

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

500 C - THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

000 March 31, 2000  
 500000

NO MAR 31 PM 6:57

Copied  
 Berger  
 Lew  
 Reed  
 Podesta

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER AND JACOB LEW

SUBJECT: Memorandum from SECDEF on Junior ROTC and DoD Schools

During the CINCs Conference you asked Bill Cohen and the CINCs to look into whether increased Junior ROTC (JROTC), which many local and state officials desire, could also help solve the recruiting challenge today. You also noted the DoD school system successes and that they may hold some important lessons for our national effort. Bill has provided two information papers that contain amplifying information on both issues raised in the conference.

Key points in the JROTC information paper include:

- The proportion of JROTC graduates who enter the military following completion of high school is roughly five times greater than the proportion of non-JROTC students.
- For FY96-98, JROTC participation has led to approximately 8,000 new recruits per year.
- DoD surveys indicate that 35 percent of high school graduates with more than 2 years in JROTC end up with active, reserve, or guard affiliation within both officer and enlisted ranks.
- DOD is in the process of expanding the JROTC program from its current 2,591 units to the authorized maximum of 3,500 by FY05.

Additional information regarding JROTC not in the Cohen memo:

- Begun in 1954, JROTC is popular throughout the nation with a long waiting list of schools and instructors wishing to join the program.
- After the Los Angeles Riots, General Colin Powell proposed a significant expansion of the program, particularly in inner-cities, to provide alternatives to drug use and gang membership.

cc: Vice President  
 Chief of Staff

- Services normally pay about 65 percent of the cost to establish and run a unit but the services pay all costs for disadvantaged schools for the first three years.
- In FY99 the 2,591 units cost \$177 million and in FY01 program cost will be \$209 million.

Highlights from the DoD education information paper:

- DOD school students are consistently among those receiving the highest rankings on national level academic achievement tests. Achievement of minority students is particularly noteworthy.
- Contributing factors may include: better education level among teachers; rigorous curriculum standards with teacher development programs linked to the curriculum; accountability measures; and an unparalleled level of community and parental support.

We will look into scheduling a visit to a DOD school as you mentioned in the conference.

Attachment

Tab A Incoming Correspondence



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

1127  
PLEASE STAY

FEB 17 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and Department of Defense Education Activity Schools

During our session with the CINCs, we covered a number of important topics. You asked for additional information on two of those topics, the Junior ROTC program and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools. Attached are information papers that provide background on each of these topics.

We are expanding our Junior ROTC program to fund the 3,500 units Congress has authorized. The program has been an enormous success because it instills citizenship values, encourages service to country and gives students a sense of accomplishment and personal responsibility. Moreover, Junior ROTC has made a strong positive impression on teachers, school administrators and parents.

The DoDEA schools are another great success story. Our students are consistently among those receiving the highest rankings on national tests of academic performance. In addition, DoDEA teachers are better educated than their peers nationwide, with approximately 63% in our domestic schools and 68% in our overseas schools holding advanced degrees. We believe that a focus on excellence in teaching and learning coupled with parental and community involvement have led to the DoDEA schools' success.

The Department is proud of both of these programs. We stand ready to assist you should you need more information or desire to visit any of our JROTC units or DoDEA schools.

2 Attachments  
As stated



## **INFORMATION PAPER**

### **JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS (ROTC) PROGRAM**

**JUNIOR ROTC'S MISSION IS TO INSTILL CITIZENSHIP VALUES:** Junior ROTC is DoD's largest youth program with over 400,000 students enrolled in 2,588 secondary schools (2,526 in United States, 62 overseas). The statutory mission statement for Junior ROTC, codified in 1993, is to instill in students the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment.

**JUNIOR ROTC INCREASES VISIBILITY IN SCHOOLS AND IN THE COMMUNITY:** Military recruiting faces the challenge that a smaller military results in fewer veterans being visible in communities and schools around the nation. Recent surveys reveal that youth who had been exposed to people with military experience enjoyed a far greater understanding of the nature of military life than those who had no such exposure. Misconceptions about daily life in the military can operate against recruiting. The Junior ROTC program represents an excellent means to address that problem. Moreover, the program builds better citizens which, in turn, strengthens the nation. Further expansion of the program will increase military awareness among youth and those who influence their career decisions.

