

PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS PROGRAM



2022



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Executive Summary

Military-connected students have distinct educational experiences. They are three times more likely to move than their civilian peers, which means they are continuously adapting to new academic and social environments. Many also have to deal with the absence of a parent due to deployment, which can cause tremendous stress for them and their families. The Purple Star Schools (PSS) program, an initiative adopted in numerous states that sets standards to designate military-friendly schools, is designed to help mitigate the unique academic and socioemotional challenges faced by military-connected students and their families.

The Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®), the National Advocate for PSS, partnered with the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL) to study the implementation and impact of the initiative. This report is a follow-up to a previous study by MCEC and CPRL conducted in 2021. It updates the previous study by providing additional detail on how the program has been implemented over time and furthers it with a focus on program evolution and how stakeholders have worked to ensure rigor and sustainability.

The report is based on research in six focus states: Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia.

In brief, we found that:

- There is variation across states, districts, and schools in terms of the robustness and quality of the PSS initiative;
- State- and district-level actors play an important role in ensuring compliance with program requirements and driving program quality and sustainability;
- COVID-19 led to a reduction of in-person programming and made it difficult for schools to establish personal connections with students and families; and
- The PSS program continues to have a positive impact on military-connected students, both academically and socioemotionally. It does this by streamlining the transition process, creating different avenues for ongoing communication, increasing staff awareness of and sensitivity to the unique needs of military-connected children, and facilitating opportunities for community-building.

While PSS is primarily implemented at the school level, we found that continuously improving the quality of the program and ensuring that it is sustainable over time is a collaborative effort that involves both the district and the state. In recognition of this, our recommendations apply to every level of the school system.

States should...

- 1 Use the application and renewal process to drive continuous improvement
- 2 Collaborate with and connect schools and districts to facilitate idea-sharing and program improvement
- 3 Act as a clearinghouse of resources and provide guidance on best practices for program implementation
- 4 Collect and publish academic and socioemotional data on military-connected students to assess and evaluate the impact of PSS and other relevant programs
- 5 Explicitly include family engagement practices in PSS requirements
- 6 Provide targeted funding for districts and schools to support military-connected families

Districts should...

- 1 Act as another layer of support for families by:
 - Designating a district-level point of contact (POC) in addition to a school-level POC who can inform incoming families of transition requirements, school options, and other resources available in the community
 - Providing an avenue for families to provide feedback or raise concerns about issues arising at the school-level
 - Where relevant, building a district-level webpage in addition to a school webpage
- 2 Leverage their knowledge of implementation within schools (including challenges) to identify resources to support schools with the implementation of program components, and to ensure fidelity of program implementation

Schools should...

- 1 Collect and update information on military-connectedness at enrollment and as needed during the school year, and share data with relevant school staff
- 2 Be transparent with families on why reporting military-connectedness is important
- 3 Use a broad conception of military-connectedness when identifying military-connected students
- 4 Leverage social media and word-of-mouth to maximize family awareness
- 5 For points of contact (POC)
 - Strive to develop networks
 - Select POCs that have an interest in, or connection to, issues facing military-connected families and students where possible
- 6 For professional development (PD)
 - Customize PD instruction for the school's military population
 - Offer training for school staff throughout the school year
 - Make PD interactive and immersive
 - Collect school staff feedback on the frequency, timing, and utility of PD
- 7 For transition teams
 - Include parents in welcome programming
 - Empower students to drive programming
 - Support the socioemotional needs of students leaving the school
 - Ensure school staff are collaboratively engaged in the transition process alongside the POC
- 8 For webpages
 - Set webpage maintenance routines
 - Solicit family feedback
 - Drive traffic to sites through PD training and linking
- 9 For military recognition events
 - Use various modalities to include all community members
 - Engage students in event planning and execution

Addressing these recommendations will ensure that PSS continues to grow and improve over time and that military-connected students and their families will have a comprehensive system of support.

Introduction

Military-connected students are no strangers to having to start over. From a young age, many military-connected students experience frequent moves, new schools, parental deployments, and different social circles and experiences. On average, they will move and change schools six to nine times throughout their academic career – three times more than their civilian peers.¹ While they often develop resilience, versatility, and self-sufficiency as a result, it can still be incredibly burdensome for military-connected students and their families to repeatedly have to advocate for their needs.

Like other highly-mobile student populations in the United States, military-connected students face a distinct set of challenges as they navigate their educational journey. Children with deployed parents are more likely than their civilian counterparts to develop behavioral and stress disorders and to require more frequent emotional and behavioral healthcare visits.² While military-connected students often succeed academically, in many cases outperforming their peers on state-administered standardized tests, they can struggle to adjust to the social impacts of repeatedly moving and entering new school environments.³

The Purple Star Schools (PSS) program has been adopted in numerous states to help alleviate the pressures placed on students and their families as they adapt to their new school environments. Schools and districts that receive PSS designations are aware of and proactive in addressing the academic and socioemotional impacts that arise from being military-connected and provide support for these students to excel despite the challenges they face.

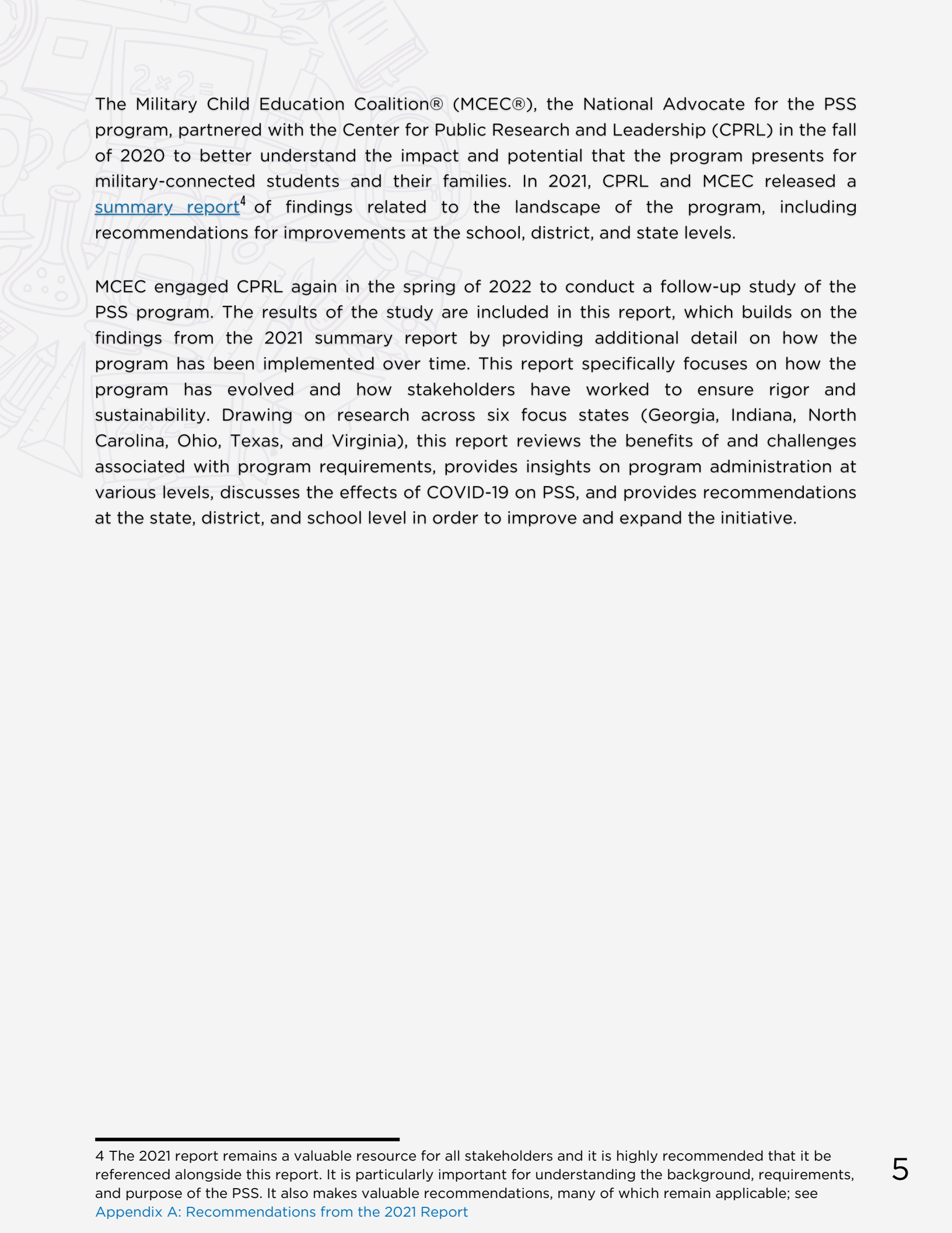
The power of PSS comes from its ability to address “the student, the family, and the community, which are all important parts of the military-connected student’s life.”

- District-level Staff

1 See Clever & Segal, The Demographics of Military Children and Families doi.org/10.1353/foc.2013.0018, 2013

2 See St. John & Fenning, Supporting the Behavioral and Mental Health Needs of Military Children doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2019.1680945, 2020

3 See Mesecar & Soifer, Getting School Districts Ready for the [Military Student Identifier](#), 2018



The Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®), the National Advocate for the PSS program, partnered with the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL) in the fall of 2020 to better understand the impact and potential that the program presents for military-connected students and their families. In 2021, CPRL and MCEC released a [summary report](#)⁴ of findings related to the landscape of the program, including recommendations for improvements at the school, district, and state levels.

MCEC engaged CPRL again in the spring of 2022 to conduct a follow-up study of the PSS program. The results of the study are included in this report, which builds on the findings from the 2021 summary report by providing additional detail on how the program has been implemented over time. This report specifically focuses on how the program has evolved and how stakeholders have worked to ensure rigor and sustainability. Drawing on research across six focus states (Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia), this report reviews the benefits of and challenges associated with program requirements, provides insights on program administration at various levels, discusses the effects of COVID-19 on PSS, and provides recommendations at the state, district, and school level in order to improve and expand the initiative.

4 The 2021 report remains a valuable resource for all stakeholders and it is highly recommended that it be referenced alongside this report. It is particularly important for understanding the background, requirements, and purpose of the PSS. It also makes valuable recommendations, many of which remain applicable; see [Appendix A: Recommendations from the 2021 Report](#)

Background

Every year, approximately 200,000 military-connected students in the United States transition into new schools.⁵ As cited in the 2021 CPRL report, military-connected students face a host of academic and socioemotional challenges due to frequent moves and other related circumstances, including:

Academic Challenges

- Learning gaps due to variation in state curricula and standards as students move from one location to the next
- Difficulty in credit transfers and obtaining course equivalencies, which in turn impact graduation requirements
- Scheduling and administrative challenges due to differences in enrollment practices, academic calendars, and program admissions across schools, districts, and states

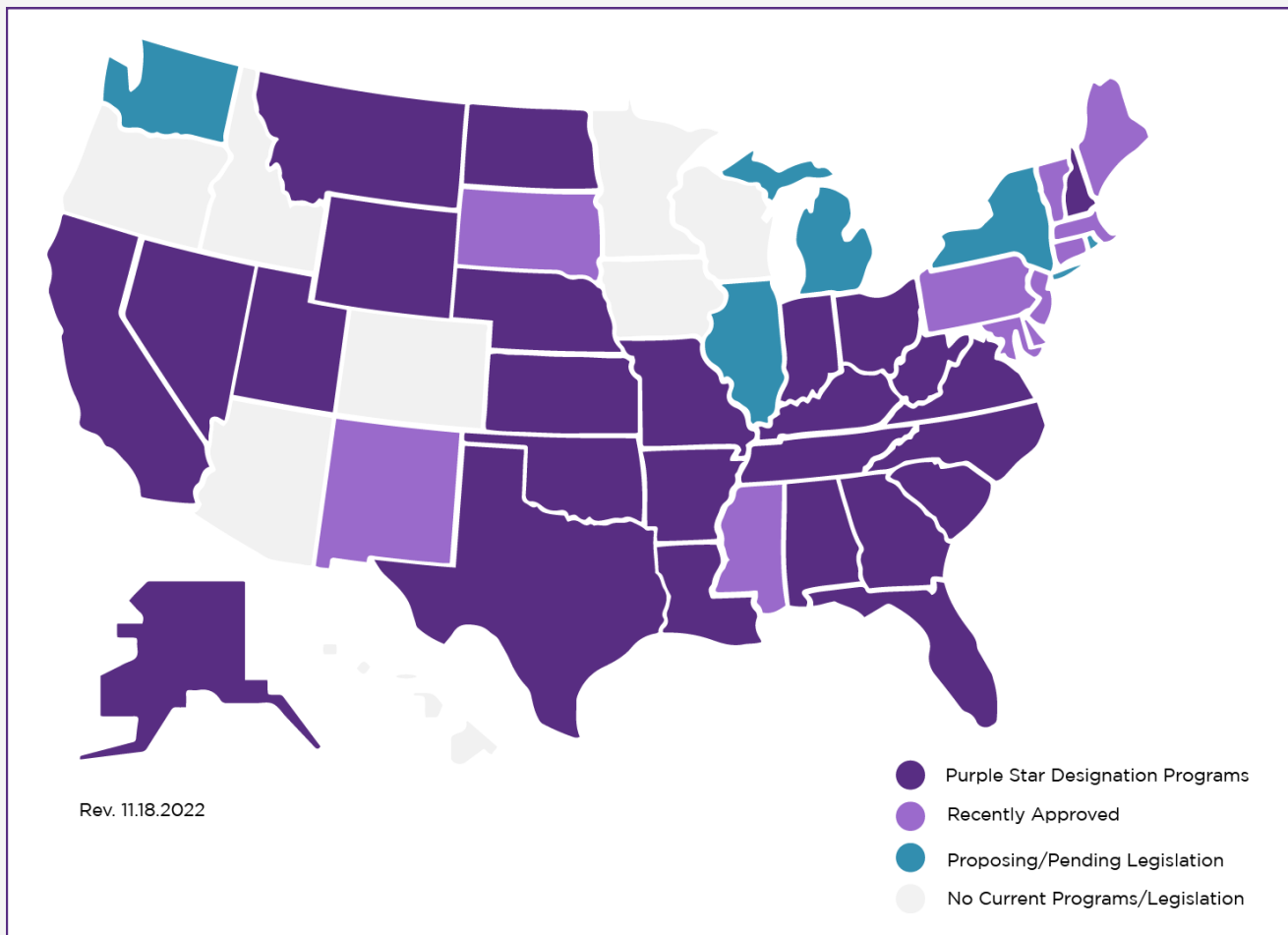
Socioemotional Challenges

- Changes in support system with every move, due to separation from friends, family, and mentors
- Disconnection from the new social environment due to lack of belonging
- Adjusting to parental deployment, especially when combined with a school change

There are two primary initiatives that aim to address the unique needs of military-connected students: [The Military Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children \(The Compact\)](#) and [Purple Star Schools](#). The Compact seeks to build an equitable educational experience for military-connected students through the coordination of graduation requirements, course placement, records transfers, extracurricular eligibility, and other administrative practices that often stand as barriers to a smooth transition for military-connected students. Currently, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Compact. Additionally, the Compact's influence is augmented via the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3), a group with a commissioner from each signing state or district that meets to discuss and troubleshoot challenges faced by military-connected students.

