



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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June 2, 2025

The Honorable Governor Glenn Youngkin
Office of the Governor PO Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

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

Dear Governor Youngkin and Members of the General Assembly:

I am pleased to submit the enclosed report titled, 2024 Executive Summary of the Interim Activity and Work of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

In accordance with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, 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, pursuant to § 22.1-361 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Please direct questions to Mr. Dan Dunham, Military Student and Families Specialist, at dan.dunham@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Anne Gullickson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Emily Anne Gullickson, M.Ed. J.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

EAG/dd

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE INTERIM ACTIVITY AND
WORK OF THE VIRGINIA COUNCIL ON THE INTERSTATE
COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR
MILITARY CHILDREN**

Pursuant to the *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-361



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MEMBERS OF THE VIRGINIA COUNCIL ON THE INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

As of June 1, 2025

Emily Anne Gullickson,	Compact Commissioner, Council Chairman, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction
Senator Mamie E. Locke,	Hampton, 2 nd District, Virginia Senator 2nd District, Senate Representative
Delegate Jackie Glass,	House of Delegates Representative, Delegate 89th District
Dr. Victor Shandor,	Superintendent, York County Public Schools
Rear Admiral Carl A. Lahti,	USN, Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, (Military Installation Representative Member)
Mrs. Shawnee Edwards-Zollar,	Customer Technical Service Specialist, Afton Chemical, (Citizen Member)
Mrs. Tian Olson,	Military Spouse, Attorney, Education Advocate, Parent of a (Military Child Member)
Mrs. Michelle Norman,	Executive Director and Founder, Partners in PROMISE, (Military Student Support Process Action Team Military Spouse Member)
Mr. Raul Vargas,	President, VARCom Solutions; Founder, CEO, and Chairman, American Latino Veterans Association, (Citizen Member)

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 (the Council) was created in 2009 to consider 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 31, 2023, the United States Defense Manpower Data Center estimated that there are 72,179 school aged military-associated children of active-duty military, Coast Guard, The United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (USPHS), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) members residing in Virginia. According to this data, Virginia is home to nearly 13,419 more of these children than Texas, the next highest State.

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 Council in 2024 was identification and support of the needs of key stakeholders so they can continue the work to ease the needs of military-connected children in our schools. In July 2024, Rear Admiral Carl Lahti replaced Rear Admiral Wesley McCall, having assumed command of Navy Region Mid-Atlantic. In March 2025, Emily Anne Gullickson replaced Lisa Coons as Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Council held two public meetings in 2024. The first meeting was held on April 17, 2024, in person at Old City Hall, in Richmond, Virginia. The meeting was only attended by council members and VDOE staff. Council meetings are streamed live on the Department's YouTube channel and recorded for archival purposes. The April meeting agenda covered several issues related to the education of children of military families in the Commonwealth. Additional details about the meeting are included below.

- ***April 17, 2024, Virginia Council Meeting, Richmond, Virginia***

During the April 17, 2024, meeting the Council was provided an overview of the business conducted at the 2023 annual business meeting (ABM) of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) that was held in Richmond, Virginia on November 8th and 9th, 2023. During this meeting, Mr. Dunham shared with Council that there was an overwhelming appreciation for Virginia's hosting of this ABM followed by a warm welcome provided by Mr. Craig Crenshaw, Virginia Secretary of Defense and Veterans Affairs, Mrs. Aimee Guidera, Virginia Secretary of Education, and Dr. Lisa Coons, Former Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction. Additional items discussed by Council during the April 17, 2024, meeting included numerous items of interest to the Council and on the work of Mr. Daniel Dunham, the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Military Student and Families Specialist. These included:

- Discussion of the concern over the use of the term "diploma" in the titling of Virginia's Applied Studies Diploma: Council member Norman voiced concern over the use of the term "Diploma" that is attached to this document. She shared that it does not reflect the true nature of what is being received, as this document only reflects a completion of a strand of study and does not hold the same weight as a diploma. Dr. Coons shared with the Council that there is currently a major revision underway on accountability, accreditation, and operations in State Board processes. She further shared that the applied studies diploma is in statutory code and so making changes outside of statutory code does have limitations. Dr. Coons communicated that in March, the Board voted to approve work on the School Performance and Support Framework and further explained each of these components. She stated that she would be happy to express the concerns shared with the Board during their next meeting and that VDOE would work to improve transparency regarding the varied diploma types and implications of each towards meeting post-secondary goals.
- Discussion on the recording of student absences related to a military service member parent's pre- and or post-deployment: Council Member Dr. Brown began the discussion on what is required under ESSA around chronic absenteeism and asked if there was any avenue to investigate modifying or adapting reporting

requirements on military-connected students' absences related to those which occurred under Article 5 of the Compact. He expressed concern that these absences may result in a "false positive" for a school division like York County whose military student population is 32% of the overall student population. The discussion concluded with Dr. Coons and Mr. Dunham voicing commitment to share the concerns expressed by the Council with the U.S. Department of Education and MIC3 in the hopes that this leads to changes in the reporting of student absences, especially those when the student is able to make up for the lost time.