**PARTICIPATION IN JUNIOR ROTC INCREASES INTEREST IN MILITARY SERVICE:** Surveys of Junior ROTC cadets indicate that about 35 percent of the graduating high school seniors in School Year 1997-98 with more than two years participation in the Junior ROTC program are interested in some type of military affiliation (active duty enlistment, officer program participation, or service in the Reserve or Guard). Translating this into hard recruiting numbers, in FYs 1996-1999, about 8,000 new recruits per year entered active duty after completing two years of Junior ROTC. The proportion of JROTC graduates who enter the military following completion of high school is roughly five times greater than the proportion of non-JROTC students.

**DOD IS EXPANDING THE JUNIOR ROTC PROGRAM:** In 1992, 1,481 schools had Junior ROTC units (1,452 in the United States and 29 overseas). The Fiscal Year 1993 Defense Authorization Act expanded the program by increasing the number of units authorized from 1,600 to 3,500 units. Currently, the number of Junior ROTC units totals 2,584.

The number of schools seeking a Junior ROTC unit has continued to grow. Currently, there are 616 schools on Service waiting lists (Army – 232, Navy – 151, Marine Corps – 75, Air Force – 158). The volume of inquiries and letters from Congress and from educators nationwide, who seek further program growth, also is increasing. As part of their POM submissions, the Services programmed additional Junior ROTC units, beginning in FY 2000. The Army included funding for 275 additional Junior ROTC units (its statutory limit) in its most recent POM submission. The Marine Corps planned to add 32 units to reach its limit of 210. The Navy would add 75 units over the FYDP with 50 more units in FY 2000 and 5 additional per year until FY 2005.

The Air Force would clear its existing unit waiting list with funding for an additional 160 units.

Even with these additional units, the services would not reach the maximum 3,500 units authorized. DoD leadership reviewed the matter as part of its Summer 1999 Program Review. The decision was favorable and, in August 1999, the following additional resources (Alternative 2 below) were provided to JROTC.

| <i>(\$M)</i>                              | <u>FY99</u> | <u>FY00</u> | <u>FY01</u> | <u>FY02</u> | <u>FY03</u> | <u>FY04</u> | <u>FY05</u> |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Alternative 1 (POM)                       | 169.6       | 181.2       | 186.5       | 192.2       | 193.0       | 204.5       | 206.4       |
| Alternative 2 (Expand to Statutory Limit) | -           | -           | +11.1       | +16.7       | +22.2       | +27.6       | +22.2       |

**Secretary's Direction, August 1999 Program Decision Memorandum**

## **INFORMATION PAPER**

### **DoD EDUCATION ACTIVITY SCHOOLS**

**DoD STUDENTS EXCEL ACADEMICALLY:** Students in the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools consistently rank at the top of the scale on national tests of academic performance. This year, when the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test were released, the country took notice of this exceptional performance. National publications such as the Wall Street Journal, the Boston Globe, the New York Times, and the Sacramento Bee featured or editorialized about the remarkable performance of students in DoD schools, seeking keys to improving student performance in other school systems. National columnists have asked the question, "What makes DoD students so successful?"

In his December 28, 1999, Boston Globe column, "There Are Things We Can Learn From the Schools On Military Bases," writer William Raspberry discusses his thoughts about the success of military schools. He ends by saying, *"There are other possible explanations for the disproportionate achievement of military schools, and some of them – the presence of fathers who are both self-disciplined and accepting of military discipline, for instance – are quite attractive. Which are the correct explanations? I don't know, but I can tell you this: If I were running a failing school system, I'd surely try to find out."*

**COMPETENCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND COMMUNITY ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESS:** The groundwork for improvements in DoDEA was laid with a multiyear, data driven Community Strategic Plan (CSP) that identified a common vision and strategic direction, goals and benchmarks. DoDEA took its direction from the President's education initiatives and the eight National Education Goals – plus two additional organizational goals – in adopting a corporate approach to educational programming. We do not presume to have all the right answers! However, we believe we have identified key ingredients that have helped DoDEA focus on student achievement. These are: (1) a sustained and rigorous focus on excellence in teaching and learning, (2) a data-driven accountability system to identify student learning gaps and measure and report student progress, and (3) strong community and parental involvement.

Educators, parents, and military leaders reached a consensus on academic goals, a joint venture that produced the first DoDEA CSP in 1995. The shared vision and quantifiable benchmarks outlined in that document guided the activities of the schools and their communities for the past 5 years. The CSP serves as an ambitious agenda helping all DoDEA schools and communities to achieve success for all students. The major features of the three key ingredients of DoDEA's success are discussed below.