5 See Mesecar & Soifer, Getting School Districts Ready for the [Military Student Identifier](#), 2018

As mentioned above, the other national initiative designed to address the needs of military-connected students and families is the PSS program, which was launched in 2017 as a grassroots initiative in Ohio, and has since expanded to 37 states.



Unlike MIC3, PSS has no central governing body. As such, the program varies somewhat across states, though all state PSS initiatives tend to include some or all of the following program requirements.⁶ These requirements work in tandem to help address key challenges that military-connected students face and to ensure the student academic success and socioemotional well-being.

1

A designated staff point of contact (POC) for military-connected students and their families to serve as the primary link between the military-connected family and school.

2

Provision of professional development (PD) for staff related to the needs of military-connected students and their families

3

A campus or student-led transition team to help familiarize incoming military-connected students with their new environments

4

A dedicated school and/or district webpage that provides resources related to the military-connected experience

5

Events that recognize and celebrate military students in the school community

6 Many states also require schools to select from a list of additional/optional activities, which can include publicizing support for military-connected students and families through school board resolutions, celebrating the Month of the Military Child in April, providing employment opportunities for military-connected spouses, and more.

Methodology and Outreach

Our research is situated in the context of the expansion of the PSS program, as well as the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools, students, and families. This report is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways and to what extent do military-connected children and families⁷ benefit when their child attends a school with the PSS designation?
2. What are the key effective practices in PSS-designated schools that can be replicated to support military-connected students on the path to college- and life-readiness?
3. How have PSS practices and policies changed since December 2020, if at all, including changes in response to the recommendations from previous studies and the COVID-19 pandemic?

To answer these questions, we began with a review of the extant literature on the needs of military-connected students and of the current landscape of the program nationally. We then selected a subset of states for further qualitative and quantitative research based on a set of criteria in collaboration with MCEC, including [Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia](#).⁸

⁷ We want to highlight that, unless otherwise stated, this report utilizes the broad definition of military-connected to include students with Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, and Veteran affiliation, as well as students who have had a family member that has died in combat. For more information about defining military-connectedness, see [Data on Military-Connected Students](#) on page 20.

⁸ See [Appendix B: State Profiles](#)

States, Districts, and Schools

Since the previous CPRL report focused on Ohio, Virginia, and North Carolina, selecting these states allowed us some insight into how PSS has evolved. Focusing on Georgia, Indiana, and Texas allowed us to examine variations in state characteristics, program presence, and program implementation. For each state, we selected districts based on a mixed method approach of random, purposeful, and snowball sampling.

For the random sampling method, we first compiled and then randomized a list of districts with at least one Purple Star School each to ensure an equal probability of selecting each district. For purposeful sampling, we then modified our initial randomized list of focus districts to account for variation at the district level with regards to region, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and locale classification (city, suburb, town, or rural). While we aim to ensure that

our selection was reflective of the broader public school population, this report does not explore the respective impacts of the PSS program on these sub-groups. For the states with a large concentration of military-connected students (Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia), we also wanted to ensure that there was at least one focus district with a high military-connected student population. Finally, the method of snowball sampling entailed requesting recommendations through interviewees for participants at the district-, school-, and family-level that would be able to share valuable insight on their experiences with the program. Our final list of focus districts and schools was ultimately contingent on responses to our requests for interviews, but still closely represented the country's demographics in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.¹⁰

Box 1: State Selection Criteria

State Characteristics

- Size and region of the state
- Number of children (ages 5-18) with Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve affiliations⁹

PSS Program Presence

- Proportion of schools designated as of 2022 (we only included states with more than five districts with designated schools)
- Length of time the program has been in place (we only included states that were currently awarding PSS designations)

Program Implementation

- Required and optional program components
- Application and renewal processes

⁹ Based on [Military State Policy | Purple Star Schools Program](#), 2021

¹⁰ See [Appendix C: Demographic Comparison Table for Interviews](#)

Data Collection Interviews and Surveys

The data collection process included interviews with over 60 stakeholders, including students, families, school administrators, teachers, district leaders, and state-level PSS program leaders. We also collected survey responses from 334 stakeholders, including 115 students, 109 families, 55 school administrators, and 55 district leaders.¹¹ Since we were seeking to understand the varied practices and impact of the program on a national scale, our survey outreach was open to anyone connected to the PSS program, though particular attention was given to our focus states. We distributed our surveys directly via email to contacts identified through desktop research, requested that interviewees share them with their local communities, and posted them on MCEC social media channels.

Limitations

Our method of snowball sampling led to the expansion of outreach beyond our selected focus districts and schools, which we expect may have impacted our goal of intentionally sampling for a broad range of experiences. However, as mentioned, we aimed to ensure that our sample was as representative as possible of the country's demographics. We also recognize that our method of purposeful sampling reduced randomization, making it more likely to hear from actors who are familiar with or more passionate about the PSS program, though our findings indicate that this was not always the case. We had low response rates from family and student interview requests, which we assume was due to busy schedules (our study period fell within spring break and end-of-year exams) as well as COVID-19 related difficulties (a lack of motivation for additional screen time, for example). That said, we did receive a significant number of responses to the family survey and were, therefore, able to supplement our interviews with those analyses.

The family survey respondents consisted of predominantly White, non-Hispanic, Active Duty, and Air Force participants, which limits our ability to make generalizations about the military experience across racial and ethnic groups, as well as across military branches and affiliations. Additionally, the most represented military ranks were Field Grade Officer (O4-O6) and Mid-Grade Enlisted (E6-E7). The student survey responses were heavily skewed to one specific school, leading to its exclusion from the current analysis. Future research should seek to understand how experiences vary across the various dimensions we outlined above, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, military affiliation, branch, and rank.

¹¹ See [Appendix D: Demographic Breakdown of Survey Data](#)

Findings

We have heard about the numerous and wide-reaching benefits of the PSS program on military-connected students and their families. This stems, in part, from the positive impact that PSS designation has on school staff awareness of and motivation to support military-connected students and their families.

The five program components of PSS include a variety of activities and practices that serve to inform and empower families and students and offer both academic and socioemotional support. For one, we found that the program streamlines the transition process, in part by ensuring schools offer significant flexibility to incoming students regarding registration documents, course transfers, credits, and more. PSS designation also ensures that military-connected students have multiple formal and informal avenues for socioemotional support, leading to increased feelings of belonging.

Within this overall positive picture, however, we found that there is variation across states, districts, and schools in terms of implementation such that program quality is uneven. The level of implementation varies due to numerous factors, including but not limited to the size of the military-connected student population, military-connectedness in the wider community, the length of time the program has been in place, and the lack of standardization of program requirements and practices across states, districts, and schools. In some cases, these discrepancies in program requirements may make expectations unclear for highly mobile military families as they transition between PSS in different states. Unsurprisingly, the issue of governance is one that came up in many of our interviews. Stakeholders noted the importance of oversight and support at the state and district levels to ensure not only compliance with program requirements but also program quality and sustainability.

The following section contains our findings based on desktop research, interviews, and survey data. We discuss state and district involvement in the program, the implementation of the five program components, and the impact of the program on students and families. Interspersed throughout these findings is the impact of COVID-19, which largely resulted in a reduction of programming and undermined schools' ability to establish personal connections with students and families. We also discuss recommendations related to findings, summarized in the executive summary above and included in more depth in each section. Given that we conducted this research only a year since the last study was published, our current findings confirm many of the benefits, challenges, and recommendations outlined in the 2021 report, though we build on these with additional specificity on practices related to program implementation.

State Oversight and Support

There is considerable variation across states in the type and extent of state involvement in and guidance on PSS programming offered. States may help boost awareness around PSS, provide technical assistance with programming, and facilitate communication and idea-sharing between districts and schools. Because PSS is most often adopted through state legislation, states also tend to oversee the designation and renewal process.

Benefits

- **Raises awareness and motivates schools to pursue designations**

State-level actors, particularly in states where adoption occurs via legislation, are well-positioned to communicate the purpose and value of the program and to encourage schools to apply. Many schools and districts report first learning about the program as a result of the state’s efforts to raise awareness, including through information sessions and webinars designed to inform districts and schools about program requirements and the process for applying. State attention to the program can also raise the program’s credibility and the sense of urgency around the goals of PSS.

Box 2: Raising Awareness with #PaintNCPurple

North Carolina has the goal to #MakeNCPurple with 100% of schools receiving the Purple Star designation by 2024, illustrating the state’s influence in expanding the program and embedding it into state culture.

“The state was really instrumental in...making sure we understood the purpose behind why we were doing this.”¹²

-District POC

- **Facilitates knowledge-sharing**

Some states use their knowledge of district- and school-level implementation to disseminate information about how to adopt PSS programming. They might, for instance, provide vetted, high-quality PD resources. Some states broker relationships between districts and schools that are facing common challenges, or that could benefit from one another’s expertise. They act as convenors of PSS such that these stakeholders can gather and share information about PSS implementation and the evolving needs of military-connected students and families.

Box 3: Ohio Purple Star State Task Force

Ohio has a PSS State Task Force where POCs meet monthly to share best practices for supporting the military-connected community and document their ideas in a website for use across the state. The Task Force also participates in designing the PSS renewal application.

12 All quotes have been edited for clarity.

- **Leverages the rigor of the application to drive program quality**

The designation and renewal processes are opportunities for states to not only drive compliance with PSS program requirements but program quality as well. In the initial and renewal application processes, states can direct school attention to the type and depth of programming required by setting clear expectations for what type of evidence they need to present and publishing tools that will signal to schools how their application will be evaluated. After an application is submitted, providing feedback and technical assistance to applicants is another opportunity to strengthen school-level programming. Particularly in the renewal application process, states have an opportunity to push schools that have had experience implementing the program to identify areas for improvement and expansion.

Box 4: Texas PSS Application Rubric

Texas has developed a rubric to evaluate applications and to help schools self-assess their candidacy as a PSS designated school. Additionally, the PSS application requires applicants to provide written context and evidence of their programming, rather than merely stating that they have required program components.¹⁴

"They're really hoping you prove that you've gone above and beyond just doing the basics, [that] you are actually spending time to support those military students, not just identifying them."

- School POC

Challenges

- **Ensuring ongoing attention to PSS given staff turnover**

Turnover in state-level staff may lead to changes in the level of attention given to the program, and may also result in loss of information critical to program oversight. Particularly where PSS is championed by a staff member who then leaves, the extent of state involvement and oversight may vary when a new staff member takes over.

¹³ See [Texas Purple Star Campus Application Rubric](#), 2022

¹⁴ See [Texas Purple Star Campus Application 2022-2023](#)

- Balance between growing the program and ensuring program fidelity and quality

It is important to note that the existence of more PSS schools does not necessarily imply high-quality programs. States should encourage and support the growth of more designations with an eye towards ensuring that schools have the resources, capacity, and full awareness needed to implement programs with fidelity. In addition, states need the capacity to oversee implementation. Particularly where program oversight falls on state education agency staff who have other responsibilities (which is the case in most states), it is important to ensure that as the program grows, states can keep up with the level of oversight needed to ensure program quality.

Box 5: Georgia’s Military Flagship Award

In Georgia, the Military Flagship Award is a competitive program that requires schools to demonstrate that they “go above and beyond to serve and support” military-connected children.¹⁵ The decision to make the program competitive increases the rigor of the program, though it may limit its reach.

Recommendations

- Use the application and renewal process to drive continuous improvement

States should develop rubrics that will (1) signal to applicants what the state is looking for in terms of program implementation; and (2) provide a basis for the state to objectively evaluate and provide feedback to schools on their readiness to implement the PSS program. For each element of the rubric, states should specify what evidence is needed.

They

“The initial process was about building a foundation. [The renewal application] wants you to describe ‘what are you doing with that foundation? How are you taking it a step further?’”

- School POC

They should also designate a particular time period for both applications and renewals so the state can manage the workflow associated with these processes. We suggest conducting renewals on a three-year cycle to give schools the time to implement their programs fully prior to renewal, and to ensure that the state has adequate data and time to review applications for renewal.

15 See Georgia Department of Education [Military Flagship School Award](#)

- Collaborate with and connect schools and districts to facilitate idea-sharing and program improvement

As is already done in some places, states should formally connect schools and districts to share best practices and ideas with ease and efficiency on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, they can collaborate with these stakeholders to provide feedback and guidance on program implementation and help generate new ideas for creative programming.

