

Virginia Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

January 6, 2016

2:00 p.m.

Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building
101 N. 14th Street, Richmond, VA 23219

Minutes

The following Council members were in attendance: Delegate M. Kirkland Cox (Chairman), Jill Gaitens, Dr. John B. Gordon, III, Captain Frank E. Hughlett, Dorothy McAuliffe, Senator John C. Miller, Dr. Aaron C. Spence, Dr. Steven R. Staples, and Brad Williams.

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Delegate Cox called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Delegate Cox welcomed Council members, guests, and acknowledged the presence of Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, and Col. William S. Galbraith, Commander, Joint Base Langley-Eustis.

Approval of the September 29, 2015, Meeting Minutes

Senator Miller made a motion to adopt the September 29, 2015, minutes as drafted. Dr. Spence seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Transitions for Military Students: Through the Eyes of School Counselors

Amanda Yoder and Megan Graman, military-connected school counselors in Virginia Beach Public Schools addressed the Council. Their [presentation](#) is available on the Council's webpage. Ms. Yoder and Ms. Graman described their role, impact, and challenges faced by military-connected students. One of the biggest impacts has been sharing knowledge of the military GI bill and college options for military students. The challenges and possible solutions shared by the counselors include:

1. The acceptance of assessments from sending states for verified credits – many students face challenges when they have not completed assessments in the sending state that can be accepted for verified credit in Virginia, so they are required to take SOL tests for classes taken one, two, three, sometimes four years ago. The counselors suggested increasing the awareness of substitute exams, compiling information on acceptable assessments from other states, and issuing waivers for students required to complete an SOL test from a class taken prior to the previous school year.
2. Government requirement – Virginia is one of the only states to require a year-long government course. The counselors suggested students utilize Virtual Virginia upon their transition.
3. Mid-year transfers – many students are required to transfer before the end of the Virginia school year to a school where the school year has already or is very close to concluding, making the issuance of credit a major challenge. The counselors

- suggested school divisions provide students the opportunity to complete work before their transition, rather than during or after their move. They also encouraged school divisions to waive longer periods of time.
4. Variation of math standards from state to state – the counselors encouraged mathematics teachers to understand there are differences between state standards for mathematics, and the creation of an online program (modules) to fill in knowledge gaps.
 5. In-state college tuition – many students begin the college application process while they are considered “in-state” because their parent is stationed in Virginia, but by the time they attend school, they are no longer considered “in-state” due to new orders for their parents. The counselors suggested requiring colleges to honor the orders of service members at the time of the application, in addition to the orders at the time of enrollment.
 6. Academies/Specialty Programs – application deadlines for specialty programs/magnet schools have often passed by the time military-families move to the school division and the programs are already at capacity, resulting in a lack of equitable opportunities for military-connected students. The counselors suggested divisions hold “highly mobile family spots” for students arriving after the deadline until July 1, upon which the spots are released to wait-listed students. Connecticut was cited as an example of such an accommodation.

Dr. Staples asked if there are materials that the Virginia Department of Education can leverage on a statewide basis to share with military families outside Virginia Beach. Ms. Yoder indicated she is happy to share the materials developed in Virginia Beach.

Dr. Gordon asked about the criteria for waivers for students required to complete an SOL test from a class taken prior to the previous school year. Ms. Graman indicated they would like to see more uniformity. Ms. Yoder indicated the criteria would be up to the Board of Education. Dr. Spence indicated he would support uniformity as well, and this issue is not unique to military-connected students. Dr. Spence reiterated that the policy should be clear about how many years prior the course was taken. He thanked and recognized the

Senator Miller asked how many military-connected students the military-connected school counselors in Virginia Beach are reaching. Ms. Yoder indicated there are approximately 3,000 military students in the schools served by her and Ms. Graman, and approximately 22,000 in the entire division.

Senator Miller also noted that the General Assembly will be discussing possible reduction in SOL tests and elimination of verified credits in the upcoming session.

Mrs. McAuliffe asked the counselors what organizations they partner with to share their information. Ms. Yoder indicated they share their information with the Virginia School Counselors Association, school liaison officers internationally, and the college access network.

Captain Hughlett reiterated the need to capture the wealth of knowledge from the military-connected school counselors as their DOD grant will run out this year.

Ms. Gaitens asked the counselors about their biggest take-away, what actions are sustainable, and what issues need to be further worked on? The counselors indicated the GI bill process needs more attention, and continuing professional development is critical. The counselors also noted the importance of taking AP tests because a score of two can be enough for verified credit.

Mr. Williams indicated that the information shared by the counselors is an accurate reflection of military-connected students' experiences.

