



Key Message

States have a valuable opportunity to facilitate improved local implementation of policies designed to support military-connected children and ensure families are empowered with the knowledge they need by clarifying requirements, enhancing communication efforts and streamlining access to information on state and local education websites.

Analysis

Military families face distinct challenges due to frequent moves and varying educational requirements across states, directly impacting service member focus and readiness. When parents lack awareness of state policies intended to support their children, they're left to navigate complex systems during critical transition periods. This avoidable stress undermines family stability and, ultimately, mission readiness.

Best Practices and Innovative Approaches

Military-connected students bring unique strengths and face distinct challenges as they transition between schools and states. By enhancing both the implementation of supportive education policies and the accessibility of critical information, states have a powerful opportunity to reduce barriers, ease transitions and affirm their commitment to military families.

Policy Implementation

To amplify the impact and long-term success of the Purple Star Schools Program (or similar military recognition programs), states are encouraged to consider the following statutory or administrative enhancements:

- Establish a statewide military recognition program – such as the Purple Star Program – to formally designate schools that demonstrate excellence in supporting military-connected students. Program criteria should include:
 - Targeted professional development and training for school staff to build understanding of military family needs and transitions
 - A student-led transition initiative that pairs incoming military-connected students with peer ambassadors

According to War Department-sponsored research, “State Implementation of Four Initiatives to Support Military-Connected Students,” examining the effectiveness of policies that states have enacted to support military-connected students (or in subsequent actions taken), the following states have been found to fully meet the objectives of this initiative. This means all specified components of the model Purple Star Schools Program (or a similar military-friendly school designation program) are included, the state agency has established implementation rules, and information on the program is easily accessible on a dedicated state webpage for military families:

Arkansas*, Delaware*, Florida*, Georgia, Idaho*, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, New Mexico*, Ohio*, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia

*Indicates states identified by DSLO as best practice examples for policy implementation and/or information accessibility



- A dedicated webpage on the school's website providing information and resources for military families
 - A clearly identified point of contact for military-connected families, serving as a liaison between the school and military community
 - Implement a recertification process requiring schools to reapply for designation within a specified time frame. This promotes program fidelity, encourages continuous improvement and ensures sustained commitment to military-connected students.
- ✓ **Innovative approaches:**
- ✓ **Incorporate support for military-connected students with special education needs into already established criteria.**
 - ✓ **Provide incentives for schools that achieve the Purple Star designation, such as grants for professional development or program implementation.**

EXAMPLES:**NEW MEXICO**

New Mexico Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 30, Part 19, Section 6.30.19.9-10

<https://prod-rf-lambda.rtssaas.com/PublicFiles/d89c47bd0d70402dba89b03a22bda6d1/fe51ca81-f5e8-48c8-b468-d03c5537ded7/06.030.0019.pdf>

"6.30.19.9 PROGRAM ELEMENTS FOR PURPLE STAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH ACTIVE-DUTY

MILITARY FAMILIES: A public school that enrolls military-connected students shall submit to the department with their purple star school application evidence the school has fulfilled the following requirements:

A. The public school applicant shall designate a staff member to serve as the school MPOC.

(1) The MPOC shall complete professional development provided by the school on the unique needs of military students and families utilizing training materials from the military child education coalition website.

(2) The MPOC shall support military-connected students and their families by:

(a) serving as the point of contact and working collaboratively between military connected students, their families, the school, and military personnel;

(b) maintaining familiarity with enrollment and withdrawal procedures, records transfer, existing community and installation resources, and student supports; and

(c) providing additional resources for school personnel on issues related to military-connected students.

B. The public school applicant shall include a page on the school website for resources and information for military families, which may include:

(1) Relocation information, such as overview of school environment, extracurricular activities, tutoring, student codes of conduct, and key staff contacts such as the MPOC;

(2) Details on enrollment and registration procedures, including:



- (a) enrollment for military families;
 - (b) transfer information;
 - (c) documentation checklist for student records, transcripts, and residency; and
 - (d) eligibility requirements for free state funded public school pre-kindergarten;
 - (3) Withdrawal procedures;
 - (4) Information on the interstate compact on educational opportunity for military children;
 - (5) Information on special education services and Section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973;
 - (6) Information on available student counseling and support services; and
 - (7) Opportunities for parental involvement and engagement.
- C. The public school applicant shall provide a list of resources describing the available academic, social and emotional supports to assist military-connected students which may include, but are not limited to the following:
- (1) academic advisement and interventions;
 - (2) school-based, student-led transition programs;
 - (3) peer-support systems;
 - (4) new student orientation to the school environment and procedures;
 - (5) social events or welcoming activities organized throughout the school year to help military-connected students and families learn about the school culture, routines, and surrounding community; and
 - (6) military recognition events.
- D. The public school applicant shall submit a resolution supporting military students to its local school board or charter school governing council and the public school's application to become a purple star public school.