- Support the development of a repository of training materials

See PSS Component 2: Professional Development on page 32 for insight into how states can help provide up-to-date and high-quality materials for PD.

- Provide guidance for dedicated web pages

See PSS Component 4: Webpage on page 40 about how states can guide schools on what kinds of content to include on their webpages.

- Collect and publish academic and socioemotional data on military-connected students to assess and evaluate the impact of PSS and other relevant programs

See Data on Military-Connected Students on page 20 which details why states should collect data on this subgroup.

- Explicitly include family engagement practices in PSS requirements

Given the positive impact of existing family engagement practices, as described below in Family Engagement on page 24, we recommend requiring family engagement as a PSS component. This codification can both clarify expectations for supporting families and provide specific guidance for how to effectively do so.

- Provide targeted funding for districts and schools to support military-connected families

As will be discussed further below, the fact that PSS is typically not a funded program is an obstacle to high-quality and sustainable program implementation. When passing legislation for PSS, states should appropriate funding to support implementation at the district- and school-levels.

District Oversight and Support

Across our sample, there is variation in the extent of district involvement in PSS initiation, implementation, and monitoring, ranging from minimal district involvement to unofficial district involvement to an officially defined district role.¹⁶ Our research also reveals that the type of involvement varies both within and between states and includes spreading awareness, providing assistance with the application and renewal processes, ongoing guidance in programming, and direct oversight of program compliance. Several of the benefits and challenges related to district oversight and support are similar to those for the state.

Benefits

- **Raises awareness and motivates schools to pursue designations**

As will be discussed further below, the fact that PSS is typically not a funded program is an obstacle to high-quality and sustainable program implementation. When passing legislation for PSS, states should appropriate funding to support implementation at the district- and school-levels.

- **Serves as an additional resource for families**

District staff note that they may have a distinct role from schools when it comes to engaging military-connected families. Especially when not all schools in the district have a PSS designation, or there is variation in the level of programming across schools, districts report the importance of hosting district-level town hall meetings, and publicizing their commitment to military-connected families and students through newsletters, social media, or the district-level website. For more detail on district family engagement practices, see [Family Engagement](#) on Page 24.

“Our district...let all of the schools know that it was going to be a priority. [They want] everybody to fully understand not only what the program is, but kind of the gravity of the program, now that it’s a priority at the district level.”

- School POC

¹⁶ See [Box 10: District-level POC](#)

- **Facilitates communication with and access to information from the state, military installation, and other schools in the district**

The district often serves as an intermediary between school and state, facilitating more frequent and efficient communication. They can also develop and maintain relationships with military installation staff, many of whom are assigned to multiple schools. Finally, the district is uniquely positioned to facilitate collaboration between schools, which helps to create cohesion in terms of program implementation, and also provides opportunities to connect school communities, for example via district-wide events.

- **Oversees school fidelity of program implementation**

The additional layer of program authority and involvement at the district level (both at the application and renewal stage as well as during program implementation) is helpful for ensuring school compliance with PSS programming, serves to create greater standardization across schools in terms of program implementation, and can help drive program quality. Districts can also monitor adherence to the Compact and PSS by providing recourse to students and families when their needs are not being addressed in school.

"[My role is to] ensure the integrity of the Compact is maintained, and assist with resolving any transfer challenges and conflicts."

-District POC

Challenges

- **Capacity constraints**

There typically are no designated funds to support PSS, which means PSS responsibilities are likely given to existing staff. This could limit their capacity to provide the level of oversight and support that would be beneficial for the program.

- **Unintentionally minimizing school buy-in and involvement in program implementation**

Depending on the division of responsibilities between district- and school-level staff, school staff may become too reliant on the district for implementation of program components, which may mean that they are not as invested in changing the culture of their school to better support military-connected students and families.

Recommendations

- Designate a district-level POC in addition to a school-level POC

Across our sample, schools with a district-level POC cite the value of receiving guidance and technical assistance from the district. In addition to making schools aware of and motivated to apply for the PSS designation, the district can maximize school collaboration with the state, nearby military installation, and other schools in the district. Their bird's eye view also allows them to be a clearinghouse of information for common challenges schools are facing. Schools appreciate that the district-level POC serves as their safety net to make sure they are adhering to program requirements. Families and students also directly benefit from having a district-level POC; as mentioned, families can utilize the district-level POC when their children attend multiple schools in the district, or when they are dissatisfied with the level of support they receive from their school.

Importantly, however, our research indicates that the district-level POC should not replace the school-level POC, as families still require a contact in their building for school-specific questions. Because it can be difficult to find the capacity for an additional district role, we recommend leveraging the expertise of a district staff member who is already involved with supporting highly-mobile populations.

- Where relevant, build a district webpage in addition to the school webpage

Especially in districts with several Purple Star designated schools, we recommend building a dedicated district webpage in addition to each school webpage. In the same way that a district-level POC is helpful for families with children who attend multiple schools in the district, a district webpage serves as a useful tool and home base for these families to explore all of their educational options. The district webpage may provide many of the same resources that the school does, in addition to any relevant district-level staff contact information.

Data on Military-Connected Students

In 2015, the Military Student Identifier (MSI) was included in the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA mandates states and districts to collect and report academic assessment data on students with parents who are Active Duty members¹⁷ of the U.S. Armed Forces but does not include children of National Guard, Reserve, or Veteran members. As of the 2017-2018 school year, all 50 states and the District of Columbia are required to collect and report this data, though states vary in how they choose to define "military-connected," what outcome information is collected, and what data is publicly reported.¹⁸

While ESSA only requires schools to collect and report academic assessment data on students with parents who are Active Duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces, there are numerous ways to identify and define "military-connected." Specifically, the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act expanded the definition of military-connected child in ESSA to include children of National Guard and Reserve members regardless of duty status (i.e., Active, Reserve). Schools also often utilize their own definitions of "military-connected student" with some schools explicitly focusing on students with parents who are members of the Armed Forces and on Active Duty, while others include National Guard and Reserves. Still, others may give students and families the space to indicate if they have a Veteran affiliation, siblings or extended family involved in the military, a family member who has died in combat, or if students themselves have signed a military contract.

The ESSA requirement increases awareness of the needs of military-connected students by making important outcome data available to states, districts, and schools. Continued collection and use of the MSI creates a clearer context for the PSS program to effectively support the educational experience of military-connected students, but streamlining is needed to generate organized and usable data.

Through our research, we found that there are several ways that schools are identifying and collecting data on military-connected students:

- Families are asked to indicate military-connectedness on school registration and enrollment forms.
- In some cases, students are identified as being military-connected after the registration process by school staff who are working with the student.
- In other cases, schools learn this information when a family fills out other forms connected with military-related benefits, such as forms designed to collect information for the Federal Impact Aid program.

¹⁷ See [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) Section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii)), 2015

¹⁸ See [Expanding MSI Helps Provide Equal Support for All Military-Connected Students | Understanding ESSA](#), 2020

Benefits

- Promotes visibility of military-connected families and students

Knowledge of which students are military-connected is the first step for school staff to understand how their unique circumstances may be impacting academic performance and overall well-being. District-level staff report the importance of understanding how military students are connected in order to help cater programming and services to their unique needs. For example, one district learned that their military-connected community was predominantly Veteran affiliated, and consequently was able to tailor some military recognition events to spotlight and celebrate them.

- Helps district and school staff connect military-connected families and students to resources

When school staff have information about which students are military-connected, through their school's data system or otherwise, they can better prepare to transition these students into their schools and plan for how to support them on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, a clear picture of the number and distribution of military-connected students across schools can enable district-level actors to provide or suggest programming and organize staffing (for example, hiring more dedicated counselors). Districts may even be able to leverage this data to apply for supplemental grant funding through public and private sources.¹⁹

Challenges

- Varying access to data

School staff who could benefit from knowing about a student's military connection do not always receive this information in a timely way. Access to data is also impacted by whether families report that they are military-connected. If a family is concerned about their child being singled out or treated differently, for example, they may be reluctant to self-identify. And finally, students may be misidentified or not identified at all due to general data reporting errors.

19 See Getting School Districts Ready for the [Military Student Identifier](#), 2018

- Limited use of data

In addition to challenges associated with the availability of data on military-connectedness, even where data is collected, it may not be used to inform programming or support to students. For instance, there may not be a readily accessible way to connect data on a student's status as military-connected to other indicators, such as data on academic achievement and socioemotional well-being (attendance and discipline rates, for example). This presents a missed opportunity to use the data to inform instruction and programming. However, there are some states that have started to connect the data (see Box 6).

Box 6: Texas Results-Driven Accountability Framework

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) collects academic information on military-connected students as part of its state accountability framework.²⁰ Academic data on military-connected students is then reflected in the Results-Driven Accountability Framework (RDA). The RDA allows districts to identify, and the state to monitor and support, areas in need of improvement in relation to subgroup performance.

Recommendations

- Collect and update information on military-connectedness at enrollment and as needed during the school year and share data with relevant staff

Data on military-connectedness should be collected at enrollment but then periodically updated to ensure that students who are not self-identifying at enrollment are counted as military-connected once a school becomes aware of their status. Once a child is identified, ensure that there are processes in place to share the student's status with school staff who will be interacting with the student and who may benefit from knowing the student's circumstances.

Box 7: Tracking Military-Connectedness in North Carolina

North Carolina requires schools to collect information on military-connectedness through their school's information system.²¹ Some schools and districts use a simple icon indicator, like purple stars, to enable teachers to easily identify each military-connected student in their classrooms.

20 Learn more about the collection and use of MSI from the Texas Education Agency [TEA Military Student Identifier](#), 2020

21 See [General Assembly of North Carolina House Bill 1060](#)

- **Be transparent with families on why reporting military-connectedness is important**

Districts and schools must be clear about how they define military-connectedness, and why they are collecting the information. School and district staff must clarify and communicate their intentions to provide support to military-connected students. This can help alleviate family fears about how information is used and how it may impact on their child.

- **Collect and publish academic and socioemotional data on military-connected students to assess and evaluate the impact of PSS and other relevant programs**

As is done in Texas and South Carolina,²² states should accelerate implementation of the aforementioned ESSA requirements and publish academic data on military-connected students. Additionally, in consideration of the substantial socioemotional challenges military-connected children face, states should require the collection of socioemotional indicators, like attendance and discipline rates, for this subgroup. In turn, to monitor the impact of PSS, states can pay close attention to the academic and socioemotional data on military-connected students in the application process for the PSS designation. This data can help school and district staff to clarify and communicate their intentions to provide support to military-connected students.

- **Use a broad conception of military-connectedness**

Beyond the legal requirement under ESSA of collecting and reporting information on students with parents in the Armed Forces on Active Duty, some schools have noted the need to identify and provide individualized support to other military-connected students (including the categories in [Box 8](#)). Within the umbrella term of military-connected, these students and families have individual and varying needs. For example, a student with a parent who is currently deployed might have anxiety over a parent's absence, whereas another student might be supporting a parent who is a veteran dealing with mental health concerns.

Box 8: Defining Military-Connected in Indiana

Many schools in Indiana extend their definition of military-connected to include students who have cousins, grandparents, aunts, and uncles who are military-connected (rather than only counting students with parental military affiliation), maximizing the number of students who are counted and can therefore benefit from PSS support.

22 See [SC State House - Educational Performance of Military-Connected Children](#), 2016

Family Engagement

Though both the MIC3 and PSS are geared towards providing support for military-connected students, we find that many states include programming or support for military-connected families as well. In fact, across our sample, many school staff cite family engagement as key to the success of PSS. The POC often leads family engagement by initiating outreach to provide support during the transition period and on an ongoing basis, recognizing them in events, and helping them build their own communities. Additionally, many of the strategies used to engage with and support families mirror the approaches taken with students.

We find that most school staff (61.8%) report that their schools engage with military-connected families “Well” or “Very Well.”²³ School staff attribute the increased emphasis on engaging with military-connected families to their PSS designation, citing that “engagement is improving with this program.” Family perception of engagement, however, is lower according to survey data: 41.3% of families report feeling “Engaged” or “Very Engaged” by their schools, which is attributed to, among other factors, how long the program has been in place, how long the family has been part of the school community, and how involved existing military-connected families are in school activities.²⁴

Benefits

- **Serves to welcome, recognize and inform families**

One way schools build relationships with families is by inviting them to participate in military recognition events, which help families feel welcomed into and supported by their new community. School staff also give campus tours to prospective and incoming families- both virtual and in-person- to provide them with some degree of certainty about their new environment during an otherwise unsettling transition period. Relatedly, stakeholders report the popularity of school information sessions held for military-connected parents. Often led by the POC, these events provide guidance on the process of transitioning to the school, available resources, discuss common issues with students, and offer space for parents to ask any questions.

“[Families] appreciate it...[and are] more open to communicating and having a working relationship...Because we...respect and honor their lifestyle.”

- School Counselor

23 See [Appendix E: Graph 1](#) for “How well do you think your school engages with military-connected families?”

24 See [Appendix F: Graph 1](#) for “How engaged is your family with the school community at your child’s Purple Star School?”

- **Allows for individualized and holistic care for each family**

Attention to family engagement allows schools to tailor activities and support to the individual needs of their military-connected students and families. For example, school staff in contact with families, such as the POC, report that there are numerous ways to support families facing deployment, as the length of time and impact on both students and parents can vary significantly. Once these relationships are established, schools are able to provide holistic support for life both in and outside of school. Some provide resources on special education, temporary housing options, and daycare. Schools also help families find communities through events (military-related or otherwise), social media groups, spouse clubs, family support groups, and volunteering with school organizations, such as the Parent-Teachers Association/Organization (PTA/PTO).

