

**ALABAMA STATE COUNCIL
Monday, August 16, 2021**

PRESENT	<p>Dr. Douglas L. Ragland Terry Roller Kim Kozel Maj Gen Sheryl Gordon Dr. Diane C. Flournoy Cherie Cain Robert Richert John Gilchrist Kim Vickers</p>	<p>Compact Commissioner Chair Chief Administrative Officer, AL State Dept. of Ed. DoD Representative & School Liaison, Fort Rucker Alabama National Guard School & Community Stakeholder Attending on behalf of Erica Lewis, Redstone Arsenal School Liaison, Maxwell Gunter AFB Attending on behalf of Nick Moore, Office of the Governor Associate Athletic Director, AL High School Athletics Assoc.</p>
STAFF	<p>Cherise Imai Lindsey Dablow</p>	<p>MIC3 Executive Director MIC3 Training & Operations Assoc.</p>
EXCUSED	<p>Dr. Eric Mackey Rep. Will Dismukes Dave Pope Patrick Mantell Dr. Lisa Stamps</p>	<p>State Superintendent of Education Alabama State House of Representatives AL State Department of Education Communication Specialist & Military Advisor, Dept. of Ed Superintendent of Daleville City Schools</p>

ITEM 1 – CALL TO ORDER

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM CT by Alabama Compact Commissioner and Chair Dr. Douglas L. Ragland.

ITEM 2 – WELCOME

2. Chair Ragland welcomed the members and provided opening remarks.

ITEM 3 – ROLL CALL

3. The Chair directed MIC3 Training and Operations Associate Lindsey Dablow to call roll. A quorum was established.

ITEM 4 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

4. Maj Gen Sheryl Gordon motioned to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Robert Richert. Motion carried.

ITEM 5 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

5. Ms. Cherie Cain motioned to approve the minutes of August 7, 2020, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Richert. Motion carried.

ITEM 6 – NEW BUSINESS

7. **Pandemic and Education Update** – Chair Ragland recognized Mr. Terry Roller and asked him to provide an update on Alabama's current education situation as impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Roller reported there are about 156 school districts in Alabama. Schools in areas with vulnerable populations took a rigorous approach to providing for the needs of their communities to the best of their abilities. During this past year Alabama school districts have faced accessibility issues related to internet availability and bandwidth capabilities. Mr. Roller stated Governor Kay Ivey is encouraging schools to return to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year. He noted there would be a continued focus on safety and sanitation protocols established during the previous school year.

8. Mr. Roller stated Alabama does not have a state mask mandate in place, instead allowing schools to determine what is in the best interest of their student population under an optional or "as needed" basis. School district superintendents, school boards, and staff have the autonomy to work with their stakeholder groups to make those decisions for their students.

9. Mr. Roller informed the Council Members the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is converting to a new student information system, PowerSchool, because the company that provides the current system was acquired by another company. Most of the challenges faced to this point have been with transferring and merging of student information into the new system. He asked those within the school districts to be patient since the system came online August 2, 2021, shortly before the start of the school year. Mr. Roller encouraged schools to work up the chair of command if they experience issues with the new student information system.

10. He concluded his report stating recent feedback from stakeholder groups to the ALSDE has surrounded the social emotional health of students two years into the pandemic. Mr. Roller clarified "social emotional learning" is about personalization in learning to adjust to the individual needs of students and where they currently are but that is not synonymous with mental health challenges. The ALSDE prioritizes the mental health needs of students and staff. Alabama has taken steps through legislation to place a Mental Health Services Coordinator in 115 school districts. This initiative has obtained additional funding to build the program. He noted school districts continue to expand their mental health collaboratives which allows students that receive mental health services to interact with those professional at the school, so they do not miss school time. Mr. Roller reported the first session of Youth Mental Health First Aid, which identifies initial signs of mental health issues, allowing the child to access support early had taken place. Finally, training is being provided to staff because the ALSDE recognizes the mental health impact the pandemic has had on teachers and school administrators as well as students.

11. Chair Ragland acknowledged Mr. Roller for his report and recognized his work with the Alabama High School Athletics Association. The Chair thanked him for his continued support of Alabama's MIC3 State Council.

