



Key Message

When military parents lack transparent access to existing state policies intended to support their children, they're left to navigate complex systems on their own during critical transition periods. States have a valuable opportunity to further support military families by clarifying requirements in policy and statute, enhancing communication efforts and streamlining access to information on state and local education websites.

STATE ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Advance
Enrollment



Interstate Compact
on Educational
Opportunity for
Military Children



Purple Star
Schools
Program



Military
Student
Identifier



POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Update policies

Strengthen practices

Support execution



INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY

Improve awareness

Expand information sharing & access



Military-connected students embody resilience, adaptability and a global perspective – qualities that enrich every classroom they enter.

As states continue to advance policies that support our military-connected students, there is a tremendous opportunity to strengthen implementation, increase awareness and ensure equitable access to information. By improving policies around Advance Enrollment, the Military Student Identifier, the Education Compact and the Purple Star Schools Program – states can create more inclusive, responsive and effective education systems. These efforts not only benefit military families but also elevate the overall quality and equity of education for all students.



Policy Area Discussion Points and Recommendations for State Enhancements

Advance Enrollment



Advance Enrollment allows military families to begin the school enrollment process prior to arriving at their new location. By clarifying district requirements and increasing information access for families on existing Advance Enrollment policies, states support educational continuity for military-connected students.

Discussion Points

- Military-connected students enrich classrooms across the nation, and states play a critical role in ensuring their smooth transitions during military-directed moves.
- Currently, 41 states offer Advance Enrollment for military-connected students.
- States can strengthen their Advance Enrollment policies by increasing outreach to families and school personnel and clarifying requirements.
- By adopting these provisions, states can help unlock greater educational stability for military-connected children, while reinforcing their state's role in supporting military families.



Recommendations: Policy Implementation

To facilitate effective implementation of Advance Enrollment, states are encouraged to adopt statutory or administrative policies that make it clear that proof of residency isn't required for school enrollment, course registration and program application (i.e., notification of pending relocation by remote means shall substitute in-person and proof-of-residency requirements until a specified period upon arrival).



Recommendations: Information Access

To strengthen implementation of Advance Enrollment provisions and promote seamless transitions for military-connected students, states are encouraged to create and maintain a webpage hosted by the state education agency geared to military families, featuring up-to-date information and resources on Advance Enrollment.

Military Student Identifier



The Military Student Identifier, or MSI, was established to ensure data-driven support for military-connected students. Enhancing policies around the MSI is an opportunity for states to gain clarity regarding the challenges and success of military-connected students.



Discussion Points

- Reliable identification of military-connected students is essential to understanding their academic progress, addressing their unique needs and ensuring strategic allocation of educational resources. In the absence of consistent methods across systems, too many students remain invisible in the data.
- Since its inclusion in the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, in 2016, the MSI has provided a valuable framework – but recent analyses reveal inconsistent implementation across states, districts and schools, limiting its potential impact.
- By clarifying and standardizing MSI data-collection requirements, states have a powerful opportunity to help families and districts understand the value of identifying military-connected students, increase transparency across demographics and promote data-driven decisions.



Recommendations: Policy Implementation

To ensure the effectiveness of the Military Student Identifier and data-informed support for military-connected students, states are encouraged to adopt policies through statute or administration actions that integrate the MSI as a reportable demographic within statewide longitudinal data systems. Including military-connected students as a disaggregated subgroup ensures a robust, intersectional view across key demographics – such as disability status, race, ethnicity and sex. This data provides educators and policy makers actionable data based on the ESSA and Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.

- Leverage the standardized definition of “military-connected student” established by the Common Education Data Standards workgroup.

Did you know?

The Common Education Data Standards project is a national effort where groups work together to develop common data standards for key education data. These standards make it easier to share and compare data within and across P-20 education institutions and sectors. The initiative includes a common vocabulary, data models and tools to assist education stakeholders understand and use education data. Additional information about CEDS is available at <https://ceds.ed.gov/whatIsCEDS.aspx#>.

