



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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January 6, 2026

The Honorable Glenn Youngkin
Governor
Patrick Henry Building, Third Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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, 2025 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*.

If you have any questions or require additional information relative to this report, please do not hesitate to contact the Deputy Superintendent of Special Education and Specialized Populations, Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins, at Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov or at (804) 750-8738.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Anne Gullickson".

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

CC: The Honorable Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Virginia Secretary of Education

2025 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE INTERIM ACTIVITY AND WORK OF THE VIRGINIA COUNCIL ON THE INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

Va. Code § 22.1-361



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

As of December 30, 2025

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Ms. 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 H. Glass | House of Delegates Representative, Delegate 89 th District |
| Rear Admiral Stephen Barnett | 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.

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). The Compact seeks to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families by frequent moves and the 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 any other state. As of September 18, 2025, the United States Defense Manpower Data Center estimated that there are 71,293 school-age (between ages 5-18), military-associated children of active-duty military, 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 10,670 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 2025 was identifying and supporting the needs of key stakeholders so they can continue the work to ease the needs of military-connected children in our schools. In September 2024, Rear Admiral Stephen Barnet assumed command of Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, succeeding Rear Admiral Carl Lahiti.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Council held one public meeting in 2025. This in-person meeting was held on October 1, 2025, at Old City Hall, Richmond, Virginia. The meeting was attended by Council members and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff. Council meetings are streamed live on the Department's YouTube channel and recorded for archival purposes. The October 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.

- **October 1, 2025, Virginia Council Meeting, Richmond, Virginia**

During the meeting, the Council was provided with an overview by Council member Mrs. Michelle Norman and her participation in the 2024 Association of Defense Communities Installations Innovation Forum. The report included information shared on learning how Council members stressed the importance of supporting military-connected students with disabilities, spouse participation in government, education, and other civic committees and councils, and on best practices such as Virginia's Purple Star program.

Deputy Superintendent Sam Hollins, on behalf of Superintendent Gullickson, addressed a few critical items for consideration for the upcoming legislative session:

- 1) Recognition of Delegate Sewell's legislative efforts last year to ensure all local divisions prioritize military-connected students with open enrollment and out-of-zone lottery policies for available public seats to give families options on where their child attends school to best meet their needs. This was modified to be permissive, which still limits some military-connected families' abilities to enroll in a school that leads to a more seamless educational experience to the model their child just attended in another state or country. It also creates unnecessary access barriers should a family desire to enroll in a school close to a relative or spouse's place of work.
- 2) Improving transferability of credits for college credit coursework or industry-recognized credentials earned in high school as well as reciprocity for advanced diplomas from other states for military-connected students who move to Virginia to continue their rigorous program of study rather than being forced to pursue a standard diploma to address all other Virginia graduation requirements.

Additionally, Mr. Ben King informed the Council of the Military Order of the Purple Hearts I.M.P.A.C.T. award for high school peer-to-peer program leaders. This award is the first of its kind, and this year, seven students across Virginia were selected for the award.

The Council also voted and approved the selection of 288 Purple Star Awards for schools across Virginia. Of these, 118 were first-time recipients, 78 were second-time recipients, and 92 were third-time recipients.

Lastly, Mr. Daniel Dunham, the VDOE Military Student and Families Specialist, provided an overview of his work on behalf of military students and their families. These included:

- An update on Graduation Rules Amendment;
- An update on VDOE's/GMU's Peer-to-Peer Module training;
- Military Recruiter Student Record Collection Report; and
- An overview of the School Liaison Officer's Meeting held on July 22, 2025.

Military Family Education Liaison

Pursuant to Va. Code § 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 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 the 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) 923-0958 (office)
Dan.Dunham@doe.virginia.gov

Dissemination of Information

Through a variety of methods, 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.

U.S. 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 are 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 (EFMP) case managers serve to support military families who care for family members with individuals 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 Families Specialist is in regular communication with the SLOs and EFMPs via email, phone, and during 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 may be outside the scope of the Compact.