**DoDEA SCHOOLS FOCUS ON EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING:** DoDEA's teachers are better educated than their peers nationwide. In our domestic schools 63 percent of our teachers hold advanced degrees, i.e. masters, specialist or doctorate degrees. In our overseas

schools, 68 percent of our teachers hold advanced degrees. According to Department of Education data, only 47 percent of teachers nationwide hold advanced degrees.

The performance of DoDEA's minority students is particularly noteworthy. Throughout the country, African American and Hispanic students were scoring below the expected levels while in DoDEA's domestic and overseas schools, those same student groups ranked number one and two when compared to their peers nationally. In the December 22, 1999, Wall Street Journal article "Making the Grade, Pentagon-Run Schools Excel in Academics, Defying Demographics," writer Daniel Golden says "*...Their students are poorer and more racially diverse than the national average, and only 60 % finish the school year where they started it. Instead of struggling, however, the schools the Pentagon runs at Fort Knox and other U.S. military bases are defying demographics by acing the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federal exam regarded as the best gauge of pre-college academic performance.*"

**EVERY STUDENT CAN LEARN AND BE SUCCESSFUL:** One of the basic premises of the 224 DoD schools is that EACH of the 112,000 students in our schools in 13 countries, 7 states, Guam and Puerto Rico, can learn and be successful. DoDEA's students are the most diverse ethnically, racially, and geographically of those in any U.S. school system. They are not, however, diverse in the expectations for all students. To achieve and sustain high levels of student achievement, DoDEA adopted rigorous curriculum standards, including the national standards in such areas as Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Health and Physical Education, and Technology. They adopted new curriculum materials to reflect the new standards as well as adopted new performance assessments to measure student achievement, including the Terra Nova and Work Sampling. To complement these efforts, DoDEA linked professional development opportunities for teachers to the reform efforts and provided high quality, research-based training in the new curricular approaches, improved teaching strategies, and use of technology in the instructional process.

**ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES ARE IMPORTANT AND IN PLACE:** Data drives all decisions regarding curriculum, training, staffing, and funding. A School Improvement Process that includes teachers, parents, and community leaders, has been implemented in every school to analyze their schools' achievements and implement strategies for improvements that are linked to the CSP. DoDEA provides an annual *Accountability Report* to stakeholders reporting progress against the goals and benchmarks. Individual *School Profiles* were developed as companion documents to the *Accountability Report* to provide leaders and parents with an in-depth look at the schools, student achievement, and progress made over the past year.

Creation of a system to provide targeted support and resources for low-performing schools was an outcome of a data-driven process. Sixteen schools that were farthest from meeting the achievement benchmarks were selected for special emphasis based on performance on standardized tests in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Both overseas and domestic targeted schools have made significant progress.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE SUCCESS OF DoDEA SCHOOLS:** In his December 28, 1999, New York Times column, "Military Bases Succeed with Schools," writer Anthony Lewis says, "*Finally, I think there is a deeper sense of community among*

*military families...we have to recognize that the military is one of our most successful institutions: profoundly effective in achieving racial integration in the services and now, we find, in educating its children. We should be able to learn from its successes."*

DoDEA enjoys an unparalleled level of community and parental support. The military community values and supports education as a critical element of its quality of life and military readiness. Surveys demonstrate both high levels of parental involvement in our schools and high expectations of parents of both the students and the schools. Systemic changes were made to create avenues for the greater involvement of administrators, teachers, parents, and the military commands. William Raspberry wrote, *"My guess—and that's all it is—is that people who believe they can achieve based on their own efforts tend to raise children who share that belief. Military children, I am suggesting, may have an unusual degree of academic success because they hold to an unusual degree the empowering belief that they are in control of their destinies."*

**ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES ARE UNDERWAY:** America's military forces are willing to risk their lives for their country, but they are not willing to sacrifice their children's future in the process. Therefore, quality education has been a central quality of life issue for the military. DoD has recognized that quality costs. Most recently, the Department has funded a 5-year program to implement the President's educational initiatives to expand full-day kindergarten to all schools and reduce the pupil/teacher ratio in grades 1-3. DoD has also included the funding for the modernization of all schools to support these initiatives, and to incorporate and accelerate technology into the classroom. Recognizing the unique factors of military life, DoD has also funded an increase the numbers of school counselors, psychologists, and nurses. Each community has unique needs that must be met and resources to implement community-wide initiatives.

