MCEC®

MILITARY CHILD EDUCATION COALITION®

MILITARY KIDS NOW 2020 SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT

MCEC®

The Military Child Education Coalition serves the children of those who serve us all and encourages efforts that strengthen our military children and ensure opportunities for their quality education.

Founded in 1998, the Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®) is a 501(c)(3) global, nonprofit leadership and advocacy organization focused exclusively on the well-being and needs of America's approximately four million military and veteran-connected children, specifically in the areas of academic opportunity and excellence, school transition support, and developmental needs. Our goal is to ensure that every military-connected child grows and thrives through good and challenging times in order to be college, workplace, and ultimately, life-ready. To learn more, visit **MilitaryChild.org**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MCEC MILITARY KIDS NOW 2020 SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT

For over 20 years, the Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®) has dedicated itself to delivering high-quality programs and services to meet the needs of military-connected students, parents, and professionals. Throughout that time, MCEC has also been a proud leader and collaborator in encouraging changes in policies, practices, and legislation that enhance the well-being of military families dealing with transition, mobility, and separation. And, through it all, MCEC has listened intently to its stakeholders and reflected their ever-evolving needs via new programs and advocacy.

Still, challenges persist.

The beginning of the new decade provided a perfect moment in time to take a fresh look at the education and well-being challenges that continue to face military families. The Military Kids NOW Survey was developed over four months and contained around eighty closed and open-ended items. The survey was shared directly with stakeholders and promoted through multiple media outlets in early spring 2020. Military-connected parents with school-aged children, military kids (aged 13 and over), and professionals serving military-connected children were invited to respond.

A few weeks later, the Coronavirus outbreak began to disrupt school and work routines, creating unprecedented upheaval worldwide. Regardless, parents, teens, and professionals completed the survey in admirable numbers: over 5,100 military-connected students, parents, veterans, and educators from 21 countries. In the US, respondents were from all 50 states and 2 US territories. Over 300 more responded, but were not military-connected and did not meet the survey parameters.

The responses were both heartening and heartbreaking. They reflected the strength of their commitments to their country, their families, and their education while also highlighting continuing gaps in services, bumpy school transitions, and fears about student preparedness for life after high school.

This report summarizes the initial analysis of the survey results, highlighting trends, challenges, and areas where support is most needed. The depth and richness of the survey results will doubtless lead to further analysis to gain an even better understanding of the needs and challenges of military-connected students, their parents, and the professionals who support them.

This analysis will be used by MCEC to deepen its understanding of ongoing education challenges for military-connected students and to thoughtfully recalibrate initiatives to better serve the military community. Only one thing is guaranteed not to change: the MCEC commitment…for the sake of the child.

A glossary of terms can be found on page **39**. Questions regarding this report should be sent to **mcec.isd@militarychild.org**.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A Look at Who Responded

Over 5,100 military-connected students, parents and educators from 21 countries completed the survey. In the US, respondents were from all 50 states and 2 US territories.

Legend:
- Students
- Parents
- Professionals/School Personnel

Number of Participants
- Students: 454
- Parents: 3,824
- Professionals/School Personnel: 854

Residents – In US
- Students: 368
- Parents: 3,405
- Professionals/School Personnel: 791

Residents – Outside US
- Students: 86
- Parents: 419
- Professionals/School Personnel: 63
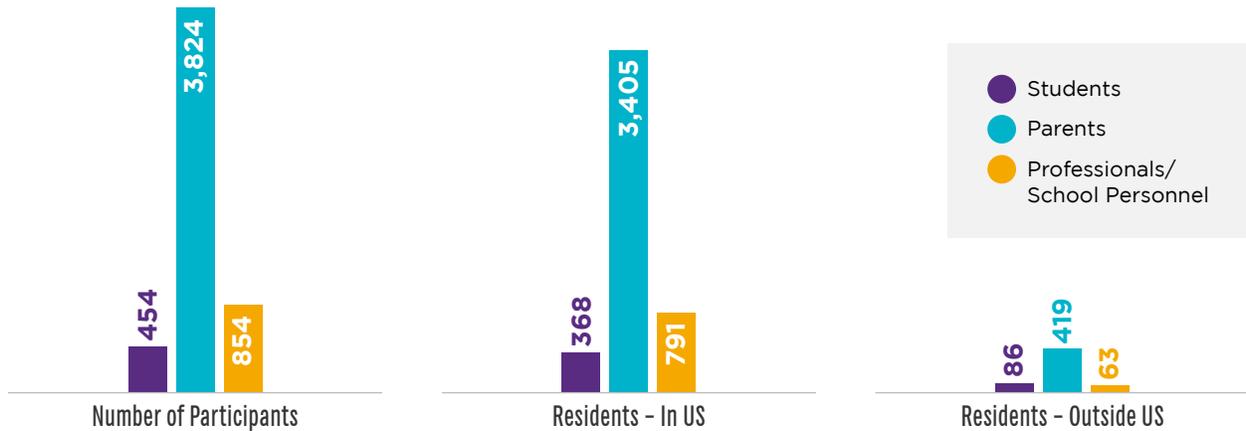
TOP STATES REPRESENTED:

- Virginia
- Texas
- California
- Florida
- North Carolina
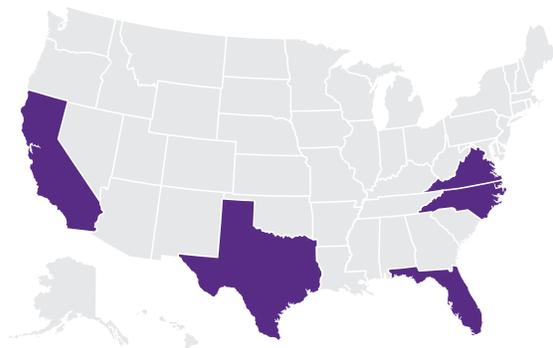
COUNTRIES

- Bahrain
- Belgium
- Canada
- Germany
- Ghana
- India
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Kuwait
- Morocco
- Netherlands
- Philippines
- Portugal
- Somalia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- United Kingdom
- United States

TOP COUNTRIES REPRESENTED:

- United States
- Germany
- Japan
- United Kingdom
- Korea
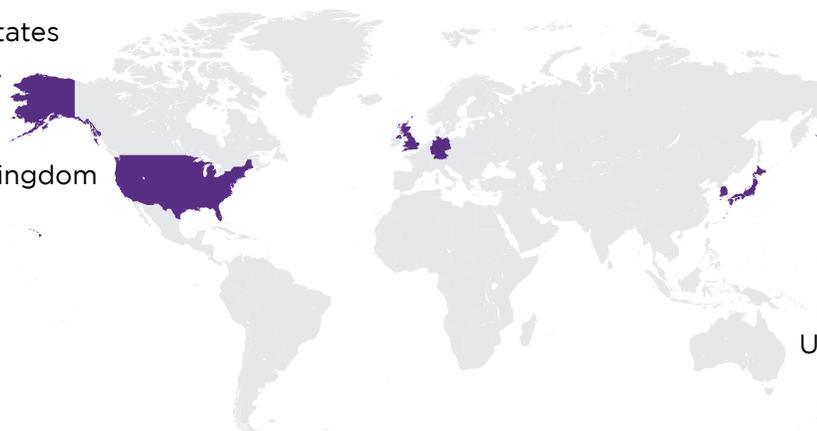
Students and Parents

BRANCH OF SERVICE:

| 37% | 34% | 19% | 6% | 4% |
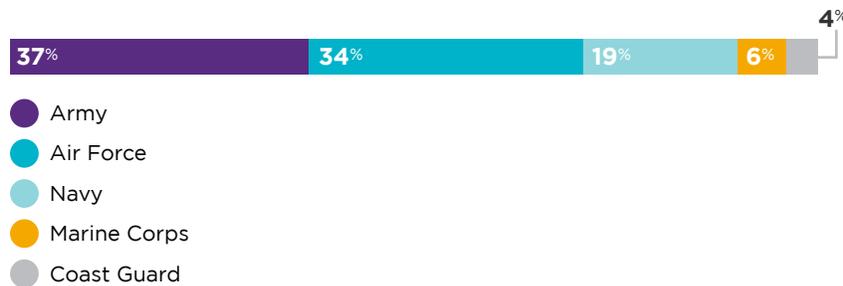
- ● Army
- ● Air Force
- ● Navy
- ● Marine Corps
- ● Coast Guard

AFFILIATION WITH THE MILITARY

3%
3%
13%
81%

- ● Active Duty
- ● Veteran
- ● National Guard
- ● Reserve
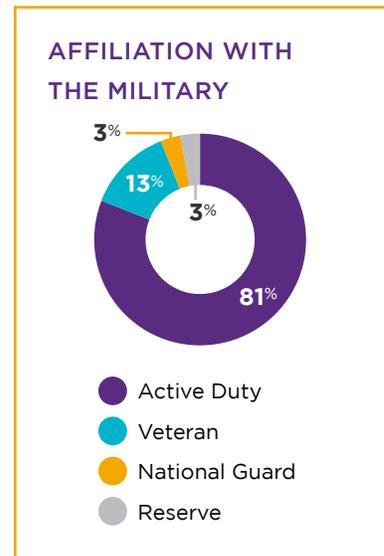
School-related Information:

STUDENT-PARENT QUESTION
Type of School Attending

3%
1%
3%
9%
9%
14%
61%

- ● Public school
- ● DoDEA
- ● Homeschool
- ● Private school
- ● Charter school
- ● Virtual school
- ● Other
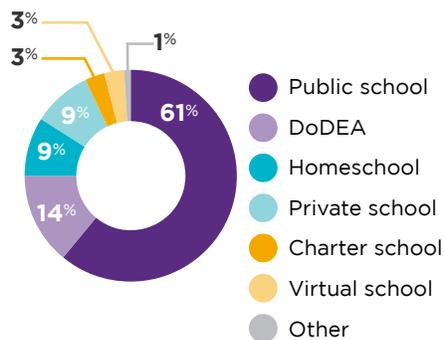
STUDENT QUESTION
Current Grade Level

22%
29%
23%
26%

- ● 9th
- ● 10th
- ● 11th
- ● 12th
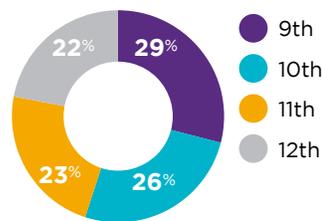
PARENT QUESTION
Child(ren)'s Grade Level

24%
48%
28%

- ● PreK-5th
- ● 6th-8th
- ● 9th-12th
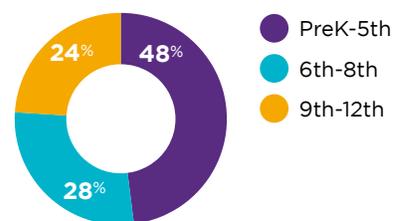
TIMES TRANSITIONED BY GRADE:

Students reported finding 9th Grade the most difficult when starting as a new student. Students reported it typically takes them 1-3 months to adjust to a new school.

How many times students transferred school during...

77% of students moved 2 or more times during Kindergarten-5th grades
42% of students moved 2 or more times during 6th-8th grades
25% of students moved 2 or more times during 9th-12th grades

Kindergarten – 5th Grade

| 9% | 14% | 21% | 27% | 16% | 7% | 6% |

6th-8th Grade

| 27% | 30% | 25% | 13% | 3% | 2% |

9th-12th Grade

| 48% | 27% | 16% | 6% | 2% | 1% |
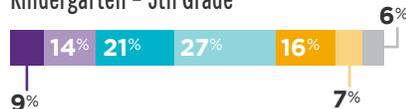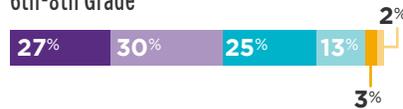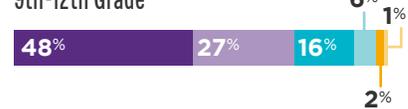
- ● Same school
- ● 1 time
- ● 2 times
- ● 3 times
- ● 4 times
- ● 5 times
- ● 6 or more times

Professionals

| 35% | 18% | 13% | 10% | 8% | | 4% | | 1% |

3%

- ● Teacher
- ● Counselor
- ● Other
- ● Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC)
- ● Administrator
- ● Health Professional
- ● Child Services Provider
- ● School Liaison Officer (SLO)
- ● Military Student Transition Consultant (MSTC/MSTA)
- ● Exceptional Family Member Program Staff (EFMP)

● "Other" incudes:

- School/District personnel
  - > Paraprofessional/Teacher Aide
  - > Campus Instructional Technologist
  - > Librarian/Library & Technology Advisor
  - > Training & Curriculum Specialist
  - > CTE Special Populations/Transition Center Coordinator
  - > Secretary/Administrative Assistant/Clerk/Registrar/Data Specialist
  - > School Liaison

- Social Worker/Case Manager/Social Services Support
- Instructional Disabilities Administrator
- Family Engagement, Learning, Disabilities Specialist
- College Readiness/Academic/Career Specialist
- DoDEA Grant Manager
- Community Military Family Support Personnel
- Installation Family Support Personnel

AGE GROUP OF MILITARY-CONNECTED CHILDREN SERVED BY PROFESSIONALS
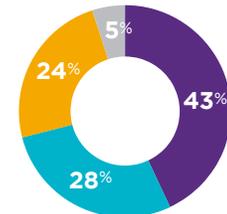
- ● Elementary
- ● Middle School
- ● High School
- ● Post-secondary

UNDERSTANDING THE MILITARY CHILD

There are more than 2 million children in US classrooms whose parents are active-duty military service members, National Guard or reservists, or military veterans. These children experience multiple moves, extended separations from family members, and increased stress and anxiety as a result of military lifestyle challenges. Despite these challenges, military-connected students are resilient, thrive in diversity, and bring a unique perspective to their world. Their challenges aren't always shared or acknowledged, and MCEC is proud to have given students a chance to share their voice so that we can all work toward building better structures of support for them. In this section, we review what students responded when asked what they would like to share with their peers, parents, and educators. Questions were open-ended and optional.

"I am not a victim, I just want a level playing field when I transfer in."

– Air Force Student

"Sure, I have lots of stories of my fun, exotic travels but it all has a price. I have attended four different schools in the past four years and it is not easy. In fact, it's pretty exhausting. I might seem a little cold, but it's only because I've learned that you never know when you might have to move and suddenly say goodbye to your friends. I know it's hard to do so, but if my peers were just a little more open and accepting, transitioning to a new school would be so much easier." – Navy Student

"Military-connected students have more emotional baggage than they let on, and are complex individuals. We also have more experience and knowledge than most." – Army Student

In Their Own Words

Students were asked the question, "If you could give advice to others about how to better understand military-connected students, who would it be?" This was a multi-select question and students could choose from any of the three options. Percentages indicate which audience(s) students wanted to share their thoughts with.

50%	39%	11%

● School/Teachers
● My Peers
● My Family
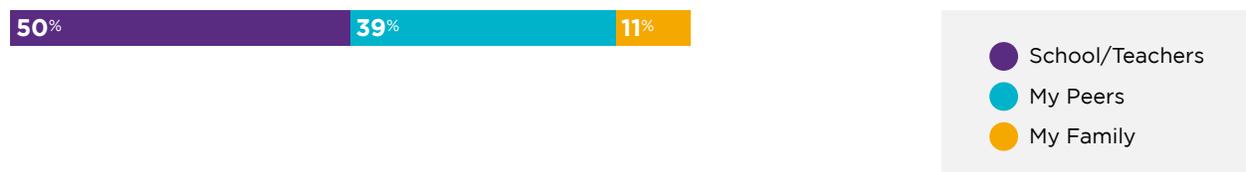
I wish my **school/teachers** understood...

Responses were categorized based on topic and listed from highest to lowest frequency in each category.

ACADEMICS

- Every school is different (requirements, schedules, resources, etc.).
    - > Each state has their own version of the same entry level exams
    - > The endless cycle of reassessment is tiresome and unnecessary
    - > There is a disparity in school resources (technology)
    - > We deal with a lot of different teaching styles based on various areas we lived in

> ## The endless cycle of reassessment is tiresome and unnecessary.

- There is a difference in curriculum causing learning gaps/keeping up in each state/school.
    - > Teach us to accommodate/be prepared
    - > It's hard to keep up with schoolwork during a move (workload, missed/new assignments)
    - > They're not teaching at the advanced level I'm used to (I'm constantly bored)
    - > We are not slow; we learned different subjects; do not hold us back
    - > I have already taken some courses (and have to take again)
    - > The expectation that I should already know what they are teaching/methods

- There are different graduation requirements in each state/school.
    - > Graduation standards do not define how I excel in school
    - > Due to moving, we rarely have the opportunity to take enjoyable courses that would pertain to a possible career path

- Homeschool
  - > I'm homeschooling due to school difficulties
  - > Being homeschooled in a military family means we always have to fight for what we need to succeed
- I deserve the same opportunities (to graduate and participate in extracurricular activities) .
- I am eager to leave the education system due to my frustrations and challenges.
- It's difficult to have credits transferred.

MILITARY LIFESTYLE

- What it's really like to be a military kid
- The difficulties of being a military child
  - > To acknowledge my military lifestyle (struggles, challenges)
- The differences when a parent is deployed
  - > My behavior changes (acting out, crying, performance)
  - > Sometimes schoolwork may not be a priority during deployment
  - > We might want someone to talk to/ check up on us when a parent is gone whether we say so or not
  - > It's hard to focus and have fears of a parent not coming home
  - > It takes a big toll on military kids' mental health and performance
  - > The emotions kids go through during deployments, TDY, and PCS.
  - > It's hard to adjust to additional responsibilities at home
- Not all military kids come from the same background or education
- Schedule changes/unavailability with military life
- To be more lenient during deployment, loss of a family member or learning about an unexpected PCSing
- Arts are significantly under-supported for military students, having to move constantly

Military kids have great experiences, give us a chance to share.

