

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

September 29, 2015

Medal of Honor Room, Brashear Center
Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story

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. Steven R. Staples, and Brad Williams. Dr. Cheryl R. Woodhouse, Senior Executive Director of Middle Schools for Virginia Beach City Public Schools, attended in place of Dr. Aaron C. Spence.

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Delegate Cox called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Delegate Cox thanked Captain Frank Hughlett, Commander, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek – Fort Story, U.S. Navy, for hosting the Council meeting.

Approval of the April 2, 2015, Meeting Minutes

Senator Miller made a motion to adopt the April 2, 2015, minutes as drafted. Mrs. McAuliffe seconded the motion. The minutes were approved. Dr. Staples abstained as he did not attend the April 2, 2015, meeting.

Remarks from Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs

Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr., Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, thanked the Council members for their work to support military families. Secretary Harvey recognized the passage and implementation of the military student identifier. He thanked the Council members for their leadership and commitment in achieving the identifier, and noted that the data will help Virginia's position as bases are realigned.

Delegate Cox thanked Secretary Harvey for his leadership, and recognized the work of Senator Miller and Mrs. McAuliffe in achieving the military student identifier. Mrs. McAuliffe acknowledged and thanked Secretary Harvey for his public service.

Academic and Career Planning and Positive Outcomes for Military Students

Joseph Wharff, school counselor specialist for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), addressed the Council. Mr. Wharff's [presentation](#) is available online.

Mr. Wharff noted that school counselors primarily work with students in three domains – academic, career, and personal/social. He noted that VDOE is focused on credentialing, which is portable, and moving from clock hour requirements to competency requirements, which will aid military transfer students. Mr. Wharff remarked that grading scales, class rank, course weight, and fractional credits are local school division policies. School divisions also have authority, and

thus variance, in block vs. traditional scheduling. These local policies can present problems for military transfer students coming in mid-year.

He noted that all military transfer students should receive an academic and career plan as soon as they transition, which is also portable if they transition out of Virginia. Programs like the [Virginia Education Wizard](#) are also helpful in building a student's portable portfolio with interests, skills, and career assessments.

Dr. Gordon asked if there is an opportunity to incorporate assessments on a student's plan of study. Mr. Wharff noted that as part of the [Regulations Governing Secondary School Transcripts](#), assessments, such as SAT and ACT, and excluding Standards of Learning (SOL) test scores, are included.

Senator Miller asked about partnerships with Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to make sure we are not duplicating efforts. Mr. Wharff responded that there is a close connection with WIBs.

Dr. Staples noted the importance of a liaison, like Mr. Wharff, for school counselors at VDOE. He also noted that students must be prepared for traditional and alternative post-secondary paths; a four year degree is not the ticket for every student.

Captain Hughlett asked if the Virginia Education Wizard is available to homeschool students. Mr. Wharff responded that anyone anywhere can access the Wizard and create an account.

Mrs. McAuliffe noted that more discussion is needed regarding the autonomy of local school divisions with regard to course credit for transferring students. She also asked if there is a point of contact for families who are experiencing troubles transiting. Dr. Staples noted that the military family education liaison at VDOE is a good resource for many families.

Dr. Staples indicated his desire for a link from VDOE's homepage for military families.

Implementing Virginia's Military Student Identifier

Melissa Luchau, military family education liaison, provided an update on implementation of Virginia's military student identifier. Mrs. Luchau's [presentation](#) is available online.

Mrs. Luchau noted the statutory requirement for VDOE to develop a process for identifying military-connected students. She noted that school divisions were provided flexibility in how they identify the students and collect the data, and that they will report the data via the Student Record Collection three times per year. Mrs. Luchau described the communications – both written and webinars – with school divisions about implementing the military student identifier. She also provided an overview of frequently asked questions during the initial implementation, including if the identifier includes retired military (no), when school divisions are expected to collect the data (effective for the 2015-2016 school year), and how data will be reported (nonidentifiable and aggregate). The first collection of data based on the military student identifier will be available mid-November 2015, and subsequent data will be available in mid-May 2016, and August 2016.

Mrs. McAuliffe asked about the frequency of questions from school divisions. Mrs. Luchau noted she has received about ten questions total from school divisions as they have begun implementing this data collection.

Mrs. McAuliffe asked about outreach to school divisions, in addition to the superintendent's memos. Dr. Staples indicated he discussed the military student identifier in a number of meetings he conducted with superintendents throughout the beginning of the school year, and the initial data in November will inform VDOE as to what school divisions may need additional outreach.

Captain Hughlett noted the need to sensitize military families as to the importance of this data collection. He indicated that communications would be forthcoming alerting families about the military student identifier and encouraging them to participate.

Public Comment

Delegate Cox opened the floor for public comment.

Ms. Donna Worthy addressed the Council with concerns about her children's transition to Virginia. Ms. Worthy noted that her child was required to take nine SOL assessments during her transition to Virginia because her Terra Nova tests from the DoDEA school were not accepted under Virginia policy. While her child's school counselor was great, being required to take assessments from her freshman, sophomore, and junior year took its toll on her daughter. Ms. Hardy noted that assessments should only be going forward, not retroactive, and military students should not be penalized.

Mrs. Debbie Patch, Regional School Liaison Officer for Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, also addressed the Council. She urged the Council to utilize the grant resources provided to school divisions in Hampton Roads, particularly the knowledge gained by two school counselors with a primary focus on military students.

Open Discussion

Mr. Williams noted that the Interstate Compact has helped school counselors address what assessments can be substituted for verified credit, but more work is needed to help local school divisions understand SOL equivalent tests. Right now it is incumbent on school counselors to investigate the sending state's exit/end-of-course tests and the associated cut/passing scores. Mr. Williams suggested the need for a clearinghouse at VDOE of state's assessments.

Mrs. McAuliffe thanked Ms. Worthy for her comments, and noted the opportunity to examine Virginia's SOL policy. She too questioned why we have to go back and measure 9th grade for an incoming junior.

Dr. Staples indicated the need to examine when and how SOL assessments can be waived.

Dr. Gordon noted that as a former high school principal, there is a lot of autonomy as to waiving courses and issuing credit to transfer students. He noted transfers during the senior year are the most difficult, as it is difficult to pass an SOL for a course taken several years prior. He

recommended more education for school counselors about locally awarded credit and the substitute tests for verified credit.

Ms. Worthy thanked the Council members for listening to her concerns and their feedback.

Closing Remarks

Delegate Cox adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

DRAFT