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HUI KULA

SCHOOL LIAISON NEWSLETTER SHARING EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION
THAT AFFECTS MILITARY CHILDREN IN THE NAVY REGION HAWAII





Military personnel can be confident about quality of Hawaii's public schools

Education remains a quality-of-life issue for military families.

Military children typically attend six to nine different schools from kindergarten to grade 12, move at least twice during high school, and often change schools in the middle of the school year.

What a surreal experience it has been to return to Hawaii 15 years almost to the day, replace the same officer I replaced 18 years earlier, increase the Santa Ana brood to eight kids, and find a Hawaii public education system that met our expectations and eased our transition.

It's no secret that a number of military families being reassigned to Hawaii arrive with negative perceptions of Hawaii's public schools.

For me, colleagues told me the similar bad Hawaii schools stories and wondered how I'll pay to put my six school-aged kids in private school.

Monica and I are firm believers in public school, and this assignment would be no different than the previous six in regards to school enrollment.

Despite the negative stories, we researched and planned to enroll the kids in the Hawaii public school system.

Hickam Elementary, Moanalua Middle and Radford High Schools were very accommodating, understanding and attentive to our relocation needs as a military family.

Thanks to the superb support of these schools' staff, our kids started school on the first day, though it began a month earlier from their previous school calendar, and transitioned seamlessly with minimal chaos.

I have also witnessed first-hand the great work of the Radford Transition Center (RTC) student facilitators who help all new students quickly adjust and acclimate to their new school.

Recently, I attended two separate events where RTC student facilitators briefed Mrs. Elyn Dunford, wife of Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono. The dedication, poise and professionalism of these facilitators were impressive, and the beneficiaries are the Radford students.

Education is also a readiness issue for the military, as service members can better focus on achieving their respective mission objectives when their school-age children enroll in quality education.

For our highly mobile military families, it is reassuring to know that Hawaii has the same educational standards as 41 other states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Educational Activity.

Additionally, Hawaii uses the same assessment test as 14 other states (e.g., California and Washington),

and we now know that a student who does well in Hawaii's public schools will also do well in these other states using the same standards and/or the same assessment test.

So how do these standards and assessment tests translate to student performance? Radford High School has almost 65 percent military students, and their student successes are impressive. One military family had two daughters graduate as valedictorians in 2013 and 2015, respectively, with the older one currently attending Yale University on an Air Force ROTC Scholarship.

Another military daughter arrived in Hawaii for her senior year, graduated as a valedictorian in 2015, and was accepted into the Doctor of Medicine Early Acceptance Program at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine.

A local (non-military) graduate is finishing this school year at New Mexico Military Institute and has been accepted to the United States Naval Academy.

These are just a few of the many student success stories in Hawaii's public schools.

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