- How little I actually see my military parent
- Just because my parent isn't active duty doesn't mean he doesn't have problems (TDY, financial, civilian work)
- Military kids have great experiences, give us a chance to share
- Not to stereotype military kids
- What it's like to have a military family member
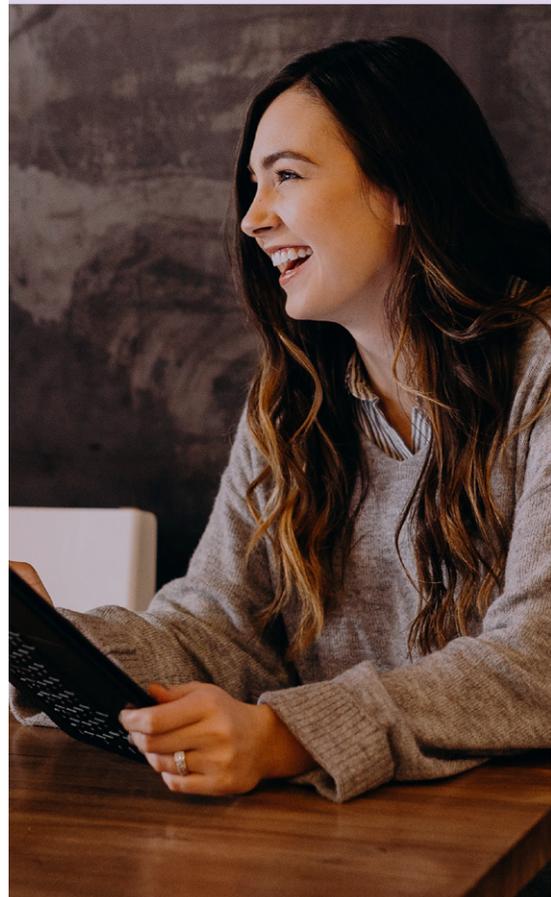
TRANSITION

- Moving is hard on me
  > It's hard to move country to country
  > The struggle of never feeling you have a home because the military always forces you to leave
  > Loss of friends and opportunities

- Support with transitions are critical for my success
  > I just want a level playing field when I transfer in
  > Teachers can make the transition easier by making it a priority to get to know new students

- Moving into a new school is hard
  > Moving in the middle of the school year
  > We aren't like everyone else when we come in at different times of the year

- What it's like to move
- Moving is not a choice
- The transition period can be long or short (be patient)

I just want to fit in.

BEING NEW/ACCEPTANCE

- I need time to adjust/have difficulties adjusting
  > Moving impacts so much of your life that even after a month, you are far from 'okay'
  > It's hard to adjust to a new school

- I just want to fit in/be accepted
  > I wish they would accept me and what I have to offer. I am an asset (look for the positive)

- Everything is new, not just one thing

EXPRESSING FEELINGS

- I feel stressed, anxious, and overwhelmed
- I don't want to be as social as they want me to be
- I feel lonely and isolated
- Mental health challenges
- How hard it is to gain confidence
- I feel scared and intimidated

RELATIONSHIPS/CONNECTIONS

- We have to make new friends and learn new environments
- It's hard to ask for help
- I miss my old friends
- Not having the same life experiences as my peers

I wish my **peers** understood

Responses were categorized based on topic and listed from highest to lowest frequency in each category.

BEING NEW/ACCEPTANCE

- Being the new kid is hard
- It takes time for me to adjust
- I want to be accepted/fit in
- I feel left out
- Accepting me makes a difference
- To give me chance
- We are alike in a lot of ways
- Not to bully
- Wanting to go back to their home state
- I'm trying my best

MILITARY LIFESTYLE

- How to relate to my military lifestyle/ experience
- Being military isn't easy
- It's not my choice
- I've attended multiple schools
- Not to stereotype military kids
- It's different having a deployed parent

RELATIONSHIPS/CONNECTIONS

- How hard it is to make friends
- Not having the same life experiences
- I'm worth the friendship
- I miss my friends
- We don't get close because we might move
- Not having the same friends

EXPRESSING FEELINGS

- Sometimes I just don't want to talk

We don't get close because we might move.

TRANSITION

- What it's like to move
- How hard it is to leave/move
- I need support
- I never know when I have to move
- How isolating it is to move

I wish my **family** understood

Responses were categorized based on topic and listed from highest to lowest frequency in each category.

Moving is not just house to house.

EXPRESSING FEELINGS

- I feel depressed, stressed, emotional strain, or lonely
- How I feel and what got me to feel this way
- The uncertainty I feel about my future
- I'm trying my best

MILITARY LIFESTYLE

- The challenges of being a military child
- It is stressful caring for my siblings when my parents are absent
- It's hard to manage home, school, and social life
- I am distant from my parent due to their absence (emotionally)
- I need my family's support

TRANSITION

- Moving is hard on me
  - > Moving in the middle of the school year is especially hard
- I need time to adjust/have difficulties adjusting
- Moving is not just house to house

ACADEMIC

- Every school is different (requirements, how they teach, schedules)
  - > My grades have dropped
  - > It's hard to catch up or adjust to a new school
- How to homeschool

RELATIONSHIPS/CONNECTIONS

- It's hard to build relationships/find friends

BEING NEW/ACCEPTANCE

- The need to fit in
  - > I have a hard time fitting in

Parents | Level of Understanding

Parents indicate a high level of understanding of most processes and procedures related to transitioning their student from one school to another, such as locating documents needed for registration, carrying unofficial transcripts, and graduation exams and requirements. They show less understanding of how to advocate for their students with exceptional needs, access graduation waivers for senior students, communicate with the school regarding absences related to transition and deployment, and supplement official transcripts with portfolio samples.

Parents reported their level of understanding with the following statements:

How to obtain **graduation waivers** for students who move in their senior year of high school.

| 72% | 28% |

● Do not understand
● Understand

How to help my child(ren) **create a portfolio** with examples of student work, assessments, etc., that could help supplement my child(ren)'s transcripts from other schools, states and countries.

| 49% | 51% |

How to advocate for my child(ren) for **placement into extracurricular activities**, including sports and academic groups.

| 31% | 69% |

How to advocate for placement of my child(ren) into **gifted programs**.

| 43% | 57% |

How to find information about differences between states regarding **minimum age requirements** for enrolling early learners (e.g., Kindergarten and 1st grade students).

| 26% | 74% |

How to inform schools that **student absences may be given special consideration** when related to parent deployment and student transition.

| 37% | 63% |

Graduation exams may be **different between states**.

| 22% | 78% |

How to find information about **graduation requirements** in different states and countries.

| 37% | 63% |

How to find information about **state immunization requirements** and exceptions for new students.

| 20% | 80% |

How to advocate for **appropriate classroom and/or educational program placement** for my child(ren).

| 34% | 66% |

I should **hand-carry unofficial transcripts** to a new school for initial evaluation.

| 13% | 87% |

How to advocate for **appropriate placement of my child(ren) with IEPs or 504 Plans** into appropriate classrooms or programs.

| 34% | 66% |

How to find the **documents I need to have** in order to enroll my child(ren) in a new school.

| 11% | 89% |

Professionals | Level of Confidence

97% **of professionals believe military-connected children encounter additional stress or challenges compared to their civilian peers.**

Supporting military-connected children takes a school-wide effort, including professional development opportunities to inform school staff of the academic and social-emotional challenges these children face. Professionals indicated a high level of confident/very confident responses to items related to their understanding of the military family lifestyle, ability to address social and emotional struggles, helping the student establish themselves and thrive, advocating for students, and assisting in preparing students for post-secondary success.

Professionals were not as confident in addressing the following for military-connected families.

50% Identifying and assisting children whose parents are in the National Guard or Reserves

45% Assisting military-connected children in preparing for college and careers

40% Advocating for policy on behalf of military-connected students

38% Managing behavioral and mental health issues related to transition, mobility, deployment and return from deployment

36% Forming/maintaining/contributing to military and community partnerships

Level of Confidence Breakdown by Profession

Responses were listed in order of frequency from highest to lowest for each participant role.

