



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

M. KIRKLAND "KIRK" COX
MAJORITY LEADER

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SIXTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
RULES (VICE CHAIRMAN)
APPROPRIATIONS

December 29, 2014

The Honorable Terry McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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

Dear Governor McAuliffe and Members of the General Assembly:

As chairman of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and in accordance with § 22.1-361, *Code of Virginia*, I am pleased to submit an executive summary of the work of the Virginia Council for 2014.

The Virginia Council may consider any and all matters related to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children which seeks to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents. The executive summary provides information regarding the meetings of the Virginia Council, as well as other actions taken during 2014 to disseminate information regarding the Compact to school divisions, military families, and other affected entities.

The Virginia Council is grateful for the support the Governor and General Assembly give to the dependents of military families in the Commonwealth, especially as they transition in and out of our great public schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Kirkland Cox".

Delegate M. Kirkland Cox
Chair, Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact
on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Enclosure

2014

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 General Assembly

December 2014

**Members of the
Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact
on Educational Opportunity for Military Children**

as of December 1, 2014

The Honorable M. Kirkland Cox, Virginia House of Delegates (Council Chairman)

Jill Gaitens, Community Affairs Leader, Military Child Education Coalition

Dr. John B. Gordon, III, Director of Administrative Services, Fredericksburg City Public Schools

Captain Frank E. Hughlett, Commander, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek – Fort Story, U.S. Navy

Dorothy McAuliffe, First Lady of Virginia (Governor’s designee)

The Honorable John C. Miller, Senate of Virginia

Dr. Aaron C. Spence, Superintendent, Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Dr. Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Brad Williams, School Counseling Director, Tabb High School

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.

Given that Virginia is home to some of the nation's largest and most important military installations, it is not surprising that the Commonwealth's schools educate more military children than any other state. As of August 2014, the Defense Manpower Data Center estimated that there are 75,285 school age military-associated children of active duty members in Virginia.

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, therefore, seeks to make transition 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 Virginia Council membership changed drastically in 2014, providing new expertise and experience, additional opportunities to spread the word regarding the Compact, and outreach to new partners. A continued focus of the Council in 2014 was providing training for educators and military families on the components of the Compact and resources available to assist military-connected students. The Virginia Council held three meetings in 2014, and has taken on an advocacy role in supporting initiatives, such as the military student identifier, to better serve military-connected children. The military family education liaison, on behalf of the Virginia Council, participated in numerous professional development events to share information about the Compact and answer questions about its implementation in the Commonwealth. This executive summary provides an overview of the work of the Council in 2014.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children held three public meetings in 2014. The meetings were attended by school liaison officers, school representatives, military officials, educational organizations, Virginia Department of Education (Department) staff, and other members of the public. The meetings are also streamed live on the Department's Web page and recorded for archival purposes. The meetings' agendas have covered a number of issues related to the education of children of military families in the Commonwealth. Additional detail about each meeting is included below:

- *April 29, 2014 Virginia Council Meeting*

The meeting included a presentation from the Virginia National Guard Youth Program about the support network available to guard youth, who would be otherwise disconnected from military support systems. The Virginia National Guard Youth Program provides for youth development and programming, summer camps, referrals, briefings to service members and families, deployment support, and opportunities to build community capacity.

Department staff provided an overview of guidance issued by the Department related to the physical education requirements for transfer students. The guidance noted, in part, that when students transfer to Virginia school divisions in their junior or senior years from schools that require fewer than two credits for health and physical education, local school divisions must waive health and physical education graduation requirements beyond those required of the student's sending school. Thus, a junior or senior transferring from a school that does not require, or only requires one health and physical education credit does not have to take additional health and physical education course(s) to meet graduation requirements.

The military family education liaison also provided the Council with a summary of "Month of the Military Child" celebrations in the Commonwealth.

- *September 15, 2014 Virginia Council Meeting*

Since the Council gained seven new members in August, the meeting began with an overview of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and its implementation in Virginia. The military family education liaison discussed unique aspects of military-connected children, why the Interstate Compact was developed, and key provisions of the Compact, as adopted by the Virginia General Assembly in 2009.

