

**Testimony Submitted for**  
**Interstate Compact For Educational**  
**Opportunity of Military Children**  
**Joint hearing of the House Education, Intergovernmental Affairs and**  
**Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committees**

Good morning. My name is Patty Sanker and I'm the Superintendent of the South Middleton School District in Cumberland County. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bills No. 2518 and 2566 of Session 2008 that address the formation of an interstate compact on educational opportunities for military children. The South Middleton School District is located less than ten miles from the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle. As a result of this close proximity, the District has been privileged to have many military families locate within the boundaries of the District. Throughout the years, we have successfully worked and transitioned many military children to and from our District.

Because of the District's long affiliation with the U.S. Army War College, six years ago I was approached by Mrs. Marianne Ivany wife of General Robert Ivany, who was the Commandant of the United States War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania to consider entering into a formal memorandum of agreement that basically promises that our District would assist in the transition of the military child to and from our schools. As the mother of four children, Mrs. Ivany was sensitive to the needs of the military child as she and her family had been transferred many times during her husband's career. Mrs. Ivany was successful in her initiative and recruited a total of five school districts in the Carlisle area to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The Big Spring School District in Newville, PA; the Carlisle Area School District in Carlisle, PA; the Cumberland Valley School District in Mechanicsburg, PA; the Mechanicsburg School District in Mechanicsburg, PA; and the South Middleton School District in Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, formally entered into a Memorandum of Agreement at a signing ceremony held at the U.S. Army War College on April 19, 2002. Recently, the five school districts re-signed a new five-year Memorandum of Agreement at a signing ceremony held at the U.S. Army War College.

The Agreement is focused on the academic and school-related needs of military-connected children. Children of active military personnel often face frequent moves or separation from family members. Transitions between schools raise issues such as transferability of student records, course grades, credit hours, and the different test requirements from various states. The MOA attempts to establish partnerships and networks between schools and military installations. The MOA seeks to facilitate the mutual development of reciprocal practices and conduits for information between school systems for transitioning military students. The MOA is designed to address transition challenges for military students that are primarily high school based.

In preparing for my remarks today, I spoke with the school counselors at Boiling Springs High School regarding the types of activities we do everyday for our military children. As I suspected, the counselors stated that basically the practices for the military children are the same that we do for all transfer students.

#### **Prior to the move**

1. Prior to the family moving, the counseling office will send information to families who request items such as educational planning guides, district newsletters, activities pamphlets, etc. Counselors are available by e-mail and phone to answer questions before the family's arrival. Counselors will provide tours and schedule informational meetings with military families who are not sure of the school district to which they choose to move.
2. When a family verifies that they will establish a residence within the school district, the family has the choice of scheduling a registration appointment before the actual move or after – whichever is more convenient.
3. The family is provided with a list of information/documents that will be collected at the appointment. (Immunization records, copy of birth certificate, copies of report cards, etc.)
4. Contact names are provided for extracurricular coaches, music directors, special programs, etc.

#### **Registration appointment**

1. Each family meets with the counselor who will be working with their student. All issues that pertain to the student are discussed at that time.
2. The student's academic, extracurricular, and emotional needs are addressed at the registration appointment.
3. The services that will best assist the individual student are arranged at that time.
4. Much time is spent to match previous course work with the graduation requirements of the student's new school.
5. If the family already knows that they will move again after one year, much time will be spent to create a course schedule that will meet the requirements of the next school's graduation requirements.

6. A building tour is conducted.
7. Students receive a Student Handbook.
8. School operation issues are explained – the bell schedule, cafeteria procedures, cycle days, final exams, resource, etc.

### **School entry**

1. Students/parents are invited to attend an orientation program, if the student arrives during the summer months.
2. Students receive one-to-one help when they arrive during the school year.
3. All students receive a follow-up check by the counselor after attending class for a few days.
4. Military requested senior year stabilization graduation status letters (for juniors) are provided.

### **School Withdrawal**

1. The following types of information may be provided to the receiving school (faxed and/or mailed) and parents may take copies:
  - Immunization/health records
  - Educational Planning Guide
  - School Profile
  - Academic History – including grades at the time of withdrawal
  - Attendance Record
  - Disciplinary Record
  - Student's Class Schedule
  - Testing Information
  - Extracurricular Participation
2. Final exams may be taken at alternative times if the family's move coincides with final exams week. Teachers will calculate grades early, if necessary.

The above list of tasks performed by our school counselors are those that are performed for both children of military families and other students either transferring to or from our school district. The tasks are necessary for all students who enter or transfer from our schools. Since Districts perform basically the same tasks, I question why this normal process needs to be regulated. While we support the military and the commitments of their families, our school district has demonstrated that we work hard to integrate military children into our school district and our communications with districts do not evidence any problems handling the transferring of children. Our voluntary agreements are working. The South Middleton School District would be concerned about entering into any new Compact that may compromise the solid relationships that we currently have with our military families.

Thank you for your time today. I am available for questions.