Teacher Responses

- Identifying and assisting children whose parents are in the National Guard or Reserves
- Assisting military-connected children in preparing for college and careers
- Managing behavioral and mental health issues related to transition, mobility, deployment and return from deployment
- Advocating for policy on behalf of military-connected students
- Forming/maintaining/contributing to military and community partnerships

Counselor Responses

- Identifying and assisting children whose parents are in the National Guard or Reserves
- Assisting military-connected children in preparing for college and careers
- Advocating for policy on behalf of military-connected students
- Forming/maintaining/contributing to military and community partnerships
- Managing behavioral and mental health issues related to transition, mobility, deployment and return from deployment

Administrator Responses

- Identifying and assisting children whose parents are in the National Guard or Reserves
- Managing behavioral and mental health issues related to transition, mobility, deployment and return from deployment
- Advocating for policy on behalf of military-connected students
- Assisting military-connected children in preparing for college and careers
- Forming/maintaining/contributing to military and community partnerships

PROFESSIONALS' CONFIDENCE LEVEL IN ADDRESSING THE FOLLOWING FOR MILITARY-CONNECTED FAMILIES

Understanding the military family lifestyle

6% — 18% 77%

Legend:
- Not at All-Slightly Confident
- Somewhat Confident
- Confident-Very Confident

Helping new students establish themselves and thrive in the classroom

4% — 13% 83%

Advocating for policy on behalf of military-connected students

16% 24% 60%

Forming/maintaining/contributing to military and community partnerships

13% 22% 64%

Addressing social and emotional struggles related to moving/transition

6% — 18% 76%

Managing behavioral and mental health issues related to transition, mobility, deployment and return from deployment

10% 28% 62%

Assisting military-connected children in preparing for college and careers

20% 25% 55%

Identifying and assisting children whose parents are in the National Guard or Reserves

24% 25% 50%

ACADEMIC FINDINGS

The Curriculum

There are a variety of programs that serve students' needs. Still, there is little consistency in implementing processes and procedures from one location to the next, which can lead to frustration for a family in the midst of a move. The lack of alignment of curriculum from state to state and overseas, along with the potential for loss of credit and missing graduation requirements, are areas of concern for families. Weighting courses, determining class ranking, and struggling with the lack of courses that mirror those from the former school concern students and parents. An area of particular frustration is the lack of access to programs and services for students with exceptional needs, including those requiring gifted services. Testing and retesting to qualify for services, accepting documentation from a previous district, continuing services specified in an IEP or 504 Plan from a former district, and providing accommodations in the classroom are all concerns for mobile families. Inconsistency of early childhood and pre-Kindergarten opportunities are additional sources of anxiety.

Gaps

Both adults and students speak of gaps in learning as students move from one school to another. Many note the lack of curriculum alignment from school to school that leads to missing prerequisite knowledge for academic success in the new setting. And, students are often tested on content not taught in previous schools. The scope and sequence of different programs from district to district - for example, mathematics and higher-level coursework - leave students with the need for tutoring to be successful.

> "We've only received bits and pieces of education, and some kids have missed whole units/skills."

Advanced Academics

Weighting courses, ranking, GPA, graduating with honors, special programs such as the International Baccalaureate program, and early graduation create concerns for respondents. They speak of little consistency in placement, with students moving from school to school and in and out of gifted programs depending on the receiving school's definition. Testing, which causes delays in enrollment in appropriate classes, may be required of a student who has been considered gifted throughout their school career.

> "One minute you're gifted or need special ed and the next you're not. What a terrible roller coaster our kids ride."

Extra and Co-curricular Activities

Students may be excluded from extra and co-curricular activities for a variety of reasons; homeschooling and a mid-year move that caused a student to miss deadlines are two reasons cited by respondents. Overseas respondents voice concern that their students need activities on par with stateside schools. An additional concern is the variety of activities offered at the receiving school not matching activities from the sending school.

Private and Homeschooling

Private schooling, according to survey respondents, better addresses the ability of children to fit into the school culture and environment, and the schools can cater to the needs of their children. Parents speak of standards being higher and class size being smaller in private schools. Their perception is that teachers are dedicated to teaching, and there is a connectedness present in a private school that is lacking in a public school.

"The homeschool community is a wonderful complement to military life."

Not all private schooling involves a face-to-face setting. Technology may be used for a child's schooling through an online school. One parent speaks of her child's experience of visiting the virtual campus and involvement with events throughout the year. Students meet online through chat sessions and connect with their peers and teachers.

Respondents often reference homeschooling as a means of avoiding challenges of qualifying for and receiving services, including both gifted and special needs, for which the student had previously qualified. It is also seen as a way to meet the child's needs by parents who feel they know their child better and can meet his emotional needs better than the public school. Parents speak of it as a way to avoid disruption to the child's academics,

"It seems as [if] the rules are structured so a new student transferring in will not ever make it to the top!"
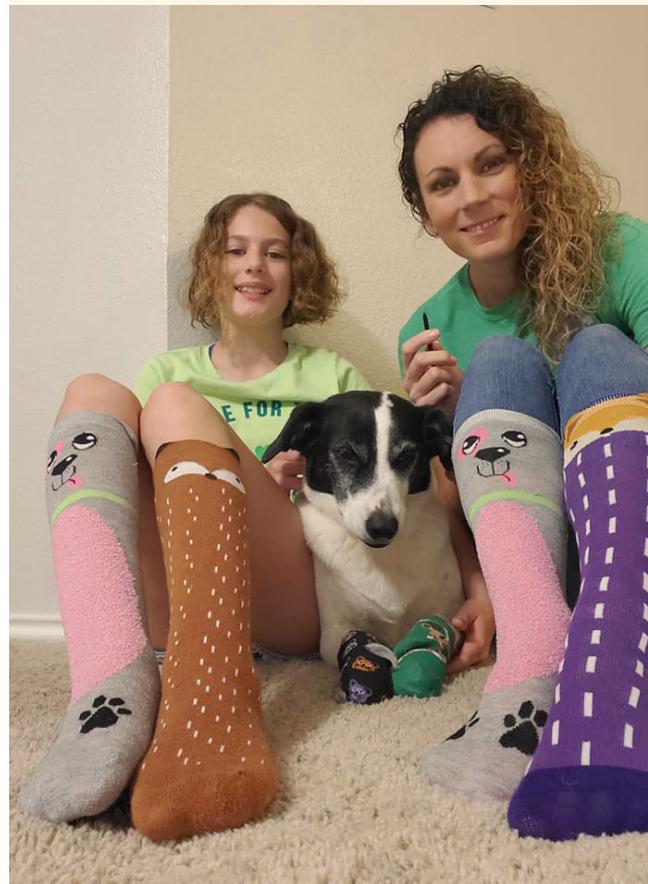
with two critical payoffs: it enables learning to move forward amid transition, and it preempts course selection issues at the receiving school. Although respondents who homeschooled are positive about it as an alternative to public schooling, they also voice drawbacks: the difficulties of registering for and having a seat for standardized tests, including the PSAT, SAT, ACT, and ASVAB; assistance with applying for scholarships; the inability in many locations to participate in extracurricular activities; the need for additional resources; and connecting with the homeschooling community.

"The flexibility of homeschooling allows work to be done anywhere at any time, especially on moves."

Additional Findings

Challenges for the mobile military-connected student include discrepancies in scheduling (block vs. traditional, for example) and start and stop dates, variations in standards from one school setting to another that may cause learning gaps, finding equivalent courses, transferring credits, and understanding testing and graduation requirements.

In addition, access to and placement in gifted, advanced academics, and career/technical education programs present challenges. Families also identify preparing for a career and post-secondary education, the application and enrollment process, tuition concerns, and the search for scholarships as difficulties in their child's education.

Top 10 Academic Concerns Ranked by Participant Role

STUDENTS	PARENTS	PROFESSIONALS
1. Being unprepared for curriculum differences (learning gaps)	1. Addressing variations in state academic standards	1. Moving mid-school year
2. Addressing variations in state academic standards	2. Being unprepared for curriculum differences (learning gaps)	2. Being unprepared for curriculum differences (learning gaps)
3. Moving mid-school year	3. Moving mid-school year	3. Addressing variations in state academic standards
4. Understanding state/ national testing differences/requirements	4. Accessing gifted education programs	4. Transferring special education documentation (e.g., IEP, 504 Plan, Behavior Plan, HS Transition Plan)
5. Transferring credits	5. Understanding state/ national testing differences/requirements	5. Dealing with school-year calendar discrepancies (i.e., conflicting start and end dates)
6. Finding equivalent courses (e.g., foreign languages, advanced courses, AP, IB, etc.)	6. Dealing with school-year calendar discrepancies (i.e., conflicting start and end dates)	6. Accessing appropriate special education placement and supports
7. Handling schedule discrepancies between sending and receiving schools (i.e., traditional vs. block schedules)	7. Accessing advanced academic programs (honors, Advanced Placement, etc.)	7. Understanding state/ national testing differences/requirements
8. Accessing advanced academic programs (honors, Advanced Placement, etc.)	8. Maintaining eligibility for extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, band, choir, orchestra, debate, etc.)	8. Handling schedule discrepancies between sending and receiving schools (i.e., traditional vs. block schedules)
9. Dealing with school-year calendar discrepancies (i.e., conflicting start and end dates)	9. Finding equivalent courses (e.g., foreign languages, advanced courses, AP, IB, etc.)	9. Transferring credits
10. Maintaining eligibility for extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, band, choir, orchestra, debate, etc.)	10. Handling schedule discrepancies between sending and receiving schools (i.e., traditional vs. block schedules)	10. Accessing gifted education programs

Additional Academic Challenges reported in open-ended text option

- Homeschool
- School choice availability
  - > Pre-school availability
- Quality of schools
- Lack of school resources
- Staff development
- Staff attitudes
- Lack of support for military from schools
- School communication
- Transportation

- Quality of teachers
- Attendance policies
- Learning adjustment/not equipped with technology needed (COVID-19)
- Differences in teacher/school expectations/styles (unrealistic/extreme)
- Keeping academic and social development aligned
- Rezoning resulting in additional school challenges
- Federal funding/lack of services provided

504 and Special Education

Respondents see special education and Section 504 as particularly confusing and frustrating. Navigating the rules, regulations, and processes with each move means learning different systems. Respondents speak of different rules for qualifying, varying implementations, and continuity as concerns. Parents also voice concerns about reduced services when a student moves from special education, per state or district regulation, to a Section 504 plan. Respondents voice concerns about the time required to establish or re-establish services with each move and the lack of consistency between schools regarding plans. The new school might require testing to confirm

"The 'wait to fail' model is ineffective."

the need for services, while services might be reduced in scope from the previous school, and/or staff might be unwilling or unable to provide services stated in the IEP/IAP. Student placement in the mainstream classroom (for monitoring and interventions in the least restrictive environment as part of the process to identify the need for services) is seen as creating academic gaps in this population. Frustrated parents, serving as their children's advocates, may not understand the processes and procedures of the new school and may be perceived by school staff as argumentative and aggressive.

