

# **Guiding Principles for Addressing the Issues of Transitioning Military Students**

## **Memorandum of Agreement**

### **I. Purpose**

This agreement is designed to facilitate the mutual development of reciprocal practices, conduits for information between systems about requirements, and accelerate the exchange of emerging opportunities. The fundamental architecture of this agreement is to sustain partnerships that serve as extraordinary models. The anticipated outcome will be institutionalized systems for transition predictability of the high school experience for the military connected student. The intent of this Memorandum of Agreement is to immediately address transition problems identified in the United States Army's Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS) data. For the sake of the child, this Memorandum of Agreement is adopted by the signers in a way that models and exemplifies partnership, flexibility, inclusiveness, and information sharing for all schools that serve high school age military students.

### **II. Scope and Memorandum of Agreement Time Table:**

Designed to address transition challenges that are primarily high school connected, the scope of this document and process is to agree on issues that can be immediately solved and to begin implementing those solutions as soon as possible.

### **III. Guiding Principles**

Whereas, military students are faced with numerous transitions during their formative years, and..

Whereas, moves during the High School Years provide special challenges to learning and future achievement, and...

Whereas, there are some 175,000 secondary school-aged students of military personnel, and...

Whereas, the Army's Secondary Education Transition Study revealed that the average military-connected student transitions more than two times during their high school years...

Whereas, the participants of the Secondary Education Transition Study understand that there are many students in schools that face transition

challenges...

Therefore, be it resolved that in the best interest of all students in transition, we the undersigned agree to:

**Improve the Timely Transfer of Records**

*Practices may include:*

1. Developing consistent systems that allow for hand carried or temporary records to be used for placement.
2. With the support of the military installation, cooperating and monitoring jointly the effectiveness and efficiency of in/out-processing (school clearance).
3. Evaluating the processes through a determination of local critical effectiveness measures.

**Develop Systems to Ease Student Transition during the First Two Weeks of Enrollment**

*Practices may include:*

1. Collaboratively developing "virtual" orientation (school and installation Web sites).
2. Creating and implementing combined awareness training of school and appropriate installation staff on the challenges a student faces as the "new kid."
3. Highlighting and monitoring the support systems and practices that increase the likelihood that a quick assimilation will be made.
4. Communicating information about specialized high school programs (e.g.: magnet or special schools admission requirements, timelines and pre-requisites).

**Promote Practices Which Foster Access to Extracurricular Programs**

*Practices may include:*

1. Reviewing local try-out timelines and systems with an eye to the opportunity to increase access and encourage inclusiveness.
2. Encouraging counselors, school coaches, and Youth programs staff to routinely write letters of referral and/or recommendations for students transitioning out of the system.
3. Posting current and accurate information (including calendars of events) on school system and installation Web sites.

**Establish Procedures to Lessen the Adverse Impact of Moves from the**

### **End of Junior Year, as Well as Before, and During the Senior Year**

*Practices may include:*

1. Using counselors and school transition specialists as outreach to students and resources to parents and staff.
2. Encouraging and supporting student networking and sponsorship groups.
3. Giving senior students and their parents additional assistance and support as needed for graduation completion and post-secondary application.

### **Communicate Variations in the School Calendars and Schedules**

*Practices may include:*

1. Collaborating and posting current/accurate calendars and school year events in a manner that is easy for parents to access.
2. Sharing calendar and school year information
3. Defining, explaining, and illustrating the type(s) of high school schedule(s) in-place at each high school.

### **Create and Implement Professional Development Systems**

*Practices may include:*

1. Emphasizing strategies that support attention to individual student needs.
2. Developing, encouraging, and fully supporting joint installation and school professional development communities that share strategies, resources, and effectiveness indicators.
3. Discovering, recognizing, and consider replicating proven practices in sponsorship and peer mentor programs.
4. Ensuring that all professional school staff has the basic information about military life and culture. For example Army Family Team Building (AFTB) or other service modules could be used as a resource for professional development.
5. Developing joint training modules for schools and installation personnel.
6. Teaming school counselors with appropriate installation personnel/resources (chaplains, child and youth services, installation counselors) on the unique social/emotional needs of military students.