- **May result in new professional opportunities for family members**

Schools cite the opportunity to directly involve and leverage the experiences of military-connected parents and veterans by hiring them for military student- and family-facing and/or advocacy roles. This is reportedly both rewarding to parents and instrumental in helping “bridge the gap” between schools and military families.

“If they’re getting ready for deployment, if they’re returning from a deployment, if mom or dad has to be gone for a little while...our process is to reach out to that family individually, to see what they need.”

- District POC

Challenges

While the majority of school staff report positive family engagement, some share that “there are ways and areas that [they] could be better and do more.”

- **Maintaining family relationships**

Both at high schools where parents might be naturally less involved in their students’ educational experiences, and at larger schools more generally, some POCs note challenges in maintaining communication with families throughout the year. While it often feels natural to reach out to provide initial support during the transition period, staff may struggle to maintain contact and provide ongoing support as families settle into their communities and are no longer new. Relatedly, due to the highly-mobile lifestyle of military-connected families, some schools report simply not having the time to forge meaningful relationships with them.

- **COVID-19 limitations on face-to-face communication**

During the pandemic, most schools were unable to connect with families in person; in-person events were suspended, as well as any informal meetups with families and school tours. As a result, some families report that they felt disconnected during this time.

- **Lack of accessible mechanisms to collect as well as implement military-connected family and student feedback**

One of the silver linings of the numerous moves that military-connected families make during their child's education experience is that they are uniquely positioned to offer strategies and ideas for improvement in schools. However, most schools do not formally collect feedback on PSS programming from families and students.

Recommendations

- **Include parents in welcome programming**

Engaging families in the student transition process may make the move easier for the whole family. For example, where there are transition teams that give tours to new students, we recommend including families on the tours (or at least part of them) so that they can see their child being taken care of, which can alleviate some moving-related stress.

- **Leverage social media and word-of-mouth to maximize family awareness**

In addition to school and district webpages (see PSS Component 4: Webpage on page 40), social media is an especially effective tool for continuously updating families on upcoming events and generally reminding families about what services are available. Some schools find that families are more likely to see school updates when they check their social media accounts, rather than proactively checking to see if the webpage has any updates.

- **Designate district-level POC to serve as a resource for families**

As outlined above in District Oversight and Support on page 17, having a district-level POC can be a resource for families who might have children attending multiple schools in the district or have unresolved difficulties at the school level.

Implementation of Program Components

As noted above, most PSS programs include all or most of the following program components: (1) a designated point of contact; (2) professional development for school staff; (3) a campus or student-led transition team; (4) a dedicated school and/or district webpage; and (5) military recognition events.

Our surveys show that there is a discrepancy in how families rate the helpfulness of PSS program components compared to how school staff rate them. On average, 76.9% of school staff and administrators²⁵ report that all program components are either “Helpful” or “Very Helpful”, compared to 52.4% of families.²⁶ Qualitative data from the surveys is inconclusive as to the reason for this discrepancy, though as discussed in various places in this report, one reason may be due to variations in terms of how well program components are implemented.

25 See [Appendix E: Graphs 2-6](#) “How helpful are the following programs and practices in supporting military-connected children and their families?”

26 See [Appendix F: Graphs 2-6](#) “How helpful are the following programs and practices for you?”



Point of Contact (POC)

WHAT

A required component of PSS in all states, the POC serves as a source of ongoing information and support for military-connected families in schools.

WHO

There is some variation in who fills the role at the school level, but typically it is a principal, assistant principal, teacher, or counselor. District-level POCs are often filled by a Superintendent, Director of Student Services, or Director of Curriculum.

RESPONSIBILITIES

POC responsibilities also vary across our focus states and include engaging with and guiding incoming families, counseling for students, and maintaining program elements, such as planning and executing events, leading transition teams, completing and developing content for professional development (PD), and updating the dedicated webpage. POCs are also often responsible for overseeing and completing the PSS application.

Benefits

- **Provides practical support**

POCs aim to streamline the transition process by connecting with incoming families during the enrollment process and providing guidance on classes, credit transfers, and extracurriculars, and in some cases, giving school tours before a student's first day. Some POCs take a holistic approach to supporting military-connected students and provide information to families about life outside of school, including housing and daycare.

"We really want to try to minimize the disruption that military families already experience."

- School POC

- Acts as a consistent resource

POCs can facilitate relationship-building between military-connected students and their school community, including with school staff as well as with other students. Across our sample, POCs are usually closely connected to and well-known by military-connected students in their school, both new and returning. On the first day of school and on an ongoing basis, POCs can provide support through informal, everyday conversations, small group activities, and sometimes even formal one-on-one or group mentorship. To enhance these bonds, some POCs might personally invite military-connected students to celebration events or actively help them become involved in extracurricular activities. Because many POCs are responsible for leading student transition teams, they can also facilitate peer-to-peer interaction, which is especially crucial for new students to feel a sense of belonging and comfort in an unfamiliar environment.

"They know from day one that there's a familiar face...we make sure we're at the door [on] day one, introduce ourselves, walk them down the hallway, try to quickly build those connections... So they know where to turn if they need something."

- School Counselor

- Coordinates maintenance of the designation

In addition to overseeing and completing the PSS application, many POCs also ensure that program requirements are met by facilitating and tracking school activities to varying degrees, such as executing military recognition events, leading transition teams, updating the webpage, and providing PD. POCs also sometimes lead the application process for renewal by compiling artifacts of these activities for submission and reaching out to others at the district and state level for feedback and assistance.

- Guides and empowers teachers to deliver socioemotional support

School staff shared that POCs provide both informal and formal training for teachers to support military-connected students with unpredictable and complex circumstances. As a starting point, POCs typically communicate to teachers which of their students are military-connected, providing the necessary context for teachers to monitor these students.

"If a [military-connected] student is having issues, [the POC] has access to teachers and staff and can work with them one-on-one to provide extra support as well."

- Principal

Additionally, whether through formal PD or informal conversations, POCs educate teachers on specific student behaviors to look for before and during parent deployment or other major life changes. From a practical standpoint, POCs also remind teachers of the specific support services offered and help formulate a plan of action when military-connected students need additional, targeted support.

Challenges

- **Capacity constraints**

When existing staff – principals, teachers, or counselors – adopt the role of POC, as is often the case, other duties are rarely shifted off their plates. Given these other responsibilities, some school staff report that POCs can be limited in their capacity to directly engage with all military-connected families and students, especially in large districts. Furthermore, there is usually no additional funding to support the POC's activities and responsibilities.

- **Limited access to certain information**

Some school POCs who do not have a formal connection to the military express the desire to have more contextual information about military-connected students and families, such as if they have lost parents, in order to better target their support. Furthermore, delays in obtaining necessary academic information for students transitioning into schools make it difficult for staff to adequately prepare to meet students' needs. More broadly, programs in the earlier stages cite initial difficulty in knowing exactly what information is available on the base, and how much support from the base they can reasonably request. For POCs who are military-connected, their backgrounds and connectedness with the community often help them to overcome these barriers to accessing information.

- **Difficulties providing effective emotional support for military-connected students and families**

Although we found that POCs do provide significant socioemotional support to students and families, there continue to be challenges around particularly sensitive topics. Some POCs, especially those without military backgrounds, find it difficult to effectively support students leading up to and during parent deployment, for example.

Recommendations

- Strive to develop networks

POCs are most effective when they have relationships with not only families and students but also other schools in the district, military installations, state agencies, district-level personnel, and community organizations. These networks enable POCs to implement program activities with more breadth and depth.

- Select POCs who have an interest in, or connection to, issues facing military-connected families and students where possible

Several schools cite the unique impact of the POC when they themselves are military-connected. This paves the way for a meaningful bond with military-connected students based on shared experiences and understanding. Moreover, having a personal military connection can lead to greater investment in the role and higher quality in the execution of program components. At one school, for instance, the Data Manager served as POC because of his personal connection and investment in supporting military-connected students. Even when the POC is not military-connected, it is helpful to have supporting staff members who are.

"My teacher is in a military family and she understands [my] family being deployed."

-Student

2

Professional Development (PD)

WHAT

The primary function of professional development (PD) is to educate and prepare school-level staff on how to best meet the needs of military-connected students. All states require school staff to complete PD on special considerations for working with military-connected students and families.

WHO TRAINS

In general, PD is delivered by the MFLC, School Liaison Officer, and/or school or district-level POC.

WHO IS TRAINED

In some schools, all school staff are required to attend PD; in others, only the POC is required to attend. And in still others, district-level staff are also required to attend school-level PD.

FORMAT AND FREQUENCY

Our sample revealed variation in the format (virtual or in-person), frequency of PD (annual or throughout the year), and content. Some PD is logistical in nature, educating staff on what services are available for military-connected students. Others equip staff with strategies for sensitively communicating with military-connected students.

Benefits

- Educates staff and faculty on the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3)

PD in several schools includes content on the rights of military-connected students and families pursuant to the MIC3. It is essential to educate staff on the Compact and MIC3 to ensure that counselors and teachers know exactly how flexible they can be with course enrollment, placement, and graduation requirements for military-connected students.

"It's very important primarily for our counselors...to counsel each of those children [and teachers] on what their graduation requirements are according to the MIC3 rules."

-District POC

- Highlights military-related benefits available to students

Whether state-specific or national, programs and practices already exist to combat some of the obstacles that military-connected students face, including but not limited to scholarships and tuition assistance. Making staff aware of these resources so that they can in turn share them with military-connected students can help to ease the transition to post-secondary education options.

"You really don't realize it's a different world...I think it's important that our teachers know our community."

- District POC

- Empowers staff and faculty to provide emotional support to military-connected children

Many PD sessions educate trainees on best practices for adequately supporting the socioemotional needs of military-connected children. Interviewees cite the importance of more practical content that educates staff on all aspects of a military lifestyle, including any military terminology, details about the deployment cycle, and common transition experiences. Trainers also discuss academic and social behavior for teachers to monitor

"But as a teacher...knowing those students who are military children, it's good to [understand]...how they're feeling [and] what they're going through."

- Teacher

in their students, especially leading up to, during, and after parental deployment. PD can also include best practices for creating open lines of communication with families so that parents feel comfortable confiding in teachers about circumstances at home that might impact their kids.

Challenges

- Sizable time commitment

Given that many teachers and school staff are already overextended in their jobs, there are challenges around meaningful engagement and participation in PD. Some programs treat PD as a check-the-box sort of task and only offer training once a year or once an application cycle. Sometimes schools only require POCs to participate in PD; our interviews suggest that when this is the case, knowledge about the needs of military-connected families and students may not be adequately disseminated to other staff. One school-level actor reports that though they are aware of their school's PSS designation, the "program is run by only a few teachers."

- **Adaptation of PD during a pandemic**

COVID-19 only exacerbated the challenge of staff participation and buy-in. Many schools were forced to either forgo PD altogether, adapt in-person sessions to a shortened, virtual session, make it optional for staff, or, in one case, create a newsletter with links to training materials. Schools reported nearly all of these alternatives to be lacking in rigor and effectiveness.

- **Sourcing of relevant and high-quality PD**

Some schools simply do not offer PD specific to military-connected students, but rather combine this training with other general topics. Others report that their PD is not always

"We make sure that our principals and our staff members understand... [that] we are going to be empathetic to situations for our military families to make sure that their adjustment is as peaceful as it possibly can be, especially in the midst of chaos."

-District Coordinator

up-to-date or aligned with the needs of their military-connected students. Even in cases where training feels informative for staff in theory, it does not always translate clearly into tangible practices to support military-connected students and families. Additionally, some schools and districts report simply not knowing where to look for training content.

Recommendations

- **States should support the development of a repository of training materials**

Given the challenge schools face in acquiring high-quality PD materials, states should ease the burden on PD facilitators by providing a collection of up-to-date, accurate, and high-quality materials, including information on MIC3 and other relevant state laws – as one school put it, a “shared knowledge base.” In states where this is already happening, schools report its effectiveness in educating staff on the experiences of military-connected students.

- **Offer trainings for school staff throughout the school year**

As mentioned earlier, most schools offer annual PD, whether in the form of an all-day conference or less intensive session. Generally speaking, there is consensus that ongoing training and support throughout the year in addition to their annual training is optimal. If trainers are continuously updating PD content to address challenges that arise in the military-connected community, then it follows that these updates should subsequently be communicated to all staff.

- **Customize PD instruction for the school's military population**

Materials adopted from the state or district should be modified to the local context. For instance, trainers should consider the size, affiliations, and other background information of the school's military population and common issues that arise throughout the year. From a practical standpoint, it is also helpful to customize state materials to include school-level protocols that staff should be aware of, such as processes for reporting student mental health concerns. Some schools report the desire for training to debrief notable challenges in the military-connected community from the previous school year, ensuring that the school is continuously building on and improving their efforts to target support.

- **Make professional development interactive and immersive**

To make PD both engaging and effective, schools should consider immersive forms of learning. For instance, one school supplements traditional PD sessions with staff tours of the military base so that they can experience the day-to-day lives of their military-connected students. Another technique is inviting special guests – such as the military base liaison, veterans, or even past students and families to share their perspective on school supports.

- **Collect staff feedback on frequency, timing, and utility of PD**

To maximize participation, schools should offer PD related to what school staff actually feel they need to best support students. If staff are unsure of the relevance of a given training topic, then their engagement is likely to suffer. Schools should also integrate these training sessions into staff-wide PD can ensure maximum attendance.



3

Transition Teams

WHAT

Transition teams provide support to incoming military-connected students to help them adjust to their new school environment and feel welcomed overall. In many schools, transition teams are implemented as the Student 2 Student® (S2S™) program (created by MCEC). Transition teams are a required program component in many but not all states. Even when transition teams are not required, they often still exist informally such that all new students, military-connected and not, are paired with peers.