The meeting also included a presentation on impact aid and how it differs from other federal education programs. Members learned about eligibility and funding categories, as well as best practices for receiving the maximum funds a school division is eligible to receive.

At the request of the chair, the military family education liaison provided a presentation on military student identifier policies. The presentation noted what a military student

identifier is, what states have implemented an identifier, how information is collected in those states, benefits of having an identifier, and issues to consider.

Council members discussed the value of identifying military-connected children, if the data should be reported to the Department, and the possible benefit to school divisions in accessing impact aid and grant funding. During the public comment period, school liaison officers spoke in favor of a military student identifier.

- *December 2, 2014 Virginia Council Meeting*
The meeting included a presentation from Stafford County Public Schools on its initiatives to assist military-connected youth. Stafford's military support activities include honor walls, "Month of the Military Child" celebrations including "Purple Up," workshops and training for counselors, principals, and school officials, military appreciation events, deployment groups, and military mail and care packages.

Two military-connected students discussed the impact of military moves on their educational and social experiences. Further, school liaisons from Fort Belvoir and Navy Region Mid Atlantic provided information about the role of the school liaison officer.

Finally, the Council unanimously adopted the following statement in support of the 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.

All presentations and meeting materials are available online at www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/va_council/.

Military Family Education Liaison

Pursuant to § 22.1-361, the Department of Education 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 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' Web pages.

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Dissemination of Information

Through a variety of mediums, the Department, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has disseminated timely and relevant information related to the education of military children to school divisions, school liaison officers, military organizations and other important stakeholders.

- *Dedicated Web pages* – The Department, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has developed and maintained Web pages dedicated to the Military Compact (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/index.shtml) with resources for military families and educators. The site features guidance documents to help school divisions interpret key provisions of the Compact and training materials, 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 school liaisons. The Web site highlights best practices of school divisions to assist military-connected children, and provides links to numerous military-affiliated organizations for additional resources. The Department has also maintained a Web page dedicated to the Virginia Council that includes the Council's meeting schedule, agendas and minutes from previous meetings, and presentations given at Council meetings.
- *Guidance Documents* – The Department of Education, on behalf of the Virginia Council, published several guidance documents in 2014 to aid military families and school divisions in implementation of the Compact and assisting military families.
 - A 16-page document, *Guidance for Military Families with Students in Special Education*, 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.
 - Superintendent's Memo #098-14 provides guidance to school divisions in providing flexibility in health and physical education requirements to facilitate the on-time graduation for all transfer students. When students transfer to Virginia

school divisions in their junior or senior years from schools that require fewer than two credits for health and physical education, local school divisions must waive health and physical education graduation requirements beyond those required of the student's sending school. Thus, a junior or senior transferring from a school that does not require or only requires one health and physical education credit does not have to take additional health and physical education course(s) to meet graduation requirements. While the question of health and physical education requirements for graduation arose due to the frequent transfers of military-connected youth from schools with different requirements, this provision applies to all students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time above the tenth grade, whether from a military family or a non-military family.

- *Training Opportunities* – The Department, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has presented information about the Compact and the Virginia Council to thousands of educators, military families, and other interested stakeholders since its creation in 2009. The military family education liaison provided training on the Compact to educators in Williamsburg, Virginia Beach and Stafford, and discussed the military student identifier issue with education leaders representing all school divisions in the Hampton Roads region. School liaisons throughout Virginia frequently provide training on the Interstate Compact to educators in their region as well.
- *Communication with School Liaison Officers* – The military family education liaison is in regular communication with the school liaison officers via e-mail and the quarterly Virginia Council meetings. These communications serve as opportunities to discuss any issues with implementation of the Military Compact and share updated resources. The military family education liaison regularly participates in the Hampton Roads Commanding Officers and Division Superintendents meetings as well.

