

PHASE 3 - DDESS INSTALLATION QUALITY OF LIFE INPUT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General Comments – Consensus

On 16 October 2003, a meeting was held in Peachtree City, Georgia with representatives of the 14 DDESS installations. Each installation was represented by a command officer, a parent, a teacher and the superintendent. In addition, two students were in attendance as well as representatives from the Federal Educators' Association Stateside Region and the National Military Family Association. Each installation was given time to present a report on the status of their DDESS schools and to indicate rationale for retaining the schools under the hospices of DoDEA.

Each installation's presentation was recorded and a synopsis of the presentation was developed. From this written record and additional materials given to DoDEA staff, an individual installation report was developed. These summaries are included after this introduction.

In reviewing these installation summaries, a number of issues were found to be consistent across all bases. These commonalities are reported below.

Instructional Programs

Consistency of Instruction – Military families are often faced with moving from base to base. This constant movement between schools creates concerns for military members and their families. Many dependent students rotate through various DoDEA schools stateside and overseas and parents indicate that having a consistent curriculum in these schools eases the transition to a new school. Families report that common curriculum, standards, and programs in DoDEA schools is a definite plus.

Student Achievement – To many parents, the number one indicator of educational quality is the standardized test results of schools and school districts. In every case, the national test results have the DDESS schools scoring higher in both language arts and math than the LEA. In addition, the achievement gap for minority students is considerably less in DDESS schools and these results are viewed as true indicators of the quality of the DDESS schools. When combined with the co-curricular programs that are offered, command and parents strongly believe the quality of instruction would be compromised if the schools were transferred to the LEA.

Special Education - This issue is a major theme at many installations. A number of DDESS locations are CAT 4 installations which means that children enrolled in EFMP with unique special needs are served at these schools. While strong programs exist at all schools, there are special circumstances at various locations. At West Point, there is a discrepancy between the level of service in the DDESS schools and the LEA with the LEA referring students with special needs to regional centers at much greater distances which are an additional cost fact to DoD. In

North Carolina, there is a cap on the percentage of students who can be designated as special education and both Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune have greater numbers of students than what would be allowed in the LEA. Parents worry about the ability of the LEA to provide these special services to their students.

Pre-kindergarten Programs – All DDESS schools offer a pre-kindergarten program for four year olds. Most of the LEA's do not provide the same program and parents are concerned that this quality program will not be available to them.

Staffing

Quality Staff - Each installation reported great satisfaction with the quality and dedication of their teaching and administrative staffs. It was noted that the DDESS staffs have a unique understanding of the military lifestyle and are active participants in the life and mission of the base they serve. Parents report that teachers and administrators have high expectations and standards that greatly enhance a strong educational program.

Spousal/Veterans Preference – One of the benefits of the DDESS schools is the opportunity of spouses and veterans to find federal employment. These programs are not recognized by the LEA's and it is difficult for spouses to get full time jobs in education in the LEA's due to their mobility issues. Spouses also have difficulty getting teaching credentials in all the states they may be stationed in and therefore are unable to teach. DDESS accepts all state credentials.

Certification of Teachers and Administrators – One of the assumptions that may be made is that the teachers would just transfer with the students to the LEA. As mentioned above, although all DDESS teachers are certified, they may not be certified in that state. In addition, the movement to the LEA would have impact on teacher retirement benefits which would have to be addressed in any transferring of schools.

Parent and Command Involvement

Governance – All of the installations noted the positive impact of having parents participate in the governance of the DDESS schools through their school boards. Although these boards are advisory in nature, all the installations indicated that parents believe they have a major impact on the quality of the educational programs in the schools. In addition, parents believe that their involvement in school activities is encouraged by the schools and command. Parents are concerned that transference of the schools to the LEA will eliminate their opportunity to participate in the governance of their schools since they will not be able to serve on school board due to state and local restrictions against living on federal property.

Command Interaction - While each of the installations reported a positive working relationship with the local communities around the bases and with the LEA's, all indicated that it did not reach the same level of positive interactions as with the DDESS schools. Commanders can directly influence issues such as school calendars, emergency directives, and control of student discipline on base and work very closely with the DDESS district superintendents and principals. While maintaining their independence, there is a great amount of partnership between the

DDESS schools and the command, which is only intensified during times of crisis and deployment.

