

Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children
November 3, 2015 Meeting Minutes
Paris Gibson Education Center, Great Falls, MT

Attendance

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

OPI Staff: Madalyn Quinlan, Amy Kruse

Invited Guests: Colonel Denise Cooper, Principal Brad Barringer (North Middle School, Great Falls), Heather Lahr (Counselor, North Middle School, Great Falls), Kellen Borggard (Student, North Middle School, Great Falls), Christy Hagler, Office of Congressman Zinke; Cari Kent, Office of Senator Daines; Cheryl Ulmer, Office of Senator Tester

Call to order

State Superintendent Juneau called the meeting to order at 1: 25 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

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

Approval of Minutes

Motion: Mark Beckman moved to adopt the minutes of the August 26, 2014 meeting. Superintendent Lacey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Introduction and Nomination of Carol Phillips, School Liaison Officer, Malmstrom AFB, to Serve as the Military Family Liaison for the Council

Carol Phillips has become an important connection between the schools and the military families on Malmstrom AFB. She advocates for the families and communicates to the schools regarding upcoming deployments and the needs of the children. She attends school board meetings and is focusing on growing relationships between herself, Malmstrom AFB and the schools.

Motion: Senator Buttrey moved to nominate Carol Phillips as a member of the council, filling the role of the Military Family Liaison. Representative Price seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Building Support for Military Children

Carol Phillips discussed transition issues of military families. Earlier this year, she reached out to the new principal of North Middle School, Brad Barringer, to address the need for improved transitions. Principal Barringer said that in their discussions, they found that the experience of military children entering school varied depending on the schedule of that particular day and time, who enrolled them, etc. Therefore, the welcoming of some students was falling through the cracks. Because of the new collaboration between Carol Phillips and Principal Barringer, a structure was put into place to ensure all students were welcomed. Teams were then launched which helped make a large school feel small. Each team turned in a plan aimed at making all students feel welcomed. Students were given a role in

showing students around. Principal Barringer reiterated how what they've put into place to help the military children has ended up creating a better school for everybody.

Carol Phillips then introduced Colonel Denise Cooper, Commander of the 341st Mission Support Group. Col. Cooper discussed the importance of the liaison role in all relationships and the huge impact Carol Phillips has made in her role as a liaison for the families and the Great Falls Public Schools. "When we don't have a liaison role, we have families floundering. We recruit an individual and retain a family." Col. Cooper also discussed her role in educating educators. She brings the Mission Brief video to school staff, discusses active shooter roles, and works on building trust between the military community and the school community. Professional learning is offered to the GFPS staff. Superintendent Lacey commented on the partnership and how by working together, schools can have a strategic plan on how to prepare for a large deployment.

Principal Barringer then introduced Counselor Lahr who facilitates support at North Middle School when there are deployments. Principal Barringer then introduced Kellen. Mark Beckman asked Kellen how he'd train Beckman to be a guide. Kellen replied that the key is to put yourself in the new student's shoes. Kellen shows new students the lockers, talks about extracurricular activities and answers questions about the different teams and their areas.

The Council thanked Kellen for the difference he is making.

Participation in the Interstate Compact

Senator Buttrey shared the history and role of the compact. Buttrey stated that Montana does a pretty good job at standardization of processes statewide, but issues exist in process differences from state to state, which is addressed by the compact. "We don't want to penalize the kids and keep them from graduating on time." The bill, passed in 2013, statutorily enters the state into the national compact and sets forth a standardization of processes to assist military students with issues ranging from immunizations, to grades, to courses, to attendance to extracurricular activities with the majority of the focus on on-time graduation. 10% of Montana is military connected but we need to protect students leaving Montana as well as those entering Montana schools. Cari Kent asked what the effect of the Compact has been. Lacey responded: timeliness, improved communication and providing a framework and structure to solve problems.

Identifying Military-impacted Students and Monitoring their Progress

Superintendent Lacey discussed the six new entries that have been made to the student information system to identify, track and therefore support military children. Teachers can see the information clearly in PowerSchool and the data is used to help when there are large deployments. The council discussed the difference in numbers between what is reported through the student information system identifier (1500 K-12 students) and what the military reports (Army One Source) for the number of military children in public schools (6847). The discrepancy could be due to National Guard children and the definition of active military. Lt. Col. Dorvall will look into the difference and report back to Madalyn Quinlan.

Interstate Compact Commission Update

Harold Stearns said the strength of the Montana compact is evident in the small amount of business he has had to conduct in Montana over the past year. He gave an example of a Great Falls family who tried to use the compact to their benefit. Stearns also discussed the upcoming national meetings and its structure that will look at any changes that may need to be made to the compact. Montana is well represented at the national meeting by Mark Beckman and the Montana High School Association. A goal of Stearns is to get booklets out on the compact to all of Montana's school superintendents.

MHSA Transfer Rule and High School Try-out Rules

Mark Beckman shared his MHSA Report.

- Activities are the other half of education.
- Copies of the PowerPoint he gave at the NFHS Summit in April were given to all council members.
- MHSA issues: MHSA issues and local policies don't go hand in hand. All academic/age/semester rules are enforced. There can never be an advantage because of the compact. All hardships are determined by Mark Beckman.
- Local school issues: Tryouts are a problem. MHSA does not have the authority to tell schools when to hold try-outs or practices. Eligibility issues revolving around try-outs and practices are resolved on a case by case scenario. Superintendent Lacey stated that "We just try to do what is right for the kid."
- Action Strategy – What can we do to facilitate the opportunity for inclusion?

National Guard Update

Lieutenant Colonel Dorvall discussed the importance of making sure service members let schools know when they cross over to active duty status. This will affect data in the student information system and allow for better monitoring and support of National Guard families. Yellow Ribbon events are the main communication system about deployments and kick off support for the families.

Dorvall also discussed Camp Runnamucka which is geared to ages 9-13. First tier of eligibility is kids of parents who are about to deploy, are deployed, and just finished a tour.

The Teen Resilience Program of the National Guard plays an important role since the military is not exempt from youth suicide. Dorvall said the National Guard has reached 163 kids with their program that includes 14 modules of resilience training. The modules focus on real time resilience, mental toughness, character strength and building relationships. The National Guard also has a teen panel that helps to de-centralize their programming by getting out around the state to communicate to schools and students about the supports available. Sara Cease was thrilled to have been able to have a booth at the recent MEA-MFT Conference. They are hopeful this will open doors to a supportive collaboration between the National Guard and the schools.

Public Comments

Kari Kent thanked the council for what they're doing and asked the Council to let Daines' office know how they could be of help. Superintendent Juneau suggested supporting the TROOPS grant. Cheryl Ulmer and Christy Hagler thanked the council as well.

Next Meeting Topics

Next meeting in February or March 2016

Report on national meeting

Camp Runnamucka

Fact sheet for high schools

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.