

Progress Report
Department of Defense and Department of Education
Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding
July- September 2008

Overview

In the 90 days since the DoD-ED MOU was signed, significant efforts have been made to coordinate existing programs and foster new opportunities for growth and synergy. Efforts at the national, state, and local levels include disseminating online educational resources to parents, teachers, students, military leaders; participating in regional, state and installation-based military education meetings; and improving the collection of data for the distribution of ED Impact Aid funds.

Background

On June 25, 2008, the Deputy Secretaries of Defense and Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to create a formal partnership between their two departments to support the education of military students. The MOU was developed by Department of Education (ED) and Department of Defense (DoD) staff over a period of several months to provide a comprehensive and cohesive structure for collaboration between the two federal agencies as well as with local, state and other relevant entities. Prior to the adoption of this MOU, staff of both agencies frequently worked together on various issues without the benefit of agency-wide integration and coordination. Through the MOU, the agencies can now leverage their coordinated strengths to improve the educational opportunities of military connected students.

Over the course of the first three months of this partnership, the two agencies have (1) established a working group, (2) initiated a data bank of existing efforts and resources, and (3) collaborated on two joint projects, a new grant program, and a host of state and local initiatives. The first working group convened on July 16, which was followed by two more meetings on August 21 and September 25. The working group has now established regular monthly meetings.

The working group is co-chaired by representatives from Department of Defense Education Activity's (DoDEA) Educational Partnership Branch and ED's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and is comprised of representatives from the following offices:

Department of Defense

1. Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
2. Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics
3. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs

4. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs
5. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
6. DoD General Counsel
7. Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs
8. Assistant Secretary of the Army, Installations and Environment
9. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Manpower and Reserve Affairs
10. Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Manpower and Reserve Affairs
11. Army Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management
12. Defense State Liaison Office
13. Department of the Army, Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command
14. Department of the Navy, Commander Naval Installations Command
15. Department of the Air Force, Manpower, Personnel and Services
16. Headquarters United States Marine Corps, Marine and Family Readiness
17. Office of Economic Adjustment
18. Department of Defense Education Activity

Department of Education

1. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
2. Office of Communications and Outreach
3. Office of Innovation and Improvement
4. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
5. Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs
6. Office of the General Counsel
7. Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development

ED has established a military liaison position within the Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. This person will serve as the primary liaison between ED and DoD for coordination of program development, management, and outreach related to improving the academic condition of military children.

Joint Projects

The DoD and ED MOU Working Group established the need to identify an inventory of the existing resources that may support the education of military students. In response to this need DoDEA with contributions from ED, created the Joint Survey of Resources to (1) identify the gaps, (2) avoid duplication of effort, (3) consolidate the resources for dissemination to stakeholders, (4) enhance the awareness of the resources, and (5) facilitate the collaboration and integration of the development of new resources. To date there are over 200 entries of existing resources that align with the responsibilities and objectives set forth in the MOU.

Teacher-to-Teacher Workshops: In August 2008, ED and DoDEA co-sponsored two Teacher-to-Teacher workshops in the Clover Park School District in Lakewood, Washington (serving both Ft. Lewis and McChord Air Force Base) and the Morongo Unified School District (serving Marine Corps Combat Training Development Command) in Twentynine Palms, California.

The workshops were a part of a series that ED hosted throughout the summer. These free sessions brought together some of the nation's most effective teachers to share successful practices for raising student achievement in key academic areas. DoD and ED collaboratively designed these workshops creating topics based on school districts' achievement data and strategic plans. Both sites emphasized mathematics, science, literacy strategies, differentiated instruction and English Language Learners' strategies.

The two school districts selected have a high concentration of students from military families which presented an opportunity for DoDEA to offer some specialized sessions. DoDEA conducted student transition and deployment-related sessions at each workshop to include (1) Exploring Military Culture, (2) Leveling the Playing Field for Military-Connected Students, and (3) Student Online Achievement Resources (SOAR). More than 150 K-12 teachers, counselors and administrators attended the two-day workshops at each sites. Educators expressed a high degree of satisfaction for the content and practical strategies and believed they had a deeper understanding of military culture and the impact of deployment on children of the military.

Touching Base Newsletter: Prior to signing the MOU, ED created a quarterly e-newsletter, *Touching Base*, to provide information about educational issues and resources pertaining to the military community. While DoD has contributed to the newsletter in the past, it evolved into a joint publication in response to the MOU. The newsletter has reported on activities of the Secretary of Education and other ED officials' activities that are related to military concerns. The primary audience is the military community, family support centers for all branches of the military, military organizations, teachers, administrators, state and local educational agencies, and interested federal government agencies. It is available via e-mail, and it is also posted on the Department of Education Website, which may be found at the following URL: <http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/touchingbase/index.html>.

State and Local Initiatives

Washington State: ED's Region X Office and DoD's Regional Liaisons Office are co-sponsors of the Washington State Military Kids and Families Summit, "Care, Connect, and Collaborate!" to be held on November 14, 2008 in Tacoma, Washington. The purpose of the Summit is to connect families with educators, community leaders, and others who want to understand and support military children. The event includes workshops on deployment, transition, reunion, and related issues. Resources and exhibits will be available to complement the dynamic speakers and networking opportunities.

Illinois: In August, local military commanders and ED's Regional Representative co-sponsored roundtable discussions to identify and discuss key military education issues with community leaders at Naval Station Great Lakes and Scott Air Force Base. Major issues discussed were the MOU, Impact Aid, and base commanders' challenges in getting school districts timely and adequate information about military connected student growth. The meetings also included briefings from the Lieutenant Governor's defense liaison about the progress of a commission considering the state's adoption of the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children. Superintendents of the key school districts that serve military families, local and state elected officials and staffers, and top military and parent representatives attended the events. This was the first time these key players came together to meet with regional ED officials.

