

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

Resources to Help Military-Connected Children Stay Academically Engaged During a PCS Move: Resource Review

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Introduction

This report was developed in response to a request for resources to help military-connected children stay academically engaged during a permanent change of station (PCS) move. The Technical Assistance (TA) team at the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) conducted a brief search of publicly available resources on the topic of interest. Resources to assist military-connected children stay academically engaged during a PCS were identified for both parents and students.

This report is divided into three sections and provides the following elements:

- Brief background information;
- Resources for parents to keep their children academically engaged during a PCS; and
- Resources for military-connected children to stay academically engaged during a PCS.

This rapid resource review provides a preliminary examination of the research. Thus, given the brief timeline, this report is not intended to serve as a comprehensive review of the literature or offer a comprehensive list of resources. In addition, the resources listed are not endorsed by the Clearinghouse; rather, the resources are offered to assist you in making data-driven decisions.

Background

Military families face unique challenges. Frequent moves associated with PCS orders are constant and specific to military families. One of the hardest aspects of the PCS for families with school-aged children is the school transition process (Center for Public Research and Leadership at Columbia University [CPRL] & Military Child Education Coalition [MCEC], 2017).

Military-connected children, on average, change schools six to nine times from kindergarten through high school; this is about three times more than civilian children change schools (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). Children who move often can suffer academically; feel disconnected from other children; and even miss out on extracurricular activities if the timing of the moves does not coincide with the timing of tryouts for sports teams, theatre performances, or other extracurricular activities (Hawkins et al., 2018). However, military-connected children often become accustomed to frequent moves, and the need to adapt to different situations may promote resiliency as children develop positive coping strategies (Spencer et al., 2016).

To alleviate some of the pressure felt by military families during a PCS and to increase consistency regarding school-transition issues, the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Compact) was developed. The Compact has been adopted by all 50 states and the District of Columbia and concentrates on the following topics:

- Transferring educational and immunization records and enrollment;
- Placing students, at least initially, in classes similar to those of the sending school;
- Excusing absences so the child can spend time with a parent on leave from active duty service;
- Offering special education services;
- Providing flexible eligibility requirements for extracurricular activities; and
- Waiving graduation requirements if similar classes were taken and completed with a satisfactory grade in the sending school (Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission [MIC3], 2018).

To read more about the Compact, please visit <https://mic3.net/>.

Despite the implementation of the Compact, challenges remain for military families who face frequent relocations. A 2017 report identified some of these remaining challenges as difficulties in accurate course placement, registration delays, and the socio-emotional impacts of moving on children. Difficulties in accurate course placement and transfer were due to the variability of course names and sequencing among states and individual school districts. Difficulties or delays in registering for classes were amplified if the child had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and this IEP was not received by the new school prior to the family's arrival (CPRL & MCEC, 2017).

While challenges remain, resources exist for students and parents to help ease their school-transition process. Parents can help their children during times of transition by doing the following:

- Using education-specific checklists;
- Contacting the School Liaison Officer and Exceptional Family Member Program prior to the relocation;
- Visiting the new school and meeting with staff to advocate for their children;
- Finding activities and programs for their children in the new school;
- Learning what the credit requirements are for the new school and understanding what each child's academic needs are; and
- Maintaining an up-to-date portfolio with children's educational records (CPRL & MCEC, 2017, p. 32).

This Resource Review provides resources for parents and children to help the children stay academically engaged during a move. The next section offers resources that are designed for parents, and many of the resources address the recommendations provided by the 2017 CPRL and MCEC report outlined above.

Resources for Parents

The TA team identified six resources to assist parents in keeping their children academically engaged during a PCS. A brief description and link to a corresponding website or tool for each resource are provided below. Resources are listed alphabetically.

Education Revolution, National Military Family Association

This website houses resources for parents of military-connected students, teachers, administrators, and state and local school officials. Included on the website are a toolkit that offers advice for parents on how to tackle education obstacles their children may encounter, advocacy materials for educators or decision-makers, information on brick-and-mortar school standards and homeschooling, and a checklist for education-related items during a PCS.

- <https://www.militaryfamily.org/info-resources/education/education-revolution/>

Geographic Transition Tips for Military-Connected Parents and Students, Clearinghouse

This handout provides strategies to help parents navigate the school-transition process more smoothly. The tips may serve as reminders of details parents already consider or provide additional tools to help parents advocate for their children. Every transition and school system are a little bit different, and these tips or strategies may work better in some situations over others. Tips included in this handout are generally related to ensuring children receive credit for classes taken. Knowing when cut-off dates are to receive class credit or discussing class names and descriptions with the school registrars at the current and new schools are important considerations to ensure classes and credits are comparable and accepted in both locations. To read more tips on how to help military-connected students stay academically engaged during the school-transition process, please download the handout at the link below.