12. **School District/Community Updates** – Chair Ragland asked Dr. Diane Flournoy and the School Liaisons to share any community updates they may have. He yielded the floor to Dr. Flournoy who reported Dale County schools were back to in-person learning but students in the city schools are not due back until August 24th. She reported, that like much of the country, locally there is a teacher shortage, but schools are working together to address that as the start of the school year approaches. Dr. Flournoy concluded her report stating the Daleville City Schools were coming back to in-person learning with masks.
13. Chair Ragland recognized Mr. Richert as the newest member of the state council. Mr. Richert is the School Liaison at Maxwell/Gunter AFB following the retirement of Ms. Wanda Cooper. Mr. Richert reported Montgomery County schools were beginning the school year with in-person learning but making masks optional for students. He noted the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) school on the base is requiring masks.
14. The Chair recognized Ms. Cain who reported the three main school districts in the area began August 4, 2022, with two schools implementing a mask mandate from the start of the school year. The third school district implemented a mask mandate on August 13, 2021.
15. Chair Ragland yielded the floor to Ms. Kim Kozel who reported Enterprise School District, Ozark, and the DoDEA Parker Elementary School opened the school year at the beginning of August with a mask mandate in place. She noted Parker Elementary began the year with 611 students and of those three students requested to be enrolled into virtual learning. The Chair thanked Ms. Kozel for her report and recognized her work as the state's Military Representative.
16. Chair Ragland asked Maj Gen Gordon if she would like to address the council regarding this topic. Maj Gen Gordon stated the National Guard has families throughout the state and no issues have been brought to her attention which was a positive sign. She noted that Members of the National Guard were required to be vaccinated and she thought that would help the state. Chair Ragland thanked her for her comments and service to the State Council.
17. Chair Ragland reported Jefferson County opened school on August 2, 2021, with a mask requirement for district staff and students. The school is following the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. The Birmingham city schools have started their school year with a couple cases of COVID-19 but have been able to mitigate risks to keep the city schools open.
18. **Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) Update, Kim Vickers** – Chair Ragland recognized Ms. Kim Vickers for her recent promotion to Associate Athletic Director and acknowledged her hard work and dedication to student athletes throughout the state. Ms. Vickers reported AHSAA is planning a normal athletic season this year. The AHSAA has created points of emphasis for schools to follow regarding social distancing, masking, and health department guidelines. The AHSAA is allowing schools to determine how displays of sportsmanship will be handled during the season. For example, schools can determine if it is in the best interest health wise of their student athletes to shake hands at the end of competitions. Ms. Vickers stated schools are required to follow their local health department guidelines throughout the athletic season.
19. Chair Ragland thanked Ms. Vickers for her report and requested she extend an invitation to the newly appointed Executive Director of the AHSAA, Mr. Briggs Commentary, to join the State Council.

Chair Ragland recognized the importance of the State Council partnering with the AHSAA to assist military-connected students.

20. **Governor's Office** – Chair Ragland yielded the floor to Mr. John Gilchrist to provide an update from the Governor's Office. Mr. Gilchrist presented the *Alabama Survey on the Underemployed and Unemployed*. According to the results of the study, in September 2020, 31% of unemployed individuals were not looking for work because of COVID-19, but in July 2021 only 17% chose that as their reason for not looking for employment.

21. Mr. Gilchrist noted in September 2020 the three industries most impacted by COVID-19 within the state of Alabama were manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, and human services. The numbers in July 2021 showed the same trend for those three industries. The three reasons most survey respondents provided for unemployment were because work is unavailable or hard to find, I want to stay home because of COVID-19, and I lack the necessary skills, qualifications, or education.

22. He reported that of those surveyed eight out of ten plan to look for a job in the next 12 months. Respondent's top three employment values were to earn more money, have more stability, and have a more consistent paycheck. Mr. Gilchrist noted the percentages from September 2020 to July 2021 signal a shift in respondent's values away from the amount of money earned to a consistent or steady paycheck. This demonstrates people are concerned about getting and maintaining a consistent job instead of unstable, one-time earning streams. The survey also found people are more willing to retrain or change industries in order to find employment but preferred a short-term training to a long-term commitment. Mr. Gilchrist noted that 59% of respondents had read, seen, or heard of the AlabamWorks! program, which is a program intended to stabilize Alabama's workforce.

23. Chair Ragland thanked Mr. Gilchrist and the Governor's Office for the presentation and opened the floor for questions. There being none the Chair continued with the agenda.