6.30.19.10 PROGRAM ELEMENTS FOR PURPLE STAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHOUT ACTIVE-DUTY

MILITARY FAMILIES: A school that does not enroll military-connected students may apply to be a purple star public school by:

- A. emphasizing the importance and honor of military service, which may include: veterans day assemblies, armed forces day celebrations, hosting patriotic events, letter-writing campaigns, care package drives, partnerships with veterans organizations, inviting local military personnel to speak, maintaining a wall of honor, recognizing military appreciation month, and producing public service announcements that highlight the value of military service;
- B. recognizing the service to the country, accomplishments of veterans active-duty and reserve military personnel, and the national guard personnel in their communities;
- C. sponsoring special events recognizing military service;
- D. celebrating students who have committed to serving in the military; and
- E. submitting a resolution to the local school board or charter school governing council supporting students of military families, and the public school's application to become a purple star public school."

**FLORIDA****2024 Florida Statutes, Title XLVIII, Chapter 1003, Section 051**

<https://m.flsenate.gov/statutes/1003.051>

“1003.051 Purple Star Campuses.–

(1) As used in this section, the term “military student” means a student who is:

- (a) Enrolled in a school district, charter school, or any school or educational institution participating in an educational choice scholarship program established pursuant to chapter 1002; and
- (b) A dependent of a current member of the United States military serving on active duty in, or a former member of, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard; a reserve component of any branch of the United States military; or the Florida National Guard.

(2)(a) The Department of Education shall establish the Purple Star Campus program. At a minimum, the program must require a participating school to:

- 1. Designate a staff member as a military liaison.
- 2. Maintain a web page on the school’s website which includes resources for military students and their families.
- 3. Maintain a student-led transition program that assists military students in transitioning into the school.
- 4. Offer professional learning training opportunities for staff members on issues relating to military students.
- 5. Reserve at least 5 percent of controlled open enrollment seats for military students.

(b) The department may establish additional criteria to identify schools that demonstrate a commitment to or provide critical transition supports for military-connected families, such as hosting an annual military recognition event, partnering with a school liaison officer from a military installation, supporting projects that connect the school with the military community, and providing outreach for military parents and their children.

(3) A school may partner with a school district to procure digital, professional learning, or other assistance necessary for the school to meet the criteria specified in subsection (2).

(4) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to implement this section.”

ARKANSAS**House Bill 1545**

<https://arkleg.state.ar.us/Acts/FTPDocument?path=%2FACTS%2F2025R%2FPublic%2F&file=501.pdf&ddBienniumSession=2025%2F2025R>

“6-28-301. Purple Star School Program.

(a) Each public school with twenty (20) or more children of military families enrolled annually by October 1 shall:

(1) Adopt the Purple Star School Program developed by the Arkansas Council for Military Children and approved by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education; and



(2) Survey arriving and departing uniform services families to assess the effectiveness of programs and services under this chapter as specified by the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education.

(b) The purpose of the Purple Star School Program shall be to:

(1) Assist children of uniformed services families by addressing the educational, social, and emotional challenges the children of uniformed services families face during their transition to a new school; and

(2) Keep children of uniformed services families on track to enroll and excel in college, enter the workforce, and become life-ready.

(c) The council-developed Purple Star School Program required under subsection (a) of this section shall:

(1) Require each public school to designate a military family education facilitator to:

(A) Identify military-connected students who are enrolled in the public school and inform public school teachers of those students;

(B) Serve as the Purple Star School Program point of contact for the public school, each child of a military family, and the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of, or person standing in loco parentis to a child of a military family; and

(C) Assist in determining and coordinating public school services and programs for military-connected students;

(2) Require a designated public school district military family education facilitator, public school military family education coordinator, and public school staff to complete council recommended and division-approved initial and continuing education on identifying the needs and unique challenges faced by children of members of the uniformed services;

(3) Require each public school district to include on its website a “Military Families” section that informs uniformed services families of:

(A) The student enrollment application process;

(B) Available education pathways;

(C) Notable public school or public school district Purple Star School Programs;

(D) Public school district military family education coordinator contact information; and

(E) Public school military family education facilitator contact information;

(4)

(A) Require each public school or public school district to establish a volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador program that shall be open to all enrolled students who want to contribute.

