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An Implementation Evaluation of Four Initiatives Intended to Support Military-Connected Children's Educational Success

Jennifer Karre, Ph.D.
Kristin K. Brawley
Cameron Richardson, Ph.D.
Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.



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Executive Summary

In collaboration with the Department of Defense (DoD) Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLLO), the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) examined the implementation of four specific initiatives and other policies and programs intended to support military-connected students. These four initiatives are Advance Enrollment (AE), the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Compact), the Military Student Identifier (MSI), and the Purple Star Schools Program (PSSP) or equivalent. This report¹ discusses the results of a qualitative evaluation of the implementation of the four initiatives and other policies and programs within each state and at the local level. As part of this evaluation, stakeholders with national, state, and local perspectives on the implementation of these initiatives and programs were interviewed. The interview questions focused on the four initiatives in terms of awareness, implementation, impact, barriers, improvements, and coordination of services. Overall, this qualitative evaluation identified inconsistencies in the implementation of the four initiatives at the state and local school district levels. For military families, the frequent moves, or PCS (i.e., Permanent Change of Station), is challenging and stressful and this is exacerbated by the lack of continuity of policy implementation. Evaluators invited 230 people to participate in the evaluation. A total of 154 interviews were conducted. Participants were connected with all six branches of the United States Armed Forces (i.e., Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Navy, Marine Corps, Space Force), the DoD, or the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3; the governing body that oversees the implementation of the Compact). The participants included Service headquarters personnel, installation personnel, school personnel in the installation area, parents who were Service members or spouses of

Service members assigned to the installation, local partners identified by installation personnel, DoD personnel, and MIC3 representatives. Participants represented 30 states. Eighty-eight percent of military-connected students reside in those 30 states, and 82% of military installations that are in the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia are located in those 30 states.



Advance Enrollment

Participants' reports of their own awareness and their perception of families' awareness of AE suggest that although installation and school personnel awareness of AE may be relatively high, parent awareness is likely insufficient. Furthermore, there were discrepancies in the perception of family awareness, with some school liaisons, but few parents, reporting that most families are aware of AE. Conversely, more Exceptional Family Member Program—Family Support staff (EFMP-FS) report family awareness of AE (i.e., compared to other participant types). Furthermore, the majority of school liaisons and school personnel indicated that they did not know how many families request AE or that few families request AE. Reports of perceived positive impacts of AE for students, in general, included the following: families experience less stress, students are better able to choose classes that are needed or desired, schools are more prepared for students' arrival, and students spend less time out of school. Furthermore, school liaisons, EFMP-FS, and school personnel indicated that AE is very helpful for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan such that AE allows the school to begin the process of securing services for the student sooner.

Participants discussed many barriers related to AE. These barriers included factors such as family aware-

¹ Two other reports were completed as part of this scientific investigation. First, the Clearinghouse conducted a comprehensive review of academic and non-academic literature related to the educational success of military-connected students. Second, the Clearinghouse conducted an assessment of how each of the four initiatives were implemented at the state/District of Columbia level by examining state legislation and state education department regulations to understand the legislative and regulatory requirements of the policies.

ness; school awareness; some cases where students are able to enroll in school but not register for classes; inconsistent implementation across school districts; school attendance eligibility being based on where the family lives, which means that families who have not secured housing cannot use AE; schools not complying with the law; changing move dates; lack of specificity in legislation leading to difficulties or inconsistencies with implementation; differences between the student's needs and interests on paper versus in reality; classes already being filled if a move occurs midyear; IEP or 504 Plan documentation transfer not happening in advance or in a timely manner; and a lack of community providers or school staff, both of which impact schools' ability to provide services for students with an IEP or 504 Plan. Participants discussed several ideas for improvement. These ideas frequently fell into the following categories: awareness, policy enforcement, policy specification, and leveraging technology.



Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Participants' reports of their own awareness and their perception of families' and school personnel awareness of the Compact suggest that although installation personnel awareness of the Compact is high, parent and school personnel awareness is likely insufficient. Perceptions of whether school personnel use the Compact vary widely based on participant type, with teachers/counselors being most likely to indicate that school personnel use the Compact and parents being least likely to say school personnel use the Compact. The impacts of the Compact discussed by participants include improvements related to credit transfers, course placement, graduation, extra-curricular activity participation, kindergarten enrollment, and a general reduction of stress for families.

With regards to students with an IEP or 504 plan, there was wide variability in responses related to how long it takes for students to receive comparable services (i.e., from immediately to 90 days or longer) and related to the circumstances under which students receive a new evaluation when moving into the district (i.e., from

all students with an IEP or 504 Plan receiving a new evaluation to new evaluations being based on the date of the last evaluation). Furthermore, several school liaisons, without prompting, spontaneously discussed the difficulty of accessing services in the schools (e.g., staffing challenges) and/or in the community (e.g., distance to providers, finding providers who take Tricare). Participants also discussed several barriers related to the Compact. These barriers frequently fell into the following categories: lack of school and parent awareness, school non-compliance, and differences between states or schools. Participants had a variety of suggestions for how to improve the Compact. These suggestions tended to center around family and school awareness, consistency across states, and policy enforcement in schools.



Military Student Identifier

Although nearly all participants responded that they were familiar with the MSI, participant responses suggested that there may have been some confusion between the MSI and Impact Aid. Participants indicated that the MSI is used for several purposes, including tracking enrollment of military-connected students, tracking performance of military-connected students, increasing funding, identifying the military-connected students in schools, providing services at the school or state level, and providing services at the military level. However, implementation of the MSI was inconsistent across schools or school districts in terms of frequency of data collection, what response options are provided to families when they identify as being affiliated with the military, and the specific ways in which states, school districts, and schools use the data. Furthermore, although some parents indicated that they use the data (e.g., to look for schools with a high percentage of military-connected students), the vast majority of parents indicated that they do not use the data. Participants discussed several perceived impacts of the MSI. These impacts included that the data from the MSI increases supports, resources, and programming availability (e.g., Military and Family Life Counselors [MFLC], Anchored4Life); increases funding; and improves inter-

actions with individual students (e.g., increased sensitivity, understanding possible needs).

Participants reported barriers related to the collection and use of the MSI data. These barriers included a lack of consistency across schools and states, a lack of understanding of who is considered a military family, problems related to data collection, and families not self-identifying as military families. Participants suggested several areas for improvement related to the MSI. These included better advertising and explicit support from command, consistency across states, increased enforcement, increased availability of data for school personnel and parents, improved data collection processes, increased data sharing across systems, and provision of funding to implement the data collection.



Purple Star Schools Program

Although most participants who lived in a state with PSSP were aware of the initiative, and school personnel awareness appeared to be high, responses indicated that, in general, parent awareness is likely low. Participants identified several components as working well: the military point-of-contact, the peer-to-peer transition program, and the professional development for school staff. Although there was variability in responses by participant type (i.e., EFMP-FS were more likely to report impact on school selection than school liaisons and parents), overall, it appears that some families do seem to take the designation into account when selecting schools. Similarly, although there was variability by participant type (i.e., school personnel were more likely to report an impact than other participant types), participants reported that PSSP has impacts, including better awareness of military culture in the school, improvements to school culture, and social-emotional benefits for students.

Several barriers related to PSSP were reported. These include PSSP being a “check-the-box” designation with little meaningful action attached to it, a lack of funding (e.g., at the state level, for a banner at the school), staffing challenges, a lack of consistency in implementation, difficulties with the application process, a lack of stan-

dardization of professional development, and challenges encountered implementing the peer-to-peer program. Respondents suggested multiple ideas for improvement to PSSP. These included ensuring consistency across states, increasing state-level excitement for the award, funding awardees to ensure implementation, implementing stronger enforcement measures, adjusting the timing of the deadlines, sharing best practices among schools or states, and connecting PSSP to school-wide goals (e.g., student belonging).

Other Partnerships and Programs

Participants discussed many installation-school partnerships. These included installation personnel attending school board meetings; regular meetings occurring between the school district and the installation; installation personnel attending back-to-school nights; student field trips to the installation; school staff trips to the installation; mentoring programs, career days, career talks, and job shadowing; on-installation internships; guest speakers from the installation; Service members volunteering at the schools; adopt-a-school; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning opportunities; Month of the Military Child events; Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC); the school liaison; and MFLC. Participants also discussed other programs that were available for military families: peer-to-peer programs, Boys and Girls Club, Armed Services YMCA, Army Youth Program in Your Neighborhood, and tutor.com. Participants reported positive impacts associated with the partnerships and programs. They included promoting connection, inclusion, and school climate; and influencing social-emotional outcomes, academic performance, and career readiness.

The most commonly reported barriers to implementation were a lack of time or resources, the presence of “red tape,” a lack of interest or difficulties with communication, and turnover at the schools and the installations. Barriers to students benefiting from the partnerships included the geographic distribution of families and difficulties with transportation (e.g., shortages of busses and bus drivers). Common improvement themes were funding, communication, and additional school liaisons.

School District and School Website Data Extraction

A website data extraction was conducted and consisted of a systematic review of school district and school websites. The primary purpose of the data extraction was to determine if information about the four initiatives was available. The secondary purpose was to examine what additional programs or services were available to military-connected students. The websites that were examined were from the 22 school districts, located in 11 states, that approved school personnel interviews and the 47 associated schools.

The majority of examined school districts had a web page with information for military families. In contrast, when looking at the individual school websites, the majority of examined schools did not have a web page with information for military families. However, just under half of schools linked to the district page for military families.

Few school district or school websites had information about AE. Indeed, only two school district websites and no school websites provided information on AE.

Only half of the school districts provided information about the Compact. One school district discussed absences related to deployments, but it did not tie the deployment absence policy to the Compact. Furthermore, only three school websites specifically discussed the Compact. An additional 10 school websites discussed the protections related to immunizations, deployment-related absences, and non-custodial parents. However, these protections were not discussed in relation to the Compact.

Very few school district or school websites had information about the MSI. Indeed, only two school district websites and no school websites provided information on the MSI. Furthermore, project staff were unable to locate any discussion or examples of the data collection form, and, as such, no response options were identified.

Of the school districts that were in states with PSSP, just under half of school district websites provided an overall description of PSSP. Of the schools that had

received the PSSP designation, less than half had a web page for military families on the school website. Half of the schools with the PSSP designation linked to the school district's web page for military families.

Some school district and school websites included additional information specifically for military families related to the following: additional staff for military families, the special education department, gifted programming, JROTC, tutor.com, peer-to-peer programs, DoD STEM programs, School Quest, school liaisons, MFLC, partnerships with Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA), and installation services.

Measures of School Characteristics

Recently, there has been interest in quantifying the extent to which schools may be able to serve military-connected students. Indeed, some of the military Service branches are evaluating the school districts outside of military installations as part of 10 USC Sec 1781b. One goal of this project was to identify metrics that could be considered as Services and parents seek to evaluate or choose school districts in an installation area. This idea presents a challenge due to factors such as states using different metrics to assess student and school outcomes and parents prioritizing different school qualities (e.g., high military population, Advanced Placement [AP] offerings). Potential metrics that Services or parents may be interested in considering as they evaluate or select school districts or schools in which to enroll their children were identified. They fall under the general categories of academic performance, future readiness, school characteristics, and program offerings.

Themes Across Initiatives and Programs

Several themes emerged across multiple initiatives, including the following: (1) many perceived successes when initiatives were implemented as intended; (2) general lack of awareness of the initiatives among military families and school personnel; (3) little to no enforcement of the initiatives; (4) an absence of implementation consistency of the initiatives across schools, school districts, and states; (5) the lack of housing availability,

which is leading to families living farther away from the installation, and other geographic considerations (e.g., living in a metro area, living in a rural area) introduce challenges for military families and for the implementation of the initiatives; (6) a lack of funding may be impacting implementation of the initiatives; (7) timing of events (e.g., application deadlines, data collections, PCSs) likely impact the effectiveness of the initiatives; (8) technology could be leveraged to increase the effectiveness of the initiatives; and (9) effective communication strategies could increase the positive impact of the initiatives.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on findings from the data gathered during the preparation of the literature review, the state-level initiatives report, and the current report. The recommendations are framed as steps that DSLO can take to support military-connected students. Some recommendations require DSLO to work collaboratively with specific partners to help improve the experiences of military-connected students and their families. As applicable, recommendations in this report are linked to associated recommendations in the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) 2019 report titled, “Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society.”²

Recommendation 1

To address the inconsistency in data collection, data reporting, and definitions of “military-connected students” across initiatives and states, advocate for standardization of data collection related to military-connected students, to include operationalization (i.e., how “military-connected student” is defined), data collection, and data reporting.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 36-37, 40-44, and 68-69 of this report and pages 4, 17-21, and 40-51 of the state-level report. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendation 1

in the NASEM report, which advises standardizing definitions in order to “facilitate synthesis and comparison of information” (p. 326).

Recommendation 2

To address awareness challenges related to the initiatives, support the development, implementation, and sharing of evidence-informed³ practices for strategic communication of the initiatives to parents and school personnel.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 15-17, 20-27, 31-46, 52, 56, 67, and 69 of this report. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendation 10 in the NASEM report, which advises optimizing program delivery in terms of service delivery timing, dose, and format. This also applies to information delivery.

Recommendation 3

Given the inconsistencies in implementation across states and school districts, advocate for information transparency and expectation management related to the specific ways the initiatives are implemented in each state and school district.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 20-23, 26, 28, 31-35, 37-38, 40-44, 50, 52-53, 56, 59-61, and 67 of this report and pages 3-27 of the state-level report. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendation 5 in the NASEM report, which advises understanding the unique aspects of communities surrounding military installations.

Recommendation 4

In order to take advantage of modern technology that could be used to enhance support of military families and promote consistency in initiative implementation, encourage states to leverage technology to directly support military families and to support effective implementation of the initiatives.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 20-23, 26, 28, 31-35, 40-44, 47, 50, 52-53, 56, 67, and 69 of this report and pages 3-27 of the state-level report. This recommendation is consistent with Recom-

² <https://doi.org/10.17226/25380>

³ Evidence based: “demonstrates impact on outcomes of interest through application of rigorous scientific research methods...that allows for causal inference”. Evidence informed: “developed...with the best available external evidence from systematic research and a body of empirical literature...demonstrates impact of outcomes of interest through application of scientific research methods that do not allow for causal inference” (NASEM, 2019, p 9).

mendation 10 in the NASEM report, which advises “harnessing new technologies for program delivery” (p. 338). Use of technology may be similarly advantageous in the school setting.

Recommendation 5

In light of findings related to inconsistencies in implementation, a lack of enforcement, and varying perceptions of impact, support initiative standardization, enforcement, and evaluation.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 20-23, 26-28, 31-35, 37, 39-44, 48, 50, 52-53, 56-57, and 67 of this report, pages 3-27 of the state-level report, and pages 24-25 of the literature review. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendations 2 and 7 in the NASEM report, which advise the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches and the use of program evaluation and continuous quality improvement in order to support military family readiness.

Recommendation 6

To address findings related to (1) persistent challenges with IEP transfers and (2) variability experienced by students in gifted programs, consider ways to increase (1) IEP transportability and (2) standardization of gifted qualifications and programming.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 17-18, 21-23, 31-32, 34-35, and 67-68 of this report and pages 18-20 of the literature review.

Recommendation 7

To address challenges related to parent and school personnel awareness, consider the ways in which increasing the capacity of the School Liaison Program and standardizing school liaison duties may improve parent and school personnel awareness of the initiatives.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 15-17, 20-22, 24-27, 31-38, 43-46, 52, 55-56, and 67-68 of this report.

Recommendation 8

Based on the variability across states in how the MIC3 state commissioner duties are executed, consider how the selection and implementation of the MIC3 state commissioner position (e.g., whether it is a paid position or additional duty, the location of the commissioner within the education system) may impact the execution of MIC3 commissioner duties.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 31 and 33-34 of this report.

Recommendation 9

To address concerns that lack of funding affects implementation, advocate for states to fully fund the initiatives and support the use of existing and potential funding mechanisms to improve the implementation of the four initiatives and to implement other programming that is evidence informed or evidence based.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 22, 34, 42-44, 50, 52-53, 56-57, and 68 of this report.

Recommendation 10

Given the lack of quantitative research around military-connected students’ transitions to new schools and the lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of programs and initiatives for military-connected students, support research to understand the scope of successes or difficulties during transitions to new schools and evaluations to ensure evidence-informed and evidence-based practices are used to support students during those transitions.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on page 57 of this report and pages 16-21, 24-25, and 27 of the literature review. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendations 2 and 7 in the NASEM report, which advise the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches and the use of program evaluation and continuous quality improvement in order to support military family readiness.

Introduction

In collaboration with the Department of Defense (DoD) Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO), the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) examined the implementation of four specific initiatives and other policies and programs that are intended to support military-connected students. These four initiatives are Advance Enrollment (AE), the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Compact), the Military Student Identifier (MSI), and the Purple Star Schools Program (PSSP) or equivalent.

