



New School Year, New School

by Bennett Leigh

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Sonya Faucette, a service member with Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay, teaches a lesson to children in Ms. Lopez's 3rd grade class at W.T. Sampson Elementary School, a DoD school in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Faucette volunteers her time at the school and is pursuing a degree in elementary education. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Blair Heusdens

Statistics show that military children typically move six to nine times during their K-12 school years. Many students end up moving a few times during high school—even during their senior year.

Not only do these students have to start over socially at each new school, but academic standards, courses, access to programs, promotion and graduation requirements, programs for children with special needs, and the transfer and acceptance of records vary greatly from state to state and even from school to school. And dealing with a parent who is deployed overseas adds yet another dimension of anxiety for many of these students.

Many initiatives and programs have been formed and implemented to help military students deal with their own set of issues, from academic to social and even family life. And parents can better equip themselves to help their children deal with the constant moves that are part of the military lifestyle.

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, developed with the Department of Defense and the Council of State Governments' (CSG) National Center for Interstate Compacts, addresses the key issues encountered by military families: eligibility, enrollment, placement and graduation. In addition, the compact provides for a detailed governance structure at both the state and national levels with built-in enforcement and compliance mechanisms.

Each participating state must adopt the Compact through legislation. As of press time, according to the CSG, 24 states have enacted the Compact while 10 have introduced the legislation and five states have passed the Compact in one of their legislative chambers. For more information on the Compact, visit the Military Impacted Schools Association at www.militarystudent.org.

The Military Child Education Coalition offers an Education Resource Center on its website. The Center is a compilation of resources in one location for all fifty states, DoDEA, and Washington, D.C. It provides information about state school requirements and resources by each individual state, or you can identify specific resource areas that you wish to research in one or more states. Resource areas include assessment testing, curriculum and state standards, and information on virtual schools and home-schooling. Visit www.militarychild.org for more information. ●

New Student Checklists

courtesy of the
Military Child Education Coalition,
www.militarychild.org; CFC#10261

Checklist for Parents/Students Entering a New School

Before arriving at your new assignment:

- contact your new school district
- check the Internet to see if the school district has a web site
- ask for general information about the school district
- ask for information about what school your child will be attending
- ask for a copy of the school calendar
- check to see if you can register your child prior to arriving at your new assignment
- register on-line through the school district web site
- register with forms that the district sends you
- ask the school district what they do if you arrive at your new assignment and do not have a permanent address yet
- will the school district register your child and place him/her in a school immediately
- once you have a permanent address, will you have to move your child or can your child stay at the same school for your entire assignment
- what can you take care of prior to arriving at your new school
- do you need any physical examinations or immunizations

Specific questions about the school programs:

- what is the relationship between the school district and the local military installation
- is your School Board and leadership team dedicated to quality education
- what is your parent participation in the educational process
- do you have clearly defined and measured learning standards
- what are the elements of a quality instructional program
- what is your accreditation level—state or regional—and is this for all of your schools

- do you have a comprehensive set of educational options for students with disabilities and special needs
- what are your district test scores
- what is your average class size
- do you have differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners - regardless of their learning style
- how do you develop productive, good citizens
- how do you use technology—to drill students or to enhance instruction
- do you offer a high ability learner program
- do you offer a special education program
- do you have remedial programs for students who do not qualify for special education
- do you have counselors available for all grade levels
- do you offer a summer school program
- how safe are your schools
- what do your facilities look like
- are they handicap accessible
- are they clean and up-to-date
- is transportation available



Education Secretary Arne Duncan with students at Montclair Elementary School in Denver, Colo.
AEA photo

Elementary

- what is the entrance age for children in kindergarten
- do you have full-day kindergarten
- do you offer a developmentally appropriate early childhood program (i.e. hands-on approach to learning)

Secondary

- is the school on block or traditional scheduling
- what is the grading scale (4 point or 5 point)
- what are the graduation requirements
- is there a state-mandated test for students
- is there a state-mandated class, such as state history
- do you offer: JROTC, Advanced Placement (AP) classes or vocational education
- what is the policy on a new

- student becoming valedictorian/salutatorian
- how does a child participate in programs that have early tryouts, to include cheerleading, choral groups, sports teams, etc.
- does the school hold any positions so that students can try out late, if starting in the fall
- does the school accept videotaped auditions
- ask about specific programs of interest for your child
- do you provide any test preparation programs for ACT/SAT

Hand-carry the following information for each child:

- birth certificate
- social security number
- child's military ID card
- immunization records
- report cards
- copy of school transcript
- IEPs for students with special needs

Tips for Parents to Foster Connectedness

1. Model respectful, cooperative, positive behavior in your everyday interactions.
2. Participate in school events.
3. Show interest. Be involved in your child's academic activities.
4. Maintain regular contact with your child's teacher.
5. Monitor your child's homework completion and work with him/her on homework assignments that involve family participation.
6. Be present when things go wrong.
7. Know your child's friends, and their parents.
8. Ask school leaders what you can do to support them.
9. Volunteer at school.
10. Nominate effective school leaders for local awards. ●

Courtesy Johns Hopkins
University Military Child Initiative
www.jhsph.edu/mci