Partnerships with Other Organizations

The Department, on behalf of the Virginia Council, has partnered with several organizations throughout 2014 to disseminate information about the Military Compact and resources provided by the military family education liaison, identify additional resources that are available to military families, and coordinate the assistance of children of military families.

- *Virginia Military Youth Network* – The network provides military, government, and community service organizations an opportunity to partner together, building Virginia's capacity to support the children and youth of military families. The purpose of the network is to increase efficiencies by providing a framework for carrying out activities and pulling together resources, to increase impact by creating bigger recognition in our local communities and statewide, and to build member capacity by learning from partner organizations.
- *Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) and the Quality of Life Subcommittee* – Department staff, on behalf of the Virginia Council, attend the VMAC meetings and

participate on the Quality of Life subcommittee. The December 12, 2014, meeting of the VMAC focused on K-12 and postsecondary education, and council members indicated their support for a military student identifier. Department staff will continue to participate in the Quality of Life subcommittee discussions regarding education issues raised by installation commanders.

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 Department, on behalf of the Virginia Council, is in regular communication with MIC3 to disseminate policy information related to the Military Compact. The military family education liaison also works with Commission staff in some cases where a military family's transfer in or out of Virginia schools needs assistance.

The military family education liaison attended the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunities for Military Children as Virginia's commissioner's designee. All fifty states plus the District of Columbia became members of the Interstate Compact by the conclusion of 2014. Forty-two of the fifty-one member states attended the Annual Meeting.

The military family education liaison for Virginia joined the commissioner for Vermont and Florida to lead a presentation on effective state council practices. The Virginia Council was highlighted as a national model for other state councils.

The annual meeting also included:

- Orientation for new State Council representatives to discuss the role of the Interstate Commission and Compact Commissioners, Commission administration and operations, and committee structure and function.
- Commemoration of adoption of the Compact by 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- Reports from ex-officio members – the Department of Defense, the Military Impacted School Association, the Military Child Education Coalition, the National Military Family Association, and the National Network of Legislators in the Military.
- Discussion of developing a strategic plan for the Commission.
- Breakout sessions to discuss hot topics faced by state councils in implementation of the Compact, and share best practices.

Hot Issues

Throughout 2014, several issues related to the transition of military-connected students surfaced as reoccurring topics to address. The Council will continue to discuss these important issues with its partners, and provide leadership in finding solutions to these challenges.

For several years, the Virginia Council has acknowledged the challenge of identifying military-connected children in Virginia schools, since enrollment procedures vary from school division to school division. Identifying these children is important to connecting military-connected children with counselors and services for academic, social, and emotional support.

At its meeting December 2, 2014, the Council unanimously adopted the following 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.

While professional development opportunities and training on the Interstate Compact continued throughout the year, there is still a need for more training due to high turnover and the range of educators who work with military-connected children. The Council is focusing its efforts on trainings for educators who interact directly with military-connected children -- school counselors and teachers. School liaison officers have also noted a lack of formal school division operating procedures to apply the provisions of the Interstate Compact.

Awarding of verified credit for assessments completed successfully in the sending state also continues to be a big issue for many military families. The Department has issued guidance that if military-connected students have taken and passed an exit or end-of-course test for graduation or accountability purposes in their sending states, they should be awarded the corresponding verified credit in Virginia and not be required to take the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment for that course. Despite this guidance, many students are told they must take multiple SOL tests when they transition to Virginia schools. The Council and Department will continue to get information out to school counselors regarding this issue in order that counselors know to ask students about any previous assessments taken, and families come to school armed with the pertinent information.

Conclusion

Throughout 2014, the Virginia Council has taken on many important issues related to the education of children of military families. The Council provided numerous training opportunities to educators and military families on the provisions of the Compact. Additional guidance was given regarding services for students with special education needs, and flexibility in health and

physical education requirements to facilitate on-time graduation. The Council also shared best practices of outreach initiatives for military-connected children, and advocated for a military student identifier in local school divisions.

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 military children's contributions 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 servicemen and women, their families and their children.