Although supported at the national level by the DoD, these four initiatives are state- and District of Columbia (DC)-level policy initiatives, which means that the policies related to the implementation of the initiatives are decided at the state/DC⁴ level. Guidance for the development of AE legislation is provided in the form of best practices from DSLO. Guidance for the development of Compact legislation is provided by the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3; the governing body that oversees the implementation of the Compact) in the form of model language. Guidance for the implementation of the MSI is provided by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Guidance for the development of PSSP regulations is provided by DSLO and the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC).

The Clearinghouse employed a three-part approach to this scientific investigation. First, as part of the examination of the four initiatives, the Clearinghouse conducted a comprehensive review of academic and non-academic literature related to the educational success of military-connected students. In that review, very little research on or evaluation of programs for military-connected students was found.⁵ Therefore, although supports are available for military-connected students, very little is known about the implementation or effectiveness of those supports.

Second, the Clearinghouse conducted an assessment of how each of the four initiatives were implemented at the state level. For this investigation, state legislation and state education department regulations were examined to understand the legislative and regulatory requirements of the policies in each state. The examination found variability across states in whether states had adopted the initiatives and, for those that did, how the initiatives were conceptualized and specified.⁶

Third, the current report is a qualitative assessment of the implementation of the four initiatives and other policies and programs within each state and at the local level. Stakeholders with national, state, and local perspectives on the implementation of these initiatives and programs were interviewed. The questions focused on awareness, implementation, impact, barriers, improvements, and coordination of services.

This report first discusses the methods that were used to conduct the evaluation. This section includes a description of how the data were collected and analyzed. Next, the report describes the participants. Third, each of the four initiatives are examined separately. Fourth, other programs, partnerships, and coordination of services are explored. Fifth, a website data extraction of school district and school websites is discussed. This included an examination of the information that is available on school or school district websites for military families. Sixth, potential measures that may be helpful for Services or families when they are evaluating or selecting school districts and schools are outlined. Seventh, commonalities across initiatives and programs are considered. Finally, actionable recommendations are proposed based on findings from this investigation.

⁴ Hereafter, the word "state" will be inclusive of DC.

⁵ https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_military-connected-students-educational-success_20220721.pdf

⁶ https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_report_speakmc_initiatives_20240220rev.pdf

Interviews

This qualitative evaluation was conducted to assess the implementation of the four specific policy initiatives intended to support military-connected students.

Interview questions were co-developed by the Clearinghouse, staff within the DoD Military Community & Family Policy (MC&FP) office, and program managers from each Service headquarters. Questions regarding the four initiatives fell into five categories: awareness, implementation, impact, barriers, and improvement. Additional questions addressed partnerships between military installations and local schools or school districts, programs that are available to support military-connected students, coordination between the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) and the School Liaison Program (SLP), and recommendations to improve local or state policies related to military-connected children. Due to time constraints, not all participant types (e.g., school administrators, parents, command) were asked every question. A table with all of the questions and which participant types received each question is located in Appendix A.

The Clearinghouse sought local-, state-, and nation-level perspectives. As such, individuals from the following categories were recruited to participate in the semi-structured interviews: DoD MC&FP and Service headquarters program managers, MIC3 leadership and state commissioners, school liaisons, school administrators, teachers or counselors, EFMP–Family Support staff (EFMP-FS), command representatives, parents, and local partners (e.g., local child/youth development program staff, individuals who are part of local education councils).

Each military Service selected a set number of installations (for a total of 12 installations), which were roughly proportionate to the size of the Service, from which Clearinghouse staff recruited school personnel, instal-

lation personnel, parents, and local partners from the surrounding area. Installations were selected with the goal of including a variety of installations that had a diversity of the following characteristics: installation sizes, school district sizes, states, differences in the military impact on the area, differences in the availability of services and programs, at least one joint base, at least one purple base (i.e., multiple Services with a presence on the installation), at least one rural and remote location, and at least one urban location. Up to three school districts were selected from each installation area. For five of these installations, project personnel traveled to the installation areas to conduct the interviews in person. For the remaining seven installations, interviews were conducted via phone. In addition to the school liaisons in the installation areas, additional school liaisons were interviewed from across the United States.

Potential participants were identified through discussions with DSLO personnel, DoD and Service program managers, the local school liaison, and school district personnel. Potential participants were sent an email that described the project and invited them to participate in an interview, which was to last 60-90 minutes for program managers and school liaisons and 30-45 minutes for all other participant types. Follow-up emails were sent to non-responders, and follow-up phone calls were made if the potential participant's phone number was available to the project team.

Interviews were conducted by evaluation personnel from the Clearinghouse. A consent form was provided to the participants and reviewed before the start of the interview. Interviews were semi-structured interviews. The first question for each of the four initiatives asked participants if they were familiar with the initiative. If the participant said they were not, the interviewer provided a brief description of the initiative and then asked again if they were familiar with it. If the participant was not

familiar with the initiative, they were not asked the remaining questions in that section. Handwritten notes were taken by project staff during the interview. As such, statements attributed to participants in this report should not be interpreted as direct quotes. Furthermore, participants were asked about their experience with, understanding of, or perception of the implementation of the initiatives. As such, each statement is each individual's understanding of the topic. It is possible that participants may have a misunderstanding or misperception of the topic. We have highlighted a few examples where we have evidence that this may be the case. Note that we have not highlighted all misunderstandings or misperceptions.

Coding

To start the code development process, an initial set of codes was developed by two project personnel who extracted themes from 10 interviews. These themes were initially based around the six question categories (i.e., awareness, implementation, impact, barriers, improvement, coordination) and then expanded into subthemes. The final codebook included the initiative name, category, subcategory, code, definition, and examples. An "other" category was available in each category and in subcategories, as applicable, to capture statements that did not fit into the developed codes. The final codebook included 367 codes, which were then expanded and combined during data analysis. Data coders were trained on the same initial set of interviews. Throughout the coding process, coders all coded the same interview once per week in order to examine reliability and to prevent drift in coding.

Participants' responses could be assigned to a particular code if they were answering a direct question, if they answered a question for which the answer also fit into another category (e.g., discussion of lack of awareness of an initiative being a barrier was also coded under awareness of the initiative), and if they spontaneously made a statement that fit into a particular code (e.g., sometimes participants' answers to one question led them to discuss another topic).

In much of the reporting of the results on the following pages, discussion of code categories, or themes, begins with the number of participants who made a comment that fell into that theme (e.g., barriers). Subsequent discussion speaks to the percent of participants who made comments in subthemes (e.g., barriers related to parent awareness, barriers related to school awareness). The percent of participants who had comments in a subtheme may add up to more than 100%. Participants often made comments that fell into more than one code and were counted separately. Conversely, the percent of respondents who made comments in a subtheme may add up to less than 100%. Participant comments were varied and wide-ranging, and this report covers commonly reported or particularly salient themes. Therefore, although being included in the count of a category, one-off responses may not be subsequently discussed in this report.

Moreover, occasionally participants would answer "no" to a question but would then, in the course of answering the question, provide examples that would imply a "yes" answer. These responses were counted as a "yes" instead of a "no." Similarly, if a respondent answered "no" but, in the course of answering a different question, provided examples that would imply a "yes" answer, the answer was counted as a "yes" instead of a "no."

Process Evaluation Timeline

General timeline for process evaluation development, execution, and analysis:

8/1/22 – 9/30/22: Developed evaluation plan, interview protocols, and recruitment material

9/30/22 – 11/10/22: Penn State Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval

11/22/22 – 2/27/23: DoD review and approval

11/30/22 – 1/30/23: Federal register 60-day notice

3/2/23 – 4/1/23: Federal register 30-day notice

3/2/23 – 4/19/23: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review and approval

5/8/23 – 11/20/23: Participant recruitment

5/16/23 – 12/1/23: Interviews

7/5/23 – 12/1/23: Interview coding

12/1/23 – 2/9/23: Analyses

This project was determined by the DoD, Component Office of Human Research Protections to be program evaluation. Therefore, Pennsylvania State University IRB review and approval was not required. The project was approved under OMB Control Number 0704-0658.

Data Extraction at the Local Level

A website data extraction was performed for each of the schools and school districts that were affiliated with interview participants or that were selected for inclusion, regardless of whether participants affiliated with the school agreed to participate. The goal of the local-level data extraction was to identify information related to the four initiatives that is available on the district or school website. Furthermore, data were collected on additional programs and information included on the website that was specifically targeted to military families.

Data collection tools for this investigation were developed for districts and for schools. These tools were based on the information gathered from the extraction

of state-level website data related to the four initiatives that was conducted in 2023⁷ and included initiative components identified in the state-level data extraction. In addition, data were gathered from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data⁸ and included the number of students and schools in the district, the total current expenditures per student, the teacher/student ratio, the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, whether the school is eligible for schoolwide Title 1, and the census locale classification.

There was wide variability in the ease of locating information on district and school websites. As such, two coders were trained to code the websites. Each coder conducted a primary review of half of the websites and a secondary review of the other half of the websites. Even though two reviews of the website occurred, because of the difficulty in finding information on some of the websites, the Clearinghouse cannot guarantee that all of the information available on all of the websites was located. The website data extraction for the districts and schools was conducted between August and December 2023.

⁷ https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_report_speakmc_initiatives_20240220rev.pdf

⁸ <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>

Participants

Evaluators invited 230 people to participate in the evaluation. A total of 164 people agreed to participate, and project staff conducted 154 interviews with participants. Table 1 shows the number of participants, separated by participant type, who were invited, agreed, and participated. Overall, the response rate (i.e., the percent of those who were invited that participated) was 67%. Nearly three quarters (73%) of participants who participated agreed to participate after the first recruitment email, nearly a quarter (23%) agreed after the follow-up email, and 4% agreed after the follow-up phone call. Participants who agreed but did not participate either did not respond to scheduling emails (n=6) or did not attend their scheduled interview and did not respond to an email that attempted to reschedule the interview (n=4).

Participants were connected with all six branches of the United States Armed Forces (i.e., Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Navy, Marine Corps, Space Force), the DoD, or MIC3. The participants included Service headquarters personnel, installation personnel, school personnel in the installation area, parents who were Service members or spouses of Service members assigned to the installation, local partners identified by installation personnel, DoD personnel, and MIC3 representatives. Table 2 displays the number of participants from each group. Participants represented 30 states. Eighty-eight percent of military-connected students reside in those 30 states, and 82% of military installations that are in the 50 U.S. states and DC are located in those 30 states.⁹

Participant Response Rates					
Participant Type	Number Invited	Number Agreed	Percent Agreed	Number Participated	Percent Participated
All	230	164	71%	154	67%
Program manager	7	7	100%	7	100%
MIC3 representative	18	11	61%	11	61%
School liaison	64	51	80%	46	72%
School administrator ¹⁰	35	25	71%	23	66%
Teacher/counselor	36	20	56%	19	53%
EFMP-FS	14	8	57%	8	57%
Command	13	11	85%	11	85%
Parent	34	24	71%	23	68%
Local partner	9	7	78%	6	67%

Table 1
Participant Response Rates

Participants by Group Affiliation		
Group	Number	Percent
Army	36	23%
Air Force	36	23%
Navy	30	19%
Marine Corps	24	16%
Space Force	16	10%
Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission	11	7%
Coast Guard	1	1%
Department of Defense	1	1%

Note. The total number of participants in this table is greater than the number of participants in the evaluation. Although Space Force is now separate from the Air Force, there are circumstances in which an individual may still be affiliated with both. In this circumstance, for this table, they are counted as affiliated with both Space Force and Air Force.

Table 2
Participants by Group Affiliation

⁹ Data sources: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020 (https://mic3.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/50-AD-Data_20200731.pdf); Military OneSource retrieved in 2021 (<https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/view-all>). Counts of installations include only active duty installations that gave permission to be included on the Military OneSource list of installations; installations do not include National Guard, Reserve, Army Recruiting Command, or Army Cadet Command locations; joint bases are double or triple counted based on the number of Services at the joint base.

¹⁰ School administrators included principals, assistant principals, and school district personnel.

For the interviews with school personnel, Clearinghouse evaluators worked with the local school liaison to contact up to three school districts in their area and secure district approval to recruit school personnel. The Clearinghouse sought approval from 25 school districts in 12 installation areas in 11 states and obtained approval from 22 school districts. One of those 22 districts, however, had additional requirements that could not be reconciled before the end of data collection. Therefore, no school personnel were interviewed in that school district. School districts differed in how they transferred the project to the schools after approval was granted at the school-district level. Some provided the name of the school and the names and contact information of potential participants. Others provided the name of the school principal and requested that the evaluators contact them for names of additional potential participants. Furthermore, Clearinghouse staff requested the names of more potential participants than were needed. This was done so that (1) evaluators had back-ups in case someone said “no” and (2) to help ensure confidentiality. The Clearinghouse also asked for back-up schools in case a particular school was not interested in partic-

ipating. Ultimately, the Clearinghouse project team received the names of 41 schools from which to recruit school personnel. Four schools did not respond to inquiries about the project. As such, school personnel were recruited from 37 schools.

The Clearinghouse team initially sought parent participants from the same schools from which school personnel were recruited. However, to increase the pool of potential participants, evaluators loosened the criteria to include parents of children in any school in the district. Furthermore, as parents may have more than one child, they may have been affiliated with more than one school, including schools not selected for school personnel interviews.

Ultimately, school personnel and parent participants were affiliated with 19 school districts and 38 schools. These districts and schools were diverse in terms of geographical area, size of district and school, student-teacher ratio, expenditures per student, and economic disadvantage. Table 3 shows the approximate range related to these characteristics.¹¹

Approximate Range of Demographic Characteristics of School Districts and Schools Included in the Evaluation				
Geographical Areas Represented in Interviews		School and School District Characteristics	Low	High
City Large ¹²	Town Fringe	Students in school district	Less than 400	More than 100,000
City Midsize	Town Distant	Schools in school district	Less than 5	More than 200
City Small	Town Remote	Total current expenditures per student	Less than \$9,000	More than \$20,000
Suburb Large	Rural Fringe	District student to teacher ratio	Less than 11	More than 22
Suburb Midsize	Rural Remote	Students in school	Less than 300	More than 2000
Suburb Small		School student to teacher ratio	Less than 11	More than 22
Geographical Areas Not Represented in Interviews		Percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch	Less than 15%	100%
Rural Distant				
School-Wide Title 1				
Yes	47%			
No	34%			
Missing data	18%			

Table 3
Approximate Range of Demographic Characteristics of School Districts and Schools Included in the Evaluation

¹¹ <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>; <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>

¹² National Center for Education Statistics Locale Classifications and Criteria, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/docs/locale_classifications.pdf

Advance Enrollment

AE is an initiative that allows parents to enroll their children in public school based on military orders as opposed to traditional means of establishing residency (e.g., lease, mortgage statement). Thus, AE allows enrollment to occur before the family has moved to the new duty station.¹³ This initiative is established through state legislation, and, as such, it varies by state regarding requirements and specificity of the legislation.¹⁴

Awareness

Of the 148 participants who lived in states with AE, 127 (86%) were aware of AE, and 21 (14%) were not. As shown in Table 4, although the overall awareness was high, a smaller proportion of the 23 parent respondents expressed awareness of the initiative (n=16, 70%). Examples of participant comments are included throughout this report. Participant comments were selected for inclusion in this report based on their ability to describe the phenomenon being discussed.

As can be seen in Table 5, 63 participants discussed family awareness of AE. Of the participants who discussed family awareness of AE, 41% believed that most families know what AE is, 37% reported that some (but not most) families know or that there were caveats to their awareness. Twenty-two percent reported that many families are not aware of AE. Responses varied based on participant type. Fifty-one percent of school liaisons indicated that most families are aware, but only 21% of parents reported that most families are aware.

Most Families Aware

I get emails all the time asking how to advance enroll, asking if they have to have an address. (School Liaison)

Yes, the school liaison sends out information to all incoming families, talks about it in email communications. (EFMP-FS)

Respondents Who Were Aware of AE				
Respondent Type	Aware (#/%)		Not Aware (#/%)	
All respondents	127	86%	21	14%
Program manager	6	86%	1	14%
MIC3 representative	8	73%	3	27%
School liaison	38	95%	2	5%
School administrator	21	91%	2	9%
Teacher/counselor	16	84%	3	16%
EFMP-FS	8	100%	0	0%
Command	10	91%	1	9%
Parent	16	70%	7	30%
Local partner	4	67%	2	33%

Note. Participants who did not live in states with AE did not receive questions about AE.