Ohio: In August, ED's Regional Representative visited the Wright Patterson Air Force Base STARBASE program. STARBASE is a premier educational program, sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. DoD STARBASE offers a positive, proven approach to engendering excitement and interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Coordination of Grants

In July of 2008, DoDEA received delegation of authority under subsections 2192 (b) and 2193a of the Title 10, United States Code, related to establishing and executing programs for the purpose of improving mathematics and scientific knowledge and skills of elementary and secondary school students and faculty members. Programs established under section 2193a must be coordinated with the Secretary of Education. Through a pilot program DoDEA coordinated the award of three \$300,000 grants with ED. The grants were awarded to three military-connected school districts for the following programs:

- The Hawaii Department of Education's *Bridging the Mathematical Continuum Project*. The project is a three-fold initiative that: 1) prepares all students for successful achievement in Algebra I and II courses; 2) enhances the quality of teaching; and 3) increases preparedness of all students so they will have the knowledge, skills, and habits-of-mind needed for successful achievement in mathematics. Its three components are Math Whizz, Developing Mathematical Ideas, and TI-Nspire Teacher Leader Cadre.

- The Beaufort County School District in South Carolina introduced the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program in 2007 to help improve student achievement in all secondary schools. AVID programs are found in over 3,500 schools in the United States and abroad, and it has extensive internal and third-party research validating its success. The grant will allow Beaufort County School District to expand this initiative by introducing AVID into two of its military-impacted secondary schools: Robert Smalls Middle School and Battery Creek High School.
- The El Paso, Texas, Independent School District's Science Coaching Initiative. With these grant funds, the district will contract with the Princeton Review to provide teachers with a science coaching program at four priority schools in year one. These schools include Bassett Middle School and the elementary campuses of Bliss, Burnet and Travis. The science coaching program includes: small-group and one-on-one professional development sessions; classroom support and feedback to teachers; model lessons using best practices and the inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning; lunch time and conference period professional development; and co-teaching and model instruction for new science teachers.

Economic Adjustment Committee Education Site Visits

Senior leaders from the Department of the Army, US Department of Education, Secretary of Defense, and Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), have conducted site visits to a representative sample (Fort Benning, Fort Bliss, Fort Drum, Fort Riley, and Fort Carson) of growth locations. The purpose of these visits was to: (1) provide program stakeholders with on-the-ground knowledge of issues surrounding military mission growth; (2) improve communications among all partners; (3) identify any gaps or lags in school capacities; and (4) establish the foundation for a subsequent consideration of education issues related to mission growth by the entire Economic Adjustment Committee (EAC).

On September 9, 2008, the EAC conducted a Senior Leadership visit to the Fort Bragg community. The senior leaders represented the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, ED, DoDEA, OEA and Army Headquarters. Local participants represented Fort Bragg, local educational agencies (LEAs) from seven nearby counties, the Department of Defense Dependent Schools located on Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, the state of North Carolina, and the Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base Realignment and Closure Regional Task Force (BRAC RTF).

Department of the Army Student Data Collection Pilot

In Army-identified growth sites, school districts have expressed tremendous concern about the number of children that may be entering their school districts over the next several years and the costs associated with serving those children. The Department of the Army began trying to define the universe of potential Army-connected children that LEAs could claim for

the purposes of maximizing their Impact Aid revenues. After consultation with ED, Army determined that a pilot project with two military installations (Fort Rucker and Fort Knox) would be the most appropriate first action.

The first phase of the pilot project is a public information campaign, explaining the importance of returning the surveys through promotional materials distributed through schools, community child care centers, and Army Child, Youth & School Services facilities. ED has provided technical assistance to the districts participating in the pilot program in the form of advice on improving surveying techniques as well as videoconference training with Fort Knox schools. Materials for the public information campaign are designed to reach the active duty service members as well as contractors and federal civilian employees. The second phase of the pilot program will be to pursue electronic filing of surveys and utilization of source checks, an alternative to individual student survey forms, to be implemented during the 2009-10 school year. In addition, the Army will continue to work with its databases to determine if there is a more comprehensive manner in which to capture data relating to school age children affiliated with Army installations.

DoD-ED Data Sharing

DoDEA actively collaborates with ED's EDFacts Data Usage Team, in the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (OPEPD). The Data Usage Team oversees the EDFacts Reporting System's analysis and reporting functions and proposes the development of analyses and reports for the Department's management, planning, and policy activities. Through this coordination, DoDEA's Educational Partnership Branch has been able to use EDFacts data to identify student academic needs and educational opportunities for stakeholders which, in turn, drives decisions to prioritize and establish partnerships with military-connected school districts.

Army Education Summit

The 2008 Army Education Summit was designed to: help participants review the current and future landscape of Army installations; identify potential future challenges based on changes; and discuss community planning implications. The Summit focused on the Army Family and Community Covenant's goals of building partnerships that support the strength, resilience, and readiness of soldiers and their families in a way that promotes excellence in the school experience. Participants included garrison commanders, family morale welfare and recreation directors, school liaison officers, school district superintendents and school board presidents from districts supporting 17 Army installations in the continental United States and seven communities in Europe, and representatives from DoD and ED.

Conclusion

The actions above grew from existing but fragmented DoD-ED efforts to support student achievement at military-connected schools. The DoD-ED MOU provides a structure that is spurring the efforts of both agencies to work together in a more comprehensive manner. The Working Group will next focus on the development of an overall Strategic Plan. The next report of our efforts will be in April 2009 and semi-annually thereafter.