Force Protection – One of the major issues was force protection. While military dependents in those DDESS districts that are not K-12 leave the post every day, the concern is always for the younger students. Parents are concerned that their smaller children would be off base and a distance away from home. With buses going on and off base, there is a need for additional gate security as well. In addition, although most DDESS teachers live off base and need to access gates daily and are sometimes delayed during various levels of force protection, all DDESS teachers are federal employees and can gain access to the base. If the teachers are employees of the LEA, during various force protection levels, they may not be allowed on base.

Morale – Each of the installations brought up concerns with the timing of the study. Each cited the impact of lengthy and recurring deployments as a major concern for military families and stated that many view the study as being an attempt to reduce benefits. Command indicated that they have concerns with morale of military families and the impact on retention rates. Each command indicated that the current study is the #1 issue on their installation.

Housing – One of the benefits of living on base is the opportunity to attend the DDESS schools. Command indicated that they are concerned that transferring the schools to the LEA will result in families moving off base especially into those neighborhoods where the schools are rated highly. Command also indicated they were concerned with various RCI programs in this regard as well as a concern for junior enlisted affordability to live in neighborhoods with decent schools.

Deployment – A number of installations highlighted the importance of the base schools in assisting with students of deployed war-zone parents. They cited DDESS teachers and administrators as being well-trained and sensitive to work through the emotional issues of parents' deployment. This supportive and stable environment was credited with the assisting the base effort to work with families on deployment issues. Similar programs are much more difficult to accomplish with the LEA's.

Fort Benning

Number of Schools	Students	Staff
1 - PK - 3	317	47
5 - PK - 5	1965	254
1 - Gr 6 - 8	635	80

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Parents value neighborhood schools that emphasize parental involvement
- * Additional resources such as gifted teachers that the LEA's do not have
- * Full creative arts program that is not duplicated in the LEA's
- * Outstanding afterschool program aligned with base activities
- * Excellent technology and expanded use of technology in the classroom
- * Highly qualified teacher corp
- * Involved with foreign students whose parents attend training at Fort Benning
- * Parents are aware of inequity as older students go to LEA's
- * Parents are aware of inequity of achievement levels as measured by SAT and Terra Nova scores.

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Fort Benning encompasses two counties and two LEA's
- * Question about which or both LEA will be potential operators of schools
- * Concerned with the ability of the smaller LEA's (500 students) ability to serve students
- * Concerned with the ability of the LEA to provide same level of care and understanding for children of deployed soldiers
- * Potential for severe impact on RCI
- * Exclusion from being school board members based on State Residency Laws
- * Decision to move control to LEA's comes at a most inappropriate time with country at war, deployments at an all-time high and needed support for military families now more evident than ever

Fort Rucker	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
U. S. Army Aviation Center	1 - PK - 2	493	56
	1 - Gr 3 - 6	476	55

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Three LEA's surround the base - which ones will be designated
- * Experienced staff trained to deal with unique anxieties of military children
- * Continuity of excellent programs
- * DDESS schools are geared to the needs of military children
- * School Boards have meaningful oversight of DDESS schools
- * Excellent preschool program is in place - does not exist in LEA's
- * Close coordination between schools and EFMP
- * Better technology and resources in DDESS schools

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Concerns about the poor financial support in the state of Alabama
- * Alabama ranks 50th in per student allocation
- * Lack of equity among LEA's and their schools
- * Added burden to LEA's
- * Alabama recently defeated new tax to improve education

Maxwell AFB

Number of Schools	Students	Staff
1 - PK - 6	524	65

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Recently added students from Gunter because of poor quality of education in LEA
- * Experienced staff trained to deal with unique anxieties of military children
- * Continuity of excellent programs
- * DDESS schools are geared to the needs of military children
- * School Boards have meaningful oversight of DDESS schools
- * Excellent preschool program is in place - does not exist in LEA's
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Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Concerns about the poor financial support in the state of Alabama
- * Alabama ranks 50th in per student allocation
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Robins AFB	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
Air Force Mobility Command	1 - PK - 6	448	56

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Strong parental and base leadership involvement in the school
- * Experienced staff trained to deal with unique anxieties of military children
- * Coordination of health care needs - nurse at school
- * Quality of life issue - very positive transition for families into DDESS school
- * Provides military families with predictable and familiar services/programs
- * DDESS school is more user friendly and flexible in unique military situations
- * DDESS school provides life-long values and character foundation

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Ability of junior officers/enlisted to move off-base for better schools not easily done
- * Different special needs assessments/parents concerned about access to good programs
- * LEA currently overcrowded - would create burden on LEA and local community

Special Issue

The post-transfer decline of a previous DDESS school at Robins AFB raises a caution flag. Linwood Elementary was transferred to the LEA when the property was deeded to the developer as part of a pioneering leased housing privatization effort. In 1998-99, when Linwood Elementary was a DDESS school, it was recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. Just four years later, in 2002-2003, Linwood was listed as one of the schools in the State of Georgia that was not making Adequate Yearly Progress under the Child Left Behind Act." This creates a great deal of concern that the quality is the same in the LEA.

