

Virginia Council for the Interstate Compact on
Educational Opportunity for Military Children
Minutes: September 19, 2013

Council Members in Attendance:

Delegate M. Kirkland Cox, Chair
Mrs. Marlena E. Bremseth
Dr. Bobby R. Browder
Senator John C. Miller
Mrs. Tammy Smith
Dr. Patricia I. Wright

Council Members not in Attendance:

Dr. William C. Bosher, Jr.

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Staff in Attendance:

Melissa Luchau, Military Family Education Liaison

Delegate Cox called the meeting to order and welcomed Council members and guests. He introduced the newest Council member, Mrs. Tammy Smith, who was appointed by the Governor in July. Mrs. Smith serves as the school liaison officer for Marine Corps Base Quantico. Delegate Cox also thanked Senator Miller for his leadership of the Council for the past three years.

The meeting began with a presentation from Prince William County Schools, highlighting their initiatives as a military k-12 partner. Representatives from Prince William County Public Schools included Mr. Timothy Healey, associate superintendent for student learning and accountability; Ms. Rebekah Schlatter, supervisor, secondary counseling and support services; and Ms. Carolyn Custard, director, office of student services. The following initiatives to assist military-connected children were highlighted:

- Training for all school counselors grades k-12 on the Interstate Compact and unique needs of military-connected children
- Professional school counselor led support groups for students of deployed parents
- Military Pride Clubs and Military Appreciation Events
- Increasing access to Advanced Placement courses through the Virginia Advanced Study Strategies (VASS) grant
- Student to Student Ambassador
- Month of the Military Child Observances
- Military connections through JROTC programs, Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, and the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

Senator Miller asked representatives from Prince William how they identify military-connected children. Ms. Schlatter noted they collect information through enrollment forms which are tracked in the Information Management System. She also noted that many military-connected children identify themselves by reaching out to

counselors for support. Delegate Cox asked for more information on the VASS grant and how schools integrate AP programs. Ms. Schlatter noted by increasing enrollment, they are able to increase AP course offerings, which appeals to military families as AP is very transportable.

The meeting continued with a presentation from Jennifer Zinth, of the Education Commission of the States. Ms. Zinth presented key findings and recommendations of recent reports on assisting children of military families. She also highlighted k-12 policies including:

- Unique identifier for military students
- Open enrollment policies
- Charter school entry requirements
- Allowance for excused absences
- Mandatory training for educators
- Supplemental appropriations

Mrs. Bremseth asked how Virginia policies and laws compare to those highlighted in the ECS presentation. Mrs. Melissa Luchau, military family education liaison, noted that Virginia is, of course, a member of the Interstate Compact, and that in many cases school divisions are permitted to have such policies (open enrollment, identifier for military student, allowance for excused absences, training for educators), but it is their discretion and not required by the state. A council member asked what kind of feedback other states have received after implementing the unique identifier requirement. Ms. Zinth provided information from Nevada and Texas that the fiscal impact was none to minimal and there was no opposition in the legislature.

The Council received public comment from three members of the audience:

- Dr. Sally Caradona, Old Dominion University's Center for Educational Partnerships – alerted Council members of federal legislation (H.R. 2933: Helping Military Children Succeed in Schools Act) which will require unique identifiers for military students participating in state accountability tests. Dr. Caradona also spoke about ODU's TEAMS initiative.
- Daniel Dunham, Naval District Washington Regional School Liaison Officer - indicated support for identification of military students so that funds can be better targeted and schools can better serve military students.
- Mr. Chris Dixon, Navy Region Mid Atlantic Regional School Liaison Officer - indicated that six states have adopted a unique identifier for military-connected children – South Carolina, Texas, Nevada, Maine, Michigan, and Illinois.

Council members discussed the issues related to unique identifiers for military students. Dr. Browder noted the benefits of identifying students for the provision of services. Mrs. Bremseth noted her concern that parents may be unwilling to identify as military-connected. Dr. Caradona noted the need for better communication and education as to why the information is needed.

Dr. Wright also noted that the Board of Education is considering revisions to the Standards of Accreditation that would treat all transfer students the same in terms of acceptance of out of state assessments used for accountability purposes. Right now, school divisions can accept out of state assessments for military students, but not other students. This revision would result in less confusion for school counselors and would benefit all students.

Delegate Cox closed the meeting by thanking the Council members and guests. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for Monday, December 9 at 2:00 pm.

The agenda, presentation materials, and video of the meeting can be found at: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/va_council/index.shtml.