Table 4

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Were Aware of AE

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Family Awareness of AE							
Respondent Type	Discussed Family Awareness (#)	Most Families Aware (#/%)		Some Families Aware, Specific Groups, or Caveats (#/%)		Many Families Not Aware (#/%)	
All respondents	63	26	41%	23	37%	14	22%
Program manager	7	0	0%	7	100%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	35	18	51%	11	31%	6	17%
School administrator	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teacher/counselor	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
EFMP-FS	7	5	71%	2	28%	0	0%
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	14	3	21%	3	21%	8	57%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 5

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Family Awareness of AE

¹³ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/education-employment/for-children-youth/advance-school-enrollment/>

¹⁴ https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_report_speakmc_initiatives_20240220rev.pdf

Some Families Aware, Specific Groups, or Caveats

Families are more aware of open enrollment and confuse the two. (School Liaison)

Some are not aware...maybe 60% do know...it is confusing because how it is used depends on where you live. (School Liaison)

Almost all junior high and high school families, 40% of elementary school families, unless they are EFMP families, then close to 100%. (School Liaison)

Military families who have students in middle school & high school know to do their homework and work on enrollment early. Military families with elementary families are new and do not necessarily know to be proactive. (School Liaison)

Most Families Not Aware

Very few are aware before I tell them. (School Liaison)

Forty-one participants discussed school staff awareness of AE (see Table 6). School personnel were directly asked about staff awareness; two school liaisons and one EFMP-FS spontaneously discussed staff awareness. Of those 41 participants, 29% indicated that, in general, school staff are aware of AE; 59% said that those who

need to be aware of it (e.g., front office staff, registrars, counselors) are; 10% said that, in general, staff are not aware of AE; and 2% said they were not sure if staff, in general, were aware of AE.

Staff, in General, are Aware

We do communicate this to our staff, updates regarding programs that benefit students including military students. The more information the staff have, the better they support students. Through the school leadership team, information is siphoned down to all levels. (School Administrator)

Front Office Staff and Counselors are Aware

Not so much teachers, more like front office staff and our data manager. (School Administrator)

The secretary who is in charge of enrollment does. (School Administrator)

The office staff and registrar, yes. The people who need to know about it are aware. (School Administrator)

Most School Staff Not Aware

Advance Enrollment is not well known or understood by school districts yet. (School Liaison)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Staff Awareness of AE									
Respondent Type	Discussed School Staff Awareness (#)	In General, Staff Aware (#/%)		Front Office Staff/ Counselors Aware (#/%)		In General, Staff Not Aware (#/%)		Not Sure (#/%)	
All respondents	41	12	29%	24	59%	4	10%	1	2%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	2	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%
School administrator	21	4	19%	17	81%	0	0%	0	0%
Teacher/counselor	17	8	47%	7	41%	1	6%	1	6%
EFMP-FS	1	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 6

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Staff Awareness of AE

Implementation

Of the 148 participants who lived in states with AE, 73 discussed family requests for AE. Of those who discussed family requests, 30% said that few families request AE, 19% indicated that more than 20% of families request AE (i.e., responses ranged from 25% to over 90% of families that use AE), and 51% said that they do not know the percent of families that request AE. The number and percent of participants that provided responses in each category can be found in Table 7.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Families Requesting AE							
Respondent Type	Discussed Family Requests (#)	Few Request (15% of families or less) (#/%)		More Than 20% of Families Request (#/%)		Do Not Know How Many Families Request (#/%)	
All respondents	73	22	30%	14	19%	37	51%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	1	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
School liaison	35	11	31%	10	29%	14	40%
School administrator	21	4	19%	4	19%	13	62%
Teacher/counselor	16	6	38%	0	0%	10	63%
EFMP-FS	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 7

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Families Requesting AE

Few Families Request

They like to go into the school to register so they can see the school. They may start the process online but finish it in person. (School Liaison)

Only about 10-15%. Often related to specific needs of their students – those in certain programs. (School Administrator)

Only one family requested AE last year. This is typical. (Teacher/Counselor)

Good Number of Families Request

I would say 85%...if they have a student, they are calling and requesting. (School Liaison)

50-60%...mostly those who know where they will be living. (School Liaison)

Unsure How Many Families Request

We are not privy to this information. (School Liaison)

No idea because our central office deals with this. I have dealt with some families who are in process, but I have no idea on a percent. (Teacher/Counselor)

Seventy-four participants (i.e., school liaisons, EFMP-FS, and school personnel) discussed the presence or absence of differences in AE implementation based on whether students have an IEP or 504 Plan as opposed to those students who do not. The majority (59%) of participants who discussed this issue said that there were no differences. Forty-one percent said that there were differences between students with and without an IEP or 504 Plan. Fifty percent of participants who discussed differences in implementation for students with an IEP or 504 Plan indicated that there were positive differences in that AE allows the school to begin the process of securing services for the student sooner.

No Difference

No. I tell them to hand-carry IEPs or 504 Plans. Those documents can be brought over to the local verbiage. If I can get a hold of families, I tell them to hand-carry, so it is seamless. I connect the families with EFMP. These families may need more supports and paperwork, but there is no other difference. (School Liaison)

No difference [in implementation]. Because these students have a case manager or a 504 coordinator, there is one more adult to make sure they have what they need. To make sure when they leave they have their final report card, they have different players working on it to make sure it is complete. It is the same process, just with additional data. (Teacher/Counselor)

Yes

More beneficial with a child with an identified need. They alert the special education department that the student is coming in. Start the conversation sooner. (School Liaison)

It would give us an opportunity to have records to get the process going. The additional time is helpful to ensure we can get the resources needed for the student. (Teacher/Counselor)

Impact

Of the 107 who discussed AE impact, only 17% were unsure of the impact and 7% believed that AE had no impact, while 77% mentioned some type of positive impact. Table 8 displays responses by participant type.

Eighty-two respondents specified a variety of positive impacts. These included reducing stress on families (34%), helping schools be more prepared (13%), students having less out-of-school time (12%), students being able to get classes that they need or want (12%), and other responses.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of AE							
Respondent Type	Discussed Impact (#)	Do Not Know Impact (#/%)	No Impact (#/%)	Impact (#/%)			
All respondents	107	18 17%	7 7%	82 77%			
Program manager	7	0 0%	0 0%	7 100%			
MIC3 representative	3	0 0%	0 0%	3 100%			
School liaison	34	2 6%	3 9%	29 85%			
School administrator	19	7 37%	2 11%	10 53%			
Teacher/counselor	16	4 25%	0 0%	12 75%			
EFMP-FS	1	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%			
Command	11	4 36%	0 0%	7 64%			
Parent	15	1 7%	2 13%	12 80%			
Local partner	1	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%			

Note. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 8

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of AE

Reduced Stress

Helps families breathe a little easier knowing the school will be ready for their child. (School Liaison)

Creates less anxiety for military-connected students and their parents. Eases their minds and reduces stress. An example, they will reopen a closed class if the student needs it given their previous work. (School Administrator)

Less Out of School Time

For some, for outlier districts, kids are getting in to school faster. Some schools require things that a military family would never do, such as change license or car registration – it is good to have orders. (School Liaison)

Yes, if they're able to enroll quickly and get into school more quickly, that will positively impact the student's learning. (School Administrator)

Class Enrollment

Students can choose classes they want and need for graduation. (School Liaison)

Students seem more invested in school if they use Advance Enrollment. Like getting the classes they want. I can better match students to the right classes. (Teacher/Counselor)

Schools are More Prepared

Allows school to be ready. (School Liaison)

Staff can be frontloaded with information that they need about students. Get our ducks in a row and things are in place from the first day. (Teacher/Counselor)

Other

They can get information on extra curriculars or special services before they are even there. (School Liaison)

The transition is smoother, reduces negative social-emotional problems. Little things make a difference. (School Liaison)

Not Sure About Impact

House Bill [number] was passed in [year], but it left room for interpretation...So, it's difficult to know what impact it's having because it differs by district and how it's being interpreted. (Command)

There are not enough cases to determine. (School Administrator)

No Impact

Don't see a big difference. It is first come first serve. It is almost irrelevant. (Parent)

No real impact except for those with an IEP as early notification. (School Administrator)

Differences in Impact for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

Of the 64 participants who discussed the comparative impact between students with an IEP or 504 Plan and students in the general education population, 41% perceived no difference in the impact, and 38% suggested that AE represents an added benefit for students with an IEP or 504 Plan. Table 9 shows the number and percentage of responses in each category.

Added Benefit for Students with IEPs or 504 Plans

We can get a jump start on the IEP process for those with needs if they register early. (School Administrator)

Benefits are that only certain schools serviced gifted kids, so it was great, a huge advantage to know which schools serviced those gifted needs. (Parent)

There is a huge waiting list, so families get a leg up using Advance Enrollment. (School Liaison)

Barriers

Barriers to Implementation

Of the 46 participants who mentioned something about barriers to school implementation, 22% indicated that there were no barriers, while 43% mentioned address- or location-based barriers existed, and 41% mentioned some other barrier. Responses by participant type are located in Table 10.

Address- or Location-Based

One district, due to its size, would not be able to handle the onslaught of families if families were able to enroll in whichever district they wanted. They have to have an address and military orders. (School Liaison)

A lot of schools have attendance zones, and families don't know where they will live until they get there. (Program Manager)

Families don't know where they will live; it's hard to apply for schools that may or may not be conveniently located. Families may choose a school based on educational opportunities, for example, arts, and the family ends up living 45 minutes away due to housing availability. (School Liaison)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of AE with Regard to IEP or 504 Plans

Respondent Type	Discussed IEP/504 Impact (#)	No Difference in Impact for IEP/504 (#/%)		Added Benefit for IEP/504 (#/%)		Does Not Know Impact for IEP/504 (#/%)		Other IEP/504 Differences (#/%)	
All respondents	64	26	41%	24	38%	5	8%	13	20%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	34	14	41%	15	44%	3	9%	4	12%
School administrator	18	10	56%	5	28%	1	6%	3	17%
Teacher/counselor	1	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
EFMP-FS	7	0	0%	2	29%	1	14%	4	57%
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	4	2	50%	1	25%	0	0%	2	50%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 9

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of AE with Regard to IEP or 504 Plans

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Barriers to the Implementation of AE							
Respondent Type	Discussed Barriers (#)	Address-Based Barriers (#/%)		Other Barriers (#/%)		No Barriers (#/%)	
All respondents	46	20	43%	19	41%	10	22%
Program manager	1	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	2	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%
School liaison	12	12	100%	2	17%	0	0%
School administrator	15	1	7%	10	67%	4	27%
Teacher/counselor	11	0	0%	5	45%	6	55%
EFMP-FS	1	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Command	1	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
Parent	3	3	100%	1	33%	0	0%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 10

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Barriers to the Implementation of AE

Other Barriers

A variety of barriers were discussed aside from address- or location-based barriers. These barriers included state policy related to AE or other education-related policies, DoD policy, school staff resistance, and the difficulty of understanding student needs based only on paperwork.

In [State], HB [number] was passed in [year], but it left room for interpretation. It's not currently being applied correctly, so we are trying to get that bill amended. The intent is being interpreted incorrectly. (Command)

If families come mid-year and all seats are filled for a certain class. The school is pretty overcrowded. We cannot honor if the class is already filled. (Teacher/Counselor)

If they have soft date. We had family that thought they were moving in February and showed up in October. (School Administrator)

Districts have been resistant to accepting Advance Enrollment. (School Liaison)

Needs might look different once a student has arrived [compared to what the paperwork says]. (Teacher/Counselor)

Barriers to Families Using

Of the 65 participants who discussed barriers to families using AE, 35% said there were no barriers, while 65% mentioned that there was at least one barrier. Details can be found in Table 11.

Of the respondents who mentioned one or more barriers to families using AE, 20 (i.e., almost half of those who said there were barriers) mentioned a lack of family awareness.

Getting communication and information to the family member, usually not the military member, who will enroll children. (School Liaison)

Even though the school liaison and EFMP talk about Advance Enrollment, some families don't know about Advance Enrollment. Young, enlisted families in particular don't know what they don't know. (EFMP-FS)

Awareness is the biggest barrier, and there is probably not enough ongoing contact to help them work through Advance Enrollment. [Child and Youth] is part of newcomers brief. The spouse brief really helps with Advance Enrollment. We really try to communicate the program as much as we can. Also, in and out processing is required, but it is not enforced. (School Liaison)

Families are unaware that Advance Enrollment exists. I have given information to other parents rather than parents hearing about it directly from the military or school liaison. (Parent)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Barriers to Families Using AE					
Respondent Type	Discussed Barriers (#)	Any Barriers (#/%)		No Barriers (#/%)	
All respondents	65	42	65%	23	35%
Program manager	2	2	100%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	1	1	100%	0	0%
School liaison	29	16	55%	13	45%
School administrator	5	4	80%	1	20%
Teacher/counselor	7	4	57%	3	43%
EFMP-FS	5	3	60%	2	40%
Command	2	2	100%	0	0%
Parent	14	10	71%	4	29%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-

Table 11

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Barriers to Families using AE

Other barriers to families using AE were varied. They included comments related to lack of awareness or presence of resistance from the school, students being able to enroll in school but not register for classes, families being overwhelmed with tasks related to the move, lack of consistency in how the policy is implemented, constraints of the policy, housing availability and transportation, last minute changes in orders, and difficulty finding information.

Schools push back saying it is special treatment for military students. For example, corporate families transition. (School Liaison)

Rural schools are not as familiar with Advance Enrollment. (School Liaison)

Probably families have a lot to think about when preparing for a move. It is a chaotic period. Some families have the mindset that they will figure out the school piece when they get there. The school is an afterthought in the craze of the move. Some families do prioritize school enrollment and that is who we hear from. Those who don't think about it as a priority probably need it the most. (Teacher/Counselor)

Yes – [Advance Enrollment is] not uniformly applied from district to district. (School Liaison)

Sometimes the school of choice is too far away from where the families end up living. Transportation is an issue for special needs families. They may get into the “right” school but need to provide their own transportation. There is a grant available to provide monetary assistance for transportation. It is military funded. (EFMP-FS)

Differences in Barriers for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

Of the 42 participants who discussed the comparative barriers across students in general education and those with an IEP or 504 Plan, 57% suggested that there were no additional barriers, while 43 % said there were additional barriers. See Table 12 for details.

Many of the barriers that were discussed centered around issues regarding the documentation required for students with an IEP or 504 Plan or focused on difficulties related to staffing and resources.

Documentation is not always transferred by the losing district in a timely manner or hand carried by parents. (School Liaison)

This is a small community, resources [may be up to] 300 mi away [if they want to] get services faster. (School Liaison)

Yes, this is a significant problem. There are just not enough staff, especially those who provide different therapies. There are just not enough providers of therapies. EFMP and the [city] school district are trying to find options, a working group. This is a major problem and is completely out of our hands. (School Liaison)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed IEP or 504 Plan-Related Barriers to Families Using AE					
Respondent Type	Discussed Barriers (#)	Additional Barriers (#/%)		No Barriers (#/%)	
		#	%	#	%
All respondents	42	18	43%	24	57%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-
School liaison	31	11	35%	20	65%
School administrator	0	-	-	-	-
Teacher/counselor	1	1	100%	0	0%
EFMP-FS	6	3	50%	3	50%
Command	0	-	-	-	-
Parent	4	3	75%	1	25%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-

Table 12

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed IEP or 504 Plan-Related Barriers to Families Using AE

Improvements

Of the 115 participants who mentioned something about improvements, 19% said they had no ideas for improvement, 6% said they had no ideas because AE was working well, and 75% discussed ideas for improvement. Table 13 displays details by participant type.

No Ideas for Improvement

No. It is a great idea. The problems for them are just, you can't fix housing costs. We would love to have them. It's a problem for all of our families not just military families. (School Administrator)

Things Working Well

None that I can see in my district, everything is online, we can upload documents online. (Parent)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Potential Improvements to AE							
Respondent Type	Discussed Improvements (#)	No Ideas for Improvements (#/%)		Things Working Well (#/%)		Ideas for Improvements (#/%)	
All respondents	115	22	19%	7	6%	86	75%
Program manager	6	0	0%	0	0%	6	100%
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	37	7	19%	2	5%	28	76%
School administrator	20	6	30%	2	10%	12	60%
Teacher/counselor	15	3	20%	0	0%	12	80%
EFMP-FS	7	1	14%	1	14%	5	71%
Command	10	2	20%	0	0%	8	80%
Parent	17	3	18%	2	12%	12	71%
Local partner	3	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%

Table 13

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Potential Improvements to AE

Responses from the 86 participants who discussed improvement ideas spanned a wide range of topics. These topics included enforcing policy, leveraging technology, tightening up legislation and adding a funding mechanism, leveraging different communication methods, instituting capacity waivers, encouraging families to bring paperwork that could help with course placement, and using alternate means to communicate information.

Enforcement and support by the state. (School Liaison)

Systems to share portfolios, for example, samples of work, copies of textbook covers, IEP or 504 Plans. Systems that talk to each other. (Program Manager)

Add in virtual meet and greets that could help with the transition. (School Liaison)

The schools could use more IT support. Some families are working off cell phones, not a computer. Mobile compatibility is a problem. (School Liaison)

Any issues are due to policy vagueness. Having to have all things done is sometimes a sticking point. Immunization card issues are different. I will reach out to the health department for military families, there is no silver bullet for this. (School Liaison)

Use the FRG [Family Readiness Group] to communicate with parents about their resources. Spouses are not always likely to go through the main channels to get their information. (Parent)

This is probably unique to our school district, maybe other school districts have same thing, we have a central registration, which has a lot of positives. The central registration office does not share a lot of information back to the school, for example, this student is a PCS move, are going through the Advance Enrollment process. The central registration office just says, "hey, you are getting a new student." The schools don't get all the information until the student shows up. At the school they understand the importance. Central registration is just a stop point; but you could strengthen their understanding of the process. Could be an area of improvement. (School Administrator)

Summary

Participant awareness of AE was relatively high. Overall, 86% of participants who lived in states with the initiative indicated that they were aware of it. Compared to program managers (86%), school liaisons (95%), teachers/counselors (84%), command (91%), and school administrators (91%), parents had the lowest awareness of the initiative (70%).