WHO LEADS

An adult sponsor, typically a staff member, leads the transition team.

PRACTICES

Incoming students are paired with student transition team members, who greet them on the first day of school, give a tour of the campus, and sit with them at lunch. Teams also often meet during the year to plan social and service events.

Benefits

- **Helps new students acclimate**

School staff cite the positive impact of assigning incoming military-connected students to peers to greet them on the first day of school. These students show them around, answer any questions about the school, and keep them company in the first few weeks, helping them integrate into the community and even with other peers who might share similar interests. Some schools try to specifically pair new students with military-connected members of the transition teams to maximize their feelings of belonging and comfort based on shared experiences from day one.

"Students are going to feel more comfortable asking another student a question versus coming to an adult."

- Military Coordinator

- **Spurs ongoing connections in the school and broader community**

As members of transition programs, both incoming students and peer ambassadors have the opportunity to make connections with their broader community. Transition team members sometimes participate in service projects that benefit the military community, including making valentines for veterans and holding food drives for active duty members. Student leaders in particular will meet with other transition teams in their district to share ideas and best practices for welcoming new students into the community.

- **Fosters personal connections between military-connected students and their school community**

As mentioned in **PSS Component 1: POC** on page 28, POCs and other school staff can help to facilitate relationships between military-connected students and their school community. Creating connections between new and existing military-connected students (through Military Kids Club or planning military celebration events together) give them the valuable opportunity to discuss

"[Leading a student transition team] builds character. It teaches them how to be a good teammate and classmate."
- School Liaison Officer

and process with someone familiar with their unique experiences. It is also important to foster community with non-military-connected students. We found that helping military-connected students become involved in extracurricular activities that relate to their interests can have a profound impact, especially for students who report feeling disconnected or in school with low military student populations.

- **Develops student leadership skills**

"My daughter loves being able to meet kids like her who have moved and have similar stories."
- Family Member

Transition programs, in high school especially, are often primarily led by students with some guidance from school staff. Students lead regular meetings to discuss common challenges in connecting with incoming students, generate ideas for improvement and other creative ways to promote school spirit and get involved in the military community. They also often receive formal leadership, training which might come from the district, school staff, or even the

nearby military base. Generally, these training sessions teach student ambassadors about the Compact and the complex needs of military-connected students. Students learn best practices for engagement with their military-connected peers, including what to say and ask on their very first day of school and how to address sensitive topics like parent deployment.

Challenges

- **Student recruitment and involvement**

Some school staff cite difficulty in recruiting students to participate on teams – most commonly towards the end of middle school and high school, when kids are more likely to perceive this additional school involvement as “uncool.” This challenge was only exacerbated by COVID-19, as students were already adapting to a virtual environment and a number of other disconcerting changes in routine.

- **Missed opportunities when students are not involved**

Some schools do have formal transition teams that are primarily led by staff and do not leverage peer-to-peer interaction. As mentioned, our stakeholders have cited the unequivocal benefits when students lead transition teams – both for the student leaders and especially for their new peers. It is also important to consider involving non-military-connected students in the transition teams. From our interviews, we learned that while the PSS program effectively celebrates and recognizes military-connected students, the program could grow by more actively

"I firmly believe that with a well-developed [student transition] program, this school would take this program to the next level."

- Family

fostering a sense of belonging for students. This may include inviting non-military-connected students to these groups, to more widely share knowledge about the military-connected experience and help students build networks within their new school.

Recommendations

- **Ensure school staff are collaboratively engaged in the transition process alongside the POC**

Schools should coordinate the support offered by different school staff addressing incoming students' socioemotional and academic needs to make the transitions as seamless as possible. School staff often cite that in order to holistically support student transitions, there are multiple staff across different departments responsible for addressing their various needs, which can lead to confusion for families about where to go and who to contact with questions. When staff are properly coordinated in their support, schools report that transition teams create a “shared responsibility” for each military-connected child.

- **Include parents in welcome programming**

Engaging families in the student transition process may make the move easier for the whole family. For example, by including families on the tours (or at least part of them), they get to see their child being taken care of, which can alleviate some moving-related stress.

- **Empower students to drive programming**

Our stakeholders have cited the unequivocal benefits when students lead transition teams – both for the student leaders and especially for their new peers. Existing military-connected students have a unique insight into the experience incoming students are facing, and are uniquely positioned to offer a friendly welcome. For new students, being welcomed by and then joining the transition team can foster a powerful sense of belonging.

"We like for the students to be the advocates...so that they're using this as a learning experience as well."

- School POC

- **Support the socioemotional needs of students leaving the school**

While it is not always feasible for transition teams to provide exiting families with practical information about their receiving schools and communities, transition teams

"[If they're] moving, and it's their last day, they get [an exit packet], a little box of things... kind of tokens to take with them. I think that's helpful too, as they transition out, and get a chance to say bye...for us to acknowledge what they added to the classroom."

- Principal

teams should at least ensure that students feel recognized and valued as they prepare to leave. Some schools describe their creation of "exit kits" with handwritten cards from the class.

4

Webpages

WHAT

For incoming families, the school or district website is often the first opportunity that families have to get a better idea of the resources available at a school or in a district before they move in. Although all of our focus states require a webpage dedicated to military student and family support, there is some variation in guidance given about what to include in a webpage as well as whether a school and/or if a district webpage is mandated. In actuality, some schools have no webpages, others have just school-level webpages, and still others have both school- and district-level webpages.

WHO MAINTAINS/UPDATES

Usually, an IT staff member will manage the site and the school POC will communicate any events or calendar updates throughout the year.

CONTENT

Most webpages include POC/counselor contact information, the PSS logo, upcoming events, and links to academic and socioemotional resources.

Benefits

- **Acts as a home base and centralizes resources for military-connected families**

When military-connected families relocate and need information about educational options for their children, a school or district website is a natural place to go to gather information. Across our sample, the webpages offer a breadth of school-specific and general information, including enrollment and withdrawal checklists, counselor contact information, and resources for academic and socioemotional support. In some places, there is content on MIC3, which helps to educate military-connected families about their protected rights as they navigated a new school military-connected families about their protected rights as they navigate a new school community. Finally, it is helpful when

webpages address variations in state practices and standards both in terms of curricular differences and more logistical state-specific processes, like vaccination record transfers.

"We hope to convey... that we are available whenever you need us, that our door's always open, and that your questions will be answered."

- Family Engagement Coordinator

Challenges

- **Incomplete information**

Our research reveals that the depth and comprehensiveness of some sites can be improved. Some webpages were missing clear contact information for the POC; others did not have the PSS logos – and even when they did include the logo, they sometimes did not offer any information about the program itself. Some provide lists of the school support services without any accompanying details, including “Student 2 Student® Program” and “Anchored 4 Life Program” – unique terminology that incoming families may not be familiar with. And while some schools did include a breadth of information on their webpage, the interface was difficult to navigate, with some pages more than two clicks away from the homepage. Ensuring that webpages have comprehensive and accessible information will reduce the burden on POC to field more straightforward questions.

- **Limited understanding of how useful families find webpages**

Notably, there were limited feedback mechanisms in schools – both broadly related to family feedback on PSS programming and specifically regarding the webpage. As a result, some schools note that they could not gauge how strong or effective their webpages were. Without insight into the needs and preferences of military-connected families, schools have limited direction for improving their content.

Recommendations

- **Set webpage maintenance routines**

Most schools update their webpages annually, with the POC providing event-specific updates when necessary. In order to provide the most up-to-date information for military-connected families, there should be routines in place for the POCs and other staff members to regularly communicate updates to web managers. Considering the frequent updates needed to ensure that military-connected families are fully informed, we suggest implementing procedures to make quarterly updates. This will also lessen the burden on the POC to have to proactively reach out to the web manager in an ad hoc manner. Furthermore, quarterly updating allows the school to regularly incorporate family feedback, per our recommendation below.

- **Solicit family feedback**

Given the lack of feedback mechanisms in place, we suggest including feedback forms directly on the school webpage to encourage families to share what is and what is not working for them – both in terms of the PSS program broadly and the webpage specifically. Some of our interviewers noted that their families are comfortable directly vocalizing their opinions and concerns about military support programming, but for those who are not, and especially at bigger schools, this is a useful tactic for reaching more families in an efficient manner.

“We’re going to use parents as a resource to see what they think is missing based on past experience... to analyze what we have and make it better.”

- District Coordinator

- **Leverage social media**

Social media, in conjunction with the webpage, is upcoming events. It is also an easy way to regularly spotlight stories in the military-connected community (with their permission). One district-level actor reports an increase in PSS services used after sharing them through social media channels.

- **Drive traffic to sites through PD training and linking**

In order for school webpages to serve their purpose and be useful for families, schools should ensure that all staff are aware of the dedicated webpage and reference it in conversations with families. There should be specific procedures in place where administrators in charge of student enrollment – as well as any staff who might have contact with new families – direct families to the webpage and explain what kinds of resources they can find. The POC should use PD training as an opportunity to ensure that staff are well aware of the webpage and types of resources available to military-connected students there. Another way schools should drive traffic to their sites is by linking the webpage to the pages that families frequently visit, such as school profiles (information that school districts publish on their websites that give a snapshot of the school) or school report cards.

- **States should provide guidance for dedicated pages**

Several schools we spoke to mention that having state guidance would help ensure webpage content is relevant and updated more frequently. Specifically, the state should provide an archive of vetted resources for schools and districts to use as a foundation upon which to build their webpages. Virginia is the only state we studied that publishes a detailed list of requirements for PSS webpages.

As recommended in the 2021 CPRL report, states should include a recommended template in the designated application with the following components:

- PSS logo or branding
- Contact Information
 - Up-to-date school- and district-level POC
- Resources on transferal into and out of the school
 - A welcome video
 - School calendar
 - Links to summaries of academic information
 - Links to online enrollment and registration resources
 - Transfer checklists and documents
 - Information on extracurriculars
- Academics
 - Information on specialized academic programs and application deadlines
 - Special needs resources and points-of-contact
 - Graduation requirements and diploma options
 - Home and online instruction options
- Resources on the Compact
 - Links to information on the Compact and accommodations within the district and school
- Other school-specific resources
 - Student-Parent feedback surveys
 - Information and points of contact for parent groups (e.g., PTA/PTO)
- Other military-specific resources
 - Local support organizations
 - Virtual resources for military families, including links or contacts for local spouse groups
 - College application materials
- Calendar of military-specific local events
- Pictures and artifacts that provide insight into school culture
- Traffic light voting that allows webpage visitors to indicate whether they found what they were looking for, similar to the graphic below:



5

Events

WHAT

All of our focus states include military recognition events as either the requirement or one of several options from which schools can pick to earn PSS designation. Across schools, the primary purpose of events is to demonstrate pride in and recognition of military-connected students and their families.

WHO PLANS

POC, Family Engagement Coordinator, military-connected school staff, and/or older students.

PRACTICES

This could include events such as ceremonies during military holidays and Month of the Military Child, service projects, and surprise reunions.

Benefits

- Honors and increases awareness of MC students and families

Recognition events build a military-friendly culture and immerse the entire school community in the lived experience of being military-connected. Events like “Purple Up Day,” for instance, where all students are encouraged to wear purple, boost student body awareness and embed appreciation for the military into school culture. In turn, across our sample, interviewees shared that students – especially younger students – relish the opportunity to be recognized for their military connection and to have a platform to share stories about and photos of their family members. Some schools set the expectation that all staff should attend events, which strengthens their understanding of and appreciation for military-connected students, and in turn, makes these students feel more seen and understood.

“It becomes another reinforcement for staff and students, that this is real life. That your buddy in class has someone in the military, that this is your neighbor, your teacher’s husband...and I think that has a huge impact on the respect of it, and the value of human beings.”

- District-Level Actor

“I was able to interview my dad at school about his military experience. I’ll be sending that to the Library of Congress at the end of school.”

- Student

- Offers opportunities for family and student integration into the community

Some events around military-related holidays, like Veterans Day, include community-building opportunities, like breakfast or lunches specifically for military-connected families to meet and bond. Families report feeling welcomed and more connected to the community by frequently attending these events. Furthermore, many of the schools we spoke to collaborated with the nearby military installation for events. These events might include military

"Just having teachers be able to think outside the box when you have a deployed spouse. What does that look like? If there is an open house, [how will you] incorporate that family member so they feel a part of it?"

- School POC

personnel volunteering at the school, speaking at Career Day, and student field trips to the military base. Students also engage in service projects benefiting the local military community. Some schools we spoke to reference the popularity of district-wide military recognition events for families and students. These events tend to be more robust, as the district has the ability to reach and connect more families and community members.

Challenges

- COVID-19 adaptations

While some schools became creative with virtual events, several families noted that the absence of in-person events was profoundly felt. Even in the months when students began to transition back to in-person learning, many schools were unable to hold events with any special visitors – as is frequently done with military personnel. Furthermore, some schools understandably remained in pandemic mode and found it difficult to prioritize robust event-planning amid learning loss and other COVID-19-related setbacks.

- Limited funding impacts types of events that can be offered

Because PSS initiatives don't typically offer funding for those pursuing the designation, schools sometimes struggle to execute creative and wide-reaching events with limited resources. This may also explain why at some schools, events are described as infrequent or "one-off," and typically only occur around military holidays or during Month of the Military Child.

Recommendations

- Use various modalities to include all community members

Our stakeholders confirm that offering a variety of event types, from public to more intimate activities, is optimal for accommodating a range of preferences. For instance, schools should be mindful of the fact that some children and families – and, as our interviews suggest, especially high schoolers– would prefer not to participate in large-scale recognition events. Our interviews reveal a variety of creative ways to engage families and students, such as live streaming events to include family members unable to join in person, recognizing military staff and students at sports games, inviting military personnel to Career Days, or bringing in military-connected guest speakers.