"The challenge is really with the law. There is no continuity for the 504 between states. The 504 will work in one state and the next state will take it away."

24% of parents responded that they have a student with exceptional needs living in their home, with 87% of those students served under the umbrella of special education or Section 504. Around 70% of those families have encountered challenges implementing the IEP or IAP, while approximately 50% report accommodations and supports have not remained in place during transition. Around 66% report they could have benefitted from legal advice during moves.

IEP QUESTIONS

73% | Agreed during PCS, they have encountered challenges implementing the IEP at a new school

52% | Agreed student learning goals increased steadily and appropriately despite PCS moves and transitions

67% | Agreed there has been a time their student could have benefitted from the help of a legal advocate

Additional challenges associated with their child(ren)'s IEP:

- Different standards between states/schools
- Poor attitudes/lack of training
- Lack of resources/services
  - Lack of accommodations
- Evaluation/re-evaluation
- Removal/reduction of services
- Acceptance of IEP
- Transferring IEP

- Delay of IEP services
- Legal advocacy/professional support
- Consistent support/services
- Homeschool due to challenges
- Class placement
- Financial burdens
- Leaving the military
- Not following federal guidelines

504 PLAN QUESTIONS

69% | Agreed during PCS, they have encountered challenges implementing the 504 Plan at a new school

50% | Agreed necessary accommodations and supports remained in place despite PCS moves and transitions

70% | Agreed there has been a time their student could have benefited from the help of a legal advocate

Additional challenges associated with their child(ren)'s 504 plan:

- Lack of school support
- Getting a 504 plan/diagnosis
- Different standards between states/schools
- Transferring 504 plan
- Removal/reduction of services
- Lack of resources/services
  - Lack of accommodations

- Homeschool due to challenges
- Consistent support/services
- 504 meetings (scheduling, follow-through, etc.)
- 504 vs. IEP qualifications
- Delay of services
- Federal funding/lack of services provided
- Financial burden
- Legal advocacy

Barriers to Academic Progress

Around 70% of school professionals who responded to the survey work with students with exceptional needs. They identify inadequate staff development, loss of resources and support from the previous school, accommodation decisions based on insufficient funding, lack of individualized approach, and low expectations as barriers to student achievement.

Professionals were asked, **"Based on your experience, what would you identify as barriers to ensuring exceptional military-connected students maintain academic progress?"**

19% Loss of resources/support (e.g., programs from the previous school are not available in receiving school)

13% Lack of individualization (e.g., one-size-fits-all approach)

12% Inadequate funding (e.g., decisions based on budget considerations vs student needs)

11% Inadequate staff development (e.g., blanket approach to accommodation)

9% Poor attitudes and stereotypes (e.g., lack of sensitivity to disability issues, low student expectations, resentment of additional work, discrimination, etc.)

9% Predetermined programming and classrooms

9% Rigid curriculum (e.g., teachers are not able to experiment or use different teaching methods)

6% Ineffective dispute resolution processes (e.g., lengthy appeal process, lack of appeals process, cumbersome process, inconsistent resolutions, etc.)

6% Lack of administrative support

4% I do not know of any barriers

2% Other

"Other" includes:

- Different state-to-state qualifications/ testing
- Lack of resources (staffing/overcrowding)
- Lack of parental support/denial
- Delay in testing/identification
- Parental attitudes alienating staff
- Challenges interpreting documents (time management/knowledge)
- Delay in paperwork/records/processing
- Family communication/connection
- Lack of developmental/technical job opportunities
- Lack of district level support
- Lack of experience/qualifications
- Lack of student motivation
- Lack of understanding processes, procedures and resources
- Not implementing the IEP
- Understanding the military lifestyle/ challenges

CHALLENGES WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Parents who have a child with exceptional needs and professionals who work with students with exceptional needs were asked to share some of the academic challenges they and their students have faced. Data is divided into three categories for comparison: parents with at least one child with exceptional needs who has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan); parents with at least one child with exceptional needs who has a 504 plan; professionals who work with a child with exceptional needs.

Legend:
- ● Parents - IEP Challenges
- ● Parents - 504 Plan Challenges
- ● Professionals - Barriers

Category	IEP	504	Professionals
Loss of resources/support	55%	49%	19%
Poor attitudes and stereotypes	15%	20%	9%
Lack of individualization	6%	11%	13%
Inadequate funding	9%	8%	12%
Lack of administrative support	8%	7%	6%
Inadequate staff development	3%	2%	
Predetermined program/rooms	1%		3%
Ineffective dispute resolution	3%	6%	
Rigid curriculum			9%
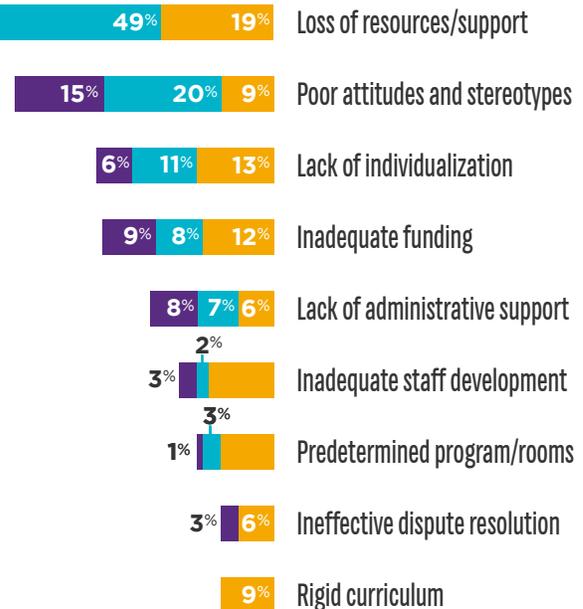
College and Career

The PCS during a student's later high school years, and particularly in the senior year, is a concern for respondents, both parents and students. As they prepare for the future, where to apply for college and what tuition will be required are two questions often posed. In general, funding for college is a concern for families with high school students. Scholarships, both academic and athletic, are also a source of concern. Non-resident tuition waivers for the military-connected student are mentioned as something that will assist families of college-aged students.

Transitioning during high school means a student may not be able to participate in athletics and, therefore, may not receive the exposure needed to be offered an athletic scholarship. Information regarding scholarships, grants (e.g., FAFSA), and the GI Bill is seen as a real need by families.

> "Finding college support through scholarships and grants. There's always something that makes us not eligible for the few that are available."

Overseas respondents feel a distinct lack of information and support in preparing their children for college. The quality of coursework leading to graduation and success in college is a concern. Respondents, once again, voiced the need for a standard, consistent curriculum that would give their students the content knowledge they need to vie for seats in top-tier colleges other than those in the state from which they graduated high school.

As noted previously in this report, families identify preparing for a career and post-secondary education, the application and enrollment process, tuition concerns, and the search for scholarships as difficulties in their child's education.

51% of the parents who responded to a question about having experienced post-secondary education challenges ranked the following concerns:

12% Finding and/or visiting colleges or other post-secondary schools

11% Applying for scholarships

10% Applying/qualifying for financial aid

10% Qualifying for in-state tuition

8% Utilizing the Post 9-11 GI Bill

1% Other

Other post-secondary challenges included in open-ended text option:

- Applying for colleges during transition
- Enrollment process (starting over/slow process)
- Lack of teacher/counselor support (recommendation letter/communication)
- PCSing prior to student completing/attending college
- Transcripts from multiple schools
- Access to athletic recruitment and scholarship opportunities
- Continuing with college prep program after PCS
- Acquiring military academy nominations while living OCONUS
- Difficulty being away from family while at college
- Finding affordable and trustworthy childcare
- Finding a job

- Finding suitable services for cognitive delays
- Fulfilling requirements when degrees/certifications differ
- Funding private school
- Lack of communication between veteran and custodial parent
- Lack of financial assistance for disabled veterans/dependents
- Lack of support for GI Bill transfer
- Limitations of DoDEA vs. Stateside schools (lack of advanced courses/AP, etc.)
- Not prepared for college education due to substandard education
- Not prepared due to lack of support
- Roommate issues
- Special Education challenges
- Understanding programs available (scholarships/alternative post-secondary)

Impact of Time

Survey respondents repeatedly voiced challenges with time. Registering for school may take time and become complicated as the service member and spouse locate a residence and move while living in temporary quarters. Schools may require documentation of residence inside their zone, which means parents may enroll a student in one school and then withdraw them and enroll them in another, all of which takes time. With each move, families may have to adjust to new processes and procedures for establishing services for their children with exceptional needs, which can be time consuming. Courses leading to a diploma or certificate may differ from school to school, thereby adding to the time needed to graduate. Summer and mid-year moves don't always happen at a time when electives and extracurriculars are selected. Students need time to adjust to a new life and acknowledge that yet another PCS is coming up, which means it's time to say goodbye and time to make new friends again.