Of the 63 participants who discussed family awareness of AE, there was variability in responses based on respondent type. Seventy-one percent of EFMP-FS reported that most families are aware of AE, whereas 51% of school liaisons and 21% of parents believed that most families are aware of AE. Only 17% of school liaisons indicated that many families are not aware of AE, but 57% of parents indicated that many families are not aware of AE.

Forty-one participants discussed school awareness of AE. Of those, 29% stated that school staff, in general, are aware of the policy; 59% indicated that those who are directly involved in enrollment and registration are aware of the policy; 10% reported that, in general, school staff are not aware of AE; and 2% were not sure if school staff were aware of AE.

Of the 73 participants who discussed families requesting AE, 30% indicated that few families request AE; 19% indicated that more than a few request AE; and 51% indicated that they did not know how many families request AE. Fifty percent of participants who discussed differences in implementation for students with an IEP or 504 Plan indicated that there were positive differences in that AE allows the school to begin the process of securing services for the student sooner. This may help explain why EFMP-FS indicated a higher family awareness rate than other participant types.

One hundred seven participants discussed the presence or absence of impacts related to AE. Of those, 77% indicated there was an impact compared to no impact or does not know. The impacts discussed included families experiencing less stress, being better able to choose classes that are needed or desired, allowing the school to be more prepared, and students spending less time out of school. Differences in impact for students with IEPs and 504 Plans echo what was said in other categories: schools can get an early start on putting services in place for the student.

Forty-six participants discussed the presence or absence of barriers to the implementation of AE, and 78% of these participants identified barriers. These barriers included factors such as school attendance being based on where the family lives; school non-compliance; changing move dates; lack of specificity in legislation; differences between the student's needs and interests on paper versus in reality; and, if a move is midyear, classes already being filled.

Of the 65 participants who discussed the presence or absence of barriers to families using AE, 65% discussed the presence of barriers. These barriers included family awareness, school awareness, the ability to enroll in school but not register for classes, inconsistent implementation across school districts, and transportation if an open enrollment school is too far away from where the family lives. Additional barriers identified for students with an IEP or 504 Plan include documentation transfer not happening in advance or in a timely manner and barriers based on a lack of community providers or school staff.

Participants (i.e., 86) provided specific ideas about potential improvements to AE. These ideas included accountability, policy specification, leveraging technology, capacity waivers for military-connected students, and utilizing alternate means (e.g., FRG) to communicate information.

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

The Compact is an initiative¹⁵ that was developed to reduce some of the challenges that students can encounter when they transfer to a new school. Specifically, the Compact is designed to address challenges that are related to enrollment, transferring records, immunizations, program placement, deployment-related absences, extra-curricular activities, and graduation. The Compact has been enacted through state legislation in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and is intended to largely match model language provided by MIC3.¹⁶

Awareness

Of the 154 participants interviewed, 136 (88%) were aware of the Compact, and 18 (12%) were not. For two groups, over 25% of participants were not aware of the Compact: parents (39%) and school administrators (26%). Table 14 shows awareness rates for additional participant types.

Seventy-six participants discussed family awareness of the Compact. Of the participants who discussed family awareness of the Compact, 38% believed that most families know what the Compact is, 32% said that some know but others do not, 22% said that many families are not aware of the Compact, and 16% said that families may be aware of the Compact but they may not know or understand all components of the Compact. Of the EFMP-FS who discussed family awareness, 63% felt that most families are aware of the Compact. This is higher than the 41% of school liaisons, the 29% of program managers, and the 20% of parents who reported that most families are aware of the Compact (see Table 15).

Most Families Aware

- | Most have at least some knowledge. (School Liaison)
- | Have not had a lot of EFMP families saying they didn't know about the compact. (EFMP-FS)
- | Not aware of the term but aware that schools will take credits from other schools. (Parent)

Some Families Aware

- | Some families know, especially if they have older children; some parents don't know to ask (e.g., waiving state testing if already done). (Program Manager)
- | There is a lot of white noise that comes through to families. Families don't pay attention to it until the information is needed. (Program Manager)
- | If they talk to a school liaison. (Parent)
- | I do not think this is 100% common knowledge...Even if you are in the know, you are not completely in the know unless you need something. (Parent)

Respondents Who Were Aware of the Compact				
Respondent Type	Aware (#/%)		Not Aware (#/%)	
All respondents	136	88%	18	12%
Program manager	7	100%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	11	100%	0	0%
School liaison	46	100%	0	0%
School administrator	17	74%	6	26%
Teacher/counselor	18	95%	1	5%
EFMP-FS	8	100%	0	0%
Command	10	91%	1	9%
Parent	14	61%	9	39%
Local partner	5	83%	1	17%

Table 14

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Were Aware of the Compact

¹⁵ "In 2006, the U.S. Department of Defense (USDOD) Office of Personnel and Readiness, in cooperation with the Council of State Governments (CSG) and National Center for Interstate Compacts, drafted the Compact to address some of the educational challenges transitioning children of military families encountered. The Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) and CSG convened an advisory group comprised of federal, state, and local officials, national stakeholder organizations representing education groups; and military families to create the interstate agreement. In 2007, the advisory group finalized the model statute language, which the USDOD promoted as one of their key priorities for military families, and through the DSLO advocacy, was adopted by state legislatures within six years. Currently, the 50 states and the District of Columbia are members of the Compact, and the Department of Defense is ex-officio, non-voting member of the Commission." www.mic3.net/background

¹⁶ Through conversations with our DSLO partners, we learned that several states initially enacted language with varying degrees of alignment with the MIC3 model language, and many states have subsequently made legislative changes with varying degrees of alignment with the model language.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Family Awareness of the Compact									
Respondent Type	Discussed Family Awareness (#)	Most Families Aware (#/%)		Some Families Aware (#/%)		Many Families Not Aware (#/%)		Some Do Not Fully Understand (#/%)	
All respondents	76	29	38%	24	32%	17	22%	12	16%
Program manager	7	2	29%	5	71%	0	0%	1	14%
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	46	19	41%	14	30%	11	24%	10	22%
School administrator	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teacher/counselor	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EFMP-FS	8	5	63%	1	13%	1	13%	0	0%
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	15	3	20%	4	27%	5	33%	1	7%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category; not all categories of responses are presented in the table.

Table 15

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Family Awareness of the Compact

Many Families Not Aware

Still a lot that don't know it exists – the ones that don't know the Compact exists are the same families that don't know there is a school liaison. (School Liaison)

No. There is a lack of awareness. (EFMP-FS)

A few. Parents who have kids with exceptional learning needs. Others don't find out about it until they go to bat for their child. (Parent)

Some Families Do Not Fully Understand

Some families who know about the Compact think it can do more than it really can do. (School Liaison)

Many think it does more than it really does. The compact is there to get the same as other children, not more than other children. (School Liaison)

The Compact is discussed...but as far as how it benefits families, the information is lacking. (Parent)

Twenty-one program managers, school liaisons, and EFMP-FS spontaneously mentioned that the DoD has people and programs in place to share information about the Compact with families.

The “Smooth Move” program helps families once they have orders – 9-12 months before they PCS. (EFMP-FS)

The EFMP staff compile resources, host events, present opportunities for EFMP families and provide training on the Compact. (EFMP-FS)

I give all incoming and outgoing families a briefing on MIC3. (School Liaison)

Fifty-one participants discussed school staff awareness of the Compact. Of those 51 participants, 41% indicated

that most school staff are aware of the Compact, 49% said that some school staff are aware, and 10% said that most school staff are not aware of the Compact. A higher percent of school staff reported both that most school staff are aware and that most school staff are not aware of the Compact than did other participant types. The vast majority of school liaisons, program managers, and MIC3 representatives fell in the middle and said that some school staff are aware. The number and percentage of participants with responses in each category are available in Table 16.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Staff Awareness of the Compact							
Respondent Type	Discussed Staff Awareness (#)	Most Staff Aware (#/%)		Some Staff Aware (#/%)		Most Staff Not Aware (#/%)	
All respondents	51	21	41%	25	49%	5	10%
Program manager	1	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	6	0	0%	6	100%	0	0%
School liaison	8	1	13%	7	88%	0	0%
School administrator	18	9	50%	5	28%	4	22%
Teacher/counselor	18	11	61%	6	33%	1	6%
EFMP-FS	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Each category is mutually exclusive. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 16

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Staff Awareness of the Compact

Most School Staff Aware

They should be aware because we are a Purple Star School – at some point the staff was trained. (Teacher/Counselor)

Yes – the majority of teachers are military or have been military or their husbands have been in the military. We will hire teachers moving to this area. Many of our teachers understand the Compact because they live it. (School Administrator)

Of the premise of it, maybe not the particulars. (Teacher/Counselor)

Some School Staff Aware

As it became commonplace, when there are new administrators, new counselors – training is not up to what it was. (School Liaison)

Outlying areas [farther away from military installations] might not be aware of the Compact. (MIC3 Representative)

Awareness is more likely at the high school. (School Administrator)

Most School Staff Not Aware

Folks in elementary are not aware. (School Administrator)

Probably not. If it comes up in a situation, yes (immunization requirements, school start age), but the Compact is not presented at staff meetings. (School Administrator)

Implementation

Of the 154 participants, 112 discussed school use of the Compact. Of those who discussed school use, 60% said that the school uses the Compact, 28% said that it depends, 6% said that schools are not using the Compact, and 6% said that there are additional local policies in place that are in the spirit of the Compact. Responses by participant type are shown in Table 17.

When participants discussed school use, they often spoke in general terms (e.g., Schools are very good at following the Compact [School Liaison]), yet some participants also gave specific examples of which provisions of the Compact are used (e.g., comparable services for students with an IEP or 504 Plan, course placement, program placement, course waivers, credit transfers, graduation requirements, extra-curriculars, kindergarten).

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Personnel Use of the Compact

Respondent Type	Discussed School Use (#)	School Use (#/%)		Depends (#/%)		Schools Do Not Use (#/%)	
All respondents	112	67	60%	31	28%	7	6%
Program manager	7	2	29%	4	57%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	11	7	64%	4	36%	0	0%
School liaison	45	29	64%	14	31%	2	4%
School administrator	17	10	59%	4	24%	2	12%
Teacher/counselor	16	14	88%	1	6%	0	0%
EFMP-FS	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Command	1	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Parent	15	4	27%	4	27%	3	20%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Presented categories are mutually exclusive; not all categories are presented.

Table 17

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Personnel Use of the Compact

School Personnel Use

Local schools are very knowledgeable; the Compact is used for on-time graduation, credit transfers. (School Liaison)

Yes. Athletic directors seem to be most in tune to this. (School Administrator)

Yes. Making sure placement is right. Students with an IEP and students in honors classes can get placed appropriately. There is an industrial coach to help with placements (kids interested in tech). Extra-curricular, we let them know in advance they can get involved when they arrive. (Teacher/Counselor)

Everyone is trying to make sure military kids are getting what they need – getting put in whatever classes they require. (Parent)

When participants discussed inconsistent use of the Compact, they discussed staff turnover at the schools, distance of the school from the installation/number of military students in the school, the school district's perceived benefit versus burden, school awareness of the Compact, and inconsistencies based on Compact provision.

Largely districts in [specific] region of the state, where a higher concentration of military connected students live. It is uneven in other districts. The state is working on outreach, but districts without high numbers of military students don't feel like it's relevant to them. (MIC3 Representative)

Schools with the highest military populations do; outliers don't know. (School Liaison)

They were kind enough to give him [credits for] electives based on [activities at previous school]. I asked if [my son] could join the basketball team, and they did not get back to me. There was a delay in school entrance as the school insisted that my son's immunization records had to be transferred to [receiving state's] paperwork. (Parent)

When the district thinks it benefits them, but not if it is seen as a burden. (School Liaison)

When participants discussed school personnel not using the Compact, they mentioned instances in which their child was denied protections guaranteed by the Compact, lack of relevance for specific school levels, and lack of school awareness.

The district is not aware of the compact – it is ignorance, not willful disobedience. (School Liaison)

It is not relevant for elementary. (School Administrator)

Not based on my experience. My daughter wasn't allowed to start school in [the city near the new duty station] because she was missing a shot although she was up to date with shots in [sending state]. (Parent)

In addition, two principals indicated that they do not use the Compact, but they implement the same policies as general practice.

Implementation for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

The Compact language related to students with an IEP or 504 Plan includes two requirements: (1) that schools allow unofficial or “hand-carried” records to be used for initial placement, accommodations, and services (i.e., they do not need to wait for official transcripts and documentation), and (2) that schools comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Participants were not asked what the law is; they were asked about their experience with and understanding of the local implementation of policies related to the Compact, and, by extension, IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of ADA. As such, the responses in this section may or may not be in compliance with the law as they are individual experiences and understanding. Moreover, these responses may or may not be misperceptions of local

implementation. Sixty participants (i.e., school liaisons, EFMP-FS, and MIC3 representatives) discussed whether there were differences in Compact implementation based on whether students have an IEP or 504 Plan as opposed to those students who do not. The majority (63%) of participants said that there were no differences. Eight percent said that there are stronger protections for students with an IEP or 504 Plan.

The Compact allows special education students to get the attention they need, to get attention quickly. (School Liaison)

However, 7% of individuals who discussed the issue stated that the Compact did not include anything that was not already included in federal law (e.g., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

The Compact sections that address special education are no different than IDEA and state law. (School Liaison)

Some participants were asked specific questions about how the Compact, related to students with an IEP or 504 Plan, was implemented. School liaisons and EFMP-FS were asked how long it took for comparable services to be implemented. School liaisons, EFMP-FS, and school personnel were asked under what circumstances a student would receive a new evaluation upon moving to the area and how long it took for that evaluation to occur.

Fifty-three school liaisons and EFMP-FS provided responses to the comparable services question. Of those 53 participants, 77% discussed a timeframe for comparable services. There was wide variability in the timeframe discussed by the respondents. Twenty-five percent of participants who discussed a timeframe related to comparable services said that comparable services occurred immediately. Six percent indicated that the services were in place within a couple of days, 8% said the services were available within 2 weeks, 6% said the services were in place within a month, and another 6% indicated that that services could take 60 days, 90 days, or longer to be available. Twenty-one percent indicated that the length of time depended on the services required.

The challenge is the providers. It could be months because of the waitlist. (School Liaison)

Depends on the service. It has been challenging for districts to hire speech-language pathologists; some students receive telehealth instead of in person. (School Liaison)

Typically, about a week. If it's a medical concern, it could take considerable time. There was a situation where a child needed a nurse in the classroom, and it took 6 months for them to start school. These cases are few and far between. (School Liaison)

Finally, 8% of respondents who answered this question indicated that, recently, there have been difficulties with schools providing comparable services and point to staffing issues, surges in the number of students requiring services, and schools not following the law.¹⁷

The student is supposed to receive services within 30 days. It takes longer, and it is a systemic issue with the school district short-staffed around special education. (EFMP-FS)

It is supposed to be 30 days but it is much more. There has been a large influx of EFMP students. (School Liaison)

60 days is the limit. Generally, the schools wait until the last day to start services. Schools may question the diagnosis to delay services. Schools know children will leave in 2 years and prolong service delivery because the schools know the kids will be leaving. (EFMP-FS)

A total of 91 participants discussed the reasons why a student with an IEP or 504 Plan may receive a new evaluation upon moving into the school district. Nearly all (95%) school liaisons, EFMP-FS, and school personnel discussed this topic. Of those who did discuss evaluations, 21% indicated that either all students with an IEP or 504 Plan moving into the district receive a new evaluation or all students with an IEP or 504 Plan moving in from out of state receive a new evaluation.¹⁸

All of the students with a 504 or IEP get a new evaluation. (School Liaison)

If they are moving into the state, they have to be re-evaluated. When the student first comes in, do a meeting, go along with existing IEP, follow that until the re-evaluation. Once there has been a re-evaluation, they write the new IEP, and then they follow new IEP.

After that, it is three years for another re-evaluation. (School Administrator)

One third of those who discussed this topic indicated that if teachers or parents request an evaluation, or if there is a new diagnosis, then an evaluation will occur.

Upon parent request or as needed. (Teacher/Counselor)

It is triggered if a parent feels that not all the needs are being met or if the school is concerned about the services needed. (School Administrator)

One third of these participants discussed that re-evaluations occur on a cyclical basis, and they are determined by the last evaluation date. Participants talked about these re-evaluations occurring either every year or every 3 years.¹⁹

It is good for 3 years. A new evaluation occurs every 3 years. (School Administrator)

IEP is an annual re-evaluation; 504 is every 3 years. (Teacher/Counselor)

Furthermore, 8% of participants who discussed new evaluations indicated that new evaluations occur if intensive services are specified, if the sending state has different criteria or categories than the receiving state, or if the school cannot accommodate the current IEP. However, the meaning of the third category listed is often unclear. That is, it is unclear if the evaluation is conducted because the district is unable to meet the need or because the state does not allow a particular type of therapy that is listed in the IEP.²⁰

Depends on what is in the IEP. If a child has 1-on-1 support or extended school then a new evaluation will be done for sure because of staffing and cost of such an intense service. (EFMP-FS)

Depends on how sending state qualifies students for different categories. (School Administrator)

If the district cannot provide comparable services, then they will establish a new IEP. When something is written in an IEP that the district cannot do. (School Liaison)

¹⁷ See 20 U.S. Code § 1414 (d)(2)(C) for IDEA requirements for provision of comparable services.