- Engage students in event planning and execution

There are numerous opportunities to involve students in event brainstorming, planning, and execution, providing leadership opportunities and ensuring that events actually reflect students' needs and preferences. In one school, for events that bring in military-connected speakers, high school students lead outreach to the military personnel. In another school, students are invited to speak on panels to families and their peers in the district about different aspects of a highly-mobile lifestyle.

Impact

As mentioned in the [Data on Military-Connected Students](#) section on page 20, districts are required to identify children who are military-connected and to report data on their academic outcomes (currently, there are no federal requirements to report data points related to socioemotional wellbeing). Our research suggests that while most places have implemented the requirement of identifying military-connected students, few places have the systems in place to regularly collect and review student outcome data for this population. Thus, the states, districts, and schools we spoke to are primarily assessing the impact of the PSS program on students and families based on anecdotal evidence.

In this section, we discuss our findings on the impact of the PSS program on student academic outcomes, socioemotional wellbeing, and families.



Academic Outcomes

Our survey data show that school staff have varying ratings of whether the PSS program has an impact on military-connected student academics, where 41.8% report that the PSS program had “An Impact” or “Somewhat of an Impact” on academic progress.²⁷ The primary reason cited for this, as mentioned, is that schools often have limited mechanisms to measure academic impact and progress for military-connected students. A higher percentage – 63.3% – of families report that their children are academically “Supported” or “Very Supported” by the PSS program.²⁸ They cite the importance of school staff understanding of the unique academic challenges military-connected students often face, which is fostered by the PSS program.

Findings

- The PSS program allows for a more seamless academic transition into school, but challenges remain in terms of obtaining timely information from sending schools

Our interviewees noted that the PSS program makes school staff more inclined to collaborate with each other as well as military-connected families and students towards the goal of smoothly transitioning students academically. This can take the form of accepting unofficial transcripts, transferring credits, and/or providing appropriate services (gifted and talented or special education programs) without requiring retesting. Doing so is especially significant at the high school level, where content misalignments pose challenges to pursuing specialized coursework and graduating on time. While many interviewees cited increased flexibility as a positive impact of PSS, some did note the challenges school staff may face in terms of delays in obtaining the necessary academic information needed to best support their incoming students.

"[If] you were at a high school in another state...it's our job to make it work [so that you graduate on time]"
- School POC

27 See [Appendix E: Graph 7](#) “How would you rate the impact of the Purple Star program on the academic progress of military-connected children at your school?”

28 See [Appendix F: Graph 7](#) “How supported do you think your child is academically at their Purple Star School?”

- PSS are aware of the need to address learning gaps

Families were satisfied when some schools offered targeted tutoring services specifically geared toward filling learning gaps that arise from different state standards or, in recent years, due to the pandemic. We found that this was especially significant for students that transition into a school in the middle of the year. These services can be provided online, through one-on-one tutoring, and/or in after school sessions.

"Many students will join in the middle of the year or will have been taught the subject differently, and the teachers are able to adapt very well to the students' needs and are able to easily make accommodations for them to learn."

- Student

"When kids know that you care about them and are there for them, they're going to perform better in the classroom."

- Principal



Socioemotional Well-being

Our surveys reveal that both school staff (66.4%)²⁹ and families (66%)³⁰ believe that the PSS program has a positive impact on military-connected students because of school staff increased awareness and special consideration of the unique social and emotional challenges that military-connected students often face.

"Sometimes all they need is an ear to listen and to understand what they're going through."

- Teacher

Findings

The PSS program increases school staff awareness of the needs of military-connected students, which enables them to provide effective socioemotional support

One of the most frequently cited impacts of the PSS program for military-connected students and families was the increased awareness of school staff on the unique circumstances and needs of the population. The increased awareness makes it more likely that school staff work together to serve children holistically, and as a consequence, students report feeling more welcome and understood.

"My teachers always try to get me involved in activities, like with the Veterans Healing Garden and having my dad come visit my school."

- Student

- The PSS program helps to foster connections between students, reducing the sense of isolation that military-connected children may face when moving to a new school

"Being with other military students and feeling that you belong and are important really makes school a fun and exciting environment."

- Student

Most of the students we surveyed report that it is easy to make friends at their PSS. That said, some military-connected students report feelings of disconnect, especially after the initial transition process is over. This feeling is exacerbated by difficulties in "breaking into" pre-existing groups of friends, identifying students with similar interests to them, and generally connecting with students that have not been exposed to or otherwise do not understand their lived experience.

29 See [Appendix E: Graph 8](#) "How would you rate the impact of the Purple Star program on the socio-emotional development of military-connected children at your school?"

30 See [Appendix F: Graph 8](#) "How supported do you think your child is socially and emotionally at their Purple Star School?"

- Impact may vary depending on the individual needs and circumstances of military-connected students

Interviewees cite the need to be cognizant of the individual needs and circumstances of military-connected students in planning programming and note that elements of PSS programming may impact students differently depending on these characteristics. Depending on factors such as age, military affiliation, and proportion of military-connected students in the grade and school, military-connected students have individual and differing needs. For example, as mentioned in the [Events](#) section on page 44, some military-connected children report that military celebration events make them feel disconnected or “singled out” from the broader school population. Among other students, these events are an extremely positive experience that make them feel seen. It can be challenging for school staff to tend to these opposing needs. Furthermore, some National Guard and Reserve families report that the MFLC in their schools seemed to be focused more on the unique circumstances Active Duty families frequently face, like deployment, high mobility, and trauma management.

"If you can [make] a student... feel that they are welcome, make them feel like they have a sense of belonging, then they have a much better chance of being able to fit in, feel comfortable, feel confident, and do well."

- School POC

Impact on Families

Findings

- PSS designations are a significant factor in families choice of school, suggesting that brand awareness of PSS is growing

Our survey reveals that 71.5% of families report that the PSS program was either an “Important” or “Very Important” factor in their school selection, in addition to hearing positive experiences from other families (through personal connection or social media groups).³¹ Some of the reasons families cite include the relative ease and robustness of the transition process as well as the specific focus on integration of their children into the school community. This is in line with what we hear from some school staff, who note an increase in their military-connected population after pursuing the PSS designation.

“I get nervous when I think about having to move the kids to a new place and a new school. But I feel better knowing that Purple Star programs are there to help us.”

- Family Member

It is important to note, however, when comparing PSS with non-PSS, perception varies among family respondents, where 47.2% report that they either found a “Meaningful Difference” or a “Very Meaningful Difference,” and 29.2% report “No Difference.”³² One explanation for this is that though PSS designation is an important factor that signals military-friendliness and that factors into the choice of school, families may have also had positive experiences at non-PSS, or less than satisfactory experiences at PSS.

- Collecting and implementing military-connected family and student feedback can foster a strong sense of belonging

Families report feeling supported when they have an open and frequent line of communication with the POC, and we found that this relationship often acts as the informal channel through which families offer feedback. Treating military-connected families as the experts they are on areas such as transitions, events, community building, and other support services can have the dual effect of improving the school climate as well as helping families feel seen and valued by their school community. Having feedback mechanisms in place would serve to give schools, districts, and states actionable data on how to improve the experience of PSS for families.

31 See [Appendix F: Graph 9](#) “How would you rate the importance of Purple Star supports in your school choice?”

32 See [Appendix F: Graph 10](#) “Did your family experience a meaningful difference between a school with a Purple Star program and a school without a Purple Star program?”

Closing

As we hope this report has demonstrated, PSS continues to play an important role in raising awareness and supporting the needs of military-connected children and their families. While many schools experienced setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, most stakeholders we spoke to indicated a desire to return to previous levels of programming, and to find ways to build on programming going forward. Throughout this report we have focused our recommendations on ways to enhance program quality and to ensure the sustainability of PSS over time. Future research should aim to study the impact on students and families in more depth. Having data, both quantitative data on academic and socioemotional outcomes for military-connected children, and data based on collecting regular feedback from military-connected students and their families, will aid in this effort.



About the Center for Public Research and Leadership

The Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL) at Columbia University strives to revitalize public school systems while reinventing professional education. CPRL conducts high-impact research and consulting projects for clients in the education sector and provides rigorous coursework, skills training, and real-world experiential learning for our graduate students who attend programs at Columbia University and across the country. Since our founding in 2011, CPRL has provided research and consulting support to more than 150 state agencies, school districts, charter school organizations, foundations, and advocacy groups, among others.

About the Military Child Education Coalition

Established in 1998, the Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®) is a nonprofit organization that solely exists to help military-connected children thrive. MCEC supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.

Acknowledgments

This project could not have been done without the effort and commitment of more than 50 individuals — students, parents, school administrators, teachers, district leaders, and state-level Purple Star program leaders — who took the time to speak with us. They generously shared their personal histories, their extensive knowledge, and often connected us with other stakeholders who contributed to our research. We have been deeply inspired by their deep commitment to military families and children.

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Appendix A: Recommendations from the 2021 Report

Recommendations for States or Other Designation-Granting Agencies

- Build recognition of the PSS brand
- Ensure that designees enact program components with reasonable fidelity
- Provide models for core components
- Provide feedback to applicant schools that miss the mark
- Develop measurement systems to evaluate PSS impact
- Invite district-level applications
- Encourage non-traditional schools to apply
- Leverage the program to establish formal practitioner networks

States that are newly initiating programming may also consider the following additional recommendations.

- Draw on existing expertise
- Engage stakeholders
- Weigh the benefits of “certifying” versus “awarding” schools

Recommendations for Schools and Districts

- Establish collaborative Purple Star working groups
- Designate both district- and school-level points-of-contact
- Train all staff, regardless of state-level requirements
- Implement student-led transition programs
- Involve students and families in program development
- Compensate or reduce other workload for staff taking on additional responsibility
- Include other highly-mobile populations in programming
- Honor all identities

Appendix B: State Profiles

		Georgia	Indiana	North Carolina	Ohio	Texas	Virginia
Number of Military-Connected Students (including those with Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve affiliation)		77,612	21,127	96,647	34,992	159,075	143,085
# of Public Schools with Designation		13	105	278	381	160	309
% of Public Schools with Designation		0.5%	5.4%	10.6%	10.2%	1.7%	14.3%
Adoption Year		2018	2020	2019	2017	2020	2018
Application and Renewal Process	Reviewing and Awarding Body	Reviewed and awarded by the members of the Compact	Reviewed and awarded by the Indiana Department of Education	Reviewed and awarded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction	Reviewed and awarded by Purple Star Advisory Board (Ohio Departments of Education, Higher Education, Veterans Services, and the Adjutant General	Reviewed and awarded by the Texas Education Agency	Reviewed by the Virginia Department of Education's Military Student Support Process Action Team and awarded by the Virginia Council on the MIC3
	Renewal Timing	Annual	Every three years	Annual	Every three years	Every two years	Every three years
Components	Point of Contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Professional Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Transition Teams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Webpage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Events	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

34 From <https://www.gadoe.org/>, 2021.

35 From <https://www.in.gov/>, 2022.

36 From <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/>, 2021.

37 From <https://education.ohio.gov/>, 2022.

38 From <https://tea.texas.gov/>, 2022.

39 From <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/>, 2021.

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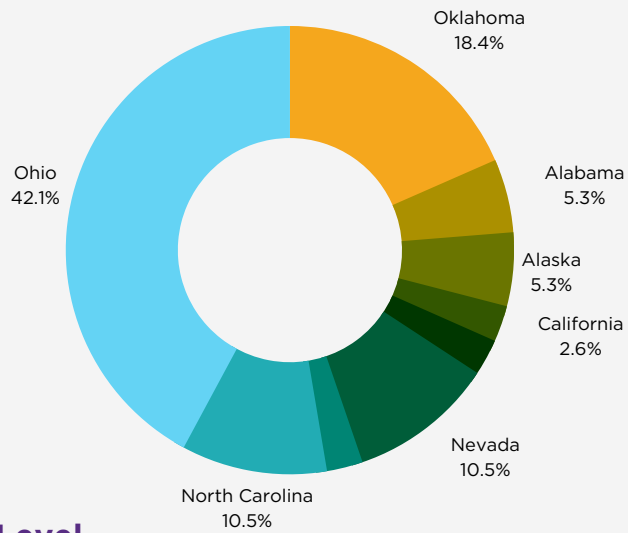
Appendix C: Demographic Comparison Table for Interviews

District, State	% White	% Hispanic	% Black	SES: % of families with income below poverty level
Anthony Wayne District, OH	93.0%	0.9%	2.0%	4.4%
Camden County GA	59.0%	9.0%	21.0%	26.1%
Carteret County Schools, NC	88.6%	9.0%	6.9%	15.1%
Chesapeake County Schools, VA	47.1%	9.4%	32.7%	11.8%
Chesterfield County Public Schools, VA	50.3%	15.6%	25.7%	6.9%
Clearfork Valley, OH	94.0%	1.8%	0.1%	7.4%
Craven County, NC	50.6%	10.8%	27.8%	20.3%
El Paso ISD, TX	9.5%	83.6%	3.5%	26.4%
Fairborn District, OH	75.4%	4.3%	9.4%	23.6%
Fort Sam Houston, TX	37.5%	31.1%	16.9%	2.2%
Hamilton Local Schools, OH	72.0%	5.2%	12.0%	15.6%
Harnett County Schools, NC	46.8%	20.7%	24.5%	18.3%
Hoke County Schools, NC	26.0%	22.1%	34.3%	23.8%
Houston County, GA	42.0%	10.0%	39.0%	16.2%
Jackson Local Schools, OH	87.3%	2.0%	2.3%	4.4%
Killeen ISD, TX	22.4%	30.2%	34.9%	16.4%
Lexington Local Schools, OH	89.8%	2.6%	1.1%	4.5%
Liberty County Schools, GA	22.0%	14.0%	53.0%	21.2%
Lowndes County, GA	61.5%	10.1%	22.1%	19.3%
Mad River District, OH	75.9%	4.6%	8.7%	25.9%
Moore County Schools, NC	63.8%	13.6%	16.0%	14.6%
MSD of Pike Township, IN	8.7%	24.1%	59.5%	16.0%
North East ISD, TX	25.7%	59.5%	7.3%	14.4%
Pender County, NC	56.1%	14.7%	14.4%	16.9%
Prince William County Public Schools, VA	30.6%	34.1%	20.4%	7.9%
San Felipe Del Rio ISD, TX	4.6%	93.5%	0.9%	21.2%
Stafford County Public Schools, VA	49.1%	19.8%	19.1%	4.1%
Temple ISD, TX	23.3%	43.1%	27.7%	28.8%
Virginia Beach City Public Schools, VA	48.7%	11.4%	23.8%	8.6%
STUDY AVERAGES	50.0%	21.0%	20.0%	15.0%
NATIONAL AVERAGES	48.0%	27.0%	15.0%	16.0%