24. **Dues paid in full for Fiscal Year 2021** – Chair Ragland noted Alabama is current with its MIC3 dues. The 2021 dues of \$11,116.00 and were paid in full on March 24, 2021.

25. **Dues for Fiscal Year 2022** – The Chair informed the State Council that Alabama's annual dues for Fiscal Year 2022 were \$11,002.00 and he thanked the Alabama State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Eric Mackey, and his staff, for not only the timely payment of the dues each year, but his continued support of the council.

ITEM 7 – REPORTS

26. **National Commission** – Cherise Imai, Executive Director (ED) of MIC3, gave a report on Cases and Inquires brought to the National Office. In FY21, there were 45 cases addressed by the National Office and most of those cases were not Compact-related. She stressed this does not mean the cases were not resolved it means the issue was not covered by the Articles of the Compact. She noted 42% of cases came from the Compact Commissioner and 38% were from parents which is similar to previous years. The majority of Compact-related cases dealt with *Article V - Placement and Attendance*, again in line with previous years. ED Imai reported the National Office does track the topic of cases that are not Compact-related and many of those cases in FY21 were regarding school choice.

27. ED Imai informed the Members that the National Office also maintains detailed notes on each case but does not publish that information because of privacy laws. She noted that this year saw a drop in cases due to COVID-19 compared to 2020 when the National Office worked 55 cases and in 2019 when 82 cases were referred to the National Office.
28. **National Guard and Reserve** – ED Imai presented information on the National Guard and Reserve issue before the Commission. Currently only Guard and Reserve Member families are covered when the Service Member is activated under Title 10 orders. She outlined current Compact provisions that apply to National Guard and Reserve families. ED Imai provided background to the State Council including the work of the National Guard and Reserve Coverage Task Force findings presented to the full Commission during the previous Annual Business Meeting (ABM). She also outlined the options to address expansion of the Compact to include all families of the National Guard and Reserve. ED Imai noted for the Members that the possibility of a dues increase was a concern of the Commission and the Commission wanted time to discuss the options with their State Councils. The outcome of the discussion during ABM was the item was referred to the Executive Committee (EXCOM).
29. ED Imai addressed the fiscal impact of expanding the Compact to include National Guard and Reserve families. Expansion of the Compact is not an opportunity to increase revenue for the Commission and could be accomplished without any changes to the current dues' formula. Alabama had 9,567 military dependents living the state during the previous year. There were also 10,250 National Guard and Reserve Dependents residing in the state during the same period, so the addition of those families could have increased Alabama's annual dues by 107%, raising them from \$11,002 to \$22,790 based on the all-inclusive number of dependents.
30. ED Imai outlined the possible courses of action before the Commission, the actions pros and cons, and any cost associated with those actions. She noted the only options available to the Commission is for all 50 states and the District of Columbia to amend their state's Compact statute; for states to amend their state codes outside the Compact through external legislation; or to take no action at this time. None of the options would affect those currently covered by the Compact under Title 10 orders.
31. ED Imai provided next steps for the State Council including seeking state specific data on the National Guard and Reserve members residing in Alabama and breaking it down into the various titles. She noted Maj Gen Gordon may be able to assist with those efforts through her role with the National Guard. The Commission has asked each state to determine how many National Guard and Reserve school-aged dependents between ages 5-18 reside in their state and how often over the past year have those families moved interstate under PCS orders. Using this information, the State Council is tasked with developing a position paper on this issue after consulting with stakeholder groups. ED Imai advised discussing the pros and cons of each option and prioritizing them from most acceptable course of action to least. She also asked the State Council to provide feedback in the report regarding the potential fiscal impact on the Commission and State.
32. ED Imai informed the Members each state's written report must be received by the Commission no later than August 31, 2021, providing the State Council's position and why. The report should include any questions, concerns, or request for clarification the State Council may have. She noted this item will be part of the discussion at the 2021 ABM and Commissioner Ragland will be asked to vote on behalf of Alabama regarding the options before the Commission.

33. Chair Ragland thanked ED Imai for her report and opened the floor for discussion. Maj Gen Gordon asked for clarification on the current Compact provision and stated the current practice should address most of the Guard and Reserve Members and their families. She stated she would check with her contacts in the Family Program, but her current feeling was to take no action at this time.