(B) The volunteer student-to-student peer ambassador program required under subdivision (c)(4)(A) of this section shall:

(i) Connect and welcome inbound students ahead of their transition to a public school;

(ii) Assist with the provision of new student orientation; and

(iii) Assist new students with establishing social connections at their new school;

(5) Establish school and community events to honor and recognize members of the uniformed services and military-connected students;

(6) Ensure that a public school or public school district appoints a volunteer uniformed services member, military spouse, or representative from a military installation or unit to serve on the school community and family engagement committee;



- (7) Ensure that a public school district's or public school's parent and family engagement plan required under § 6-15-1702 addresses relevant military family issues and resources; and
- (8) Require public schools and public school districts to collaborate with military commands to encourage uniformed services families to self-identify their military status.
- (d) The Purple Star School Program required under subsection (a) of this section may authorize public schools and public school districts to expand their Purple Star School Program to include community-level initiatives [...]"

Information Access

To increase awareness and accessibility of the Purple Star Schools Program, states are encouraged to adopt policies that promote visibility, transparency and ease-of-participation for military families and school communities:

- Maintain a dedicated state education webpage for military families that includes regularly updated information and resources about the Purple Star Schools Program.
 - Publish the current list of designated Purple Star Schools, and spotlight awardee schools that demonstrate exemplary practices in supporting military-connected students. Sharing these success stories helps foster inspiration, replication and continuous improvement across districts.
- ✓ **Innovative approach: Include a Purple Star School Program “toolkit” geared toward schools and districts, detailing the application process, requirements and links to relevant resources and support organizations. Include the current list of Purple Star awardees and highlight their best practices in supporting military-connected students.**

EXAMPLES:

OHIO

Ohio Department of Education and Workforce: Students and Families Affiliated With the Military
<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Military-Resources/Students-and-Families>

Ohio maintains a comprehensive webpage of resources on the state department of education website, including detailed information and links on enrollment options for military-connected students, transition resources, military school liaison contact information and a variety of military-specific provisions and programs, such as Advance Enrollment, Open Enrollment, Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission and the Purple Star Schools Program. The state website also has a webpage to support service members, veterans and military spouses who are educators or would like to teach in Ohio.

“Over 15,000 students in Ohio are members of military families. Frequent moves and family separations through deployments, as well as reintegration issues, can make life especially challenging.”



Ohio Department of Education and Workforce: Enrollment Options for Students from Active Duty Military Families

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Military-Resources/Students-and-Families/Enrolling-New-Students-in-Active-Duty-Military-Fam>

“Ohio supports military families as they navigate transitions both into and out of the state. On average, active-duty military families change duty stations every two to three years, and military-connected students may change schools six to nine times before graduating.

Schools and districts that service Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio’s largest military installation, are most impacted by these enrollment flexibilities. Other schools and districts around the state may also be impacted, as these enrollment flexibilities are available to active-duty service members that work at reserve units, as military recruiters, and as Reserve Officer Training Corps instructors.

In Ohio, active-duty military families have two enrollment options to reduce barriers and improve educational options [...]”

IDAHO

Idaho Department of Education: Supporting Military Families

<https://www.sde.idaho.gov/supporting-military-families/>

Idaho maintains a comprehensive webpage of resources on the state department of education website, including information about all four of the targeted initiatives, to include the Purple Star Schools Program.

“Idaho is dedicated to supporting military families as they move in and out of the state and recognizes military youth may experience education challenges when they move under military orders with the service member. Some education-related barriers may include enrollment in the receiving school, placement in courses, credit transfers, participating in extracurricular activities, and the ability to meet credit requirements to graduate on time.”

DELAWARE

Delaware Department of Education: Education for Military-Connected Youth

<https://education.delaware.gov/educators/whole-child-support/family-services/military-connected-youth/>

Delaware maintains a comprehensive webpage of resources on the state department of education website, including detailed information and links on a variety of military-specific provisions and programs such as MIC3, the MSI and the Purple Star Schools Program.

“Military children, youth and their families are a special part of Delaware’s population. On average, military students will attend six to nine different school systems from kindergarten to 12th grade. Our schools play an important role in providing supports to students during transitions and difficult times.”

**ARKANSAS****House Bill 1545**

<https://arkleg.state.ar.us/Acts/FTPDocument?path=%2FACTS%2F2025R%2FPublic%2F&file=501.pdf&ddBienniumSession=2025%2F2025R>

“(i) The council shall post on its website or post by utilizing another form of public notice, including without limitation social media, information for uniformed services families, including without limitation information regarding: [...]

(5) Purple Star School Program highlights and contact information for military family education facilitators.”

Conclusion

The best practices and innovative approaches outlined in this document demonstrate that meaningful progress is already underway across the country. States that prioritize clarity, consistency and communication are not only improving educational outcomes for military-connected students – they are also strengthening family stability and contributing to mission readiness.

Continued collaboration between state education agencies, local school districts and the War Department is essential to enable us to collectively build on existing progress and further improve consistency in implementation and awareness of key initiatives designed to support military-connected students. Together, we can ensure that every military-connected student is welcomed, supported and empowered to thrive – no matter where their journey takes them.