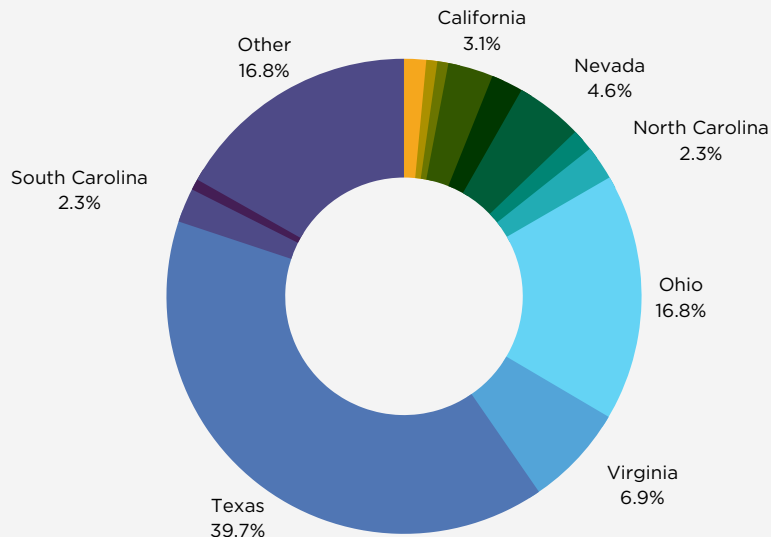
Appendix D: Demographic Breakdown of Survey Data

State Representation Across Surveys

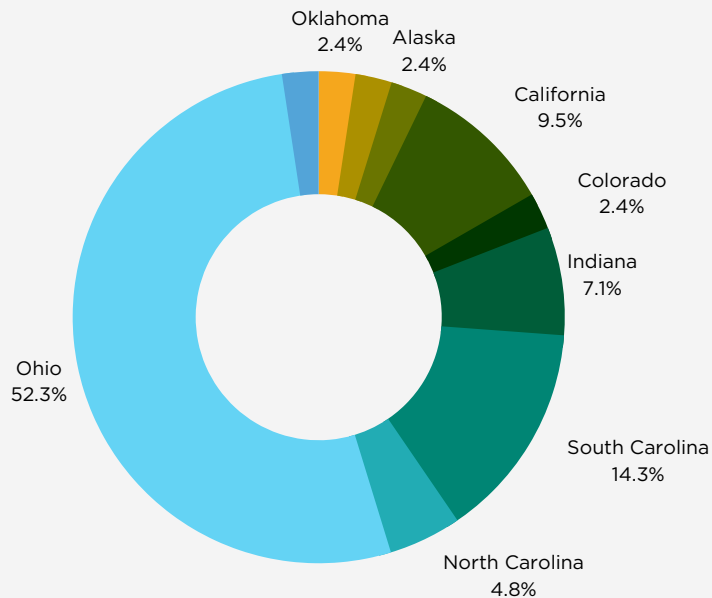
Graph 1: Family Level



Graph 2: School Level



Graph 3: District Level



Family Survey Demographics - Race, Ethnicity

Table 1: Race

Race	Number of Family Respondents	Percent of Family Respondents
White	72	67.3%
Black/African American	5	4.7%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1	0.9%
Two or more Races	8	7.4%
Other	4	3.7%
I prefer not to answer	17	15.8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 2: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	# of Family Respondents	Percent of Family Respondents
Non-Hispanic	76	69.7%
Hispanic	23	21.1%
I prefer not to answer	10	9.2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>100%</i>

Family Survey Demographics - Branch, Affiliation, Rank

Table 3: Military Branch

Military Branch	# of Family Respondents	Percent of Family Respondents
Air Force	58	53.2%
Army	29	26.6%
Coast Guard	1	0.9%
Marine Corps	2	1.8%
Navy	11	10.1%
Space Force	1	0.9%
I prefer not to answer	7	6.4%
<i>Total</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 4: Military Affiliation

Military Affiliation	# of Family Respondents	Percent of Family Respondents
Active Duty	75	68.8%
National Guard	8	7.3%
Reserve	7	6.4%
Retired/Veteran	10	9.2%
Civilian/No military affiliation	5	4.6%
I prefer not to answer	4	3.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 5: Military Rank

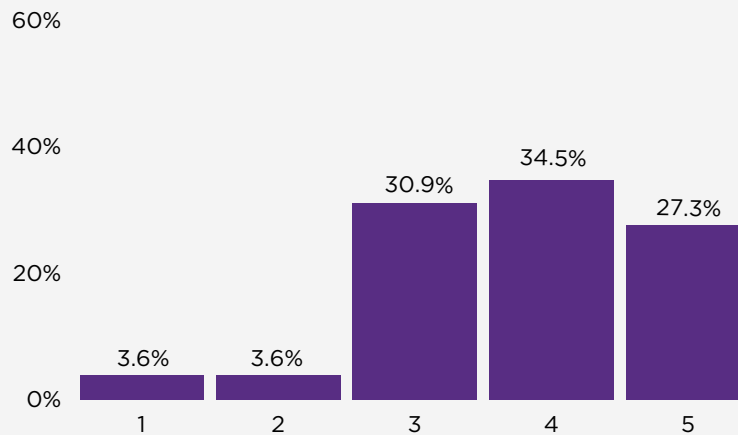
Military Ranking	# of Family Respondents	Percent of Family Respondents
Junior Enlisted (E1-E5)	12	11%
Mid-Grade Enlisted (E6-E7)	30	27.5%
Senior Enlisted (E8-E9)	6	5.5%
Warrant Officer (W1-W5)	1	0.9%
Company Grade Officer (O1-O3)	8	7.3%
Field Grade Officer (O4-O6)	38	34.9%
General Grade Officer (O7 & Above)	1	0.9%
I prefer not to answer	13	11.9%
<i>Total</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>100%</i>

Appendix E: School Administrator and Staff Survey Graphs

Graph 1

“How well do you think your school engages with military-connected families?”

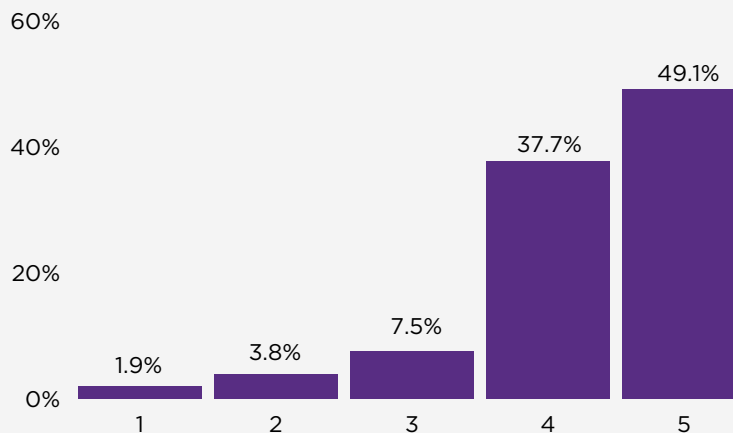
(1 = Not Well, 3 = Somewhat Well, 5 = Very Well)



Graph 2

“How helpful are the following programs and practices in supporting military-connected children and their families? [Designated school-based points of contact for military families]”

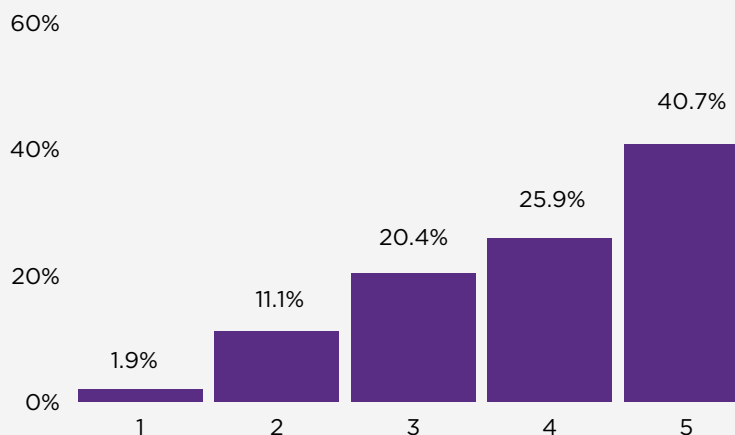
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 3

“How helpful are the following programs and practices in supporting military-connected children and families? [School staff trained on the particular needs of military-connected students and families]”

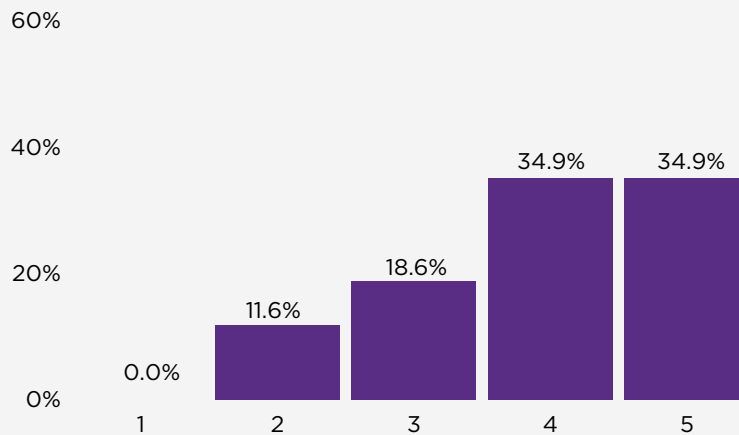
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 4

“How helpful are the following programs and practices in supporting military-connected children and their families? [Student-led transition program]”

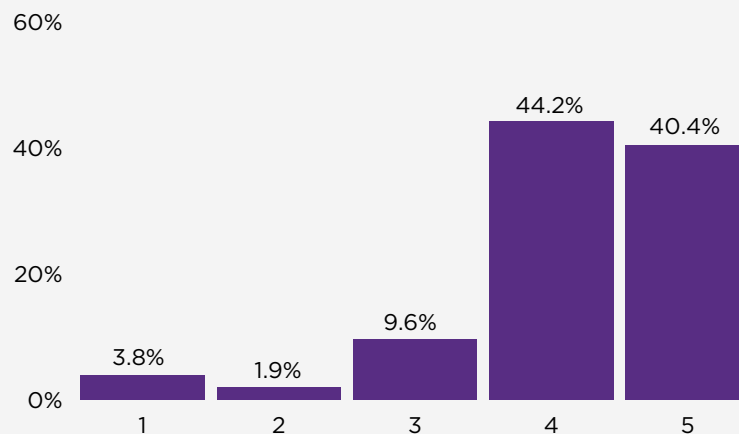
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 5

“How helpful are the following programs and practices in supporting military-connected children and families? [Designated website with resources for military families]”

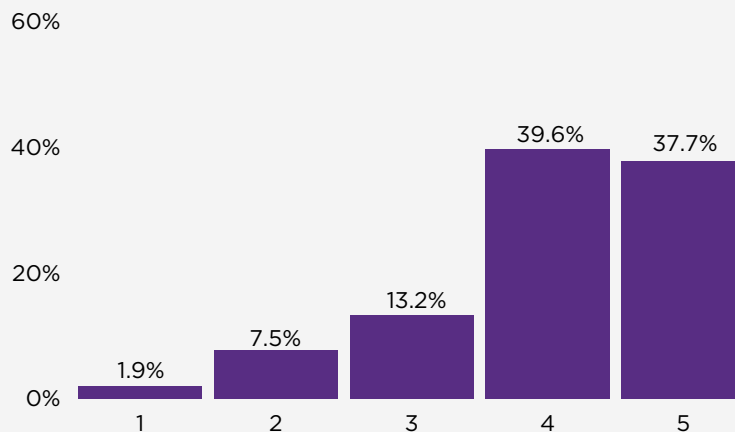
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 6

“How helpful are the following programs and practices in supporting military-connected children and their families? [Military recognition events]”

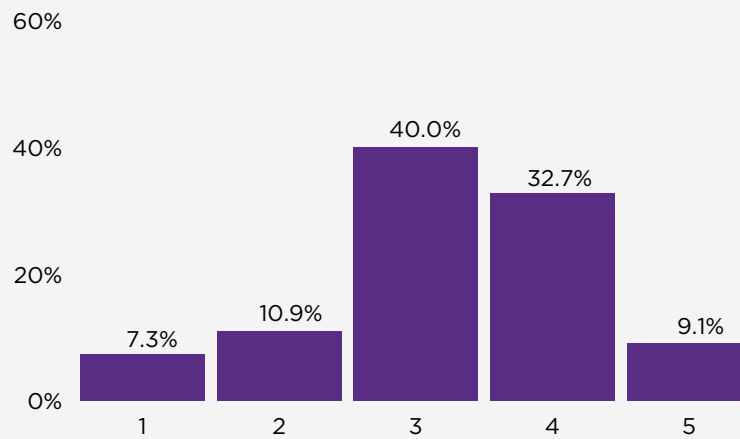
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 7

“How would you rate the impact of the Purple Star program on the academic progress of military-connected children at your school?”