¹⁸ See 20 U.S. Code § 1414 (d)(2)(C) for IDEA evaluation and re-evaluation requirements for transferring students with an existing IEP and 34 C.F.R. Part 104 for evaluation and re-evaluation requirements under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

¹⁹ See 20 U.S. Code § 1414 (a)(2) for IDEA requirements regarding the frequency of re-evaluations.

²⁰ See 20 U.S. Code § 1414 (a)(2)(A) for IDEA requirements for criteria for re-evaluations.

Seven percent of these participants indicated that they implement comparable services and monitor progress. Then they adjust or evaluate as necessary.

Schools take the old IEP at face value for the first 30 days. If the school district doesn't think the IEP or 504 Plan is appropriate, then there is a new evaluation after the 30-day period. (School Liaison)

Finally, seven percent of participants who discussed this topic indicated that they have a transfer meeting, and the path forward is discussed and can include potential changes to the IEP.

There is an intake meeting and we take a look at the prior services – from school to school, it may differ – do we have same services, how can we accommodate them? We make changes to IEP as necessary. (School Administrator)

When discussing implementation of the Compact related to students with IEPs or 504 Plans, 11 school liaisons spontaneously discussed a lack of access to services in their area or an influx of students in need of services.

There has been a high surge of special education family numbers – it impacts resources available in the community and schools. (School Liaison)

Doctors are 35 miles away; getting seen by a medical provider who takes Tricare is difficult. (School Liaison)

Impact

Of the 154 participants, 120 discussed the impact of the Compact. Sixty-eight percent of respondents who discussed the impact indicated that the Compact does have an impact. Eighteen percent indicated that the Compact impacts specific groups or the impacts have caveats; 5% said it is not needed because the schools already enact the provisions of the Compact; 3% indicated that the school has changed practices, and, therefore, they may not see the impact; 61% discussed specific impacts; and 12% indicated that they did not know if the Compact has an impact or not. Parents were the least likely to say that the Compact was impacting students' experiences and outcomes; only 31% of parents who discussed impact indicated that, overall, there was an impact (see Table 18).

Positive Impacts for Specific Groups

Probably yes but not necessarily at the elementary level. (School Administrator)

Yes, especially at the middle school and high school levels. (School Liaison)

Tryouts for teams to give military students equal opportunity. (School Liaison)

It helps in some ways, but the effectiveness is up to how the teachers and school districts handle it and less of how the state does. (Parent)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of the Compact													
Respondent Type	Discussed Compact Impact (#)	Yes (#/%)		Yes, for Specific Groups (#/%)		Not Needed (#/%)		Schools Changed Practice (#/%)		Discussed Specific Impacts (#/%)		Does Not Know (#/%)	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All respondents	120	81	68%	22	18%	6	5%	3	3%	73	61%	14	12%
Program manager	7	7	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	57%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	11	9	82%	2	18%	1	9%	1	9%	8	73%	0	0%
School liaison	44	30	68%	13	30%	3	7%	2	5%	30	68%	1	2%
School administrator	17	11	65%	3	18%	1	6%	0	0%	10	59%	2	12%
Teacher/counselor	17	12	71%	1	6%	1	6%	0	0%	10	63%	3	19%
EFMP-FS	1	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
Command	10	7	70%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	60%	3	30%
Parent	13	4	31%	3	23%	0	0%	0	0%	4	31%	5	38%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 18

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of the Compact

Not Needed

A lot of school personnel have served...or been part of a military family, they would grant that grace without the Compact. (School Liaison)

The Compact itself is not [having an impact], that is how we do business with every student. (School Administrator)

Changed Practice/Do Not Know if the Compact is Used

Recently they asked me to track the number of instances where the Compact is being used. The problem is that once the school district changes practice, it is no longer an issue. There is nothing to track because the school district is honoring the terms of the Compact. I would not know, for example, that a child is placed in a gifted program upon arrival. (School Liaison)

Of the 73 respondents who discussed specific impacts, many discussed multiple impacts. Twenty-two percent said that the Compact made the transition smoother or seamless, 34% discussed credit transfers and course placement, 33% discussed graduation, 26% mentioned extra-curricular activities, 8% said that the Compact reduced stress for families, and 7% discussed kindergarten age requirements. Less than 5% of respondents discussed each of the following impacts: improves academic and social-emotional outcomes; gives military-connected students the same opportunities as their peers; adds accountability; and helps with gifted placement, immunization requirements, state exams, and records transfer.

Differences in Impact for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

Ninety-eight participants answered the question regarding whether there are differences in the impact of the Compact for students with IEPs or 504 Plans. Of those 98, 66% said that there is no difference, 18% said that there were differences, and 16% said that they did not know if there were any differences. For the participants who said that there were differences, 11 respondents said that the Compact is especially impactful for students with IEPs or 504 Plans.

Yes. There is a sense of immediacy for special education students, though general education is equally as important. (Teacher/Counselor)

It allows us to be more mindful of kids with 504s and IEPs. (Teacher/Counselor)

It keeps districts accountable about what they must provide. (School Liaison)

Interactions with Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) Schools Related to the Compact

The 63 school liaisons, program managers, MIC3 representatives, and parents who discussed their experience with DODEA schools had a wide range of experiences. Of the 63 participants who discussed DODEA, 37% said that there is no difference between dealing with DODEA and dealing with another public school.

It is the same as other schools. (School Liaison)

DODEA schools will adhere to Compact rules and regulations the same as public schools. (MIC3 Representative)

Ten percent of respondents discussed specific impacts. Some impacts were similar to non-DODEA schools, and some were unique.

It impacts the sharing of the records for proper placement. (School Liaison)

Before, schools were not sure how to acknowledge when a student left the country; schools said they dropped out. Now, there is more consistency on records when a student moves back and forth. It has worked seamlessly since the Compact. (MIC3 Representative)

Another 10% of respondents discussed difficulties related to DODEA schools, and, again, some difficulties were similar to non-DODEA schools, and some were unique.

Coming here a family will sometimes run into a school that says they will provide records...but it can take a couple months. (School Liaison)

Some DODEA schools think the Compact does not apply to them. (School Liaison)

Barriers

One hundred eight participants discussed barriers related to the Compact. As shown in Table 19, of these 108 participants, 31% indicated that there were no barriers related to the Compact. The remaining 69% discussed one or more barriers. Participants discussed barriers such as awareness, understanding, noncompliance, kindergarten, gifted programming, differences between the states, MIC3 State Commissioner turnover, and other challenges. The number and percentage of participants with responses in each category are shown in Table 20.

Of those who discussed one or more barriers, 20% discussed lack of school awareness of the Compact. Several participants specifically mentioned schools with a small population of military families.

Some schools are not familiar with the Compact. (School Liaison)

When there is not a large military population...schools can struggle; a lack of military housing leads to families moving farther away; when there are issues, it is because the school is unaware. (MIC3 Representative)

A similar number of participants discussed parent awareness of the Compact; 23% of those who discussed

specific barriers mentioned parent awareness. Furthermore, of the parents who discussed specific barriers (n=6), 67% discussed lack of knowledge among parents.

Lack of family awareness. (School Liaison)

There is not a lot of knowledge among parents about what the Compact is. (Parent)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Presence or Absence of Barriers Related to the Compact					
Respondent Type	Discussed Barriers (#)	Reported No Barriers (#/%)		Reported Barriers (#/%)	
All respondents	108	34	31%	74	69%
Program manager	2	0	0%	2	100%
MIC3 representative	11	1	9%	10	91%
School liaison	43	9	21%	34	79%
School administrator	17	10	59%	7	41%
Teacher/counselor	16	11	69%	5	31%
EFMP-FS	6	0	0%	6	100%
Command	1	0	0%	1	100%
Parent	12	3	25%	9	75%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-

Table 19

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Discussed the Presence or Absence of Barriers Related to the Compact

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Reported Barriers Related to the Compact by Barrier Category																	
Respondent Type	Reported Barriers (#)	School Awareness (#/%)		Parent Awareness (#/%)		Parent Misunderstands (#/%)		Non-Compliance (#/%)		Kindergarten (#/%)		Gifted (#/%)		Differences Between States/Schools (#/%)		Other Barriers (#/%)	
All respondents	74	15	20%	17	23%	21	28%	11	15%	4	5%	3	4%	6	8%	21	28%
Program manager	2	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	10	6	60%	1	10%	2	20%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	10%	5	50%
School liaison	34	7	21%	6	18%	17	50%	4	12%	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%	6	18%
School administrator	7	1	14%	2	29%	0	0%	1	14%	2	29%	0	0%	3	43%	2	29%
Teacher/counselor	5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%	0	0%	1	20%	0	0%	3	60%
EFMP-FS	6	0	0%	2	33%	1	17%	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%	1	17%	2	33%
Command	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Parent	9	0	0%	6	67%	0	0%	5	56%	0	0%	1	11%	0	0%	2	22%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have reported more than one barrier.

Table 20

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Reported Barriers Related to the Compact by Barrier Category

Of all participants who discussed one or more barriers, 28% discussed parents' misunderstanding of the Compact. Furthermore, of all of the school liaisons who discussed specific barriers, 50% discussed this barrier.

They are aware of the Compact, but not its purpose. Families think it's a free for all. Families think everything is covered by the Compact. Think it's something that it's not. (School Liaison)

Families try to use the Compact on issues not covered by the Compact. (School Liaison)

Special education parents may think that the IEP from the previous school needs to be fulfilled exactly versus comparable services. (School Liaison)

Fifteen percent of participants who discussed specific barriers mentioned that schools were not always compliant with the Compact.

Schools will dismiss the Compact criteria when families bring up. (School Liaison)

The district doesn't necessarily advocate for the Compact...schools don't volunteer the Compact information unless they are pressed. Schools honor the Compact, but they are not necessarily forthcoming with the information – they need to be asked about the Compact. (Parent)

A few participants (5%) mentioned challenges with the variability in kindergarten cutoff dates across states. Indeed, an examination, conducted by the project team, of kindergarten regulations across the 50 states and DC indicated there was wide variability in several issues: kindergarten cutoff dates (i.e., from a state-wide requirement of turning 5 years old by July 1st to turning 5 years old by January 1st, or the date being determined by the school district), whether kindergarten attendance was mandatory, and whether the state requires kindergarten to be offered by the school district.

We often see issues with the kindergarten start age. In [this state], kids have to turn 5 by [an earlier date]. Families leaving another state to come to [this state] with a kindergartener, they move during the summer, and then are shocked that their child does not qualify for kindergarten and have to do preschool again, which can be pricey. The Compact only applies to those who enroll and attend – even if they attend for only 1 day. (School Liaison)

A similar number of participants (i.e., 4% of those who discussed specific barriers) talked about challenges with state differences in gifted qualifications or programming across states.

Sometimes, advanced placement classes can look different from state to state, and this can make it difficult to determine placement. (Teacher/Counselor)

The state requires an IEP for gifted programs. Students have to go through testing before they can participate. And only a small percent of kids qualify for gifted programming. (School Liaison)

Some participants (i.e., 8% of those who discussed specific barriers) discussed differences, between states or schools, that were challenging. Several of these comments were related to special education services.

Funding differences between schools leads to differences in services, which leads to parental concerns about how their child is being served. (Program manager)

The implementation of the IEP can be different based on services available in the area. They may have more services there than they did in the place that they come from. (School Administrator)

Twenty-eight percent of participants who discussed specific barriers discussed other barriers such as classes being at maximum capacity, requirements for physicals that delay the start of school, school staffing challenges, the Compact language not being in lay terms, data sharing efficiency, and difficulty accommodating students who qualify for both an IEP and gifted programming.

Improvement

Of the 154 participants, 132 discussed whether improvements could be made to the Compact. Of these 132, 20% indicated that they did not have any ideas on how to improve the Compact, and 11% said that the Compact is working well and does not need to be improved. The remaining 91 participants discussed one or more ideas for improving the Compact (see Table 21).

From my perspective and experience, there is nothing that needs to be improved. It does a good job of covering general education considerations – core areas of things kids run into as they are moving around. Don't fix it if it is not broken. (School Liaison)

Of the 91 participants who discussed ideas for improving the Compact, 35% discussed family awareness (see Table 22). Furthermore, over two-thirds of the parents (69%) and members of command (67%) who suggested improvements indicated that more needs to be done to educate parents about the Compact.

Give the knowledge to the families directly. All knowledge I have picked up is from other spouses with nothing given directly from the military. Let us know what our rights are when moving from state to state. (Parent)

More awareness and education of military families on the Compact. (Command)

Families are in the dark. Family education is not there. (Teacher/Counselor)

Fifteen percent of participants who discussed specific improvements suggested that more consistency across states would be beneficial.

Should improve training and ensure the Compact is applied consistently across states. (MIC3 Representative)

Have one national age cutoff for starting kindergarten. (School Administrator)

I have heard a few dozen complaints from [Service members] about problems with schools. Usually, it is about how one area has kids learning at one level and the new area is learning at much higher or lower levels...Level the standards. Have a federal minimum that all states need to meet. (Command)

Moreover, of those who suggested specific improvements, 21% suggested additional training for the schools.

If a school has any military-connected kids, make sure they know about the Compact, no matter how far from [the installation] the school is located. (Parent)

There is high turnover; training is needed. (School Liaison)

More communication about the Compact to counselors, teachers, and staff. Everyone having a reason to do what they are already doing would be helpful. (School Administrator)

Of the respondents who discussed improvements, 7% suggested expanding the covered groups and including DoD civilian employees, National Guard and Reserve families, and charter and private schools.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Potential Improvements to the Compact

Respondent Type	Discussed Improvement (#)	Indicated No Ideas for Improvement (#/%)		Indicated No Need For Improvement (#/%)		Indicated Specific Areas of Improvement (#/%)	
All respondents	132	26	20%	15	11%	91	69%
Program manager	6	1	17%	1	17%	4	67%
MIC3 representative	10	0	0%	1	10%	9	90%
School liaison	43	1	2%	7	16%	35	81%
School administrator	19	10	53%	1	5%	8	42%
Teacher/counselor	16	7	44%	1	6%	8	50%
EFMP-FS	8	3	38%	1	13%	4	50%
Command	10	1	10%	3	30%	6	60%
Parent	15	2	13%	0	0%	13	87%
Local partner	5	1	20%	0	0%	4	80%

Table 21

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Discussed Ideas for Improvement, No Ideas for Improvement, or No Need for Improvement of the Compact

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Specific Ideas for Improvements to the Compact

Respondent Type	Discussed Specific Improvements (#)	Family Awareness (#/%)		School Training (#/%)		MIC3 Commissioner (#/%)		Consistency Across States (#/%)		Extend Covered Groups (#/%)		Other (#/%)	
All respondents	91	32	35%	19	21%	5	5%	14	15%	6	7%	39	43%
Program manager	4	1	25%	2	50%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	1	25%
MIC3 representative	9	2	22%	3	33%	1	11%	2	22%	1	11%	5	56%
School liaison	35	10	29%	4	11%	4	11%	5	14%	5	14%	19	54%
School administrator	8	1	13%	2	25%	0	0%	2	25%	0	0%	4	50%
Teacher/counselor	8	2	25%	3	38%	0	0%	2	25%	0	0%	2	25%
EFMP-FS	4	2	50%	1	25%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%
Command	6	4	67%	0	0%	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%	2	33%
Parent	13	9	69%	4	31%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	23%
Local partner	4	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	75%

Note. Participants may have discussed more than one idea for improvement.

Table 22

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Specific Ideas for Improvement to the Compact

Summary

In addition, 5% of respondents made suggestions related to the MIC3 State Commissioner such as reducing turnover, ensuring the role is filled, making it a paid position instead of “additional duty,” and increasing communication opportunities among state commissioners.

Participants (43% of those who discussed improvements) also discussed other improvement ideas. Of these responses, eight topics were discussed by multiple people related to improvements or by multiple people during the whole discussion of the Compact. Participants discussed school accountability (i.e., enforcing the policy), adding pre-kindergarten, funding (either at the MIC3, state, or school level), adding a grace period for physicals, accepting gifted designations from other states, getting information from the sending school sooner, and the DoD providing tools for communication between the sending state and receiving state. Participants also provided specific suggestions related to courses and programs: save spots for military families, count classes for graduation even if they were taken in middle school, add language to address challenges related to moving from a block schedule to a regular schedule or vice versa, and address challenges related to letter grades versus number grades.