> "Schools are slow to move; they like lots of time. Some students do not get testing (LD or gifted) because they [the school] want to wait and see. These kids don't have that kind of time."

The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, also known as MIC3, addresses the challenges of military-connected children and their frequent relocations. It allows for uniform treatment as these students transfer between public school districts in member states. MIC3 can help mitigate the impact of time by holding member states to a uniform standard regarding educational issues including enrollment, placement and attendance, eligibility, and graduation.

Survey results indicated a decided lack of understanding of MIC3, and how it can ease transition concerns for military-connected students.

Parents and Professionals (Administrators, Counselors, Teachers) were asked, "Are you familiar with the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3)?"

BREAKDOWN BY PARTICIPANT TYPE

33%

67%

● Yes
● No

Parents

| 28% | 72% |

Professionals

| 54% | 46% |

Administrators/Counselors

| 72% | 28% |
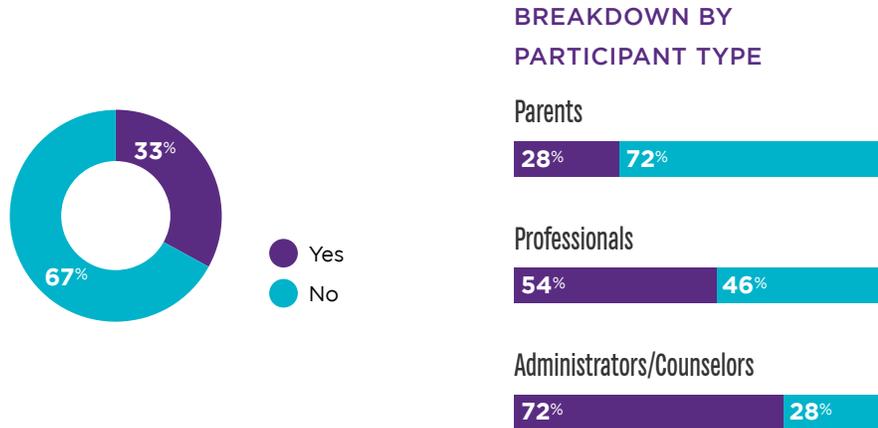
School professionals report a high level of confidence in assessing transcripts and eligibility and enrolling students in the school, including students with special needs. The areas in which they are least confident are enrollment of early learners, handling differences between states/ graduation exit exams, and addressing graduation-waiver requirements for students who move in their senior year of high school.

Administrators and counselors were not as confident (Not at All – Somewhat) in addressing the following for military-connected students:

67% | Addressing graduation-waiver requirements for students who move in their senior year of high school

64% | Handling differences between state graduation exit exams

52% | Understanding immunization requirements and exceptions for new students

50% | Handling enrollment of early learners (e.g., Kindergarten and 1st grade transfers)

44% | Evaluating transcripts from other schools, states and countries

Administrators' and counselors' confidence level in addressing the following for military-connected students.

- 🟣 Not at All-Slightly Confident
- 🔵 Somewhat Confident
- 🟡 Confident-Very Confident

Assessing enrollment eligibility for new students

13%	19%	68%

Understanding immunization requirements and exceptions for new students

30%	22%	48%

Determining how to include new students into extracurricular activities, including sports and academic

6%	17%	77%

Handling enrollment of early learners (e.g., Kindergarten and 1st grade transfers)

30%	20%	50%

Determining appropriate classroom and/or educational program placement of new students

11%	17%	72%

Handling student absences related to parent deployment and student transition

9%	22%	69%

Understanding that new students can use unofficial and/or hand-carried transcripts for initial evaluation

13%	18%	69%

Determining placement of new students with IEPs or 504 Plans into appropriate classrooms or programs

10%	17%	73%

Handling differences between state graduation exit exams

41%	23%	36%

Evaluating transcripts from other schools, states and countries

18%	25%	57%

Handling the placement of new students into gifted programs

13%	22%	65%

Addressing graduation-waiver requirements for students who move in their senior year of high school

49%	19%	32%

Military Transition Professionals Hired/Consulted

81% of parents have hired/consulted with professionals to provide support during military transitions.

Families may seek the assistance of outside consultants during transition in addition to conferring with the school counselor. Consultants referenced include the Military and Family Life Counselor, the Installation School Liaison Officer, and the office of the Exceptional Family Member Program.

26% School-based Counselor

22% Installation School Liaison Officer (SLO)

15% Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC)

13% Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)

12% Psychologist/Psychiatrist
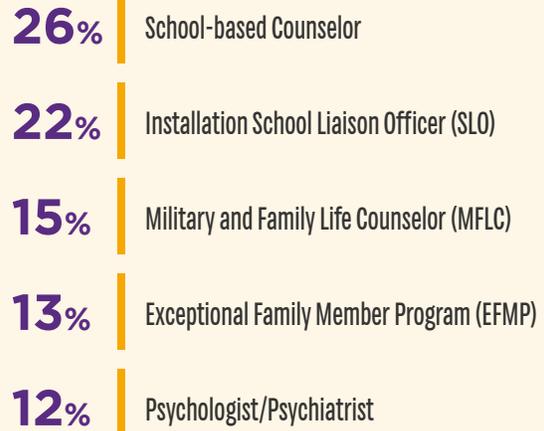
"Having to renew an IEP every 1-2 years can place a child in a cycle that never allows them to continue at the same level of services."

– Parent

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

"Being a military kid is not just saying goodbye to your parent for a while, it's saying goodbye unaware if they are going to come home or not. It's a sacrifice, and being a military child you don't have a choice. It's not something you chose. It's a choice your parents made to keep you and everyone else safe."

Unpredictability

Survey respondents note a lack of control in life choices and circumstances. Deployment, with its related security concerns, job-related threats, and PTSD, are stressors these children face that are not confronted by most civilian students. It is not only parents who deploy; a sibling may also. Geographic separations, unexpected orders to PCS, overseas rotations — all of these are part of the unpredictability of the military-connected child's life, in addition to academic concerns.

Friends and Support Networks

Mobile children need time to adjust to and figure out how things work in an entirely new environment where the social norms may be very different from their previous location. Fitting in and being part of a group is paramount in their lives, where they are not a life-long native and often lack long-term connection. Part of being a military-connected child, according to *"It's not as easy as military kids make it look."* respondents, is always being the new kid, feeling unwanted, left out. They start over and over again, just getting comfortable when it is time to move again. They may withdraw feeling fearful, anxious, lonely, isolated, scared, and disposable. Everyone is a stranger. Mid-year moves when social groups have already been established make assimilating difficult, at best.

Leaving presents additional challenges. The child knows they are leaving and that the relationships they have built will be lost. Friends come and go - they may be the ones leaving or the ones remaining. It is nonetheless a loss for the child who will miss their friends.

"Moving impacts so much of your life that even after a month at a new school, you are far from 'okay' with where you are at."

Being sensitive to possible stresses the military-connected student experiences is essential. In addition to the pressures of moving, leaving friends, curriculum concerns, exclusion from opportunities, gaps in learning, absent parents, and uncertainty about how today's choices will affect their future, they may face hostility for their parent's career. This may be due to political ideology, lack of compassion from school personnel, and/or having no access to extended family. Support is essential for these children. Students who responded to the survey asked for welcoming, acceptance, kindness, and somebody to reach out. Friendship programs, a buddy, and/or a teacher or staff member offering support are all welcomed by a new student.

"Non-military kids don't understand that even if they don't really need another friend, it could be our entire lifeline until we get our feet under us."

Communication

Communication with the school can be a concern when the family is transitioning in or out of an assignment, when the military parent is deployed or assigned to temporary duty, and when the spouse is attempting to fill the roles of both parents while carrying out everyday tasks such as transporting children and engaging in work of their own.

Parents emphasized the need for communication as an important aspect of their child's success. They specifically referred to phone calls and emails not being returned; lack of timeliness in response to records requests; the need to maintain updated websites; and the need for information about school rules, regulations, and schedules.

"The mother gets squeezed in the middle – trying to allow the child to grow up and be independent without hovering, but with no safety net built into the school for communication when they go in the academic ditch."

Families state they use both formal and informal channels of communication to obtain information about schools and districts when faced with transition. These include, but are not limited to, Military One Source, the installation website, the MFLC, the SLO, homeschool connection/organizations, Facebook groups, MCEC outreach and trainings, employees/ programs, other social media, and the school and district websites.

Additional Social-Emotional Support Issues

Social-emotional concerns include fitting in and making friends, building self-confidence, and managing stress. **Deployment is reported by 42% of respondents as a concern**, along with behavior/ discipline changes, academic grade fluctuations, and role changes sometimes resulting from the change in family structure. Concerns about the adequacy of coping skills include dealing with pressure, emotional concerns, family responsibilities during deployment, and the parent leaving the military.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES
Ranked by Participants

3,037 | Making friends

3,000 | Feeling of Acceptance/"Fitting in" (school and local culture)

2,565 | Building self-confidence

2,550 | Dealing with parent deployment/reunion

2,349 | Managing stress

1,928 | Addressing behavioral/mental health concerns (anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm, etc.)