Fort Campbell	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
101st Airborne Division	5 - PK - 5	2884	355
	2 - Gr 6 - 8	750	101
	1 - Gr 9 -12	568	80

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Who is the LEA? Post covers two states and four counties
- * Great difference in financial support - DDESS spends \$2,000/student more than LEA's
- * Greater financial support results in more program options
- * LEA's faces major challenges implementing No Child Left Behind legislation standards
- * Having a K-12 system provides vertical transition and coordination for students
- * Troops indicate that DDESS schools ease some of their deployment concerns
- * Strong special education programs that address Cat 4 student needs
- * Excellent coordination with other base services - medical, family support, youth activities
- * Tradition of excellent parent involvement in school board and school councils
- * Longer military tours due to specialized MOS - provide continuity of education

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Major difference in educational support between Tennessee and Kentucky
- * Five LEA schools identified as low performing by No Child Left Behind standards
- * Major funding issues with LEA's - largest LEA opened school late due to budget issues
- * If students must attend four different LEA's, presents major coordination issue

Special Issues

- * Fort Campbell spans two states and four counties. At the middle and high school levels, students living in different counties and states all attend the same school. If sent to the various LEA's a number of these students would need to leave the base to attend school and this has a tremendous impact on security issues.
- * In a similar manner, housing becomes a major issue. Service members will not live in certain base housing and future RCI housing if it means their students would be going to an LEA with problems in funding and quality of education

Fort Knox	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
U. S. Army Armor Center	4 - PK-3	1291	180
	2 - Gr 4-6	653	75
	1 - Gr 7-8	395	52
	1 - Gr 9-12	497	69

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Large transient military population - major training installation
- * DDESS schools more capable of handling significant student mobility rates
- * Strong technology programs that far exceed LEA capacities
- * Military training calendars are coordinated with DDESS schools
- * Consistent, high quality educational program
- * Excellent student/teacher ratio which promotes high student achievement
- * Provides a safe and secure environment for teachers and students alike
- * Spousal preferences important benefit in an area with little other opportunities
- * Excellent special education program - well coordinated with EFMP
- * Active and supportive school board that involves other parents

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * County lines divide housing areas - which LEA's would be involved?
- * LEA does not recognize DA EFMP and associated resource requirements
- * Kentucky budget issues and ability of LEA to absorb additional load

Special Issue

Just as there is a difference between the quality between DDESS and the LEA's, there is a similar difference among the LEA's. Will create housing issues since families living on base will want to attend the "better LEA."

Camp Lejeune	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
Marine Corp Base - Camp Lejeune	1 - PK - 1	306	41
II MEF	1 - K - 5	429	51
II MAR DIV	4 - PK - 5	1,529	188
II FSSG	1 - Gr 6-8	575	67
Training & Education Command	1 - Gr 9-12	473	63

MCAS - New River

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Military collaboration with DDESS schools is excellent - High standard of corporate commitment
- * Command assigned Adopt-A-School units that actively supports each school
- * Ability for military members to partner with schools due to proximity of schools
- * Transfer to LEA may result in loss of educational opportunities for military dependent children such as; universal preschool, full inclusion for special education, Read 180, and HS lab support
- * Having DDESS schools is a major QoL issue on base
- * DDESS schools reflect military culture and provide support for dependents to cope with multiple deployments
- * Neither CLDS nor Onslow County Schools desires nor supports transfer of schools
- * LEA would have to absorb additional costs because of lack of tax base and an insignificant amount of impact aid
- * Three out of four of the largest MC bases have a DoDEA school
- * Military members make a conscious decision to live on base so their children can attend a DDESS school
- * Quality CLDS schools significantly influence relocation choices (PCS)
- * Strong connection between retention and family educational issues
- * DDESS school board a respected part of base community
- * DDESS student achievement levels are consistently among the highest in the nation
- * Community schools provides a safe and secure learning environment
- * Continuity of instruction and programs of DoDEA schools at sister installations