### **Continue Strong, Child Centered Partnerships between the Installations and the Supporting School**

*Practices may include:*

1. Connecting Installation School Liaison Officers and the school district counterparts in a working group in order to share ideas about partnership systems.

2. Including senior level military representation from the supported military installation as an ex-officio member or an advisor to the district school board/advisory council.
3. Encouraging site leaders to include an active duty member(s) and/or military spouse(s) as a member of the site based management team (or equivalent organization) of each high school that serves military students.
4. Collaborating with the installation to provide a community orientation program for military families.

### **Provide Information Concerning Graduation Requirements**

*Practices may include:*

1. Communicating high school requirements (enhanced or alternative diplomas).
2. Communicating options and opportunities for earning graduation credit
3. Communicating information about state testing
4. Communicating opportunities available to senior students in transition to graduate from the sending high school through reciprocity.

### **Provide Specialized Services for Transitioning Students When Applying to and Finding Funding for Post Secondary Study**

*Practices may include:*

1. Developing processes to inform parents and students of the best methods for completing college/ vocational-technical application. Specifically highlight resident eligibility requirements and the opportunities and the other challenges for the mobile student.
2. Modeling what should be in a student portfolio.
3. Training counselors and teachers on how to best assist a transitioning student on preparing for college/vocational-technical application.
4. Supporting preparation programs for success on the SAT and ACT.
5. Publicizing scholarships and grants available to all students and those uniquely designed for military connected students.

News

## Local schools renew Army program

### Post and schools vow to work together in helping ease transition for children of military families

By Joseph Cress, Sentinel Reporter November 8, 2007

Last updated: Thursday, November 8, 2007 10:14 AM EST

Being a teenager can be hard enough without a frequent change of address.

Just imagine life as an Army brat, following your parents from one duty assignment to another across the country and world.

In 2002, Carlisle Barracks joined forces with five local school districts to help smooth the transition for military and mobile students.

Top administrators from Carlisle, South Middleton, Cumberland Valley, Big Spring and Mechanicsburg renewed their commitment to the program Wednesday.

All signed a memorandum of agreement through the Military Child Education Coalition and Carlisle Barracks, home of the U.S. Army War College. **Common agreement**

First signed in April 2002, the document states the districts will partner with the post to keep open the lines of communication.

The agreement is similar to those in place at other military installations worldwide, providing a common structure for information sharing.

Jacqueline Schultz-Rowles works as school liaison officer between Carlisle Barracks and the various school districts.

The War College Class of 2008 drew about 400 children to the Carlisle area -- of which about 75 percent live on post, Schultz-Rowles says.

Children of families living on post either enroll in Carlisle Area School District or in private schools.

#### **Advance preparation**

The War College students tend to arrive in the area around July, she says. About seven months before, Schultz-Rowles begins to receive calls from parents and military personnel working with the families and children.

One goal of the agreement is to put families in touch with school staff so arrangements can be made months in advance to carry over participation in advanced placement courses, sports, extra-curricular activities or special education programs.

Mary Kay Durham, superintendent of Carlisle area schools, says this also helps coordinate the placement of students coming from schools that may offer more or less rigorous programs of instruction than the local school districts.

Previously there were no regular meetings between district and post officials, but now there are monthly sessions where representatives of both can talk over concerns, Durham says.

Carlisle Area School District draws the greatest percentage of students whose parents are assigned to the post.

Not all military families coming into our area arrive at the same time. Some youth are children of War College faculty and garrison staff who rotate in and out.

Durham says the agreement helps no matter when orders are issued to families to move.

Schultz-Rowles says one goal of the agreement is to ease the transfer of records between schools by allowing local districts to receive hand-delivered copies.

This enables districts to register students immediately for classes instead of forcing the families to wait up to 10 days before records arrive from other military posts.

#### **All students benefit**

Durham says local school districts benefit by having an annual infusion of young minds and talents who can share their experiences of living in other areas.

The influx of new families into the local school systems offers administrators insight into other methods of education, Durham says.

Retired Army Col. Joe York coordinates the military family programs on post. He thanked the five districts for a great relationship.

Students from military families move three times more often than the average student, he says. "This agreement helps level the playing field."

Deputy Commandant Col. Tom Torrance says about 1,500 students have been helped in the five years since the first agreement was signed.

(+)