1,514 | Addressing bullying concerns (cyber and/or in-person)

1,115 | Dealing with peer pressure

952 | Coping with challenges when a parent leaves the military

948 | Coping with the loss of a family member or friend

702 | Coping with divorce or separation

688 | Handling changes in home life and/or academics due to a service member's injury/health

221 | Dealing with poverty/homelessness

Additional challenges reported in the open-ended text option:

- Family member/friend separation
- Family separation due to work requirements
- Family separation due to school choice
- Financial struggles (cost of living/loss of income due to move, etc.)
- Moving internationally or remote location
- Culture differences
- Housing
- Multiple moves
- Medical/heath challenges
- Family dynamics (blended/new sibling)

- Transition concern
- Lack of resources
- Military culture
- Perception to military
- Childcare flexibility due to work assignment
- Drivers education state differences
- Becoming a caregiver
- Coping skills
- Impacts of social media
- Security concerns due to work assignment

Top 10 Social Emotional Concerns Ranked by Participant Role

| STUDENTS	PARENTS	PROFESSIONALS
1. Feeling of Acceptance/ "Fitting in" (school and local culture)	1. Making friends	1. Dealing with parent deployment/reunion
2. Making friends	2. Feeling of Acceptance/ "Fitting in" (school and local culture)	2. Feeling of Acceptance/ "Fitting in" (school and local culture)
3. Managing stress	3. Building self-confidence	3. Making friends
4. Building self-confidence	4. Dealing with parent deployment/reunion	4. Addressing behavioral/ mental health concerns (anxiety, depression, substance abuse, etc.)
5. Dealing with parent deployment/reunion	5. Managing stress	5. Managing stress
6. Addressing behavioral/ mental health concerns (anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm, etc.)	6. Addressing behavioral/ mental health concerns (anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm, etc.)	6. Coping with divorce or separation
7. Dealing with peer pressure	7. Addressing bullying concerns (cyber and/or in-person)	7. Building self-confidence
8. Addressing bullying concerns (cyber and/or in-person)	8. Dealing with peer pressure	8. Coping with challenges when a parent leaves the military
9. Coping with the loss of a family member or friend	9. Coping with the loss of a family member or friend	9. Coping with the loss of a family member or friend
10. Coping with challenges when a parent leaves the military	10. Coping with challenges when a parent leaves the military	10. Handling changes in home life and/or academics due to a service member's injury/health

The student, parent, and professional results were combined and sorted into the categories of Healthy Development, Home Life/Family Relationships, and Family Separation.

HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

20% Making friends

19% Feeling of acceptance/"fitting in" (school and local culture)

17% Building self-confidence

15% Managing stress

12% Addressing behavioral/mental health concerns (anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm, etc.)

10% Addressing bullying concerns (cyber and/or in-person)

7% Dealing with peer pressure

HOME LIFE/FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

41% Dealing with parent deployment/reunion

16% Coping with challenges when a parent leaves the military

16% Coping with the loss of a family member or friend

12% Coping with divorce or separation

11% Handling changes in home life and/or academics due to a service member's injury/health

4% Dealing with poverty/homelessness

FAMILY SEPARATION

31% Changes in behavior/discipline

17% Role changes (taking on new/additional responsibilities)

16% Academic grade fluctuations

10% Withdrawal from friends

7% Withdrawal from school activities

6% Physical changes (appetite, drug use, self-harm, etc.)

12% My child(ren) have not experienced any of the above challenges

1% Other

"Other" family separation challenges included in open-ended text option:

- Behavioral/mental health
  - > Anxiety
  - > Separation anxiety
  - > Depression/sadness
  - > Emotional (acting out/outbursts)
  - > Stress
  - > Fear/stress of parent being in danger

People and Organizations

Family members identify the need for professional development among their children's school faculty and staff. They believe training will better prepare them to meet military-connected children's needs, especially those of transitioning students. Teachers of students with exceptional needs are seen as lacking understanding regarding the children in their care, as seen in references to them not providing accommodations from IEPs and lacking content knowledge. Teachers are sometimes seen as favoring local students.

> "Parents have to advocate. We can't wait for the schools to take care of our children; we have to do it. Civilians are in the same position."

Navigating military transitions, differing school systems, extended absences of the service member, family members with PTSD, and times of crisis such as combat-related death are all concerns for the military-connected family, and indicate times when support systems are needed. Because children spend 1/3 of their day at school, an encouraging environment is vital to their well-being, as is a partnership between the school and the caregiving parent. Staffing at schools may include counselors, MFLCs, teachers, and principals, among others; but parents may have difficulty accessing them. Communication channels may be unclear, or emails and phone calls may not be returned. Outreach to non-English speakers and minorities is important for family engagement.

Assistance may also be needed to support the families of the National Guard or Reserves, who may be assigned to extended periods of training or deployment. In most cases, family members are separated from support networks.

> "Educators that understand the difficulties military life and transitions create and their understanding and desire for quality education has helped my children deal with several transitions."

There is also a need to clarify education requirements at the receiving school during a PCS move; share information about post-secondary opportunities, including scholarships and programs such as the GI Bill for high school students; coordinate testing opportunities for assessments such as the ASVAB and the SAT with homeschooling families; have an advocate knowledgeable in and available for families arriving with special needs and gifted children; and provide consistency across state lines in programs for early childhood and pre-K children.

Many references to supportive staff members are positive, such as, the amazing military counselor who provides opportunities; the school advisor for military-connected children who offers resources; a small school with easily accessible support contacts; the highly engaged SLO who is an excellent resource; the MFLC who is vital to transition; the students in the S2S program; the kind principal.

Other references are negative. Support personnel and staff may be perceived as ineffective and not attuned to student needs. They may be seen as not knowledgeable about options for advanced students; not knowledgeable about special education laws, regulations, and plans; and/or offering nothing more than what is available on public websites. References are made to teachers and staff lacking an understanding of military-connected children's culture and challenges.

Meeting the Needs

Only **41**% of parent and student respondents feel the schools meet their student's needs. By contrast, professionals submitted a high level of confident/very confident responses to items related to their understanding of the military family lifestyle, ability to address social and emotional struggles, helping the student establish themselves and thrive, advocating for students, and assisting in preparing students for post-secondary success.

School personnel think they're meeting needs vs. parents/students who are less convinced.

Parents and students agreed the following <u>prepared their schools</u> to meet the needs of military-connected students

- Having a designated on-site staff member who acts as a military liaison/point of contact
- Having specific activities or events for military-connected students
- Having a web-page with information that supports transitioning to the school
- Having professional development for staff that addresses supporting military-connected students
- Having a student-led, campus-based student transition program

Families indicate having a designated onsite staff member to act as a liaison (who offers readily available information that supports transition into the school, provides professional development for staff that addresses the military-connected student's needs, and hosts specific activities or events for military-connected students) will better prepare schools to meet the needs of military-connected students.


MOST REQUESTED SUPPORT STRATEGY

Having a **student-led, campus-based student transition program** was the top ranked support strategy recommended by students.

Having a designated **on-site staff member who acts as a military liaison/point of contact** was the top ranked support strategy recommended by parents.

88% of participants reported having activities in their schools to support military-connected students; most common events were:

- Recognizing Month of the Military Child
- Honoring military service members in ceremonies
- Assisting new students (e.g., tours, lunch buddies, etc.)

12% were unaware of any activities or resources available to support military-connected students.
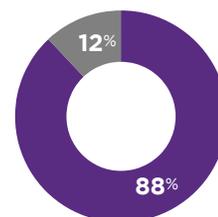
THE WISH LIST

"Having educators that understand the difficulties military life and transitions create. Their understanding and desire for quality education has helped my children deal with several transitions."

Family members are concerned about the impact of school environments that are naive to the needs of military-connected students, including the effect of the next military move and the landscape of the receiving school's environment. They list a variety of resources they believe would support their children's education. References point to assistance provided by a "really great counseling staff." They would also like to see school choice for all military-connected students (e.g., public, private, charter, home, etc.). They would like a standardized/consistent curriculum in which students could transfer without loss of credits or work toward a diploma or certificate. They would like spots reserved on sports teams and electives for students who register late or enroll mid-year. They would like enhanced homeschooling resources, "rapid onboarding" for special needs and gifted programs, and a focus on preschool/early education, including readiness assessments. They would like to know there is a spot available in childcare for their children.

Parents voiced the need for staff professional development, so schools have a better understanding of the stresses military-connected children face that are beyond those of civilian children. They speak of flexibility, deployments, family visits, and loss and grief caused by injury and death of a loved one, as well as a serial loss of friendships. They speak of compassionate training that focuses on empathy, acceptance, and outreach for local students and staff. They share concerns about overseas postings and the need for staff to be well-versed in stateside graduation requirements.