In addition to responding to the specific questions that were asked, participants discussed three other topics that should be noted. Four participants discussed challenges related to foreign language requirements. Participants noted that requirements related to, and the availability of, foreign languages vary by state and by school. Participants suggested that having a distance-learning option for foreign language requirements would be beneficial. Four school liaisons noted that when they talk with schools about the Compact, schools are receptive to the discussion and want to do the right thing. Three participants also mentioned that they have concerns about changing the Compact. The concerns stated were related to alienating states that did not want to include a particular provision or program and potentially losing states if changes are made to the Compact.

Participant awareness of the Compact was relatively high. Eighty-eight percent of all participants said they were aware of it. However, two key participant groups reported less awareness than the other groups: 26% of school administrators and 39% of parents were not aware of the Compact. When asked if, in general, families are aware of the Compact, only 38% of those who responded indicated that most families are aware. Similarly, only 41% of respondents who discussed school staff awareness indicated that most staff were aware of the Compact as opposed to some staff being aware (49%) or most school staff being unaware (10%).

Of those who discussed school use of the Compact, 60% indicated that schools are making use of the Compact. Responses varied by participant type. The vast majority of teachers/counselors indicated that school personnel use the Compact. A smaller majority of MIC3 representatives, school liaisons, and school administrators said that school personnel use the Compact. The program manager and parent participant groups had the lowest percent of respondents indicating that school personnel use the Compact. Most of the remaining responses fell into the “depends” category, and a few parents, school administrators, and school liaisons indicated that school personnel do not use the Compact.

Participant responses about the implementation of the Compact related to students with an IEP or 504 Plan were varied. Responses regarding the timeframe for comparable services ranged from immediately to 90 days or longer. Twenty-one percent said that the timeframe depended on the services that were required. Staffing challenges, increases in need, and non-compliance were cited as reasons for longer timeframes. Participants discussed several reasons for students receiving a new evaluation when they moved into the area: all students with an IEP or 504 Plan who move into the district, all students with an IEP or 504 Plan who move from out of state, if a parent or teacher requests one, if there is a new diagnosis, if intensive services are specified, if the sending state and receiving

state have different criteria, and if the school cannot accommodate the current IEP (e.g., if the state does not allow a particular type of therapy in schools). Furthermore, a third of participants who discussed evaluations indicated that evaluations are cyclical and based on the data of the last evaluation. When discussing this topic, several school liaisons spontaneously discussed the difficulty of accessing services, either in the schools (e.g., staffing challenges) or in the community (e.g., distance to providers, finding providers who take Tricare). Participants indicated that the Compact does impact students' experiences and outcomes; that it has an impact but only for specific groups; that it is not needed because schools already provide protections to military-connected students; and that schools have changed their practices due to the Compact, and, therefore, it is not possible to determine specifically when it is used. Specific impacts mentioned were related to credit transfers, course placement, graduation, extra-curricular

activities, kindergarten, the reduction of stress for families, and making the transition smoother.

Of 108 participants who discussed the presence or absence of barriers related to the Compact, 69% reported that there were barriers. These barriers included school awareness, parent awareness, parent misunderstanding of the Compact, school non-compliance, differences between states or schools, differences in kindergarten cutoff dates across states, and differences across states in gifted qualifications or programming.

Ninety-one participants provided specific ideas about potential improvements to the Compact. These ideas included improving family awareness, providing additional school training, having more consistency across states, expanding the covered groups, increasing consistency and communication related to the state commissioners, increasing school accountability, adding a grace period for physicals, and accepting gifted designations from other states.

Military Student Identifier

The MSI is a federally required data point that requires schools to ask about students' military affiliation, similar to how race, ethnicity, gender, and economic disadvantage data are required to be collected. ESSA²¹ requires that achievement data be disaggregated by "status as a student with a parent who is a member of the Armed Forces (as defined in section 101(a)(4) of title 10, United States Code) on active duty (as defined in section 101(d)(5) of such title)" (p. 129 STAT.1848). Although ESSA does not require the data to be used beyond the disaggregation of achievement data, states use the data for other purposes, including reporting disaggregated enrollment numbers²² and in other ways that are discussed in this section.

Awareness

All participants were asked if they were familiar with the MSI. Almost all respondents indicated that they were (i.e., 145 of 154 participants). However, when asked about the purpose of the MSI, the responses suggested that 1) participants had different understandings of the purpose of the MSI, and 2) there may have been some confusion between the MSI and Impact Aid. Perhaps, in some cases, when schools collect data, they collect it for both the MSI and Impact Aid at the same time. Indeed, two school liaisons indicated that this is the case. However, several respondents indicated that the data are collected separately.

Schools maintain two lists, one for MSI and one for Impact Aid. (School Liaison)

Why are we asking families upon registration to self-identify as military and then sending federal Impact Aid surveys – it is redundant. (School Liaison)

They collect Impact Aid every year, but MSI is only collected at enrollment. (School Liaison)

Table 23 provides the number of participants, overall and in each participant type, who discussed the pur-

pose of the MSI. Percentages may exceed 100% across responses for each participant type because respondents frequently discussed more than one purpose.

Purpose – Enrollment

To identify where military-connected students are going to school. (MIC3 Representative)

To be able to track where military students are going to school. (School Liaison)

Purpose – Performance

So schools can track military students as a subpopulation to track academic success. (School Liaison)

To disaggregate on state assessments to see how kids are progressing. (Program manager)

Purpose – Funding

These numbers are utilized in formulas for funding, grants, and a lot of other things. (School Liaison)

Impact Aid, DODEA grant funding. (School Liaison)

Purpose – Identifying Military-Connected Students in Schools

To know which students have families that are in the military and which branch they are in. (School Administrator)

Helps to identify, at an individual student level, who is a military kid. (School Administrator)

Purpose – Service Provision at the State/School Level

So that school administrators know who the military students are so they can receive necessary attention, support, services, etc. (MIC3 Representative)

To ensure military-connected students are provided the support they need. (School Liaison)

Purpose – Service Provision at the Military Level

The military uses it to assess the level of need. (Program Manager)

School liaisons can target efforts. (School Liaisons)

²¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177/text>

²² https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_report_speakmc_initiatives_20240220rev.pdf

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Specific Purposes of the MSI																	
Respondent Type	Discussed Purpose (#)	Enrollment (#/%)		Performance (#/%)		Funding (#/%)		Identify MCS in Schools (#/%)		Service Provision: State/School (#/%)		Service Provision: Military (#/%)		Does Not Know (#/%)		Other Purpose (#/%)	
All respondents	108	26	24%	14	13%	31	29%	57	53%	36	33%	4	4%	1	1%	7	6%
Program manager	7	3	43%	2	29%	1	14%	3	43%	2	29%	1	14%	0	0%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	9	2	22%	2	22%	0	0%	5	56%	7	78%	1	11%	0	0%	0	0%
School liaison	44	18	41%	8	18%	11	25%	21	48%	17	39%	1	2%	0	0%	5	11%
School administrator	10	0	0%	0	0%	3	30%	5	50%	2	20%	0	0%	1	10%	1	10%
Teacher/counselor	10	1	10%	0	0%	2	20%	9	90%	4	40%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
EFMP-FS	7	1	14%	0	0%	4	57%	3	43%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%
Command	10	0	0%	1	10%	7	70%	6	60%	1	10%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Parent	9	1	11%	1	11%	2	22%	4	44%	1	11%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Local partner	2	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 23

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Specific Purposes of the MSI

Implementation

School administrators and teachers/counselors were asked about what data are collected related to the MSI and how frequently the data are collected. Twenty-two school administrators and 19 teachers/counselors responded to these questions, and 5 participants from other participant type groups spontaneously discussed either the type or frequency of data collection.

Participants indicated that MSI data are collected either at enrollment (i.e., 33% of those who discussed frequency of data collection), yearly (i.e., 65% of those who discussed frequency), or every semester (i.e., 3% of those who discussed frequency). For the individuals who said that the data are collected yearly, five indicated that families either must enroll or update their files every year and that is when MSI data collection occurs. Eight participants discussed Impact Aid cards when discussing the yearly MSI data collection.

Participants discussed several different combinations of response options that are provided to parents when responding to the MSI request. Some participants indicated that the data collection form only asks if the student is military affiliated or if they are part of a military family. Some participants said that the question was only related to whether the parent was active duty. Others indicated that the question asked about active duty, National Guard, and Reserves. Others said the question also asked about families with a retired Service

member. Some participants indicated that response options also included civilian DoD employees. Furthermore, some schools appear to collect information related to Service branch, unit name, rank, military occupational specialty, or whether the family lives on the military installation. This last item, however, suggests that either data are collected once for both Impact Aid and the MSI, or the participant was thinking about Impact Aid when answering questions about the MSI.

School administrators, teachers/counselors, and parents were asked about how the MSI data are used. Table 24 displays how many participants discussed each category of MSI use.

School personnel discussed several ways in which the MSI data are used. Personnel indicated that the data influenced funding, data were needed to obtain certain programming, data were used by the Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC) to identify military-connected students, data were used to market programs and events to military families, and data were used in performance monitoring.

It was used to justify partnering with the DoD on a STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] grant. Data was used to ensure the appropriate representation of military-connected students were involved. (School Administrator)

It is collected for DoDEA funding support. (School Administrator)

Schools use it to identify students for MFLC services, celebrations, Purple Up, Month of the Military Child. (School Administrator)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed How MSI Data Are Used													
Respondent Type	Discussed Data Use (#)	School District, or State Uses Data (#/%)	Data Not Used by School District or State (#/%)	Teachers Use Data (#/%)	Teachers Do Not Use Data (#/%)	Parents Use Data (#/%)	Parents Do Not Use Data (#/%)						
All respondents	58	21 37%	2 4%	8 14%	9 16%	4 7%	16 28%						
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-	-	-						
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-						
School liaison	0	-	-	-	-	-	-						
School administrator	21	17 81%	2 10%	0 0%	1 5%	0 0%	0 0%						
Teacher/counselor	17	3 18%	0 0%	8 47%	8 47%	0 0%	0 0%						
EFMP-FS	0	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Parent	20	1 5%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 20%	16 80%						
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-						

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category; not all categories of responses are presented.

Table 24

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed How MSI Data Are Used

Teachers/counselors discussed the way in which they use the MSI data. These responses centered around having a fuller understanding of students’ circumstances in order to better serve students’ needs.

Teachers will make recommendations if they know a parent will be [deployed]. This data can help teachers to stay aware/be more sensitive of times that are tough (e.g., holidays) – this data affects the way teachers approach the child and the services they need. (Teacher/Counselor)

When they pull up student information in their system, there is [an indicator] if a student is a military kid. Staff can then keep that in the back of their mind. That insight is very helpful for younger students who may not be able to communicate as well. It reminds staff to gather more information – e.g., parent may be deployed. (Teacher/Counselor)

Our data will have a flag if they are military – we will ask: does that student have a connection with the MFCL? Have they recently moved? Do they have any noted behavioral issues? Change in family life? Has one of their caregivers recently left? Are they preparing for a move? Did they move before? Were there gaps? (Teacher/Counselor)

In contrast, approximately half of the teacher/counselor participants who discussed how the data are used indicated that teachers do not use the MSI data.

It is completed online, so teachers don’t see the responses. Teachers do not get the data. (Teacher/Counselor)

Of the 20 parents who discussed whether they used MSI data to make decisions about their children’s edu-

cation, 20% indicated that they do use the data, and 80% indicated that they do not use the data.

Yes. I look for military-friendly schools, schools with a higher percent of military kids, Purple Star, programs for deployed families. (Parent)

I look for schools with a high percent of military kids. This increases the odds that the faculty and peer group will be more aware of the military child experience, and will mean an MFCL will be present in the school. (Parent)

Most schools are not reporting or showing the data. (Parent)

No. I’m not sure how I would be able to use that to make decisions. I never knew this data was available. (Parent)

Ninety participants discussed whether military families were self-identifying as such. Most school personnel (91% of school administrators and 89% of teachers/counselors) who discussed family self-identification reported that most families identify as military families. Conversely, 46% of school liaisons who discussed this topic reported that most families do not identify as military connected, and 20% of school liaisons indicated that a certain percent (i.e., 10-50%) of families do not identify as military affiliated. In addition, a MIC3 representative also indicated that families are reluctant to self-identify as military families on the MSI.

Of the 81 respondents who answered the question about differences in data use for students who have an IEP or 504 Plan, 90% indicated there was either no difference in data use or they did not know whether there was a difference.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of the MSI											
Respondent Type	Discussed Impact (#)	No Impact (#/%)		Yes Impact (#/%)		Impact Depends on Implementation (#/%)		Unsure of Impact (#/%)		Could But Does Not Impact (#/%)	
All respondents	121	32	26%	59	49%	5	4%	28	23%	6	5%
Program manager	7	2	29%	1	14%	2	29%	2	29%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	46	19	41%	19	41%	0	0%	8	17%	4	9%
School administrator	21	4	19%	13	62%	0	0%	5	24%	0	0%
Teacher/counselor	18	4	22%	12	67%	1	6%	3	17%	0	0%
EFMP-FS	2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%
Command	9	2	22%	6	67%	1	11%	1	11%	0	0%
Parent	18	1	6%	8	44%	1	6%	7	39%	2	11%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 25

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of the MSI

Impact

One hundred twenty-one participants commented on the impact of the MSI. As can be seen in Table 25, almost half (i.e., 49%) of the participants who discussed the presence or absence of impact believed that the MSI does have an impact. Approximately a quarter of participants who discussed impact did not believe that it had an impact (i.e., 26%) or were unsure if it has an impact (23%). A smaller proportion (i.e., 5%) indicated that the MSI could be impactful, but, as it is currently implemented, MSI is not impactful. Furthermore, five participants discussed that the impact was dependent on how the MSI is implemented in particular schools.

No, MSI Not Impactful

No, just because we don't really use it within the school. (School Administrator)

It is not impactful on achievement or outcomes. (Teacher/Counselor)

No, there is poor implementation at the state level. [The state education department] is not tracking the data or holding school districts accountable to track. (School Liaison)

Yes, MSI is Impactful

Of the 59 participants who indicated that the MSI has an impact, 47% of participants indicated that the MSI impacted the supports, resources, and programming that they were able to offer. Eight participants specifically mentioned MFLCs, and three mentioned Anchored4Life.

The more military kids you have in a school, the more MFLCs you get. (Parent)

A higher military student population allows for a full-time MFLC, Anchored4Life. (School Administrator)

Dollars for students in the military – money devoted to after-school sports and tutoring. (School Administrator)

Twenty-eight percent of participants who thought MSI had an impact mentioned that MSI impacts funding. Participants either spoke generally, indicated additional state funding, referred to Impact Aid, or discussed grants.

It can lead to more state funding. (School Liaison)

This leads to additional money for schools based on the percent of military students. (Parent)

Fifteen percent of participants with affirmative impact responses discussed how the MSI impacts interactions with individual students.

We can check to make sure the kid is taking advantage of available supports. (School Administrator)

It helps people to serve the students better – additional understanding of possible needs. (Teacher/Counselor)

Increased sensitivity. (Command)

Furthermore, 3% of participants who indicated that the MSI had an impact mentioned that the MSI helps with accountability, and 2% of participants (i.e., 1 parent) discussed how it helped them identify a school with a high military population for their child.

Moreover, 2% of participants who indicated that the MSI had an impact (i.e., 1 school liaison), discussed that, prior to the implementation of the MSI, individuals in the local community were under the impression that

the military students were having a negative effect on schools' test scores. The MSI showed that the military-connected students were actually scoring higher than the school average.

Finally, one parent discussed the MSI having a negative effect on their children.

My children have been ostracized by their peers and made to feel like they are 'weirdos' for having a parent in the military. My children wanted to feel normal and like any of the other kids. (Parent)

Of the 53 school liaisons, EFMP-FS, and parents who discussed differences in the impact of the MSI for students with an IEP or 504 plan, 58% indicated that there was no difference, and 28% did not know if there were differences. Thirteen percent of these participants discussed differences in impact. Four participants discussed that additional funding or support could be obtained. One school liaison indicated that some parents feel that there may be a negative impact related to the MSI.

There is a feeling that kids will not receive services in a timely manner. Schools will "wait families out" and not provide services. (School Liaison)

Barriers

Out of the 154 participants, 119 participants discussed the presence or absence of barriers to the implementation of the MSI, to families identifying as military

families, or to using MSI data. Twenty-nine percent of participants who discussed barriers indicated that they were not aware of any barriers; 4% did not know if there were barriers; 66% reported at least one barrier (see Table 26). Responses that indicated that there were barriers fell into four categories: problems with response options, inconsistent implementation and use across states, parents choosing not to identify, and other (see Table 27 for details).

