



PRESS RELEASE

MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION

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MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION LAUNCHES SCHOOLQUEST *Powerful Web Tool Allows Parents and Children to Match Needs with New Schools*

Houston, Texas (July 12, 2006) – Joined by military families, armed service members, elected officials, and educators from around the world, the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) kicked off its annual conference today with the launch of SchoolQuest, an innovative new Web-based interactive service designed to provide military families with valuable information to facilitate a successful academic and social transition.

Based on extensive research and funded by MCEC and private donors, the SchoolQuest program was created and developed by MCEC to serve as a valuable hub of school district information for families on the move.

“SchoolQuest, in combination with the Military Child Education Coalition’s other programs and resources, provides parents, children, and educators with the tools they need to transition successfully,” said MCEC Chairman of the Board General Thomas A. ‘Tom’ Schwartz (US Army – Retired). “While MCEC focuses on addressing the needs of military-connected kids, these practical tools benefit any mobile family during relocation.”

“As a mother of four, the oldest of whom changed schools nine times before attending college, moving our family created a lot of questions with little resources to find the answers. SchoolQuest helps families navigate the challenges of a move to help find the opportunities,” said military spouse Laretta Cremin as she reflected on the need for this cutting-edge technology. “SchoolQuest’s capabilities are impressive.”

SchoolQuest is a free service which allows parents and children to investigate schools, which have been thoroughly researched by MCEC. The system also guides parents in assessing their child’s unique academic, extracurricular, social and emotional needs as they prepare to enter a new community. SchoolQuest is particularly well-suited to help military-connected children who will, on average, change schools six to nine times from kindergarten through high school graduation. As the SchoolQuest system came online, MCEC’s research team redoubled their efforts as the United States Army asked MCEC to accelerate research on school districts in key communities facing change under the Army’s Global Rebasing Initiative.

“The Military Child Education Coalition has trained tens of thousands of parents, counselors, students, and educators to meet the needs of the children of our men and women in uniform,” said Dr. Mary Keller, MCEC’s Executive Director. “From our experience in communities we know that accurate and timely information is critically needed. SchoolQuest is designed to address that need and to ease the burdens facing mobile families.”

Using detailed research of target school districts, SchoolQuest provides parents with a set of grade and need-specific questions to answer about their child's past and current school experiences. These answers are used to generate a student-specific customized report that highlights schools for the family to explore further, provides information about the schools' offerings, presents contact information for key personnel at the school and school district levels, and raises issues the family may wish to consider to help their child successfully transition and succeed in school.

At the same time, an online virtual "portfolio" is created to record the student's current achievements and needs. This document can be stored and updated by the family to document change over time and to track their student's academic history. Throughout the process, the parent is the decision maker regarding how much information to share or store in the system. Due to the generous support of The McLane Group and the Association of the United States Army, SchoolQuest is available at no cost to all families, military and civilian.

Beginning today, the MCEC annual conference provides a focal point for service members, educators, parents, and students to address the challenges of the highly mobile military family and to provide practical tools to help meet their needs. Speakers during the conference include Ambassador Karen Hughes, Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs; General William E. Ward, Deputy Commander United States European Command; Lieutenant General James F. Amos, Commander II Marine Expeditionary Force; and Vice Admiral Ann Rondeau, Director Navy Staff.

About The Military Child Education Coalition:

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is a private, non-profit organization addressing the unique academic needs of military children. Working with all of the armed services, parents, and educators, MCEC develops provides programs and timely information designed to ease transitions and deployments. For more information about MCEC and its initiatives to help military children, please visit www.militarychild.org.

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