**RECOMMENDED DoDEA SCHOOLS TO VISIT:** DoDEA's success in action can be seen at any of our 224 schools. Specific recommendations for visits include: **in Germany** -- the Heidelberg School Complex, Heidelberg (2 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 high school); Hanau Middle and High Schools, Hanau; Hainerberg Elementary School, Weisbaden; Darmstadt Elementary School, Darmstadt; **in Italy** – the Aviano Elementary and High Schools, Aviano; **in Okinawa** – Lester Middle School.

A separate list of ten of our top domestic schools is attached.

Attachment

## Top\* DDESS Schools and Descriptions

| School                       | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| West Point MS<br>West Point  | West Point Middle School is located on the base at West Point in New York. There are about 240 students in grades five through eight. The community is made up of 95% Army personnel. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 77 <sup>th</sup> percentile to a high of the 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile. West Point MS received special recognition at the national, state, and county level as scholars, musicians, and athletes.                            |
| Dexter ES<br>Ft. Benning     | Herbert J. Dexter elementary school is located at Ft. Benning, Georgia. There are about 300 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The community is made up of 99% Army personnel. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 61 <sup>st</sup> percentile to a high of the 88 <sup>th</sup> percentile. The Dexter school is focusing on programs to increase parental involvement and become partners in their child's literacy development. |
| West Point ES<br>West Point  | West Point Schools are located on the base at West Point in New York. There are about 500 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. The community is made up of 95% Army personnel. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 73 <sup>rd</sup> percentile to a high of the 88 <sup>th</sup> percentile. West Point ES upgraded the computer lab and currently is piloting the Jason Project in grades 2-4.                                     |
| Stone Street<br>Camp Lejeune | Stone Street Elementary is one of six elementary schools on Camp Lejeune. The school serves approximately 430 students in preschool through fifth grade. The community is made up of 88% Marines and 12% Navy. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 57 <sup>th</sup> percentile to a high of the 86 <sup>th</sup> percentile. Stone Street teachers and parents are working together to improve learning for all Stone Street Elementary students.        |
| Dahlgren ES                  | Dahlgren Elementary is located in Dahlgren, Virginia. The school serves approximately 200 students in preschool through eighth grade. The community is made up of 99% Navy. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 57 <sup>th</sup> percentile to a high of the 85 <sup>th</sup> percentile. Students, teachers, and parents are working together to improve student's technology skills.                                                                   |

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DeLalio ES<br>Camp Lejeune | DeLalio Elementary School sits amidst one of the most supportive communities in DDESS, MCAS New River at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The school serves about 300 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Marines are 91% of the students' sponsors. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 61 <sup>st</sup> percentile to a high of the 78 <sup>th</sup> percentile. Parent contributed 3,000 classroom volunteer hours in 1998-99.                                |
| Kingsolver ES<br>Ft. Knox  | Kingsolver Primary School is located at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. The school serves about 250 students in grades pre-kindergarten through third grade. The school serves a community which is about 95% Army. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 51 <sup>st</sup> percentile to a high of the 72 <sup>nd</sup> percentile. Students at Kingsolver ES made significant gains on achievement tests in 1999.                                                                               |
| Bowley ES<br>Ft. Bragg     | Bowley Elementary School is located at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. The school serves about 500 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. The school serves a community which is about 99% Army. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 59 <sup>th</sup> percentile to a high of the 82 <sup>nd</sup> percentile. Bowley Elementary School students made great strides in school-home partnerships, technology, science, and mathematics in 1998-99.                    |
| Maxwell ES<br>Maxwell AFB  | Maxwell Elementary School is located at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. The school serves about 500 students in grades pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. The school serves a community which is about 94% Air Force. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 58 <sup>th</sup> percentile to a high of the 79 <sup>th</sup> percentile. Two full-scale technology labs and multiple computers in each classroom provide ready access to technology for all students. |
| Quantico MS<br>Quantico    | Quantico Middle/High School is located at Quantico, Virginia. The school serves about 400 students in grades six through twelfth grade. The school serves a community which is about 94% Marines. Average student performance on standardized achievement tests at the school in 1999 ranged from a low of the 61 <sup>st</sup> percentile to a high of the 79 <sup>th</sup> percentile. Quantico is poised to complete the DoDEA Technology Standards for grades 8 and 11 as a result of a very successful pilot program using electronic portfolios.      |

\*Based on 1999 Standardized Reading and Mathematics Scores

4/1/2000

for African development limits our ability to effect change. Sandy reports a positive trend, however, among successful Africans in the U.S. now investing in Africa; also, the UN Development Program (UNDP) is expanding its programs that address this issue into Africa; providing financial and technical support to African companies to create incentives for Africans to return home; and focusing on strengthening governance. Economic opportunity and political stability remain the most effective ways to stop the drain.