- * Strong student involvement in excellent cocurricular activities including JROTC, Operation Hero, and after school intramural program
- * Model preschool for all 4 year old children recognized by the State of North Carolina and DoDEA as an exceptional full-inclusion program - LEA has a preschool program for only a select population
- * Exemplary special education program that is recognized as a model throughout DDESS and highly praised by parents
- * Full inclusion model of special education throughout the elementary schools
- * Special education program is conducive to greater individualization
- * Full time nurse in every school

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * LEA employees may not be able to gain base access in high security times nor eligible for security clearances
- * Self-contained school district (K-12) results in a unified curriculum and approach
- * Timing of transfer study during time of major deployments increases stress level of spouses and dependents
- * Spousal hiring preference for school employees not used by LEA
- * Security/Force Protection hampered if students leave base

Fort Bragg/Pope AFB	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
XVIII Airborne Corps	7 - PK - 4	3149	377
Special Operations	1 - Gr 5 - 6	740	71
	1 - Gr 7 - 9	585	73

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Quality of teachers - 100% certified DDESS as to 350 not certified in LEA
- * High student achievement - consistently outscore LEA students
- * Key quality of life issue
- * Quality and consistent curriculum which assists with transition of students
- * Strong command/school partnership that fosters positive learning environment
- * Staff is very attuned to base issues and military lifestyle
- * Students better able to cope with multiple deployments due to school sensitivity
- * Schools effectively connected to youth center and support activities
- * School calendar synchronized with military schedules
- * Spouse/veterans preference - 30% of teachers are veterans and/or spouses
- * Lower student teacher ratio at all levels
- * Nurses in all schools - DDESS ratio - 1:527 - LEA ratio - 1:4,417

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Transferring students would create additional burden on low wealth LEA
- * Strong connection to schools which is necessary during times of deployment
- * Security of students leaving base and LEA officials access to base
- * Retention issue for military members; value DDESS school benefit
- * Ability of command to provide support and direction to schools in times of need
- * Parents involved in educational issues due to school boards and location of schools

Special Note

- * 350 students living on post attend LEA. Parents see a big difference in quality
- * While eager to retain DDESS schools, command desires DDESS high school

Fort Jackson	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
U. S. Army Training Center	1 -	PK-1	
	1 -	Gr 2-3	
	1 -	Gr 4-6	

Installation/ Parent Issues

Quality of education is excellent in DDESS schools

Knowledgeable and understanding teachers and administrators

Built-in support network which is needed during deployment cycles

Parent surveys (Spring 03) indicate a high level of satisfaction with the instructional program

Coordination of programs with child care needs

Safe environment for military children

Specific enrichment programs geared toward military child

Student support groups that address deployment issues

School system understands and supports military mission

Installation/Parent Concerns

Overcrowding in LEA schools - 2nd fastest growing LEA in South Carolina

Young children bussed to schools off post

Staff in local LEA not as sensitive to military family needs as DDESS schools

Loss of community as parents leave post for affordable housing in the local community

Impact on RCI as families will not have the same incentive to live on post

Security concerns about student leaving post

Increases challenges of military transition

Fort Stewart

Number of Schools	Students	Staff
1 - PK - 6	917	91
1 - K - 6	573	61

Installation/Parent Issues

- * Strong parental and base leadership involvement in the school
- * Experienced staff trained to deal with unique anxieties of military children
- * Exceptional coordination with schools and deployed service members - email access
- * Counseling program that does not exist to the same degree in LEA
- * Provides military families with predictable and familiar services/programs
- * Heavy deployment creates additional family stress - DDESS schools seen as refuge

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Ability of junior officers/enlisted to move off-base for better schools not easily done
- * Different special needs assessments/parents concerned about access to programs
- * Parent with secondary students see difference in quality between DDESS and LEA
- * Would prefer DDESS Middle/High School

Laurel Bay	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
Beaufort Marine Corp Air Station	1 - PK - 2	645	71
U. S. Naval Hospital - Beaufort	1 - Gr 3 - 6	404	50
Marine Corp Recruit Depot - Parris Island			

Installation/Parent Issues

- * DDESS schools provide the foundation for a stable learning environment
- * Schools are the #1 attraction for families to live in Laurel Bay
- * Supported by quality administrators and educational staff
- * Direct command and parent involvement - 92% grade schools as A or B
- * Excellent student achievement
- * Many families are junior enlisted and officers - cannot afford private schools
- * Supports all three tenants in the Beaufort Tri-Command
- * Access and involvement with school board - have a say in their schools
- * Guardianship needs of deployed single service members are recognized by DDESS
- * Structured environment consistent with military core values
- * Comparison of families leaving Beaufort during deployments reflect quality of schools
 - During Desert Shield and Desert Storm - 60% of families left
 - During Operation Iraqi Freedom - less than 10% of families left
- * South Carolina schools rank in the bottom 15% nationally, 49th in dropout rate
- * Beaufort County ranks 428 out of 500 large school districts nationally
- * Beaufort County failed nine of twelve categories of the state assessment
- * Over 200 student who can't attend DDESS go to private schools or home schooled