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Presence or Absence of Barriers to the MSI							
Respondent Type	Discussed Barriers (#)	No Barriers (#/%)	Does Not Know (#/%)	Reported Barriers (#/%)			
All respondents	119	35 29%	5 4%	79 66%			
Program manager	5	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%			
MIC3 representative	5	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%			
School liaison	44	4 9%	1 2%	39 89%			
School administrator	22	10 45%	1 5%	11 50%			
Teacher/counselor	19	11 58%	0 0%	8 42%			
EFMP-FS	5	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%			
Command	1	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%			
Parent	18	10 56%	3 17%	5 28%			
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 26

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Presence or Absence of Barriers to the MSI

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Specific Barriers to the MSI									
Respondent Type	Discussed Specific Barriers (#)	Problems with Response Options (#/%)		Inconsistent Across States (#/%)		Parents Choose Not to Identify (#/%)		Other (#/%)	
All respondents	79	17	22%	5	6%	47	59%	36	46%
Program manager	5	2	40%	3	60%	1	20%	3	60%
MIC3 representative	5	3	60%	0	0%	2	40%	2	40%
School liaison	39	11	28%	2	5%	30	77%	15	38%
School administrator	11	1	9%	0	0%	5	45%	6	55%
Teacher/counselor	8	0	0%	0	0%	2	25%	6	75%
EFMP-FS	5	0	0%	0	0%	4	80%	1	20%
Command	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Parent	5	0	0%	0	0%	3	60%	2	40%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have discussed more than one barrier.

Table 27

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Specific Barriers to the MSI

The problems with response options included a lack of consistency across schools, a lack of understanding of who is considered a military family, and problems with data collection systems.

The greatest barrier is understanding the definition of what is a military family – not that grandpa was in WW2 – not about an uncle who is military. (School Liaison)

Some military families will identify themselves as active duty military in the student information database that are not covered under MSI, such as a family that has a member who is retired. (School Liaison)

The response options are too confusing. Families can only select one response option, but multiple apply. (School Liaison)

Participants also discussed the limitations of the data related to the fact that there are inconsistencies across states in how the data are collected and used.

Everyone defines military connected differently; it makes the data meaningless. (Program Manager)

Participants (i.e., program managers, school liaisons, MIC3 commissioners, school personnel, EFMP-FS, and parents) who discussed families who do not self-identify as military families to schools (i.e., 47 participants, 59% of those who discussed the presence of barriers) identified multiple reasons for the lack of disclosure. The reasons provided by these respondents included safety/security, wanting to blend in, not seeing it as important, privacy, fear of a negative impact on their child, being wary of the government, and apparent misunderstandings of how the data are used.

Concerns with operational security make families nervous about identifying as a military family. (School Liaison)

Service members are trained to not disclose military affiliation. (Program Manager)

Some families are hesitant to identify as a military family. Want to just be “normal.” (School Liaison)

If parents don’t see value, they may not identify as a military family. (School Administrator)

They are concerned about privacy and resist sharing info with the school district. (School Liaison)

Some families see as a disincentive that it could label kids who won’t be there long and close doors for

leadership or key positions in school or athletics. (School Liaison)

Families think they will have to pay more in taxes if they identify as military families. (School Liaison)

Two additional barriers were discussed frequently. First, 10 participants (i.e., 13% of those who discussed the presence of MSI barriers) mentioned that the data collection process was a barrier.

It is not included in the online enrollment process. (School Liaison)

Families are inundated with forms at that time of year and may not complete forms. Schools use hard copy versus electronic forms. Electronic forms might be better received. (School Liaison)

Second, 11 participants (i.e., 14% of those who discussed the presence of MSI barriers) indicated that the data are not accurate.

Though, there is considerable difference between Impact Aid numbers and Military Student Identifier numbers. (School Liaison)

The data is not always accurate. (School Liaison)

Most participants who discussed the presence or absence of additional MSI barriers for families with a child receiving special education services or with a disability (i.e., 76% of the 50 participants who discussed) indicated that there were no differences in barriers. However, three participants discussed additional reasons why parents may be reluctant to identify as military families to schools. Two participants indicated that parents may not identify as military families because they are concerned they will be required to participate in EFMP.

Parents are afraid if they identify as military to the school, they will be required to participate in EFMP. EFMP is thought of as a career ender, so it is not always used or wanted. (EFMP FS)

One participant indicated that parents worry that identifying as a military family will affect the services their child receives.

Parents think schools may not provide services because “I’m leaving at the end of the year,” or their child may not get what they need because “we won’t be here long.” (School Liaison)

Improvements

One hundred thirty-three participants discussed whether they had ideas for improvements to the MSI. Of those who discussed improvement, 33% did not have any ideas for improvement, 5% said that they had no ideas for improvements because the MSI was working well, and 62% discussed specific ideas for improvement. Table 28 displays the data by participant type.

Many ideas for improvement of the MSI were discussed. Table 29 displays the number of participants who suggested ideas in each category. Ideas suggested by more than one respondent or that were related to discussions in previous sections are outlined below with examples. Responses that indicated that it should be mandatory for schools to collect MSI were included in the accountability category as data collection is mandatory as part of ESSA.²³

Advertising/DoD Support

Explaining to families what it is used for; that there is confidentiality; commanders [should] publicize it and provide their support. (School Liaison)

More transparency about what they use it for. Military families would be more comfortable about providing the information if they knew why they were providing it. (School Liaison)

The importance of [the MSI] data is not highlighted; the impact is not clear. (School Liaison)

Data Use

Availability of data...finding data is hard. I go to the school liaison on base because the data is not readily available. (Parent)

Making the data available and easy to find it. Disaggregating it. (School Liaison)

Add an icon in the gradebook to denote military-connected students...It would increase awareness of military connection and help support those students. (Teacher/Counselor)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Improvements Related to the MSI

Respondent Type	Discussed Improvements (#)	No Ideas (#/%)		No Ideas, Working Well (#/%)		Specific Ideas Discussed (#/%)	
All respondents	133	44	33%	7	5%	82	62%
Program manager	7	0	0%	0	0%	7	100%
MIC3 representative	2	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%
School liaison	45	3	7%	1	2%	41	91%
School administrator	22	12	55%	2	9%	8	36%
Teacher/counselor	18	13	72%	0	0%	5	28%
EFMP-FS	8	2	25%	0	0%	6	75%
Command	9	3	33%	1	11%	5	56%
Parent	18	10	56%	3	17%	5	28%
Local partner	4	1	25%	0	0%	3	75%

Note. Each category is mutually exclusive. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 28

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Improvements Related to the MSI

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Discussed Specific Improvement Ideas

Improvement Idea	Respondents Who Discussed Improvement Idea (#/%)	
Advertising/DoD support	25	30%
Data use	12	15%
Response options	10	12%
Data collection	10	12%
Consistency across states	9	11%
Accountability/mandatory for schools	9	11%
Timing or frequency of data collection	8	10%
Data sharing across systems	6	7%
Incentives	5	6%
Expand covered groups	2	2%
Reduce number of requests for information	1	1%
Other	8	10%
Total respondents who discussed specific ideas	82	

Note. Participants may have discussed more than one improvement idea.

Table 29

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Discussed Specific Improvement Ideas

²³ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177/text>

Response Options

- | The state needs to specify what data to collect, what the military connection is. (School Liaison)
- | Differentiate among retirees, DoD civilians, active duty, Guard/Reserve. (School Administrator)
- | It would be great to have a question at enrollment that asks details about their military connection. For example, are they active duty, retired, have a deployed parent, etc. (Teacher/Counselor)

Data Collection

- | Make it electronic, not paper. (School Liaison)
- | Helping families understand how to complete it would be useful. (EFMP FS)

Consistency Across States

- | A universal system so all states do it the same way. (School Liaison)

Accountability/Mandatory for Schools

- | I wish that the Department of Education would check what states are actually reporting on – active duty, Reserve, National Guard. Audit the states. (MIC3 Representative)
- | Make it mandatory, some schools do it, and some do not. (School Liaison)

Timing or Frequency of Data Collection

- | Collecting data at the time of enrollment is the key to success. (School Liaison)
- | A concern is that this information is only requested by the families when they first enroll – what if they stay for years, separate from [the Service], and are still listed as a military student? I would love for it to be updated each year. (Command)

Data Sharing Across Systems

- | Having those two entities talk to each other. It's a lot of gathering of similar data. Similar federal programs providing data on military. The more you put on people's plates the less accurate things become. Some school districts wanted to know if they could use MSI data for Impact Aid, and Impact Aid said "no." It's a lot of work for the school district. School districts are struggling with filling positions across the board. (School Liaison)

Incentives

- | There is no money associated with it, so there is low compliance. (Program Manager)

Expand Covered Groups

- | It should ask about everyone affiliated with the installation, then subcategorize by active duty, civil service, etc. Everyone that is affiliated with the installation qualifies for resources. They may not qualify for everything. We have a ton of contractors, and some of those students qualify for tutoring or scholarships. (School Liaison)

Reduce Number of Requests for Information

- | Some parents get overwhelmed and tired of filing out surveys and providing data. (Command)

Summary

Nearly all participants responded that they were familiar with the MSI. However, when asked about the purpose of the MSI, responses suggested that there may have been some confusion between the MSI and Impact Aid. Although some participants indicated that data collections may simultaneously address both MSI and Impact Aid, other participants indicated that they are separate data collections.

The purpose of MSI was discussed by 108 participants. Stated purposes included tracking enrollment of military-connected students, tracking performance of military-connected students, increasing funding, identifying the military-connected students in schools, providing services at the school or state level, and offering services at the military level.

Regarding implementation of the MSI, respondents indicated that data are collected at enrollment, yearly, or every semester. Responses from participants indicated that military affiliation data are not collected in a consistent manner and that there are multiple ways that schools or school districts ask about military affiliation.

School administrators, teachers/counselors, and parents indicated that data are used in a variety of ways. School personnel indicated that MSI data are used to influence funding (e.g., DODEA STEM grant), to increase programming availability (e.g., MFLC), to identify military-connected students for potential MFLC services, to market events to military families, to monitor performance, and to better understand students' circumstances in order to better service students' needs. Twenty per-

cent of parents who discussed MSI data use indicated that they use the data (e.g., to look for schools with a high percentage of military-connected students), and 80% indicated that they do not use the data. Some parents indicated that schools do not report the data, or they did not know the data were available.

Ninety participants discussed whether they believe most military families identify as such. Ninety percent of school personnel believe that military families self-identify as military families, whereas 65% of school liaisons believe that most families do not identify as military connected or that a certain percent do not identify as military connected.

Of the 121 participants who discussed whether the MSI has an impact on student outcomes, less than half (49%) reported that it did. Those who said that it does have an effect, indicated impacts such as increasing supports, resources, and programming they are able to offer (e.g., MFCLC, Anchored4Life); increasing funding; and impacting interactions with individual students (e.g., increased sensitivity, understanding possible needs). Although infrequent, two participants indicated a negative effect of the MSI by expressing concerns about

their children being stigmatized due to their parent's military affiliation and discussing a concern that students will not receive services in a timely manner due to schools "waiting families out."

Of the 119 who discussed the presence or absence of barriers related to the MSI, 66% reported that there are barriers. These barriers included a lack of consistency across schools and states, a lack of understanding of who is considered a military family, problems with data collection systems, and families not self-identifying as military families. Several different reasons for not wanting to self-identify were discussed and include concerns about operational security, not wanting to be "different," not understanding why it matters, privacy concerns, fear of a negative perception of the military, being wary of the government, misunderstandings about the purpose, and fear of being required to participate in EFMP.

Eighty-two participants discussed specific ideas for improvement to the MSI. These ideas were related to advertising and DoD support, data use, response options, data collection processes, consistency across states, accountability, timing or frequency of data collection, data sharing across systems, and incentives.

Purple Star Schools Program

PSSP is a state-sponsored recognition program for schools that have taken specific steps to be military friendly.²⁴ Each state establishes its own program name and criteria, so variations exist across states.²⁵ However, common components of the programs include having a designated school staff member for military families, a dedicated webpage for military programs, a peer-to-peer transition program, and professional development.

Awareness

Of the 131 participants who lived in a state with PSSP, 120 (92%) were aware of PSSP, and 11 (8%) were not. Awareness equaled or exceeded 80% for all subgroups. Details are available in Table 30.

Sixty-seven participants discussed family awareness of PSSP. As can be seen in Table 31, of the participants who discussed family awareness of PSSP, 34% believed that most families know what PSSP is; 45% said that some families know what PSSP is, but others do not; 12% said that many families are not aware of PSSP; and 7% said that families are not aware because PSSP is too new.

Most Families Aware

MCEC has become the key spokespeople for PSSP – they do all PSSP for educator trainings – they market that component of it (School Liaison)

It is advertised on district websites...they talk about it in the newcomers workshops. Also, the superintendent did a video about it, too. (Parent)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Were Aware of PSSP

Respondent Type	Aware (#/%)		Not Aware (#/%)	
All respondents	120	92%	11	8%
Program manager	6	86%	1	14%
MIC3 representative	9	100%	0	0%
School liaison	37	100%	0	0%
School administrator	17	94%	1	6%
Teacher/counselor	15	88%	2	12%
EFMP-FS	6	86%	1	14%
Command	9	90%	1	10%
Parent	17	81%	4	19%
Local partner	4	80%	1	20%

Note. Participants that did not live in states with PSSP did not receive questions about PSSP.

Table 30

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Were Aware of PSSP

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Family Awareness of PSSP

Respondent Type	Discussed Family Awareness (#)	Most Families Aware (#/%)		Some Families Aware (#/%)		Many Families Not Aware (#/%)		Families Not Aware; PSSP too New (#/%)	
All respondents	67	23	34%	30	45%	8	12%	5	7%
Program manager	6	1	17%	5	83%	0	0%	0	0%
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	36	11	31%	19	53%	2	6%	4	11%
School administrator	2	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Teacher/counselor	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EFMP-FS	6	3	50%	1	17%	1	17%	0	0%
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	17	6	35%	5	29%	5	29%	1	6%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. One school liaison has a response in more than one category as their territory covers more than one state. Not all categories are shown.

Table 31

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Family Awareness of PSSP

²⁴ <https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/priorities/purple-star-school-program/2021>

²⁵ https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_report_speakmc_initiatives_20240220rev.pdf

Some Families Aware

It depends on what district they go to school in. At districts that have been awarded, families are much more aware, because the schools promote the fact that they are Purple Star Schools. (School Liaison)

Yes, if they have been somewhere that has it before and know to look for it. (School Liaison)

I believe parents are aware of the program but I'm not sure of if they know the exact intention. (Parent)

Most Families Not Aware

No. If they are familiar with PSSP, it doesn't mean they know what it entails. (Parent)

Zero families ask about PSSP when transitioning in. (School Liaison)

Twenty-eight participants discussed school staff awareness of the PSSP. Of those 28 participants, 89% indicated that most school staff are aware of the PSSP, while 11% said that most school staff are not aware of the PSSP (see Table 32).

Most School Staff Aware

Yes. They have professional development each year. Each staff member is required to attend. They understand how many military families they serve. Not the specific number but that a chunk of students are military connected. They are aware of why and the purpose. (School Administrator)

Yes, the whole staff are aware given the frequent celebrations, Veterans Week, and Active Duty Parent of the Week. They also publish the number of military-connected students in the school. Much emphasis is placed on honoring and recognizing military-connected students and their families. (School Administrator)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Staff Awareness of PSSP					
Respondent Type	Discussed Staff Awareness (#)	Most Staff Aware (#/%)		Most Staff Not Aware (#/%)	
All respondents	28	26	89%	3	11%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-
School liaison	0	-	-	-	-
School administrator	13	12	92%	1	8%
Teacher/counselor	15	13	87%	2	13%
EFMP-FS	0	-	-	-	-
Command	0	-	-	-	-
Parent	0	-	-	-	-
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-

Table 32

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed School Staff Awareness of PSSP

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Indicate School(s) Is a Purple Star School

Respondent Type	Discussed PSSP Designation (#)	School(s) Is a PSSP (#/%)		School(s) is Not a PSSP (#/%)	
All respondents	88	75	85%	15	17%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	2	2	100%	0	0%
School liaison	37	32	86%	6	16%
School administrator	16	14	88%	2	13%
Teacher/counselor	15	11	73%	4	27%
EFMP-FS	1	1	100%	0	0%
Command	0	-	-	-	-
Parent	17	15	88%	3	18%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category because parents may have children in more than one school, and school liaisons may cover more than one state.

Table 33

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Indicate School(s) Is a Purple Star School

Implementation

Of the 130 participants in states with PSSP, 88 discussed school use of the PSSP. Of those who discussed school use, 85% said that their school (e.g., if a school administrator, parent) or a school in their area (e.g., if a school liaison) is a Purple Star School, and 17% said the school(s) is not a Purple Star School. Table 33 shows responses by participant type.

When participants discussed the designation, they often spoke in general terms (e.g., This area has the most Purple Star Schools in the state [School Liaison]), but participants also gave specific examples of which provisions of PSSP are used (e.g., peer-to-peer program, Month of the Military Child events, school staff trainings, writing notes of appreciation to troops).