34. Chair Ragland recognized Mr. Roller who concurred with Maj Gen Gordon on the topic. The Chair polled the Members present, including those attending on behalf of other Members. The outcome of the poll was as follows:

- a. Maj Gen Sheryl Gordon – Take No Action At This Time
- b. Mr. Terry Roller - Take No Action At This Time
- c. Kim Kozel – Take No Action At This Time
- d. Kim Vickers – Take No Action At This Time
- e. Dr. Diane Flournoy – Take No Action At This Time
- f. Robert Richert – Take No Action At This Time
- g. Cherie Cain – Take No Action At This Time
- h. John Gilchrist – Take No Action At This Time
- i. Commissioner Douglas Ragland (Chair) – Take No Action At This Time

35. ED Imai confirmed Chair Ragland would submit the State Council's preference in writing to the Commission. She reported the 2021 ABM would be held on November 4-5, 2021, in a hybrid format in Little Rock, Arkansas. ED Imai stated, due to the time, staff would provide additional information to the State Council Members via email.

ITEM 8 – SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICERS/MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

36. **Maxwell AFB** – Chair Ragland asked the School Liaisons to provide their reports beginning with Mr. Richert. He reported his office is working to identify reoccurring issues for transitioning military families. Mr. Richert noted international officers and their families when arriving and transitioning into the local school systems have experienced issues with grade placement. He explained the schools did their due diligence in trying to place the students at a correct corresponding grade level based on the student's school record and any additional documentation provided.

37. Mr. Richert said another challenge is varying credit requirements for graduation from state to state but he was working towards a resolution for the affected families. Finally, he reported families moving into the state are arriving with immunizations records, but the records are not on the Alabama form. He stated this information was being transposed by medical staff on the base, but families had commented that this was not an issue in other states.

38. Mr. Richert noted in 2021 the National Defense Authorization Act allowed expansion of eligibility for enrollment at domestic DoDEA schools. Maxwell AFB was the first CONUS installation to proceed with the expanded enrollment. School began on August 9, 2021, and at that time 38 students had been accepted for enrollment at the DoDEA school on base.

39. Mr. Richert reported Maxwell AFB recently completed Operation Homefront Back to School Brigade where 300 school children received backpacks filled with school supplies. He concluded his

report informing the State Council the base is awaiting the release of the Supporting Military Families Scorecard. That information will be disseminated once it is received.

40. **Redstone Arsenal** – Ms. Cain reported on behalf of Redstone Arsenal School Liaison Erica Lewis who noted a case regarding transfer of credit related to Physical Education and World History. She noted Redstone Arsenal is slowly reopening, but the status of the Arsenal was HPCON Bravo+ due to an increase in COVID-19 cases in the surrounding area. Chair Ragland thanked Ms. Cain and noted that Mr. Roller was available to assist Ms. Lewis, if necessary, on the cases mentioned in the report.

41. **Fort Rucker** – Ms. Kozel reported one case related to transfer of credits and was waiting for additional information from the sending school to determine next steps for the student. Another case was related to school choice and athletics but because the move was not considered a bonified move by AHSAA the student would only be allowed to participate at the Junior Varsity level. Ms. Kozel's final case was also related to school choice but in this instance, it was due to rezoning by the school district. The parent requested an out of zone attendance exemption due to a parent's deployment which was under the purview of the Superintendent. The request was denied.

42. Ms. Kozel stated she was contacted by a National Guard family that had trouble registering their student(s) for the DoDEA school. Ms. Kozel wanted to express her gratitude for the National Guard Liaison Major Peebles at Fort Rucker for her assistance with the case.

43. Ms. Kozel notified the State Council that Fort Rucker had a new Garrison Commander, Col. Robert J. Holcombe. Finally, Fort Rucker Maj. Gen. David Francis held a meeting at the end of July with the Superintendents from the DoDEA school, Enterprise, Ozark, and Daleville school districts to discuss how the schools were mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic and plans for the upcoming school year. Ms. Kozel stated it was a great opportunity for the installation and the local school districts to collaborate and share best practices.

44. Mr. Roller thanked the School Liaisons for their reports and shared his contact information in the chat should they need to contact him for assistance. Chair Ragland echoed Mr. Roller's sentiments. He thanked the School Liaisons for their excellent work and support of the Compact.

ITEM 9 – ADJOURNMENT

45. With no further business before the council, Ms. Vickers motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Roller seconded the motion. Commissioner Ragland adjourned the meeting at 11:23 AM CT.