Virtual Learning Options in Virginia

Mark Saunders, director for technology and virtual learning, and Rebecca Hawthorne, virtual learning coordinator, addressed the Council. Their [presentation](#) is available on the Council's webpage. The presentation addressed virtual learning options for military-connected students, including Virtual Virginia, multidivision online providers (MOP), and local school division online programs. Virtual learning can be a resource when students transition mid-year or transition to a school division with fewer offerings than their current track.

Captain Hughlett asked if the virtual programs parallel the instruction in traditional classrooms. Mr. Saunders indicated that a division-lead virtual program would be in-line, but a program run by Virtual Virginia or a multidivision online provider may not be in sync.

Dr. Spence asked if there are plans to offer modular lessons for Virginia's government requirement. Mr. Saunders indicated the Department is looking at similar options to a pilot for Algebra I.

Dr. Spence asked about the costs associated with multidivision online providers. Mr. Saunders indicated that the school division would cover costs for a course taken through a MOP, unless a student wanted to take the course at a time it was not offered by the division or ahead of schedule.

Dr. Staples noted that the Department of Education approves virtual programs, but school divisions have flexibility to decide what to accept for credit, and cost is often decided by the division's tuition policy.

Mrs. McAuliffe asked about the utilization of the full-time program pilot and Algebra I pilot. Mr. Saunders noted that the full-time pilot was capped at 100 students, and the Algebra I pilot is in 30 classrooms.

Update on Issues Raised in 2015

Melissa Luchau, military family education liaison, addressed the Council. Her [presentation](#) is available on the Council's webpage.

Mrs. Luchau's report included the following updates:

- The Department's [guidance](#) to school divisions about the acceptance of assessments from other states was reviewed. One challenge has been the inability to issue verified credits for TerraNova tests taken in DODEA schools because there is no cut score associated

with the test. Mr. Luchau indicated that DODEA will be moving to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test, which has a cut score, and can be accepted for verified credit.

- Another challenge has been the access to easy and accurate information about sending states' end-of-course tests and their associated cut scores and content areas. Virginia's Compact Commissioner, Dr. Staples, will be requesting the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) to annually survey state Commissioners to establish and update a clearinghouse of assessment information.
- The Department of Education will be partnering with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Education to study the fidelity of implementation of the Interstate Compact.
- Mrs. Luchau provided a brief update on the military student identifier, and noted that data collected from this identification is not a public record. During the fall 2015 collection, 98 school divisions reported data regarding military-connected students in the division, and 34 school divisions did not report any military-connected students.

Review of the 2015 Executive Summary of the Interim Activity and Work of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Melissa Luchau, military family education liaison, shared a draft of the Council's report. Mrs. McAuliffe asked for an edit to the conclusion of the report to reiterate the need for schools to honor the unique service and sacrifice of military-connected students, in accordance with our responsibilities under the Interstate Compact.

The final [report](#) is available on the Council's webpage.

Public Comment

Delegate Cox opened the floor for public comment.

Mrs. Debbie Patch, Regional School Liaison Officer for Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, addressed the Council. She reiterated the significant impact of the two military-connected school counselors in Virginia Beach, and the importance of sharing their knowledge and experience with other educators. Mrs. McAuliffe asked about the options for renewing the grant or similar grants. Mrs. Gaitens indicated that new DODEA grants will be issued, but staffing is limited to ten percent. Mrs. McAuliffe reiterated the need for professional development for our school counselors and other educators.

Closed Session

Dr. Staples made a motion for the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children to convene in closed session pursuant to Section §2.2-3711(A)(2) of the Code of Virginia to discuss matters that would involve the disclosure of scholastic records of Virginia students, and that Secretary Harvey and his staff, the First Lady and her staff, and Virginia Department of Education staff Melissa Luchau and Chris Fillmore join the Council for the closed session. The motion was seconded by Senator Miller and carried unanimously. The Council went into closed session at 3:40 p.m.

Dr. Staples made a motion that the Council reconvene in open session. The motion was seconded by Senator Miller and carried unanimously. The Council reconvened at 3:55 p.m.

Dr. Staples made a motion that the Council adopt a resolution certifying that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting in which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed session were heard, discussed, or considered by the Virginia Council. The motion was seconded by Senator Miller.

In accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, a roll call vote was conducted:

Dr. John B. Gordon, III: yes
Captain Frank E. Hughlett: abstain
Dorothy McAuliffe: yes
Delegate M. Kirkland Cox: yes
Dr. Steven R. Staples: yes
Senator John C. Miller: yes
Dr. Aaron C. Spence: yes
Jill Gaitens: yes
Brad Williams: yes

Closing Remarks

Delegate Cox adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.