(D) **DoD Annual Report** (via Berger) – Sandy forwards DoD's annual report, similar to last year's, which emphasizes three priorities: taking care of people; protecting readiness today; and modernization to protect readiness tomorrow. The report highlights additional pay raises in our recent budget (0.5% above inflation); improvements in housing benefits; full funding for O&M budgets; and full funding for '01 expected contingency costs for Bosnia and Kosovo. Sandy agrees with Secretary Cohen's conclusions that stopping the annual migration of procurement funding, which has slowed modernization, will leave the military far better able to meet challenges in the future; NSC and DoD will remain vigilant on personnel issues.

(E) **Sec'y Cohen memo re: Junior ROTC (JROTC)/DoD schools (via Berger/Lew)** – Sandy and Jack summarize Secretary Cohen's memo to you, responding to your questions at the CINCs Conference regarding potential lessons from JROTC and DoD school system successes. Highlights from Secretary Cohen's reports include: the proportion of JROTC graduates who enter the military after high school is about 5 times greater than non-JROTC students; for FY96-98, JROTC participation has led to roughly 8,000 new recruits annually; DoD is in the process of expanding the JROTC program from 2,591 (\$177M) to the authorized maximum of 3,500 by FY05; on the DoD schools issue, DoD school students are consistently among the highest ranking students on national tests; achievement among minority students is noteworthy. Jack and Sandy will explore the possibility of your visiting a DoD school. cc: Brad

should  
(a) much?  
large  
10-20,000

(F) **Berger memo on Bosnian students from Sarajevo** – Sandy reports on the two Bosnian high school students whom you met in Sarajevo during the Stability Pact Summit and who expressed interest in studying in America. Adnan and Nermina Memić have been accepted at St. Mary's College in Michigan; the school has offered them four-year scholarships and an opportunity to work on campus. The Jewish Community Council and a local Muslim group are cosponsoring housing; transportation has also been arranged.

Good  
I should  
with them  
can get them  
work

(G) **Sec'y Slater letter re: FAA Reauthorization Bill** – Prior to your India trip, Rodney sent a letter regarding the FAA bill to Betty. We have now received the bill (last day for action is April 8<sup>th</sup>). Like Rodney, your White House advisers will recommend that you sign the bill. *The letter is attached.*

EDUC -  
DOD SCHOOLS

Reed / think / should  
visit one of their schools  
and should mention in JOTY  
as support for teacher training  
as they have not worked  
at how they're trained compared  
to regular public schools

copied  
Reed  
Street  
Edmonds  
Podesta

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN  
1-5-00

## Making the Grade

# Pentagon-Run Schools Excel in Academics, Defying Demographics

Of Course, It Doesn't Hurt That Parents Can Be Ordered to Get Involved Sneaking Kids Back on Base

By DANIEL GOLDEN

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
FORT KNOX, Ky. — If the schools on this U.S. Army base were lagging in standardized-test scores, they would have plenty of excuses. Their students are poorer and more racially diverse than the national average, and only 60% finish the school year where they started it.

Instead of struggling, however, the schools the Pentagon runs at Fort Knox and other U.S. military bases are defying demographics by acing the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federal exam regarded as the best gauge of precollege academic performance.

In the 1998 NAEP eighth-grade writing exam, for example, military bases in the U.S. ranked No. 2, second only to Connecticut, among 39 states and jurisdictions. In reading, their eighth-graders tied for fourth out of 43. Of the 13 NAEP tests the schools have taken at home and abroad in various grade levels and subjects since 1994, only once have they failed to top the national mean.

### Bound for College

But tests aren't the only measure of the system's success. The Defense Department says that its schools are sending more than 80% of their graduates to college, well ahead of the overall national rate of 67%. And parent satisfaction is so high that the department has had to crack down on those trying to sneak their children back into the system after leaving the military or moving off base.

