



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

M. KIRKLAND "KIRK" COX
MAJORITY LEADER

POST OFFICE BOX 1205
COLONIAL HEIGHTS, VIRGINIA 23834

SIXTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
RULES (VICE CHAIRMAN)
APPROPRIATIONS

January 12, 2016

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 2015.

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 2015 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

2015
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

January 12, 2016

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

as of December 1, 2015

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

Dr. 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.

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 September 2015, the Defense Manpower Data Center estimated that there are 71,655 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 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.

A continued focus for the Virginia Council in 2015 was encouraging school divisions to identify military-connected children in our schools so that they can receive the unique services they need, and schools have reliable data to apply for funding available from the federal government and military organizations. The Council also continued to advocate for training for educators and military families on the components of the Compact and resources available to assist military-connected students.

Virginia Council Meetings

The Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children held two public meetings in 2015, and one public meeting in early 2016. The meetings were attended by school liaison officers, school representatives, military officials, educational organizations, Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff, and other members of the public. When possible, 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 details about each meeting are included below.

- *April 2, 2015 Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

In celebration of April as the Month of the Military Child, the Council participated in a student artwork display and received information about Purple Up day activities across the Commonwealth. Dr. Staples shared a Resolution of Recognition adopted by the Virginia Board of Education commemorating April as the Month of the Military Child, and his memo to division superintendents encouraging their participation in activities to celebrate the month.

Council members heard an update on recent legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly and signed by the Governor to create the military-student identifier (HB 2373 Ramadan and SB 1354 Reeves) and discussed its implementation.

Three students - Zack Butler, a student at Kellam High School; Brooke Chapman, a student at Ocean Lakes Math and Science Academy; and Odyssey Swiatowski, a student at Green Run High School – shared their perspectives as military-connected students with the Council. The main issues discussed by the students included the benefit of programs like Student 2 Student, and the struggles students face with regard to Grade Point Average (GPA) due to varying policies on course weight and different course offerings from division to division and state to state.

A presentation was provided on DoDEA Educational Partnership grants and their impact in Virginia. In Virginia, 11 school divisions have received 23 grants totaling \$24 million since 2009. DoDEA is hoping to grow this grant to reach more schools and divisions.

Virginia Department of Education staff provided an update on the Military Family Support Services offered through the Department.

- *September 29, 2015 Virginia Council Meeting
Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek – Fort Story, Norfolk, Virginia*

Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, addressed the Council and thanked members for their work to support military families. He also recognized the passage and implementation of the military student identifier.

The school counselor specialist for VDOE addressed the Council about challenges students face when they transition to new schools and some of the resources available to school counselors to assist with those transitions. He noted that school divisions have authority regarding grading scales, class rank, course weight, issuance of fractional credits, and block vs. traditional scheduling, all of which can pose significant challenges for military transfer students, especially those that transfer mid-year.

The military family education liaison for VDOE provided an update on implementation of Virginia's military student identifier, which is discussed in greater detail later in this report.

- *January 6, 2016 Virginia Council Meeting
Richmond, Virginia*

Military-connected school counselors in Virginia Beach City Public Schools described their role, impact, and challenges faced by military-connected students. The challenges and possible solutions 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.

The Council also discussed virtual learning options for military-connected students, including Virtual Virginia, multidivision online providers, 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.

The Council discussed the state's guidance to school division about the acceptance of assessments from other states (available at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2011/091-11.shtml).

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

The Council also discussed the data collected as part of the military student identifier. The Council 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 becoming eligible for critical funds for schools to further meet the needs of uniformed services-connected students 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.

Melissa L. Luchau
Military Family Education Liaison
PO Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120
804-225-2924 (office)
Melissa.Luchau@doe.virginia.gov

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.

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. 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. School liaison officers promote parental involvement and assist parents, teachers and administrators and commanders in troubleshooting and finding solutions to education-related problems.

The military family education liaison is in regular communication with the SLOs to discuss issues with implementation of the Interstate Compact and share updated resources.

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.