- Mr. Dunham provided an update on related work to provide technical expertise and support military-connected students and the military community at large. This included the following topics:

- 2024 Military Signing Day Update.
- Student Ambassador Training 2nd Year Pilot.
- Georgetown University ECHO for Military Student Mental Health.
- Governor's Challenge: New Youth and Family Workgroup.
- Update on General Assembly Bills of Importance to PreK-12 Military-Connected Students.

- ***October 21, 2024, Virginia Council Meeting, Richmond, Virginia***

During the October 21, 2024, meeting, the Council was provided an overview of the business conducted at the 2024 annual business meeting of MIC3 held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on October 15th and 16th, 2024. Of particular importance to the Council was information of a possible dues increase for all states that will be voted on by Commissioners during next year's 2025 annual business meeting. If approved, Virginia's dues per student would increase from \$1.15 per military-connected student to \$1.78 per military-connected student. This rate increase would begin with fiscal year 2027 and continue to climb by 4% per year until FY 2034 ending in a rate of \$2.34 per military-connected student. The Council was also informed of Mr. Dunham's opportunity to highlight Virginia's Council as a best practice and that a case involving a high school senior moving from Florida to Virginia was used as a discussion exemplar during one of the tiered group breakouts. The Council voted to approve Mr. Dunham's moving forward to seek an amendment to Compact rule Sec. 4.103, *Transfers During Senior Year*. This amendment would require that the receiving and sending states each consider the diploma type the student would have earned in the sending state prior to the move.

The Council voted to approve 190 schools for the 2024-2025 Purple Star designation awards. This was the first year where 228 schools have received the award more than once, 41 of which have received the award three times.

Mr. Dunham provided an update on related work to provide technical expertise and support to military-connected students and the military community at large. This included the following topics:

- Introductions of Virginia's Newest Military School Liaison Officers;
- New Canvas Course for Supporting Military-Connected Students and their Families;
- Update on Peer-to-Peer training held for Fairfax County Public School and Arlington County Public Schools; and
- National Purple Star Convening: October 24, 2024.

The next meeting of the Council will take place early Fall of 2025.

MILITARY FAMILY EDUCATION LIAISON

Pursuant to § 22.1-361, 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 Families 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 Families Specialist is:

Daniel L. Dunham
Military Student and Families 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 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 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 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 Families Specialist is in regular communication with the SLOs and EFMPs via email, phone, and at trainings. 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 ([Military Families | Virginia Department of Education](#)), 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. It also contains links to pertinent Virginia laws related to the education of military children, as well as contact information for military school liaisons officers. Additionally, the Purple Star Designation [webpage](#) highlights this best practice and encourages school divisions to apply for this award for the hard work of assisting military-connected children. The page provides details about what the school needs to qualify and provides training modules developed to build awareness of the Interstate Compact on the Educational Opportunity of Military Children and on the unique needs and stressors these students and their families face. The Department has also maintained a webpage dedicated to the [Virginia Council](#) that includes the Council's meeting schedule and agendas from annual meetings and presentations given at the 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 which 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*, a resource 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:*
 - *Virginia Purple Star Educate the Educator Training Modules*, provides school staff online professional development on the Compact and on the unique needs of military-connected students and their families.
 - *Building Awareness of the Social Emotional Impacts of Military Family Transitions*, provides school staff online professional development on the stressors that military families face routinely and provides clarity on how best to support these families during periods of heightened stress.

The following resources specifically designed for military families were added in 2023 to the VDOE Special Education webpage for Families webpage.

- *Military Families of Students Receiving Special Education Services: Things to Know When Moving to Virginia School Systems.*
- *Military Families of Exceptional Family Members – Birth to 5 Years: Things to Know When Moving to Virginia.*
- *Are You a Military Family Relocating to Virginia with a Child Who Has a Disability? Check Out These Helpful Hints and Resources.*
- *Mental Wellness and Trauma-Informed Practices in Military Families (Video).*

TRAININGS

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. On June 14, 2024, The Virginia Military Student and Families Specialist, Fairfax County Public Schools Family Engagement Specialist,

and George Mason University (GMU) held its second training for peer-to-peer student teams and their sponsors. This same training was held for the first time with Arlington County Public Schools on September 25, 2024.