Installation/Parent Concerns

- * Impact on retention
- * Reduction in another current benefit for military families
- * Anti-Terrorism Force Protection - more resources needed on gates
- * Desire secondary school to complement current program
- * Local schools do not provide adequate education for military dependent students

Quantico	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
Marine Corp Base, Quantico	1 - PK-3		
	1 - PK, 4-5		
	1 - K-3		
	1 - Gr 6-12		

Installation/Parent Issues

DDESS schools are the number one QoL issue on the base

Transfer to LEA is a loss of educational opportunities for military dependent children

Transfer to LEA equates to DoD accepting and dictating a lower standard of education

Strong partnership and services (family, health, community) exist with DDESS schools

Base housing is in transition and impacts total cost per students

Quantico is a unique military base that attracts the best in the Marine Corp/Education #1

Quantico is the Marine Corp Officer's Training Base

3 of 4 of the largest MC bases have a DoDEA school - consistent educational programs

Families live in inferior housing on base so that their children can attend DDESS school

Installation/Parent Concerns

LEA continues to grow and has large facility needs

Base security (DC Military District) creates unique needs for base security

LEA employees may not be able to gain access to base during high security times

LEA is impacted by state budget, lack of facilities and is suffering from overcrowding

Question the timing of this study given current morale issues

Transferring of schools is single most emotional and contentious issue on base

Additional housing will result in increase in families living on base

West Point	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
U. S. Military Academy	1	- K-5	
	1	- Gr 6-8	

Installation/Parent Issues

Students in DDESS school significantly outscore their counterparts in the LEA
DDESS provides most special education programs locally, LEA outsources spec. ed.
School calendar is coordinated with Academy schedule critical for block leave
Preschool program is available; LEA has no preschool program
Minority student achievement is above national average
Reliable funding from DoD provides a program not impacted by state budget issues
Parents have strong input to curriculum and programs
Parents opt to live on post due to the quality of DDESS schools

Installation/Parent Concerns

The Mission requires the Army's best officers and NCO's as teachers
DDESS school is powerful benefit to attract quality instructors
Quality of life will be significantly diminished (calendar, safety, security, programs)
Parents would not be able to serve on the local school board

Special Issues

Recruitment of quality Academy staff members is a major issue. Officers and NCO's who come to the Academy to teach take a lateral step in terms of their military careers. New staff indicate that DDESS is a major factor in their coming to the Academy to teach.

Special education is a major issue. The DDESS schools have staffed themselves to provide special education programs at the school while the LEA sends the same type of special needs student to a regional consortium (BOCES). During the last year, the DDESS schools served 14 of 16 students with very special needs. If these student were in the LEA, they would be bussed to the BOCES facility in Goshen, NY, a ride of 45 minutes. Average cost would be \$45,000 per student.

Dahlgren	Number of Schools	Students	Staff
Naval Network and Space Operations	1 - PK-8	184	
Joint Warfare Analysis Center			
Naval Surface Warfare Center			
Aegis Training and Readiness Center			

Installation/Parent Issues

School is community school - students live around the school
Easy access for parents - students come home for lunch
School is near and coordinates with various youth services and activities
Base is in remote location - no significant surrounding town (strip malls)
School is the center of the base and affords parents the opportunity to be involved with school
A secure learning environment -
Strong involvement of mentors from four tenant commands
Strong tradition of academic excellence and academic opportunities
Excellent special education program that stresses mainstreaming
School is major reason military members accept orders to the base
Easy access to child care facility
Excellent support classes/activities to include READ 180, AVID
LEA does not provide similar services

Installation/Parent Concerns

Safety is major concern - only local school opened during sniper attacks
LEA is some distance away, would not be easy to access district services
LEA is suffering from overcrowding - 570 students over capacity K-12
New high school has been in the plans since 1989 - no funding
No private school alternative in the county
Base has many classified programs; access severely limited
LEA Elementary downgraded on State Assessment
LEA Middle School only provisionally accredited
Loss of School Board involvement - too far away from LEA
Loss of school would impact retention and recruitment
LEA Superintendent quoted in media as being opposed to transfer