

Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children
August 26, 2014 Meeting Minutes
Fort Harrison, Helena

Attendance

Board Members: State Superintendent Denise Juneau, Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Harold Stearns, Mark Beckman, Senator Ed Buttrey, Major Renea Dorvall, Superintendent Tammy Lacey, Representative Jean Price

Board Members Absent: Master Sergeant Benjamin Aylward

OPI Staff: Madalyn Quinlan, Amy Kruse

Invited Guests: Pete Donovan, Executive Director (Montana Board of Public Education); Sara Cease, Lead Child & Youth Program Coordinator (Montana National Guard)

Call to order

State Superintendent Juneau called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions - State Superintendent Juneau

Superintendent Juneau welcomed members of the council and the audience. Members of the Council and the public introduced themselves.

State Superintendent Juneau started the meeting by congratulating Major Renea Dorvall on her recent promotion to Commander of the 190th Combat Service Support Battalion. Dorvall's installation marks the first time that a female has been appointed commander of one of the four deployable Montana Army National Guard battalions.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Superintendent Lacey moved to adopt the minutes of the April 24, 2014 meeting. Representative Price seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Nomination of Dawn Beal, Community Readiness Consultant, Malmstrom AFB to Serve as the Military Family Liaison for the Council – Superintendent Lacey

Dawn Beal was unable to attend. Superintendent Lacey stated that Ms. Beal served in an ex-officio capacity on the school board in Great Falls before serving as the Community Readiness consultant and school liaison at Malmstrom. She has been instrumental at connecting the Great Falls Public Schools with the military families in the community.

Motion: Superintendent Lacey moved to nominate Dawn Beal as a non-voting member of the council, filling the role of the Military Family Liaison. Mark Beckman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Plans for the Upcoming School Year – Madalyn Quinlan

Ms. Quinlan thanked Major Dorvall and BG (Ret.) Stearns for helping to present the annual report of the council to the Education and Local Government Interim committee and expressing the need to sustain the services of the council.

1. Presentation to the Fall Conference of the Montana Association of School Superintendents: Superintendent Lacey and BG (Ret.) Stearns will present the role of the council at the Fall

Conference of the Montana Association of School Superintendents. As well as sharing information on the goals of the Compact to remove barriers to educational success imposed on military families, administrators also need to understand how the change in the AIM system could impact them.

2. Implementation of an Indicator for Military-Connected Children in the Statewide Student Information System: The Military-Connected Status field has been added to the Achievement in Montana (AIM) system.
3. Development of an Information Sheet for the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children: Superintendent Lacey will draft the Council's information sheet. The information will be educational to both parents, including a flow chart, and school districts. The goal is to have a draft by the September 15th MASS Fall Conference. Mark Beckman questioned whether the sheet will include information for potential military-connected families, such as issues with basic training schedules.

Madalyn Quinlan reminded the council that all council-pertinent materials are on the OPI website. Superintendent Juneau suggested a webinar on the material that will be presented to the administrators.

MTNG Leadership Welcome – Colonel Scott Smith, MTNG Public Affairs Officer

BG (Ret.) Stearns introduced Colonel Scott Smith. Colonel Smith stated his appreciation for the efforts of the council, expressing the unique stresses on military families in Montana due to the large distances and small populations. A service member's commander may live in Billings and his 1st sergeant in Kalispell so the family is relied upon to communicate how the service member is doing.

Colonel Smith stated there will be considerable changes coming to basic training locations. Split training is encouraged for high school students as basic training, with travel and processing time, is approximately 3 months. Athletes may have to miss the first game. Recruiters need to communicate with the coaches before students leave to basic training. Approximately 450-500 students/year are recruited. Mark Beckman reminded the council that permissive transfers do not negate the rules of the Montana High School Association. Colonel Smith will get the council more information on the basic training schedule/time commitment and the split training options.

Motion: Mr. Beckman moved that the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children co-sponsor Purple Up! Day. Superintendent Lacey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Lacey, BG (Ret.) Stearns and Ms. Quinlan will continue to work on a model school district policy. State Superintendent Juneau stated the council will not convene until the spring of 2015. BG (Ret.) Stearns suggested a conference call after the November 13-15 meeting in Nashville of the National Military Interstate Compact.

Driving Tour of Fort Harrison Training Areas – Major Robert McCrum, Range Control Officer, MTNG

Major McCrum drove the Council around the Fort, explaining its history and vast and continually improving facilities.

Counter Drug Program Presentation – Captain Daniela Ragen, Counterdrug Coordinator, MTNG

Captain Ragen discussed the mission of the program and its work to prevent drug use by educating the targeted audience of 5th, 6th and 7th graders. The program works with schools as well as law enforcement. Due to federal funding cuts, the presence of the program has been greatly diminished. The program used to be in 32 schools but last year they were only able to reach approximately 1,000 students. Vicky Turner has been helpful to the program's exposure in small schools.

National Guard Child and Youth Programs – Sara Cease, Lead Child & Youth Program Coordinator, Montana National Guard

Sara Cease discussed the goals of the program as well as the events they hold to support military youth. Sara showed a video on Camp Runnamucka where military youth get to have fun and connect with other kids who understand both the challenges and gifts of being the sons and daughters of deployed parents. The events are free of charge and are funded through federal dollars. Nationally known speakers are brought to the events.

STARBASE Program – Wendy Fechter, Director, STARBASE Great Falls

Wendy Fechter explained the hands-on STEM learning environment of STARBASE. There are currently 50 STARBASE locations throughout the U.S. The sequestration and unreliable funding by the Department of Defense has made it difficult to grow the program and keep the highly-trained teachers. Technology sits unused and is getting outdated. Some STARBASE programs in the country are going toward 501C status and Great Falls and Helena are both considering that change. Mobile units would allow STARBASE to reach the rural areas of Montana.

Tour of the Simulation Center – Major Renea Dorvall

Major Dorvall provided the Council with an opportunity to experience the simulators used for training service members. There was also an educational video on the danger of IEDs that troops are currently facing in the Middle East region.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Next meeting: Spring 2015, Location TBD