

Virginia Council for the Interstate Compact on
Educational Opportunity for Military Children
Minutes
December 2, 2014

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. Steven R. Staples, and Brad Williams. Dr. Aaron C. Spence was unable to attend the meeting.

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

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

Delegate Cox recognized the passing of Dr. William Boshier, Jr., a member of the Virginia Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children from 2010-2014. The Council paused for a moment of silence.

Approval of the September 15, 2014, Meeting Minutes

Mrs. McAuliffe made a motion to adopt the September 15, 2014, minutes as drafted. Dr. Gordon seconded the motion. The Council unanimously approved the September 15, 2014, minutes.

Public Comment

Delegate Cox opened the floor for public comment. There were no speakers during public comment.

Supporting Military Children and Families in Stafford County Public Schools

Dr. Melinda Cruz, supervisor of student services for Stafford County public schools, provided information on Stafford's initiatives to assist military-connected youth in its schools. Stafford County public schools educates close to 3,000 children of active duty military, the majority of which are Marines. 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. Dr. Cruz's presentation is available online at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/va_council/meeting_materials.shtm#dec120214.

Dr. Staples asked about the top issues for educators to know related to military-connected youth. Dr. Cruz noted compliance with the Interstate Compact, the importance of transitional support, and a general awareness of the impact of military service on children.

Perspectives from Military-Connected Youth

Emma McLeod, junior at Hayfield Secondary School, and Christopher Huber, junior at Springfield High School, discussed the impact of military moves on their educational and social experience.

Mr. Huber indicated he is now attending his third high school in three years. He noted benefits of being military-children youth including living in and learning about different cultures, while also pointing out obstacles such as re-proving yourself to teachers and coaches, and meeting new people. Despite the challenges, he said military life was rewarding, adventurous, and gave him a better understanding of the world.

Miss McLeod noted that she communicated with school liaison officers in Fairfax County before her move, to ease the transition back to Virginia from Hawaii. She noted that her current school understands military lifestyle and administrators have made her transition smooth. She noted the difficulty of transitioning from a private school to a public school in terms of the resources available, especially for technology. She also indicated her interest in participating in her school's Student 2 Student organization.

Dr. Gordon asked the students how often they, or friends, encounter issues with credit/course transfers. Mr. Huber noted the most difficulties arise in the transition from public to Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools and vice versa because DoDEA's course offerings are somewhat limited. Miss McLeod noted that quite a few credits were not accepted from Illinois, including state history. Dr. Gordon also asked if the students kept in touch with friends from previous locations, and both indicated yes, especially through social media.

Mrs. McAuliffe welcomed Emma and Chris to Virginia, and thanked them and their families for their service. Mrs. McAuliffe clarified that Chris plans to graduate in 2016, even if his family moves again. She asked Emma about the process of sorting out course equivalency issues. Emma noted that she would start with her counselor, then principal, and the superintendent, if necessary.

Senator Miller asked the students if they feel supported by their schools here in Virginia. Chris noted that he was treated just like any other student, and wish there had been someone to show him around school. Emma noted that she wished educators were more understanding of technology differences when students transition to new schools.

Dr. Staples asked about contacting school liaison officers before the school year to assist with the transition. Emma noted that it was helpful to better understand her options for different schools and the programs they offer. She encouraged Virginia to allow more options for military children to attend different schools.

Mr. Williams asked Chris and Emma about the best thing that could have happened in their first week at a new school. They both noted that it would have been nice to meet and be connected with another military student at the school.

Delegate Cox asked if the Student 2 Student program could help with connecting new students with military-connected youth in their school. Emma indicated that is the purpose of Student 2 Student, but the program is not strong or organized at her school yet. Council members noted the importance of having these types of peer mentoring programs running early in the school year.

Delegate Cox also asked about the transition in athletics programs. Chris noted that he contacted his coach in the summer before the move, and the coach has been very receptive and welcoming, allowing him to play on the JV squad for now.

Understanding the Role of the School Liaison Officer

Megan O'Day and Wendy Sullivan, school liaison officers for U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir, and Debbie Patch, school liaison for Navy Region Mid Atlantic, provided information about the role of the school liaison officer.

Ms. O'Day and Ms. Sullivan noted their efforts to assist families prior to their arrival and in preparation for their departure. The school support services office provides assistance with regards to soldier, family, civilian readiness; installation readiness; community support; and transformation. The school liaison officers create individualized family service plans, and are working in partnership with George Mason University to develop operational procedures for specific educator roles to ease implementation of the Compact and military family transitions.

Ms. Gaitens asked about persistent barriers. Ms. O'Day and Ms. Sullivan noted that peer mentoring is not mandatory, but would provide much assistance in transitioning military families. The military installations are supportive of the programs by providing training, but ultimately the schools have to sustain the programs. The school liaison officers also noted the need for behavioral support through military-connected counselors. Ms. O'Day and Ms. Sullivan also recognized the challenge many military-youth face as seniors because they cannot "beef up" their course load in preparation for college because they are often meeting graduation requirements in a new school division.

Council members asked how school liaison officers are connected with military families. Ms. O'Day and Ms. Sullivan noted that school support services office is included in the in-processing and out-processing checklist military members receive, they provide "newcomers" briefings each month, and are often connected to families through other school liaisons.

Ms. Patch noted the Navy's mission to have the school liaison officer serve as the liaison between the installation commander, military agencies and schools by providing assistance in matters pertaining to student education. She noted that Navy school liaisons provide seven core services: school transition services; deployment support; command, school and community communication; special education system navigation; home school linkage and support; partnership in education; and postsecondary preparations. Ms. Patch also discussed the Joint Military Services School Liaison Committee, a partnership and annual meeting between installation commanders and school superintendents.

Presentations are available online at

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_family/military/va_council/meeting_materials.shtm#dec120214.

Statement regarding the Military Student Identifier

Research on the military student identifier was presented to the Council at its September 15, 2014, meeting. During that meeting Council members discussed the benefits of such a policy. Melissa Luchau, military family education liaison, presented a draft statement of support regarding the military student identifier. An amendment was proposed to note the use of data by local, state, and federal entities.

Mrs. McAuliffe asked Captain Hughlett for his thoughts on the identifier. Cpt. Hughlett expressed his appreciation for bringing this issue to the forefront, and noted the overwhelming support from the military community - installation commanders and school liaisons. He noted the importance of having an identifier to help schools access valuable resources.

Senator Miller indicated that he has asked for legislation regarding a military student identifier.

Dr. Staples indicated the Department's support for enabling school divisions to access resources and tailor services to military-connected youth.

The Council unanimously adopted the following statement:

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.

Presentation of the 2014 Executive Summary of the Interim Activity and Work of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Melissa Luchau presented a draft of the Council's 2014 Executive Summary of the Interim Activity and Work of the Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The annual report is required by the *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-361. No edits were suggested. The final report will be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly before the start of the 2015 General Assembly session.

Open Discussion

Mrs. McAuliffe noted that the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) will be meeting Friday, December 12, and the Council may want to consider issues raised at the VMAC meeting at its 2015 meetings.

Mr. Williams noted the difficulty school divisions have in assessing information regarding other states' end-of-course assessments. He asked if the state could develop a clearinghouse or consolidated list for school divisions to access. Melissa Luchau noted she will contact the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission about this request.

Closing Remarks

Delegate Cox noted that the Council's meeting dates for 2015 will be selected soon and posted on the Department's webpage.

Delegate Cox adjourned the meeting at 4 p.m.

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