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 liaison 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 during training for school division staff and in meetings with military families. The resources include school liaison officers, exceptional family member program case managers, military organizations, and other important stakeholders.

The resources include:

- [Guidance for Military Families with Students in Special Education](#), a 16-page document which provides information and answers to common 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 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](#) 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 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).

Training

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 13, 2025, the Virginia Military Student and Families Specialist, Fairfax County Public Schools Family Engagement Specialist, and George Mason University (GMU) held its third training for peer-to-peer student teams and their sponsors. This same training was also held for the first time in Prince William County Public Schools on November 4, 2025.

In addition to 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 the Compact, Peer-to-Peer models, and Purple Star. These included:

- Serving as a conference presenter and panelist at the Military Child Education Coalition's (MCEC) Global Summit in SanAntonio, Texas; and
- Presenting on the Compact and Virginia laws pertaining to remote registration of military service members for Fairfax County Public Schools, Prince William County Public Schools, Loudoun County Public Schools, the Virginia Middle School Association, and during multiple community of practice sessions held for Virginia schools by Georgetown University. Community of practices are groups of people who regularly learn from one another because they share the same work and seek to improve and refine their practice. In the educational context, this means teacher, specialists, or administrators who meet over time to talk about challenges, ideas, student outcomes with a focus on improving their practices together.

Highlights

In October 2025, the Council and VDOE announced that 288 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 for military students and families. The point of contact 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. These minimum requirements and additional information related to Purple Start designation can be found on the VDOE [website](#).

Since 2018, VDOE and the Council have selected 1,083 schools across Virginia for the award, of which 298 have earned the award for a second time, and 132 have earned the award for a third time.

The peer-to-peer trainings mentioned in this report show great promise. Anecdotal evidence from student interviews and sponsors indicates that programming is having an impact on improving student connectedness beyond those of the targeted military student populations. 100% of the students surveyed stated they were extremely satisfied with the variety of topics covered and that the information and connections made will help them create a sense of belonging at their school.

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. VDOE communicated with school divisions about implementing the military student identifier through Superintendent’s Memorandums and webinars hosted by VDOE’s Office of Educational Information Management. Students are “coded” as either not military-connected, active duty-connected, or reserve-connected.

According to the VDOE 2024-2025 Military Identifier Spring Count, public schools in Virginia serve 77,764 military-connected students. There are connected students in 130 of the 131 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 counselors, services, and resources for academic, social, and behavioral 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

Virginia is a proud member of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and is committed to the care and education of the children of the men and women of our armed forces.

The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Virginia Council) was formed to assist in easing the transition of the children of military families into school as a result of frequent moves and deployment of their parents. Created by the 2009 General Assembly, Virginia joins other states participating in the compact.

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.

It should be noted that Virginia must prepare for a dues increase beginning with fiscal year 2027, as MIC3 Commissioners voted to approve a Compact Dues increase at the 2025 Annual Business Meeting. Virginia’s current dues of \$69,000 will increase to \$128,419, based on the fact that the number of military-connected school-age students residing in the Commonwealth is at the top of the MIC3 dues level.

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.

The network that encompasses the Military Student Support Process Action Team (MSSPAT), VCU, ODU, GMU, 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 advocating for consideration to be made to begin collecting data on the number 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 veteran-connected student enrollment would assist VDOE and the Virginia Department of Veterans Services 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. This includes local divisions prioritizing military-connected youth in open enrollment and out-of-zone lotteries for available public seats to give families options on where their child attends school to best meet their needs. This also includes improving transferability of credits for college credit coursework or industry-recognized credentials earned in high school as well as reciprocity for advanced diplomas from other states for military-connected students who move to Virginia to continue their rigorous program of study rather than being forced to pursue a standard diploma to address all other Virginia graduation requirements. VDOE will continue to work in partnership with the General Assembly to eliminate access barriers for military-connected families and students. The Virginia Department of Education is also committed to supporting readiness for post-school outcomes and has prioritized enlistment as part of its 3E readiness framework. This may also translate in more resource needs from school divisions, and they continue to offer the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). The VDOE is honored to support the transitional needs of military-connected students and their families.