Most astonishing to those who have studied the NAEP results is the Pentagon's record with low-income and minority children. At least half the 34,000 students at its 71 domestic base schools qualify for free or reduced-price lunches under the federal school-lunch program because their parents are on the low end of the military pay scale. Forty percent of the system's students are black or Hispanic—10 percentage points above the public-school average.

But 35% of the students in the base schools' lunch program demonstrated writing proficiency last year, almost as high a rate as the 40% among their other students. Nationally, only 10% of such low-income students achieved proficiency. And 26% of black students and 32% of Hispanic students scored at or above proficiency, far exceeding national averages of 7% for blacks and 10% for Hispanics.

"This debunks the notion that demography is destiny," says Roy Truby, executive director of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees NAEP. "It's one of the most encouraging things I've ever seen."

Ray Tolleson, interim director of the Pentagon schools, says they are so effective because they spend extra time and effort training teachers and trying to involve parents in school life. Military authorities grant service members release time—typically, an hour a week or a half-day a month—to volunteer in the schools. At Fort Knox, every school also is adopted by an Army unit, which may do anything from mentoring to proctoring.

"We've found a blueprint for success," says Gen. Patrick K. Gamble, commander of the U.S. Air Force in the Pacific and an adviser to the schools, which require 24 credits for graduation, two or three more than most states demand.

Hard to replicate

Of course, some aspects of the military formula would be hard to replicate in civilian life. The domestic base schools, which are funded from the Pentagon budget, spend \$7,279 per pupil. That's about 23% more than the national average and 26% more than Fort Knox's neighboring Hardin County school district, which depends on local taxes and state and federal aid. The Pentagon says it uses the extra funds for such things as staff training, art and music classes and technology. While class sizes are about the same as the national average, a higher proportion of teachers at the Pentagon schools hold master's degrees. And the schools have about twice as many computers per student as the national norm.

But "you can replicate the drive for parent involvement and the intensive staff training," says Mr. Tolleson, a former Northern California school superintendent. "Our teachers are really apprised of the latest techniques for working with kids," he adds.

The higher levels of minority achievement at the base schools echo their roots. After World War II, the military established schools overseas for children of occupying forces in Europe and the Pacific. At the same time, it formalized a school system in the U.S., primarily in the then-segregated South, to provide integrated schools for children of the newly desegregated armed services. In most other parts of the U.S., local school districts run base schools or dependents go to school off base.

Fort Knox's schools, which have 3,200 students, don't look much like military academies. They are relaxed places where students wear jeans and can participate in a full slate of extracurricular activities. Through close cooperation with the military authorities, the schools strive to maintain a creative learning environment, effective discipline and sensitivity to the upheavals in children's lives.

At the Fort Knox schools, many of the parent volunteers also serve as role models, including Sgt. Ricky Price, who helps fifth-grade teacher Amelia Blossom Pegram at MacDonald Intermediate School. Sgt. Price tutors students who struggle with spelling or math, hands out rewards for good test scores and "has made a difference to some of the boys who have less parent support or come from single-parent families," Ms. Pegram says.

### Detail Makes the Difference

When Ms. Pegram tries to elicit some holiday essays from her students, she first describes a menu—corn, coleslaw, and meat—in tones as flat as those she might use in giving her weekly spelling test. Then her voice ripens to savor a feast: "End-of-season corn, fresh coleslaw, smoked-meat barbecue."

The difference? "The detail?" ventures Danielle Stephenson, a braided 11-year-old. "What it looked like and tasted like?"

"All right," says Ms. Pegram, who has taught at Fort Knox for 26 years. "We're using the language, taking it up a bit." The students begin writing. Sgt. Price hunches over one of them, dispensing advice.

### 'I'll Go In'

Serita Samuel, a nurse, frequently volunteers at the Pierce Elementary School, which her son and daughter attend. But her husband, Bernard, an Army sergeant, plans to retire in March to study nursing at the University of Louisville. In that case, they would have to leave the base and forfeit eligibility for the Fort Knox schools. The prospect so distresses Ms. Samuel that she is thinking of joining the Army herself rather than sending her children to local public schools.

"They care about learning here," she says one morning as she grades a spelling test. "I told my husband, if he goes out, I'll go in."

Her daughter, Jasmine, a third-grader, is composing a cherry-pie recipe on a computer. "I don't want to go to another school," she says. "I want to stay here."