- https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/geographic_transition_tips.pdf

Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission Training Toolkit for Parents

This toolkit includes a list of websites, publications, and videos to help parents better understand the Interstate Compacts and specifically the Military Interstate Children's

Compact Commission. The toolkit is divided into the following sections, and each has multiple components: General Knowledge, Commissioner Specific, Need to Know Before You Go, and Compact Resources. To view the toolkit, please visit the link below.

- <https://mic3.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/5b-Parent-Training-Toolkit.pdf>

SchoolQuest, Military Child Education Coalition

This free, interactive tool was developed to help parents of military-connected children prepare for frequent school moves and manage the school-transition process more efficiently. The website serves as a virtual hub where parents and students can find helpful information, tools, and resources that are centralized on a single platform. These sources include StudentQuest Academic Tracker, individual student profiles, pre-built customizable checklists, reminders and notifications, school search capability, and interactive resources that have been vetted by MCEC staff. While most of the resources are designed to help middle and high school students (i.e., 6th – 12th grade students), families with younger children may also find them useful. To learn more about SchoolQuest, please visit the website below.

- <https://schoolquest.militarychild.org/about-schoolquest>

Student Transition Checklist, Clearinghouse

This checklist was developed to help parents of military-connected students create a binder to organize hard copies of educational records, immunization records, and education plans (if applicable) for each child, from each school, from grades K-12. The checklist offers spaces to record basic school information and members of a child's interdisciplinary team (if applicable). It also provides a list of documents that should be collected and maintained to help ease a child's academic transition to a new school. To download the checklist, please visit the link below.

- https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/military_connected_student_transition_checklist.pdf

Student Transition – Parent Resources, MCEC

This website was created to ease the stress of school transitions during COVID-19, but many of the resources should still be useful in future years. The website houses tools that link to resources and strategies, a worksheet that promotes communication regarding school transcripts between parents and schools, a toolkit that outlines socio-emotional health and wellness resources, a checklist that comprises student transitions, and links that direct users to information on the Compact. To view the resources available, please visit the website below.

- <https://www.militarychild.org/cprlparents>

Resources for Students

The TA team identified four resources that could help military-connected children stay academically engaged during a PCS. A brief description and link to a corresponding website for each resource are provided below. Resources are listed alphabetically.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Digital Library, Military OneSource

This resource is for Service members and their families. The MWR Digital Library has resources for children, teenagers, and adults. For children, resources, such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, graphic novels, courses that introduce database searching, and *National Geographic Kids*, are available to help improve reading skills, maintain or enhance grades, or research topics for writing assignments. For teenagers, in addition to the resources listed above, several options, such as online music lessons; access to *Great Courses* course library; and eLearning tutorials with practice tests, e-books, flashcards, and articles, can help students improve their grades in core subjects or assist in exam preparation (e.g., SATs, GRE). This resource allows military-connected students to continue to engage with academically stimulating material during a move. *Please note that certain libraries require a Military OneSource account for access; accounts are free for Service members and their families.* To view the MWR Digital Library, please visit the website below.

- <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/recreation-travel-shopping/recreation/libraries/morale-welfare-and-recreation-digital-library/>

Student Achievement, MCEC

This website describes programs that intend to support military-connected students. These include the Student 2 Student program (listed below), the Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program, student-focused webinars (available soon), and a Student Advisory Council program (available soon). The student resources serve to connect, engage, and empower military-connect students, before, during, or after a PCS. To learn more, please visit the website below.

- <https://www.militarychild.org/audience/students>

Student 2 Student Program (S2S), MCEC

This is a high school program that encourages military and civilian students to work together to welcome new students, create a positive environment, support academic excellence, and ease transitions. The core values of S2S are leadership, academics, service, finding the way, and relationships. To learn more about S2S and to determine if the program is active in a specific location, please visit the website below.

- Website: <https://www.militarychild.org/programs/student-2-student>

Tutor.com for U.S. Military Families, Princeton Review

This program provides free online tutoring and homework help to eligible Service members, civilian personnel, and their dependents. Services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Tutor.com employs over 3,000 tutors who can assist in over 100 subjects, including math, science, writing, social studies, Spanish, English, computer literacy, and advanced placement courses. Students can work with a tutor from any location where they have internet access. There are three ways students can work with a tutor: (1) students may request a tutor's help immediately, (2) students may schedule a future tutoring session, and (3) students may upload a document for offline review. If option three is chosen, comments are sent back to the student within 24 hours. A free mobile app "Tutor.com app" is also available for iOS and Android mobile devices. To learn more about Tutor.com, please visit the websites listed below.

- Website: <https://military.tutor.com/home>
- Mobile App: <https://www.tutor.com/mobile>

Additional Assistance

The TA specialists at the Clearinghouse provide support to professionals as they examine and make informed decisions about which programs fit specific situations and are worth the investment. Whether connecting one with the resources and tools to conduct a needs assessment in a specific community, suggesting the best evidence-based program or practice for a certain situation, or developing an evaluation plan, the TA team of experts is a call or email away.

Please visit the Clearinghouse's website at www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu or call 1-877-382-9185 to speak with a TA specialist.

Suggested Citation

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