

CUMBERLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS

Cumberland County Schools (CCS)

- 87 schools
- 78th largest district in US (out of 14,470)
- 52,187 students
- Second largest employer in Cumberland County (second to military)

We believe that our experience in educating military-connected students is a great strength.

Experience matters. The CCS serves the third largest concentration of military-connected students in the world (11,449). We know that issues faced by military children are unique. The CCS has services, programs, and people who understand the issues and work hard to find solutions. We speak their language.

We have expanded programs that support the unique challenges faced by military connected students.

CCS was awarded the first Pete Taylor Award for outstanding partnership between Ft. Bragg and CCS in 2005. CCS received the award for the second time in 2008.

The CCS and the local military installations of Ft. Bragg and Pope Air Force Base have enjoyed a strong history of positive relationships built on service and collaboration.

This positive relationship helps ensure that students needs are identified and addressed, resulting in high quality service for these students. The relationship shared between the entities has allowed the CCS to work in a progressive way by thinking forward and helping identify trends and targets that reveal areas of need.

In 2002, the CCS and Ft. Bragg, through the work of the Military Child Task Force, created the Local Action Plan, which emphasizes strategies to be implemented in order to address the issues of transitioning military-connected children. The Local Action Plan identifies partners of support, describes specific responsibilities, and prescribes a timeline to ensure accountability. This working document serves as a roadmap that neutralizes obstacles and streamlines support strategies.

In 2007, the CCS hired a full-time person for the position of Military Child Support Liaison.

Military Child Taskforce

Realizing that student needs exist beyond the scope of the school system, the CCS has formed a Military Child Task Force. This task force boasts members from education, and the military; as well as a variety of community, government, and service agencies. By bringing various agency representatives together, a forum is created that allows each person to better understand existing needs and by working collaboratively to better meet the needs identified. The task force's work is the true embodiment of collaborative relationships working toward a common goal.

One unintended result of the task force has been the ability for a problem or need to be articulated, substantiated, and then addressed through the eyes of the various agencies represented. This allows an issue to be viewed from a variety of angles and perspectives, each based on the specific area of service provided by the agency. As a result, it is possible for one agency to intervene to a point, knowing that others will also become involved and the services will not miss their target, as is common when multiple agencies are involved. In other words,

service continuation occurs until the problem is solved or the needs are met, and this is often accomplished with a variety of agencies and / or providers being involved.

Military Child Support Liaison (MCSL)

This full-time position was designed to assist military families with needs as they relate to deployment and relocation. The MCSL coordinates and supports efforts to assess needs, build awareness of resources, and connect those with needs to supportive solutions. The liaison role provides a connection between families with needs and possible solutions.

The stress placed on families in the midst of relocation or the deployment of a family member can be overwhelming. Support for these families can come from many places, some military-affiliated as well as non-military sources. The MCSL partners with agencies and organizations in our area to help ensure a network of support is in place when needed. In addition, the MCSL works closely with the School Liaison Officers who work on Ft. Bragg and Pope Air Force Base. Another role of the MCSL is to work with various departments within the CCS to produce materials and programs targeting military families.

Public School Systems with Military Support Position Alliance

The CCS has worked to create an alliance of public school systems in North Carolina that have a military liaison position. The purpose of this alliance is to allow the systems to share ideas about programs, interventions, and services, and to discuss issues related to military students and military communities as they impact the education of military students. Through this alliance the school systems can address common challenges as well as identify unique situations with targeted responses.

Another purpose of the alliance is to provide a clearinghouse of resources. Resources can be materials, research, anecdotal knowledge, and more. When shared, the resources can greatly improve the ability of the school systems to meet the needs of the students they serve.

The notion of the sum being greater than the parts of the whole is the foundation of this alliance. Building upon the success of the alliance, it is envisioned that other school systems will recognize the need for a full-time position dedicated to the needs of military students resulting in those systems joining the alliance. In addition, through the utilization of technology, other military-impacted districts in adjoining states will be invited to participate in alliance discussions and initiatives.

Military Connections Through Literacy

Staying connected to family members is a concern for military families. Letters, care packages, and emails provide a way for the military students in the CCS to stay connected to their loved ones.

During the national launch of the Books on Bases program, the Blue Star Families donated small libraries of reading materials to schools in the CCS.

The CCS also received a donation of books from the Kiwanis Club of Fayetteville. Home is Where the Army Sends You, Fort Bragg NC, by local author Melissa Davis, is a great addition to the developing Military Resource Centers in CCS Media Centers. The CCS has partnered with the United Through Reading® Military Program to help ease the stress of separation for military families by having deployed parents read children's books aloud via DVD for their child to watch at home or school.

Military Connections During Transitions

The CCS hosted the historic ceremony that marked the adoption of the Interstate Compact: Educational Opportunities for Military Children in North Carolina. The Interstate Compact gives local education authorities flexibility in course and program placement, access to extra – curricular activities, and on–time graduation within the criteria established. This has allowed CCS educators make the transition issues of the mobile military lifestyle as seamless as possible. There are approximately 27 states working together through the Interstate Compact affecting approximately 524,000 (82%) school age military children.

The HOST (Helping our Students Transition) Program is a CCS initiative being piloted by the CCS Military Child Support Liaison through the support of the Military Child Education Coalition. The HOST Program training provides students and staff with the tools needed to make positive transitions in elementary school.

Transitioning military students in the CCS have also benefited from two web-based programs: Soar at Home and Tutor.com. Both are free resources aimed at easing academic transition issues.

Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC's) are located in several schools. CCS students and their families utilize their services in a variety of ways.

Military Connections Through Professional Development

The Public Engagement of the Living in the New Normal (LINN) created a forum to address awareness of and advocacy to our military families. Several professional development opportunities have been created.

A partnership between the CCS, the Cumberland County Partnership for Children, and the Southern Regional Area Health Education System has led to a four-part LINN professional development series. These workshops cover military family issues and are fundamental to the CCS employees as they foster reliance in military children.

Unique opportunities:

- 48 choice options (K-12 including, but not limited to, the arts, classical studies, global studies, communications, technology, International Baccalaureate, year round calendar).
- Specialized high schools (Cross Creek Early College /Howard Health & Life Sciences High School, Massey Hill Classical, Fuller PLC High).
- Strong partnerships with higher education (community college and university) affording students college credit while in their high school programs.
- Competitive athletic programs including the traditional sports (football, baseball, basketball, soccer, wrestling, track and field, cross-country, volleyball, softball, cheerleading, golf, tennis) as well as the non-traditional sports of bowling and swimming. CCS fields 35 teams per school throughout the school year. Nine of our high schools compete at the 4A level for interscholastic competition. It is tradition that our schools excel and compete at the state championship level in a variety of sports. This district is regarded by many as the strongest level of competition in the state, especially in football. The CCS is highly recruited by colleges, especially those within the ACC.
- Award winning JROTC programs in all comprehensive high schools.
- Graduates are accepted at prestigious, highly competitive colleges and universities; receive nationally recognized scholarships; appointments to all military academies.

Class of 2006 was awarded more than \$28 million in scholarships. Class of 2009 was awarded more than \$36.5 million

- 3,386 students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes. 140 AP classes offered covering 24 courses. – this is outdated – new number would come from Jan Freeman
- 76 courses offered through Career and Technical Education, covering eight program areas. – outdated – new number would come from Suzannah Tucker
- 48 teachers from Visiting International Faculty (Canada, Philippines, United Kingdom, South Africa, Jamaica, and Australia along with others.) – new number would come from HR