The annual Connect for Success Conference was held on September 12-13, 2024, and for the second year included a presentation by the Navy Regional Mid-Atlantic's Special Education Specialist Ms. Erica Swenson. This year also included Ms. Kate Sommerville who discussed the unique challenges that military-connected students and others who are highly mobile often face and strategies to support them. The VDOE's office of family engagement provides this professional development opportunity to those who work in Parent Resource Centers. This opportunity helps to foster collaboration between the school divisions and military partners.

In addition to the peer-to-peer face to face trainings, the Military Student and Families Specialist has responded to calls from local and national bodies to present on Purple Star programming and the Compact. These included the following.

- Served as a pre-conference facilitator and panelist; Military Child Education Coalition's (MCEC) global Summit in Washington D.C.;
- Presented at two Fairfax County Public Schools staff trainings on the Compact and Virginia laws pertaining to remote registration of military service members. Another such training is being planned for Prince William County Public Schools in December; and
- Presented on the strength of peer-led support programming as a preventative measure for school violence and self-harm during the November ECHO of the second cohort of school mental health for military-connected students.

HIGHLIGHTS

In October 2024, the Council and VDOE announced that 190 schools across Virginia were honored with a Purple Star Designation. To qualify for a Purple Star in Virginia, schools must have a staff point of contact (POC) for military students and families. The POC serves as the primary link between the military family and the school. In addition, schools must meet four measures that help to build awareness within the school community and foster peer transition support.

101 of the 189 schools honored this year were second time recipients of the distinction. This is the sixth year the VDOE has designated Purple Star schools. Since 2018, the VDOE and The Council have selected 791 schools across Virginia for the award of which 489 have maintained the award and 288 have been honored more than once.

The peer-to-peer trainings mentioned in this report show great promise. It is hoped that this opportunity continues and can scale out to other interested school divisions. Anecdotal evidence from student interviews and sponsors indicate that the programming is having an impact on improving student connectedness beyond those of the targeted military student populations.

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.

In 2015, legislation was enacted 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 implementation of 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 VDOE’s 2023-2024 military identifier Spring Count, public schools in Virginia serve 79,604 military-connected students – making Virginia the state with the highest number of military-connected students in the nation. There are military-connected students in 130 of the 133 school divisions (which includes the Virginia School for Deaf and Blind and the Department of Juvenile Justice). The Council and 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 eligibility 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. 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 Families Specialist also works with Commission staff in some cases where a military family’s transfer in or out of Virginia schools needs assistance.

As previously mentioned, Mr. Dunham, as Virginia's Commissioner Designee, attended the MIC3 2024 ABM. During the meeting, Commissioners voted and approved amendments to two policies: #1-2014 Travel and Reimbursement Guidelines and on #3-2020 Operating Reserve.

During the 2024 ABM the MIC3 finance committee recommended increasing dues to keep up with the increases in operational costs of the Commission. **Commissioners from each state were asked to inform their states of this possibility and prepare to vote on the matter during the 2025 ABM.**

CONCLUSION

VDOE, the Council, and the Virginia Military Student and Families Specialist will continue to provide support and technical assistance to both individual families and schools during 2024.

The network that encompasses the Military Student Support Process Action Team (MSSPAT), which includes George Mason University, SLOs and EFMPs continues to be impactful. These partners routinely help to review Purple Star applications, conduct trainings, and provide expertise for support improvements to students, parents, and schools. In the coming year, the Military Student and Families Specialist will be requesting consideration to begin collecting data on the numbers of veteran-connected students. Virginia has many veterans with children being served by Virginia public schools. Although this population is not covered under the Compact, the unique needs of these students are closely linked to those of our military-connected students. Having the ability to know which schools are highly impacted by veterans-connected student enrollment would assist VDOE and the Virginia Department of Veterans and Defense Affairs in supporting their unique needs.

In nearly every community in Virginia, there are children with parents or guardians on active duty, Reserves, National Guard, NOAA or USPHS. While their parents honorably serve our Nation and our Commonwealth, we should recognize the contributions of military-connected students and celebrate their spirit. To this end, VDOE is honored to support the transitional needs of military-connected students and their families.