



# Touching Base

Quarterly U.S. Department of Education Newsletter for the Military Community

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[The needs of the military and their spouses] "should be on the agenda of every woman and every American because they represent the very best this country has to offer."

---First Lady Michelle Obama at the Women's Conference, Oct. 26, 2010

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## **U.S. Education Secretary Observed Veterans Day at the New Fort Meade Library**

To pay tribute on Veterans Day to military personnel and their families for their service to and sacrifice for our country, Manor View Elementary School unveiled a brand new library at Ft. Meade, Md. Among those who took part in the ribbon-cutting was U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who also volunteered with his family to stack the library's shelves with books before the unveiling. "I can't think of a better way to honor the men and women serving in America's military than by supporting their children's education," said Duncan. "To give the children of veterans and of those serving today a chance to go to an amazing library ... inspires children to build a lifelong love of learning." Retailer Target chose the 614-student school, in which 95 percent of the students are from military families, as a show of support for them. Target's Makeover program, launched with the Heart of America Foundation three years ago, is part of the company's larger commitment to education, which includes plans to donate more than \$500 million of support by the end of 2015. More than 2,000 school libraries have been renovated since the program's inception. This year, the company donated more than \$7 million for the 32 extreme library makeovers, with Manor View Elementary's opening marking the final library grand opening event for 2010.

## **ED Senior Leader for Innovation Applauds Military's Support for Education**

Scott Pearson, associate assistant deputy secretary in the Office of Innovation and Improvement, provided remarks at the U. S. Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation's 2010 Scholarship Announcement Reception at the Library of Congress on Sept. 14. Pearson thanked service members for their contributions to the nation and highlighted the administration's goal of increased access to higher education. Hosting the event were Margaret B. Davis, president and CEO of the Scholarship Foundation, and Gen. Robert Magnus, USMC (Ret.), chairman of the foundation's board of directors. The foundation is the nation's oldest and largest need-based scholarship organization supporting U. S. military families. For the 2010-11 academic year, the foundation provided 1,423 scholarships totaling \$4,250,000. For more information about the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, visit <http://www.mcsf.org/page.aspx?pid=183>.

Pearson also spoke at the launch of the Army National Guard Mobile Learning Center (MLC) at the District of Columbia's Woodrow Wilson Plaza on Sept. 30. The MLC, or "Energy Lab," provides a unique hands-on experience with math and science to 11th- and 12th-grade students in underserved communities. It is traveling across the United States during a six-month period to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) literacy to high school students around the U.S. MLC has four highly interactive experiences that require students to use their STEM skills. Students manage fossil fuel resources, create waves to produce electricity, use simulated solar panels to maximize solar energy usage, and arrange digital wind turbines to increase electrical output. The goals and objectives of the MLC align with the mission of the Department of Defense's 2010 STEM Education Outreach Plan, which recognizes that STEM talent is essential to meeting DoD's workforce needs and strengthening the nation's security. To learn more, visit <http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2010/11/15/>.

On Nov. 4, 2010, Pearson spoke at the annual meeting of the Hampton Roads Area School District Superintendents and Military Installation Commanders, hosted by the Joint Military Services School Liaison Committee. His remarks focused on the education issues of military-connected students, including the key themes of data, educational quality, and community relationships and support. His overview of the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* gave superintendents and commanders an opportunity to ask questions and discuss ramifications for military-connected students. Hampton Roads, Va., is the home of seven major

military installations, 12 school districts, and 68,000 military-connected students, the highest concentration of military students in America.

### **Discretionary Construction Program Awards Made**

Impact Aid received 27 new applications for its Section 8007(b) Discretionary Construction Program competition. Eligible applications were reviewed by field readers and the slate memo was approved by the Department's Office of the Secretary in August. Congressional notice followed and the awards were given out the week of Sept. 13. For more information, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/8007b/awards.html/>.

