior Analyst
The Learning Ladder, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

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 3, 2021, 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 five to 18 residing in Virginia. According to this data, Virginia is home to nearly 10,000 more military-associated children than Texas, the next highest state. According to the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) 2021-2022 military identifier fall count, public schools in Virginia serve 76,581 military-connected students. These are students whose parents serve on active duty in the United States Armed Forces, United States Reserve Forces, or the Virginia National Guard.

The average military-associated student faces transition challenges more than twice during high school, and most military-connected 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 2021 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 Virginia Department of Education (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 Virginia Council in 2021.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Virginia Council held two public meetings in 2021. The meeting in April 2021 was held virtually, and the meeting held in November 2021 was held in person. The meetings were attended by military school liaison officers, school representatives, students, parents, military officials, VDOE staff members, and other members of the public. The meetings were streamed live on the Department's YouTube channel 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.

- **April 20, 2021, Virginia Council Virtual Meeting
Richmond, Virginia**

During the April 20, 2021, meeting, the Council heard from Ms. Elaine Haislip, School Counselor and Military Family Point of Contact at Petsworth Elementary School in Gloucester County, Virginia; and Mr. Brendon Sellers and Mr. Brodi Sanford, Petsworth Elementary School students. These individuals shared their personal experiences of being military-connected and/or supporting military-connected students during their transitions.

Mr. Daniel Dunham, Military Student and Families Specialist at VDOE, provided an update on actions by the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) concerning actions to expand Compact eligibility to include students whose parents serve in the National Guard and Reserves while on Title 33 orders, or by order of the Governor. Mr. Dunham explained that VDOE would, if actions were taken by MIC3 Commissioners to require it, add this item to its legislative requests that are forwarded to the Office of the Governor. This would include any action to expand eligibility outside of the language of the Compact.

Mr. Dunham presented on Compact-related engagements with schools, families, partners, and Virginia governmental agencies. He informed the Council of newly appointed school liaison officers and of the appointment of a Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Regional Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) Special Education Liaison. Mr. Dunham provided a membership overview of engagements, trainings, and events received and conducted by his office.

- **November 12, 2021, Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia**

During the November 12, 2021, meeting, the Council heard from Ms. Adrienne Wood, School Counselor at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax County, Virginia; and Ms. Abby Hammond and Ms. Elysa McMillan, students at W.T. Woodson High School. Ms. Wood provided a general overview of how the school works to support military-

connected students and others new to the school. Ms. Hammond and Ms. McMillan both shared their individual experience on supporting the transitions of military-connected students. Both students provided detailed examples of the work going on at W.T. Woodson by the Woodson's Student Ambassador Club and the Operation Patriot Club, and other student lead bodies.

Mr. Dunham presented the Council with the list of 92 schools nominated to receive the SY 2021-2022 Purple Star Designation by the Military Student Support Process Action Team reviewers. The Council then approved the designation of 92 schools; 45 of which received the award for the second time.

Dr. James Lane introduced to the Council the need to consider a policy that would afford Council members the opportunity to attend future Council meetings virtually when they are unable to attend the meetings in person. The Council voted in favor of the adoption of the policy.

Mr. Dunham presented on Compact-related engagements with schools, families, partners, and Virginia governmental agencies. He went on to inform the Council of newly appointed school liaison officers serving in military commands in Virginia. Mr. Dunham provided the Council with an update on the proceeding of the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) of the Military Children's Compact Commission. Mr. Dunham shared that the Chair of the commission recommended that the vote that was to occur regarding the expansion of Compact eligibility to students of National Guard and Reserve Forces on State activated orders and those on Title 32 orders be tabled until the next ABM. Mr. Dunham concluded his presentation by providing the Council with an overview of how Virtual Virginia has worked with newly arriving military-connected students by permitting their enrollment in full-time programs and enrolling in courses that may not be available at their zoned schools.

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

Military Family Education Liaison

Pursuant to the *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-361, the 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 name and contact information of the VDOE Military Student and Family Specialist is:

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Dissemination of Information

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

The 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-connected children. They equip school division staff with resources and information about the challenges faced by military-connected 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 with individuals who have special needs. These

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

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 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](#), 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), the 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* is a 16-page document that provides information and answers to questions that military families with school-age 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*, which provides information to families, military leaders, and educators about the Interstate Compact.
- *VDOE Modules: Supporting Our Military-Connected Children in School Settings: Moving them from Risk to Resilience (Module 1 and Module 2)*, which 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 2021 VDOE's Office of Family Engagement and the VDOE 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, the 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 Memos 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 Military Identifier Fall Count for SY 2021-2022, there were 76,581 military-connected students in Virginia that were enrolled in 131 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.

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 2021 Annual Business Meeting (ABM) of the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunities for Military Children as Virginia's Commissioner's designee. The ABM provided valuable opportunities to dialogue with other state commissioners/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 Title 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 2021, once again, faced challenges as a result of the Nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Military families who experienced a permanent change of station during this year were wrestling with the academic gaps and social-emotional issues their students were exhibiting as a result of not being able to attend face-to-face instruction. As the summer commenced, schools across the State moved quickly to develop strategic plans to address many of the concerns parents had with the effects the past year have had on their students. The Virginia Military and Family Specialist continued to provide support and technical assistance to both individual families and schools during these challenging times.

The Military Student Support Process Action Team continued to be a valuable resource in 2021. The body 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 the VDOE as it works to improve transitional support of military families. Members of this team provided a webinar presentation at the 2021 Virginia School Counseling Association Conference on how to best support 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 and celebrate the contributions of military-connected 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.