With resources provided by the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3), the Department, 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:

- 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.
- A *Desk Reference for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children: Compact Rules* was shared with school liaison officers as they work with educators in implementing the provisions of the Interstate Compact.
- A brightly-colored pamphlet, *Guide for Parents, School Officials and Public Administrators*, provides information to families, military leaders and educators about the Interstate Compact – what the Compact covers, and what it does not, etc.

The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) also provided states with posters to promote the Interstate Compact. The posters were distributed to schools with large military populations to welcome military-connected students and make families aware of the Interstate Compact.

The military family education liaison, 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. SLOs throughout Virginia frequently provide training on the Interstate Compact to educators in their region as well.

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 Ramadan and SB 1354 Reeves) to require the "identification of newly enrolled uniformed services-connected students by local school divisions." School divisions were provided flexibility in how they collect the identification data. VDOE communicated with school divisions about implementing the military student identifier through Superintendent's Memos and webinars hosted by the VDOE Office of Educational Information Management. Students are "identified" as either not military connected, active duty connected, or reserve connected.

In total, 98 school divisions reported data regarding military-connected student(s) in the division. Thirty-four school divisions did not report any military-connected students during the fall 2015 data collection period, however this should not necessarily be construed as not serving any military-connected students.

The Virginia Council and the Virginia Department of Education 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 becoming eligible for critical funds for schools to further meet the needs of uniformed services-connected students residing in the Commonwealth.

Top Issues

Throughout 2015, 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.

Professional Development for Educators

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. We often hear from military families that educators are unaware of the Interstate Compact or unsure how to apply the flexibility it provides to school divisions. While Virginia has been a member of the Interstate Compact since 2009, we must continue to ensure it is being implemented with high fidelity.

Many provisions of the Interstate Compact provide for local authority and flexibility, so additional professional development on the Interstate Compact should be focused on educators who interact directly with military-connected children -- school counselors and teachers -- and the school division staff who implement local operating procedures. Some of the issues that continually present challenges are:

- Awarding of verified credit for assessments completed successfully in the sending state - 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 so that counselors know to ask students about any previous assessments taken, and families come to school armed with the pertinent information.
- Waiving of coursework required for graduation when similar work has been completed successfully in the sending state – Too many military transfer students are being told they need to complete unique Virginia coursework, when similar coursework or credit has been completed/issued in the sending state.
- Placement in gifted and specialty programs – The Interstate Compact provides that “the receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational programs based on current educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state or participation/placement in like programs in the sending state.” While the intent of the Interstate Compact is to facilitate the student placement process through which military-connected students are not disadvantaged by variations in attendance requirements, scheduling, sequencing, grading, course content, or assessment, military

families often struggle to have their children placed in gifted programs because they are told the program entrance requirements in Virginia are different than the sending state, and local school divisions have authority with regard to “gifted” education. Families also face challenges when application deadlines for specialty centers are before military-connected families even receive orders to the region, leaving them at a disadvantage for even being considered for acceptance.

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 2015 Annual Meeting of the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunities for Military Children as Virginia’s commissioner’s designee. The Annual Meeting provided valuable opportunities for the military family education liaison to dialogue with commissioners in other states about how the Interstate Compact is implemented, and share best practices for navigating challenging issues. Topics for discussion included MIC3’s strategic framework, challenges for National Guard and Reserve families, best practices when addressing issues related to temporary housing, charter schools, and grade point average (GPA) during transitions, State Council set-up and maintenance, and working with school liaison officers.

Conclusion

Throughout 2015, the Virginia Council has taken on many important issues related to the education of children of military families. The Council provided numerous training opportunities and resources to educators and military families on the provisions of the Compact. Despite progress, more work is needed to ensure that educators and military families alike are aware of the Interstate Compact, and what issues it covers, and what issues it does not address. Ongoing professional development for those working with military-connected students is needed to ensure military-connected students’ transition to and from Virginia is as seamless as possible.

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. Perhaps more importantly we should support and ease their transition in and out of our public schools as we honor their unique service and sacrifice, in accordance with our responsibilities under the Interstate Compact. 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.