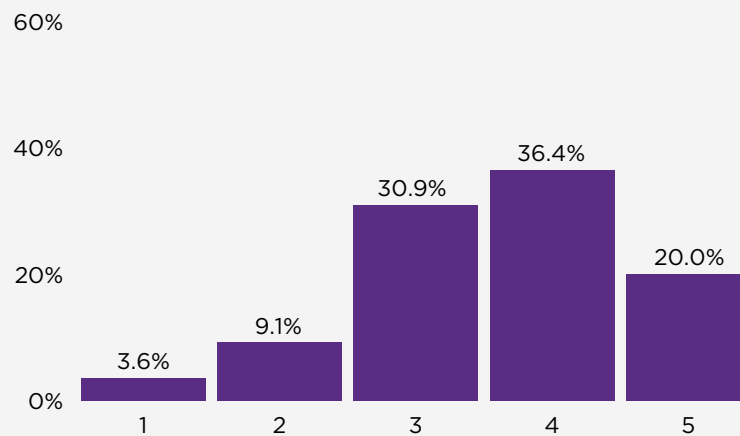
(1 = No Impact, 3 = Some Impact, 5 = Significant Impact)



Graph 8

“How would you rate the impact of the Purple Star program on the socio-emotional development of military-connected children at your school?”

(1 = No Impact, 3 = Some Impact, 5 = Significant Impact)

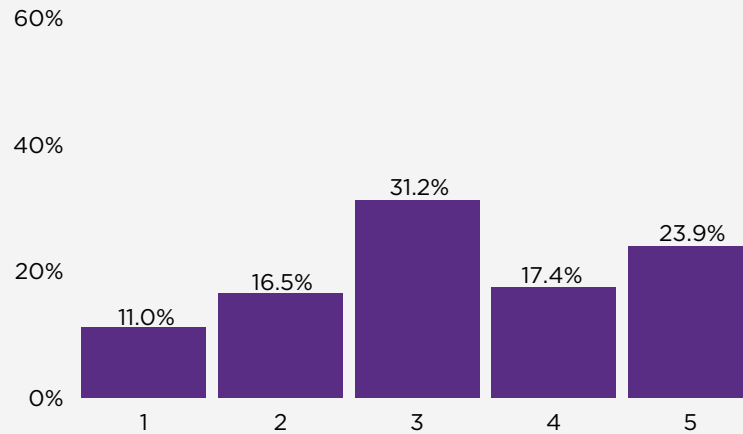


Appendix F: Family Survey Graphs

Graph 1

“How engaged is your family with the school community at your child’s Purple Star School?”

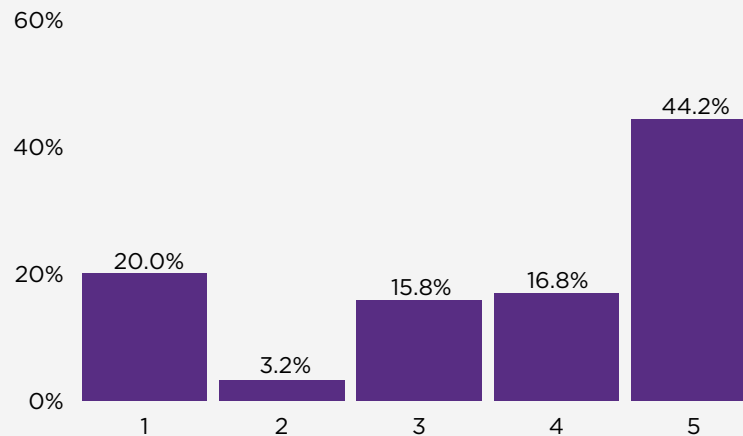
(1 = Not Engaged, 3 = Somewhat Engaged, 5 = Very Engaged)



Graph 2

“How helpful are the following programs and practices for you? [Designated staff member in your school for military-connected students and families]”

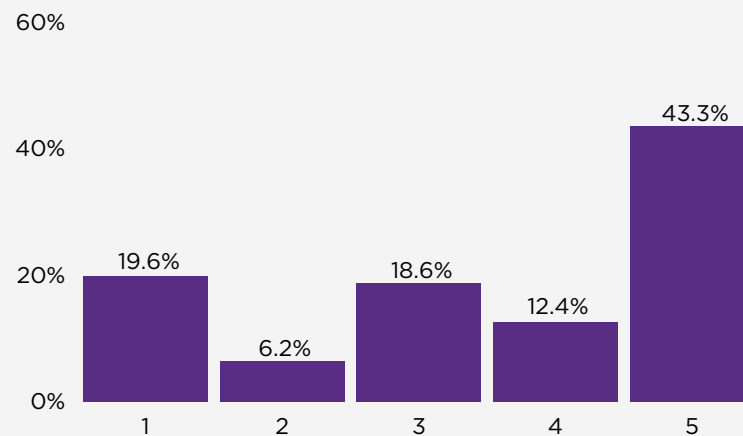
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 3

“How helpful were the following programs and practices for you? [School staff trained on the particular needs of military-connected students and families]”

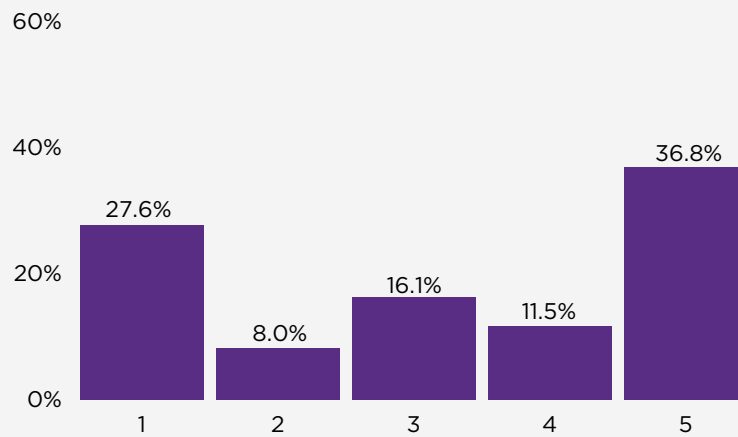
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 4

"How helpful are the following programs and practices for you? [Student-run program to welcome new students]"

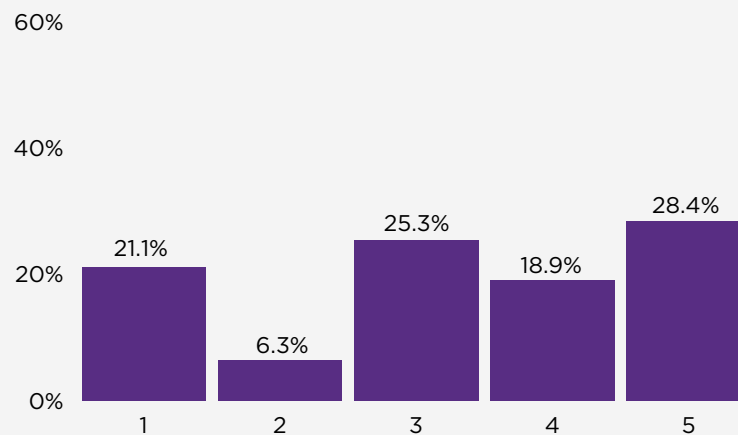
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 5

"How helpful were the following programs and practices for you? [School or district website with resources for military-connected families]"

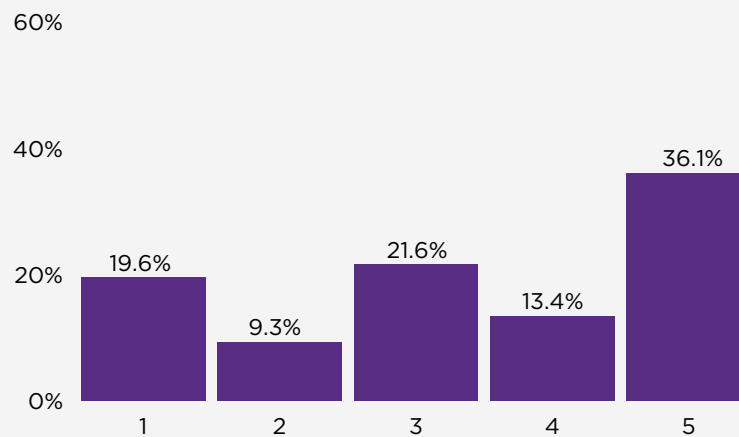
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 6

"How helpful are the following programs and practices for you? [Military recognition events]"

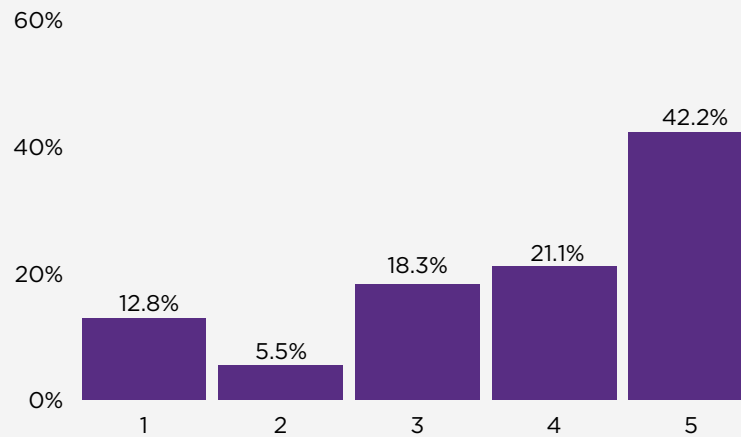
(1 = Not Helpful, 3 = Somewhat Helpful, 5 = Very Helpful)



Graph 7

“How supported do you think your child is academically at their Purple Star School?”

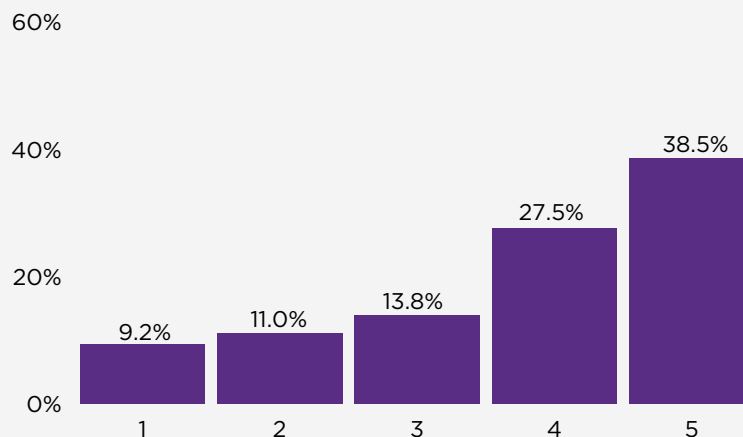
(1 = Not Supported, 3 = Somewhat Supported, 5 = Very Supported)



Graph 8

“How supported do you think your child is socially and emotionally at their Purple Star School?”

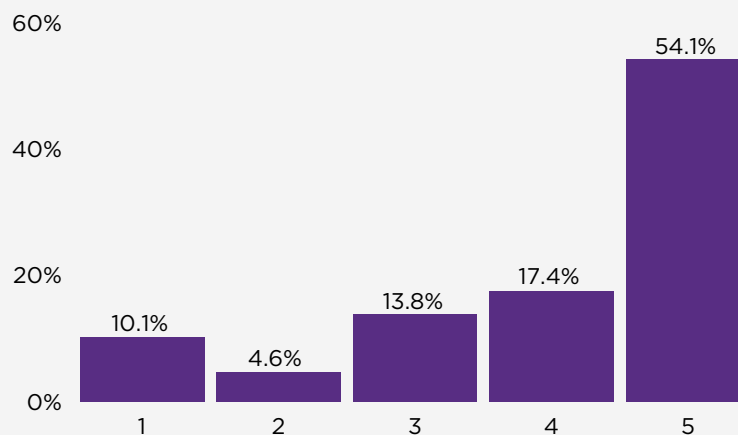
(1 = Not Supported, 3 = Somewhat Supported, 5 = Very Supported)



Graph 9

“How would you rate the importance of Purple Star supports in your school choice?”

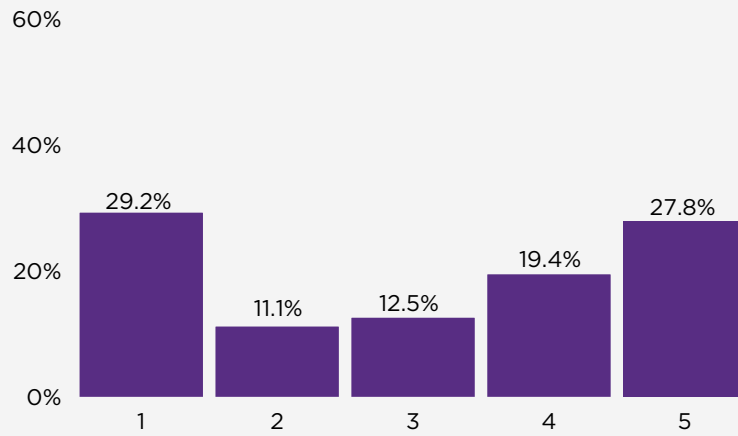
(1 = Not Important, 3 = Somewhat Important, 5 = Very Important)



Graph 10

“Did your family experience a meaningful difference between a school with Purple Star program and a school without a Purple Star program?”

(1 = No Meaningful Difference, 3 = Somewhat Meaningful Difference, 5 = Significant Meaningful Difference)



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