### **Facilities Assessment Under Way for Public Schools on Military Installations**

The Department of Defense (DoD) has begun an assessment of non-DoD schools located on military installations. The assessment will take place in two phases: a call for pre-assessment information; and on-site assessments conducted by small teams of trained DoD contractors. The teams are assessing the physical condition and functional adequacy of the school facilities. The information collected will assist the government in identifying which facilities should be replaced and which could be renovated; for the latter, determining what needs to be done to bring them to acceptable standards; and ensuring that any resources made available are applied to those schools with the highest priority requirements in a fair and equitable manner. The assessment will provide important preliminary information about the condition of the schools. For more information, call 703-588-3509

### **DoDEA's Educational Partnership Relaunches Website for Military-Connected Schools**

Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) re-launched the MilitaryK-12Partners website, <http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/index.cfm> with a redesign based on feedback from users. The site provides helpful information aimed at educators and administrators of schools that serve children of military families and for military leadership and school liaison officers. DoDEA's Educational Partnership program works collaboratively with the Department of Education to ease the transition of military children and by providing resources to school districts that educate military children. Recognizing that supporting military children takes a schoolwide effort and that professional development programs can help to inform school staff of the academic challenges that these children face, the partnership supports a variety of programs that promote quality education, seamless transitions, and deployment support.

### **eKnowledge Announces NEW Educational Material Available for Military Families**

Through a military donation program, a set of three SAT/ACT Test Preparation Books are now available. In addition to the books, the SAT and ACT DVDs have been updated to include 12 hours of instructor videos and 170 student videos that have been remastered to include over 2,000 new graphics, animations, diagrams, illustrations, photos, and other visual aids directly in the video stream to assist students as they watch them. The new material has been two years in the making. To view samples of the 170 student videos go to [http://www.eknowledge.com/back2school/dvd-v7\\_landing.htm](http://www.eknowledge.com/back2school/dvd-v7_landing.htm). For further information, contact Lori Caputo, director of eKnowledge Sponsorship Alliance (ESA) Programs, at [LoriCaputo@eknowledge.com](mailto:LoriCaputo@eknowledge.com) or at 951-256-4076.

### **Bill Calls for Vouchers for Disabled Military Children**

A proposed \$5 million voucher program for military families who have children with special education needs is part of the defense spending bill that Congress will take up in its post-election lame-duck session. The pilot program would start in the 2011-12 school year and provide up to \$7,500 per year for school costs. The pilot program is only one of several provisions tucked into the \$726 billion defense bill that are intended to improve schooling for military children who require special education services. The proposed amendment, which was sponsored by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) would also direct the secretaries of defense and education to collaborate on issues such as expedited due process resolution for military families and creation of individualized education programs that are applicable across state lines. About 100,000 active-duty and reserve service members have dependents with special needs, including spouses, children, and dependent parents. The U.S. Department of Defense would be required to evaluate the success of the program in a report to be completed no later than 2015. For more information, visit <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/10/29/10military.h30.html>

## **Proposed Legislation**

H.R. 6369 (Rep. Glenn Nye, D-VA), to amend Title 10 (Armed Forces), U.S. Code, to codify the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account program (MyCAA) conducted by the Department of Defense to assist spouses of members of the armed forces serving on active duty to pursue educational opportunities and career training, and to ensure that such educational opportunities and training are available to all military spouses (Armed Services).

H.R. 6372 (Rep. Glenn Nye, D-VA), to amend Title 38 (Veterans' Benefits), U.S. Code, to provide for the entitlement of surviving spouses of members of the armed forces who die while serving on active duty to educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program (Veterans' Affairs).

## **Signed Legislation**

House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) announced that President Obama signed H.R. 3219 into law Oct. 13, 2010. The Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010 improves and modernizes certain benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans and their families. The new law addresses the needs of veterans by enhancing employment opportunities, preventing and caring for homeless veterans, ensuring the welfare of veterans and their families by increasing insurance limits, protecting service members called to combat, honoring fallen service members and their families, strengthening education benefits, addressing housing needs of disabled veterans, and investing in research for Gulf War veteran.

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