- Include within the state’s longitudinal data systems children whose parents serve in the National Guard or reserves by amending definitions of military-connected student pursuant to 20 U.S.C. Section 6311(h)(1)(C)(ii) (<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=2024&req=granuloid%3AUSC-2012-title20-section6311&num=0#sourcecredit>).
- Ensure that there is a mechanism to disaggregate all subgroups of military-connected students (active, Guard and reserve) – allowing for more tailored support and transparency.



Recommendations: Information Access

To ensure military families can easily access and understand the Military Student Identifier, state education agencies are encouraged to create and maintain an easily accessible webpage. It should be hosted by the state education agency and geared toward military families, with up-to-date information and resources on the MSI.

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military



The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, or Education Compact, provides an enduring framework to ensure educational continuity for military-connected students – but its success depends on strong, consistent implementation across states and districts.

Discussion Points

- The Education Compact is designed to reduce barriers for military children transferring between states, addressing challenges such as enrollment delays, placement issues and transferring special education services. Ensuring successful transitions is not only a matter of compliance – it's an opportunity to affirm a state's commitment to military families.
- However, implementation varies widely, and recent studies have highlighted several areas for growth – including addressing inconsistent awareness among school staff and parents, delays in service delivery for students with disabilities and uneven application of the Education Compact provisions across districts.
- States have a critical opportunity to help military families by adopting laws and policies that improve awareness, increase compliance and streamline processes at the local level.



Recommendations: Policy Implementation

To strengthen implementation and ensure consistency of the Education Compact, states are encouraged to adopt policies that:

- Embed detailed operational requirements into agency rules or companion statutes. These should:
 - Outline data collection and reporting protocols.
 - Define clear accountability measures.
 - Establish dispute resolution pathways.
 - Standardize credit transfer procedures to ensure smooth transitions for military-connected students.
- Clarify the role of the state's Education Compact council in educating school districts and military families about the protections and rights afforded by the Education Compact and relevant state and federal laws.



Recommendations: Information Access

To strengthen awareness and accessibility of the Education Compact, states are encouraged to create and maintain a webpage hosted by the state education agency. It should be geared toward military families and feature clear, up-to-date information and resources on Education Compact provisions. It also should:

- Provide step-by-step guidance for addressing concerns, outlining how families can escalate unresolved issues – from initial school-level inquiries to a formal review by the state’s MIC3 council.
- Include a statewide directory of military school liaisons, ensuring families and educators can quickly identify local points of contact who offer training, advocacy and support.

Purple Star Schools Program (or similar military-friendly designation)



The Purple Star Schools Program provides a valuable opportunity to recognize and elevate schools that effectively support military-connected students – but its success depends on strong state-level guidance, resources and collaboration.

Discussion Points

- Military families increasingly seek schools that demonstrate a deep understanding of their unique needs, and the Purple Star Schools Program offers a promising model to help states identify and celebrate those schools that go above and beyond.
- While many states have adopted or adapted the program, recent findings highlight opportunities to strengthen implementation by addressing persistent challenges, such as insufficient rulemaking, staffing constraints, inconsistent eligibility criteria and difficulties with application processes and timelines.
- By refining legislation, establishing clear program expectations, investing in sustainability and offering technical assistance to schools, states can ensure that the Purple Star Schools Program (or similar military recognition programs) have long-term impact and success.



Recommendations: 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 establish formal rules or policies that institute a recertification process requiring schools to reapply for designation within a specified time frame (not more than three years). This promotes program fidelity, encourages continuous improvement and ensures sustained commitment to military-connected students.



Recommendations: Information Access

To increase awareness and accessibility of the Purple Star Schools Program, states are encouraged to create and maintain an accessible webpage. It should be hosted by the state education agency and geared toward military families, with up-to-date information and resources on the Purple Star Schools Program. This page should also include:

- Information outlining eligibility criteria, the application and renewal process, timelines and links to relevant support organizations and military-connected education resources
- An up-to-date list of designated Purple Star Schools, and spotlight schools that demonstrate exemplary practices in supporting military-connected students

Conclusion

The War Department remains a committed partner and stands ready to collaborate with states, districts and schools to ensure military-connected students thrive academically, socially and emotionally – no matter where their journey takes them.