Fort Knox schools are trying experimental techniques, from peer mediation for student disputes to a form of exile from regular classes, called in-school suspension, for misbehavers. These gentle approaches work particularly well here because they are backed up by a threat. If a soldier can't keep his children in line, or ignores repeated requests for a conference, the school can call his commanding officer. At the least, the soldier will get a dressing-down; at most, he or his family may be expelled from base housing.

In one recent instance, an elementary school sought help from Fort Knox authorities after a mother—a soldier's wife—insulted a cafeteria worker. The garrison command reminded the soldier that, under Army rules, he was responsible for his family's conduct. Similarly, after being contacted by Fort Knox High School, military authorities chewed out a soldier whose son had joined a gang. And when the 16-year-old's behavior didn't improve, they evicted the boy from base.

"At Fort Knox, the command is going to support you, so parents know they better show up for conferences," says Lois Gray, a former Fort Knox principal who is now superintendent of the Hardin County schools. "If I have a parent who works at Dow Corning, I don't usually call the Dow Corning chief executive."

Systemwide, about 35% of the base schools' students come or go each year, a turnover rate higher than that of many troubled urban schools. Such high mobility disrupts learning and often creates social turmoil. At many regular schools, the problem gets no special treatment; kids are just expected to assimilate.

By contrast, the base schools—where many of the teachers are military wives or were "Army brats" themselves—confront the problem directly or even try to turn it into an advantage. Since 1994, the domestic base schools and the Pentagon's 153 overseas schools have shared the same curriculum. That helps students adjust when their families are transferred from one base to another.

### Travels of 'Flat Stanley'

Eight of Betty Yundt's 25 fifth-graders at Fort Knox's Walker Intermediate School have joined the class since the start of the year; four others have left. But the students stay in touch with ex-classmates by sending them a "Flat Stanley," a cardboard cutout named for the two-dimensional hero of a 1964 book who was mailed to faraway places. The pen pals carry Flat Stanley with them and send back postcards to describe the places he has visited. Students learn geography by pinning the postcards to classroom maps, and gain a little math by measuring Flat Stanley's journeys.

Fort Knox High teacher Laurie Walker, who is married to a sergeant, assigns personal narratives on topics such as "My Worst Move." Ninth-grader Jessica Wood, who came to Fort Knox from Georgia in July, just before her stepfather was sent to Korea, took the opportunity to reflect on her family's upheavals.

"I slowly got out of bed wondering what the day was to hold even though, deep down in my heart, I already knew," she wrote. "I walked downstairs to find my mother helping my dad pack his bags. I can remember wanting to go back upstairs and locking myself in my room. I guess I thought that if I did that then it would be like the day was not happening, like he would not really have to leave."

As with other Pentagon schools, much of Fort Knox's approach is based on the idea of doing it over again to get it right. Writing is taught in three phases: brainstorming, first draft and revision. Each year, the Pentagon administers its own systemwide writing test over three days—one for each step in the process.

1/2

Fort Knox school superintendent Frank Calvano credits staff training for inculcating effective techniques. The schools have rearranged class schedules so that teachers can attend a mandatory session each Wednesday to bone up. One of the ideas taught in these sessions is "mastery learning," which is based on the concept that all students can learn—just at different speeds. Those scoring less than 80% on a subject are taught the material again and retested, while the rest of the class deepens its study of the subject.

#### **A Legal Maneuver**

Periodically, Congress hears proposals to transfer the Defense Department schools to local districts. But many Fort Knox parents are so loyal to the Pentagon-run system that, when they lose family eligibility by moving off base or retiring, they keep their children in the schools through a legal maneuver. They go to court to have friends or former neighbors on base appointed guardians.

Children with guardians are supposed to spend at least half of their nights on base, but enforcement has been spotty. In 1995, before a recent crackdown on abuses, 132 of the children in Fort Knox schools were ostensibly living with guardians. Today, about 40 have guardians, says garrison manager Malcolm Fogleman.

When Sgt. Nancy Hewlett had to move off post this year for medical reasons, she didn't want to uproot her daughter Tasha, who was entering her senior year at Fort Knox High. So, Ms. Hewlett and her civilian husband had friends on base named as guardians, giving them legal and financial responsibility for Tasha.

"It's a big decision," says Ms. Hewlett. "She's my flesh and blood. But Fort Knox has a lot more to offer Tasha than the Hardin County schools."

2/2