



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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April 27, 2012

Support Our Military Families in School Transitions

The [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#) addresses perceived inequities facing schoolchildren of military parents when they are required to relocate across state lines. Specifically, it allows the laws of the “sending” state to apply to transferring students from military families in the schools of the “receiving” state for such policies as graduation requirements, Advanced Placements (AP) and age of student enrollment.

Kentucky became one of the first states to accept the compact when Gov. Steve Beshear signed it in April 2008. Later that year, Gov. Beshear appointed retired Colonel Mark D. Needham as special assistant to the Governor for BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) Activities. In this role, Needham serves on the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission ([MIC3](#)), which provides direction and resources related to the interstate compact.

As Kentuckians, we should recognize the great sacrifice made by our military families and ensure that their children transition to and from schools in this state with ease. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently sent a letter to all chief state school officers, reminding them of their responsibilities in this area and providing suggestions for local school officials. I’m sharing his letter in this week’s blog posting.

April 25, 2012

Dear Chief State School Officer:

Throughout April, our nation has been celebrating the Month of the Military Child. In recognizing these remarkable children, we are focused on their many achievements and strengths. We are also reminded of the unique challenges they face as military-connected children.

Virtually all school districts educate a child whose parent or guardian is serving in our Armed Forces, whether stationed here or abroad and whether on active duty or in the National Guard or Reserves. Of the more than 1.2 million school-aged children of service men and women, more than 80 percent attend public schools.

One of the key issues facing military families is the frequent transitioning from one installation to the next, from one state to the next. Each of these moves impacts the military-connected child—from kindergarten through high school and even college. This is because oftentimes there are inconsistent school transfer policies that can inhibit a student's academic standing and social integration. Military-connected children with disabilities often face additional challenges.

The data demonstrate that transition challenges are not a one-time occurrence. On average, military-connected children attend six to nine different school systems from kindergarten through 12th grade. We want all military-connected school children to have an equal and fair opportunity for academic success. This requires that those individuals who make up our nation's educational system understand the unique situations the children of our service members experience.

I am writing this letter to share information and ask for your assistance in meeting the needs of military-connected school children. I hope you will help raise awareness with respect to, and provide assistance for, military-connected children and their families in your schools and communities. To be sure, not every military family looks the same, and the support needs will differ. One useful resource in this regard is the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which has been adopted by many states. (See www.mic3.net for Compact language.) This Compact, developed by the Council of State Governments, education experts, and the Department of Defense, addresses common problems that affect military-connected children as a result of frequent moves and deployments. For military-connected children with disabilities, a useful resource is the National Parent Training and Information Center-Specialized Training of Military Parents (STOMP) (www.stompproject.org).

Specifically, I would ask you to encourage your superintendents to:

- Review the Compact and consider whether their policies and procedures are consistent with the guidelines and rules set forth under the Compact;
- Involve teachers, counselors, instructors, coaches, school nurses, administrators, and students in district efforts to better address the needs of military-connected school children;
- Honor and respect the previous academic standing and accomplishments of military-connected children new to a district;
- Be flexible and open to ways to help students transfer earned courses/credits to their new school;
- Enable implementation of individualized education programs (IEPs) as soon as possible and ensure that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided for military-connected children with disabilities;
- Evaluate participation guidelines across the district for extracurricular, after-school, and sports activities to ensure they are welcoming to, and inclusive of, newly arriving students;
- Consider revising other programs or policies that inhibit military-connected children's transition; and

- Share their success stories with respect to implementation of the Compact (if applicable) and services for military-connected children in their districts. This will allow their work to be showcased to other school districts on the Compact's website (www.mic3.net). Please have them e-mail their stories to Charles Boyer (charles.boyer@ed.gov) with a short paragraph describing the impact of the Compact in their communities.

Thank you for your leadership in helping us fulfill our commitments to our service members and their children. When the women and the men in uniform answer the call of duty, their children are also impacted. Although military-connected children can be adaptable and resilient because of their parent's or guardian's experience, they still need and deserve our help. Please work to ensure their future success as they progress to adulthood. Like their parents and guardians, they will, with your assistance, do our nation proud.

Sincerely,
Arne Duncan

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.