The wish list includes the need for more transparent communication between education entities and the military-connected family. For the student, a buddy for the first critical days in a new setting is seen as necessary, along with counseling for students at any point in transition, i.e., leaving, arriving, settling in, or in need of information about a program of study. There is also a need for special sensitivity for those times when a parent is assigned to TDY, the family becomes geographically separated, and/or the military parent is deployed. Respondents express a need for a liaison or advocate who is familiar with IDEA to assist with settling in and with problems that arise in their student's program, such as noncompliance with accommodations and changed services. Timely communication regarding graduation is important, especially about applications for scholarships, the FAFSA, and the GI Bill.

Top 10 Topics Participants Would Like to Learn More About

(Ranked by participant role as multi-selected from a provided list of topics)

STUDENTS	PARENTS
1. Knowing about and applying for scholarships and financial aid	1. Gaining more self-confidence
2. Navigating the college application process	2. Knowing about and applying for scholarships and financial aid
3. Planning options after high school	3. Reducing test anxiety
4. Understanding the best career options	4. Improving communication
5. Gaining more self-confidence	5. Improving test-taking skills
6. Reducing test anxiety	6. Expressing feelings and thoughts
7. Improving study skills	7. Improving study skills
8. Managing time more effectively	8. Navigating the college application process
9. Understanding how standardized test scores (e.g., SAT, ACT, etc.) relate to academic and career planning	9. Handling/seeking support for emotional concerns
10. Improving test-taking skills	10. Managing time more effectively

Additional topics participants would like to learn more about reported in open-ended text option:

- Lifestyle changes
- Addressing learning gaps
- Transferring transcripts/registration
- Improving academic performance
- Getting school support
- Homeschool support
- Utilizing MIC3
- Special education (information/support/access)
  > Location information details (state vs. state)
  > Support for non exceptional sibling

- Overseas to stateside (reintegration)
- Non-military community support
- Managing cultural issues
- Finding quality professionals, services, resources
- School funding
- Variations in state academic standards
- Drivers education state differences
- How to make changes in DoDEA schools
- School choice
- Districts that don't comply with rules/regulations
- Availability of quality schools

Continued Learning

Professionals report that districts and schools may provide professional development related to military-connected children. They express interest in learning more about the military lifestyle and assisting students with struggles with transition, deployment, and academic concerns.

Professionals reported an interest in learning more about the following topics:

10%	Coping with parental deployment and/or the return from deployment
10%	Managing behavioral and mental health issues related to transition, mobility or deployment
10%	Advocating for policy on behalf of military-connected students
10%	Identifying and assisting children whose parents are in the National Guard or Reserves
9%	Forming/maintaining/contributing to military and community partnerships
9%	Supporting military-connected children who are identified as gifted
9%	Addressing social and emotional struggles related to moving/transition
9%	Understanding the military family lifestyle
8%	Helping new students establish themselves and thrive in the classroom
8%	Assisting military-connected children in preparing for college and careers
8%	Assisting with academic transitions (e.g., transfer of credits, finding appropriate courses, etc.)

Preference in Learning

Respondents prefer face-to-face and online classes to learn new things. They access websites, social media, and printed materials to access resources and information.

Participants (all) reported how they prefer to learn new things:

- Face-to-face/In-person classes
- Online classes/trainings
- Conferences
- Webinars
- Podcasts

9%
13%
14%
35%
29%

Keeping in mind that this survey was before COVID-19 disrupted most face-to-face learning opportunities and that there is only a 2.707% margin of error between face-to-face and online learning, it's possible that preference for online learning might actually be higher.

Methods Participants Use to Access Resources and Information

When asked with a multi-select question how they like to access information and resources, parents and professionals indicated the following preferences:

- **24%** Websites
- **16%** Social Media
- **14%** Printed materials (e.g., books, research, articles, etc.)
- **13%** School Personnel (e.g., Administrator, Counselor, Teacher, MSTC/MSTA, etc.)
- **9%** Video clips (i.e., YouTube, TED Talks, etc.)
- Conferences/Workshops
- Installation School Liaison Officer (SLO)
- **6%** Webinars
- **5%** Podcasts
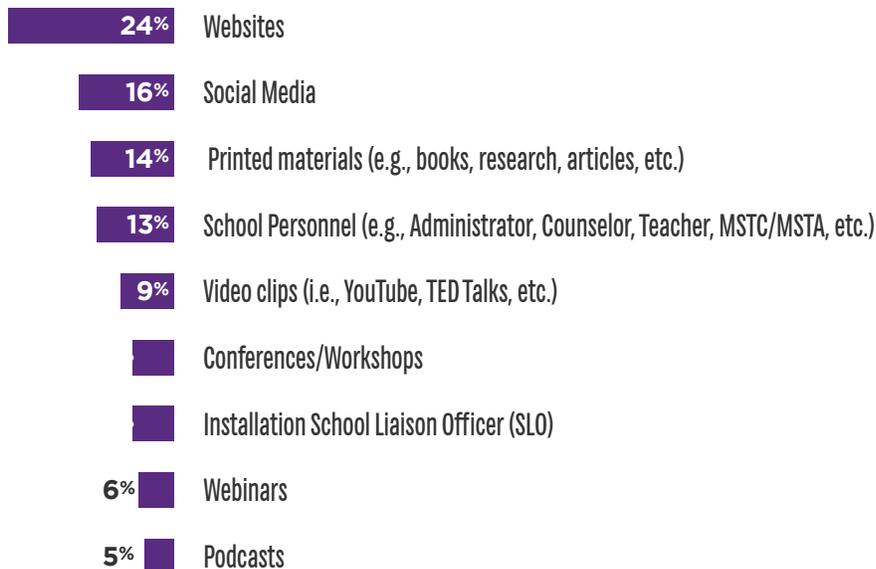
Students Accessing Resources and Information

Students report a high level of competence when using technology, viewing it as a tool, and using it responsibly for productivity, information gathering and sharing, and social matters. They feel safe using it and understand the consequences of their online behavior. In addition, they feel comfortable speaking with a parent if they encounter situations that make them feel uncomfortable. When asked with a multi-select question how they like to access information and resources, students indicated the following preferences:

- **28%** Websites
- **21%** Video Clips
- **15%** Printed Materials
- **14%** Social Media
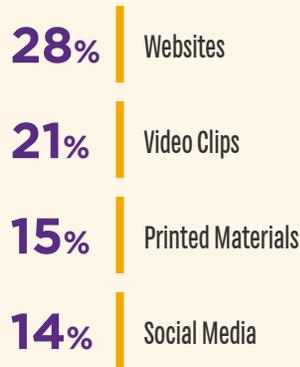
Students indicated their agreement/disagreement with the following statements about their technology use.

I feel or have felt bullied online.

| 24% | 76% |

I feel overwhelmed by social media pressures

| 28% | 72% |

I can go to my parents and/or a trusted adult if I have questions or run into an uncomfortable situation.

| 73% | 27% |

● Agree
● Disagree

GLOSSARY

504 PLAN

A 504 Plan is a legal plan that schools develop to give students with disabilities the support they need, and covers any condition that limits daily education activities. The 504 Plan may also be referred to as an IAP (Individual Accommodation Plan).

FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form to apply for financial aid for college or graduate school.

GI BILL

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill, was a law that provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans (commonly referred to as GIs). The original GI Bill expired in 1956, but the term "GI Bill" is still used to refer to programs created to assist US military veterans. GI Bill benefits help Veterans pay for college, graduate school, and training programs. Since 1944, the GI Bill has helped qualifying Veterans and their family members get money to cover all or some of the costs for school or training.

IDEA

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is the law that makes available a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

IEP

The Individualized Education Program (or Plan) is a legal document developed for each public school child who is eligible for special education. The IEP is created through a team effort and reviewed at least once a year. It describes interventions and supports that the child requires to receive a FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education).

MFLC

Military and Family Life Counseling (pronounced m-flack) The Military and Family Life Counseling Program supports service members, their families, and survivors with non-medical counseling worldwide. Trained to work with the military community, Military and Family Life Counselors deliver valuable face-to-face counseling services, briefings, and presentations to the military community both on and off the installation.

PTOP

Parent to Parent – The MCEC Parent to Parent program empowers parents to be their child's strongest advocate on educational and social issues through MCEC parent workshops, webinars and podcasts.

S2S

Student 2 Student – The MCEC Student programs at the elementary, middle and high school levels serve the purpose of easing transitions and creating a positive environment for any new student.

SLO

School Liaison Officer serves as the primary point of contact for school-related matters; represents, informs, and assists Commands; assists military families with school issues; coordinates with local school systems; and forges partnerships between the military and schools.

TDY

Temporary duty travel (TDY), also known as "temporary additional duty" (TAD) in the Navy and Marine Corps or TDI for "temporary duty under instruction," is a United States Armed Forces Service member's or Department of Defense civilian employee's travel or other assignment at a location other than the traveler's permanent duty station as authorized by the Joint Travel Regulations. This type of assignment is usually of relatively short duration, typically from two days to 189 days in length. Not all agencies use this designation.

TUITION WAIVERS

Sometimes referred to an non-resident tuition exemptions, tuition waivers allow out-of-state students to pay tuition at in-state rates. These waivers can help reduce costs since out-of-state tuition and fees, on average, are nearly 2.3 times more than the in-state rate.

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