School Use

We have comprehensive supports. Citizenship work in October, playing the branch song for each Service branch and the kids sing the lyrics. Notes of appreciation to troops. We wear different colors every day, and the colors of our favorite military branch. We do creative writing and musical composition to share with our military folks while setting up a big breakfast. We have donations, a library section, [program name] that gives new students tours of the school, we read books to younger kids, like A Paper Hug. (School Administrator)

A banner exists in some schools. Every school does a Veterans Day program because we are in a veteran-heavy area – this is the only thing the school does. No changes were made to what they do for the military community, but they got that Purple Star designation. (Parent)

Celebration, MFLC. Training – we give the staff training every year on how we can be military friendly. The district has this organized. The process itself is so easy because the district has an MFLC for the schools to lean on. We are spoiled. (School Administrator)

Twenty-eight participants (i.e., school liaisons and EFMP-FS) responded to a question about whether there were differences in PSSP implementation based on whether students have an IEP or 504 Plan as opposed to those students who do not. The majority (96%) of participants who discussed this issue said there were no differences.

No differences. Whatever students need, the district provides (School Liaison)

School administrators and school liaisons were asked about PSSP renewal. Of the 38 participants who discussed renewal, 74% said that renewal is required to maintain the PSSP designation, 21% indicated renewal is not required, and 11% were not sure.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP Components						
Respondent Type	Discussed Specific Components (#)	Discussed Components that Work Well (#/%)		Discussed Components that Do Not Work Well (#/%)		Unsure (#/%)
All respondents	54	35	65%	13	24%	15 28%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-	- -
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	- -
School liaison	26	16	62%	6	23%	8 31%
School administrator	8	7	88%	2	25%	0 0%
Teacher/counselor	9	8	89%	3	33%	0 0%
EFMP-FS	0	-	-	-	-	- -
Command	1	1	100%	0	0%	0 0%
Parent	10	3	30%	2	20%	7 70%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	- -

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 34

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP Components

Impact

Specific Program Components

Fifty-four respondents commented on specific program components of PSSP. As displayed in Table 34, 65% discussed one or more components that worked well, 24% discussed one or more components that didn't work well, and 28% indicated a lack of clarity about whether there were specific components that worked well.

Program components that participants reported work well include the military point-of-contact, the peer-to-peer transition program, and the professional development for school staff.

Recognition of families. Connections are important. For example, "I didn't know that Mr. Smith was in the Army!" or "I didn't know the art teacher was a military child!" (School Administrator)

Yes, as a father of 3, I have seen benefits for my kids and others. When transferring to a new school, it is helpful to have friendly faces and people welcoming you. It also gives leadership opportunities for military students by giving them an opportunity for peer mentorship. It helps the kids to be more welcome and to grow. (Command)

Teachers really do care about military kids. If they sense a change with a military kid they will communicate with the families – communication with families is phenomenal – they have a good bond with families. When my girls got there, the 1st day, my daughter was a nervous wreck. The nurse called me at home, asked me if she could talk with my daughter to calm her down as the nurse didn't want to send my daughter home as she was not sick and she wanted to help her through her nerves. It was my daughter's new school, 1st time on a bus. It was great that the nurse had that knowledge. My oldest daughter is in 5th grade – this is her 5th school in as many years – they are doing a phenomenal job. (Parent)

Components that participants reported do not work well include the application process, the lack of standardization of professional development, and a lack of existing students for the peer-to-peer program.

Professional development on military students is an annual requirement. This can be difficult to get this every year. Who teaches it? The course is not standardized by the state or defined who can teach the course. The school liaison teaches and records it for local districts. (School Liaison)

The hardest thing is that Student2Student is dependent on how active current students are. Adults pushing is not as effective as other children pushing. We are a large school with four lunches, if there are two lunches with current students involved in the program and two lunches with no current students involved in the program [if a new student happens to be in one of the two lunches without a current student-to-student member, the new student may not have someone to be paired up with]. Some of the pieces that are hard have to do with how the school day has to run. (School Administrator)

The plaque doesn't really mean that implementation is really happening. (Teacher/Counselor)

Some participants were unsure whether components work well.

Originally, my team felt it should be a portfolio submission. The state didn't want to spend the time, so it is a check sheet. We wanted it to be a rigorous, meaningful distinction – whether it is a meaningful distinction is something I can't answer yet. (School Liaison)

Impact on School Selection

Of the 65 respondents who discussed PSSP impacts on school selection, 48% said it does impact school selection, 34% said it does not impact school selection, and 25% were unclear on whether PSSP impacted school selection. Table 35 presents the data related to the impact of PSSP on school selection.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP on School Selection							
Respondent Type	Discussed Impact on School Selection (#)	Impact (#/%)		No Impact (#/%)		Unsure About Impact (#/%)	
All respondents	65	31	48%	22	34%	16	25%
Program manager	6	3	50%	1	17%	3	50%
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	35	14	40%	15	43%	8	23%
School administrator	1	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Teacher/counselor	1	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
EFMP-FS	6	5	83%	1	17%	0	0%
Command	1	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
Parent	15	7	47%	5	33%	4	27%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Due to conflicting statements and school liaisons whose territory covers more than one state, participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 35

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP on School Selection

No Impact

Not yet. Families tend to look at schools on base as that is more important than PSSP. (School Liaison)

We have a neighborhood school system based on where families live. Decisions may be based on housing..., proximity to spouse employer. Parents want to see...school/student performance...but it's probably not a driving force. (School Liaison)

No. It bears no weight. If you look at everything that makes someone decide what school to send kids to. There was nothing extra about being a Purple Star School that made me think that they need to go to the school. There is still systemic issues when dealing with people in the military. Why be a Purple Star School, supposedly pro-military, if you are still going to make things difficult for military families. (Parent)

Impact

I think it does, but it is more about the implementation of the award. I wouldn't recommend one school over another because they had a Purple Star. (School Liaison)

I would think so. It is much easier to surround yourself with families that know what you are going through as military families. If there are zero military-affiliated families, it can be difficult getting services or around deployment. Teachers may not be aware of how to handle situations like that. (EFMP-FS)

Yes. Especially experienced Service members who see them as more inviting and supportive. (School Liaison)

Impact on Outcomes

Of the 83 participants who discussed PSSP impacting outcomes, only 16% said it did not impact outcomes. Details can be found in Table 36.

Comments about specific impacts revolved around improving school culture and climate, benefitting social-emotional outcomes, and increasing the understanding the military lifestyle.

If implemented with fidelity, then yes. If not, just a seal of approval. (Program Manager)

It is something where if a family runs into an issue, academic or transition, the family will lean back on Purple Star Schools and say "I thought you would help with this given Purple Star." It is affecting outcomes in these outlier situations where a school isn't already providing support. (School Liaison)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP on Outcomes									
Respondent Type	Discussed Impact on Outcomes (#)	No Impact (#/%)		Impact (#/%)		Impact – with Caveats (#/%)		Unsure About Impact (#/%)	
All respondents	83	13	16%	52	63%	6	7%	12	14%
Program manager	5	1	20%	1	20%	2	40%	1	20%
MIC3 representative	3	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%
School liaison	29	7	24%	16	55%	3	10%	3	10%
School administrator	14	0	0%	12	86%	0	0%	2	14%
Teacher/counselor	12	0	0%	11	92%	0	0%	1	8%
EFMP-FS	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Command	7	1	14%	3	43%	0	0%	3	43%
Parent	13	4	31%	6	46%	1	8%	2	15%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Each category is mutually exclusive. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 36

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP on Outcomes

I think it affects culture. When the culture is positive, as with any recognition, it bolsters morale, self-confidence, the desire to do the very best when it comes to school. Military students know they are an appreciated, valued member of the student body, whether in school or profession, this motivates the best. (School Administrator)

More military children are going to that school since more parents choose to send their children there. Creates more community for both the students and the families. (Parent)

If you took it away, we would have more social-emotional concerns. And the school is already at its limits regarding social-emotional concerns. It provides a preventative impact (Teacher/Counselor)

Differences in Impact for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

Of the 37 participants who mentioned something about the comparative impact between students with an IEP or 504 Plan and students in the general education population, 68% perceived no difference in the impact, 5% suggested that PSSP represents an added benefit for students with an IEP or 504 Plan, and 27% indicated a lack of clarity regarding whether there were differences (see Table 37).

Differences

Children [receiving special education services] get a mentor. (School Liaison)

Special education students benefit more than general education kids from the buddy programs that help socialization and acceptance at the new school (EFMP-FS)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP on Outcomes with Regard to Students with IEPs or 504 Plans							
Respondent Type	Discussed IEP/504 (#)	No Differences (#/%)		Differences (#/%)		Unsure About Differences (#/%)	
All respondents	37	25	68%	2	5%	10	27%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
School liaison	28	21	75%	1	4%	6	21%
School administrator	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teacher/counselor	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
EFMP-FS	5	2	40%	1	20%	2	40%
Command	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parent	4	2	50%	0	0%	2	50%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Each category is mutually exclusive.

Table 37

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Impact of PSSP on Outcomes with Regard to Students With IEPs or 504 Plans

Barriers

Barriers to Implementation

Of the 77 participants who discussed the presence or absence of barriers to school implementation of PSSP, 52% indicated that there were no barriers, while 48% mentioned at least one barrier. Table 38 shows the number and percentage of respondents with responses in each category.

Seventeen percent of participants who discussed barriers mentioned instances of PSSP being a "check-the-box" program.

Certain schools are very proud and try hard to meet the goals. Some think, "What is the bare minimum we can do to get that designation." It can just be a nice "star" on the window. Not sure what the meat of the program is. Not sure what evidence there is for an impact. (Command)

Some states are giving it out like candy. (Program Manager)

The school says it's a Purple Star School, but there are no events or other supports...Just says it is a Purple Star School. (Local Partner)

Other barriers to implementation covered an array of concerns, including a lack funding associated with the award, concern from the school's perspective that it requires more time from an already overworked staff, challenges with implementing the peer-to-peer program, and a lack of consistency in implementation.

The lack of consistency across states. Some states are not funding it. Parents are misled into believing that schools are military friendly, when it is just a check-the-box. (Program Manager)

I'm not sure how meaningful PSSP would be. They would need to implement continued compliance, complaint procedures, maintain certification. (MIC3 Representative)

The transition peer-to-peer program is harder in schools with a low military kid population. (School Liaison)

There is no budget for an awards ceremony or banner. (School Liaison)

Time – support from staff who are already busy. (School Administrator)

The designation can be misleading to families. If used for early enrollment decisions, it could be misleading because the Purple Star School criteria does not meaningfully impact students. It does not address academics or other factors that directly contribute to education. (Command)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Barriers to School Implementation of PSSP

Respondent Type	Discussed Barriers (#)	No Barriers (#/%)	PSSP is Check-the-Box (#/%)	Other Barriers (#/%)
All respondents	77	40 52%	13 17%	31 40%
Program manager	4	0 0%	3 75%	3 75%
MIC3 representative	1	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%
School liaison	30	16 53%	4 13%	13 43%
School administrator	13	8 62%	1 8%	4 31%
Teacher/counselor	13	9 69%	0 0%	4 31%
EFMP-FS	3	1 33%	1 33%	1 33%
Command	2	0 0%	2 100%	2 100%
Parent	10	6 60%	1 10%	3 30%
Local partner	1	0 0%	1 100%	0 0%

Note. Participants may have responses in more than one category.

Table 38

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Barriers to School Implementation of PSSP

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Barriers to Students Using PSSP

Respondent Type	Discussed Barriers (#)	No Barriers (#/%)	Barriers (#/%)
All respondents	39	28 72%	11 28%
Program manager	0	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-
School liaison	30	22 73%	8 27%
School administrator	1	1 100%	0 0%
Teacher/counselor	0	-	-
EFMP-FS	1	0 0%	1 100%
Command	0	-	-
Parent	7	5 71%	2 29%
Local partner	0	-	-

Note. Each category is mutually exclusive.

Table 39

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Barriers to Students Using PSSP

Barriers to Students Using

Of the 39 who discussed the presence or absence of barriers to students using PSSP components, 72% said there were no barriers, while 28% indicated there were barriers (see Table 39).

Barriers include staffing challenges, lack of student interest in being a peer-to-peer transition program mentor, and the components being less appealing to certain personality types.

A lack of staff to run programs like the transition group. Students opt out because of personality differences (e.g., introverts). (School Liaison)

Any barrier that could be in place would be due to the student not engaging or the family not allowing engagement. Opt-in, opt-out could be another barrier; we do have some families that forgot to fill out the forms. (School Liaison)

Lack of students who want to be mentors or guides. (School Liaison)

Additional Barriers for Students with IEPs or 504 Plans

A barrier might be that schools would want to be a Purple Star school for the wrong reasons, for recognition purposes rather than providing support to military families. (EFMP-FS)

Differences in Barriers for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

As shown in Table 40, of the 32 participants who discussed the comparative barriers across students in general education and those with an IEP or 504 Plan, 88% suggested there were no additional barriers, while 13% said there were additional barriers.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Differential Barriers for Using PSSP for Those with IEP or 504 Plans					
Respondent Type	Discussed IEP/504 (#)	No Differences (#/%)		Differences (#/%)	
All respondents	32	28	88%	4	13%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-
School liaison	28	26	93%	2	7%
School administrator	0	-	-	-	-
Teacher/counselor	0	-	-	-	-
EFMP-FS	2	1	50%	1	50%
Command	0	-	-	-	-
Parent	2	1	50%	1	50%
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-

Note. Each category is mutually exclusive. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 40

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed the Differential Barriers for Using PSSP for Those with IEP or 504 Plans

Improvements

Of the 97 participants who discussed improvements, 30% said they had no ideas, and 3% said they had no ideas because PSSP was working well. Sixty-seven percent of respondents mentioned at least one idea for improvement. Details can be found in Table 41.

No Ideas for Improvement

I don't know enough about it to give any feedback. (Parent)

Since I'm not aware of the policy...I can't answer this question. (School Administrator)

I don't know, we have not tried applying for the designation and have no experience with it. (School Administrator)

Things Working Well

I have only seen it when I am helping with this school system. The military family liaison that I work with in the school system, they have done a really great job of pulling in outside entities for programs and grants. Not doing everything in house but connecting kids to the community at large; it allows for additional support of military-connected youth. (Local Partner)

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Improving PSSP							
Respondent Type	Discussed Improvements (#)	No Ideas for Improvement (#/%)		Things Working Well (#/%)		Ideas for Improvement (#/%)	
All respondents	97	29	30%	3	3%	65	67%
Program manager	4	0	0%	0	0%	4	100%
MIC3 representative	2	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%
School liaison	34	4	12%	0	0%	30	88%
School administrator	15	10	67%	0	0%	5	33%
Teacher/counselor	12	7	58%	0	0%	5	42%
EFMP-FS	5	2	40%	0	0%	3	60%
Command	7	1	14%	1	14%	5	71%
Parent	14	3	21%	1	7%	10	71%
Local partner	4	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%

Note. Each category is mutually exclusive. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 41

Number and Percent of Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Improving PSSP

Improvement ideas include ensuring consistency across the states, celebrating award achievement, funding the awardees to ensure implementation, implementing stronger accountability mechanisms, adjusting the timing of application deadlines, making changes to the components or the structure, connecting PSSP to school goals, and sharing of best practices among schools or states.

There is no fanfare once you win the designation. Years ago, a lot of honors schools could get were associated with the governor's office making a big deal of it, with the governor or lieutenant governor attending as the award was handed out. I, as a principal, asked the district for banners and signs to be printed. (School Administrator)

Time and money. Dialogue between schools; a conference or a convening about how to execute a Purple Up Day or a Month of the Military Child event. (Teacher/Counselor)

The designation needs to include yearly monitoring to hold school districts accountable. The motivation for joining Purple Stars was because they want to get new money. (School Liaison)

Push back the application deadline. [The beginning of the school year] is a terrible time. That would allow schools more time to apply, share with staff and community. More time to communicate and understand the program and benefits. (School Administrator)

Focus on substance. Talk to military kids, find out what they need. Talk to elementary, middle school, and high school kids, ask what could be meaningful to them. Teachers make a huge difference – they had a teachers' meeting and they listened to a panel of military kids. It is not a program thing, it is a people skills thing. (Parent)

Create other "tiers" above Purple Star with better supports, requirements, rewards to uphold the title such as teacher bonuses, STEM involvement from the installation, and interactions with the community college and high school. (Command)

Show benefit for students to admins and school leaders so they can get more buy-in. (School Liaison)

Connect it to school-wide issues, like matching Purple Star criteria to school goals. We have a goal of student belonging and include strategies for military-connected students to feel part of the school community. (School Administrator)

Summary

Participant awareness of PSSP was high. Of those who lived in a state with PSSP, 92% were aware of PSSP. Of the 67 participants who discussed family awareness of PSSP, 34% indicated that most families are aware, 45% indicated that some families are aware, 12% indicated that many families are not aware, and 7% said that families are not aware because the program is too new. There were some differences by participant type. All program managers and 83% of school liaisons who discussed family awareness indicated that most or some families are aware of PSSP. Parents were more evenly split between most families being aware (35%), some families being aware (29%), and many families not being aware (29%).

Participants indicated high staff awareness of PSSP. Of the 28 school personnel who lived in states with PSSP and discussed school staff awareness, 89% indicated that most staff are aware of PSSP. Of those who discussed implementation of PSSP, 85% said that their school (e.g., school administrator or parent) or a school(s) in their area (e.g., school liaisons,) is a Purple Star School.

Fifty-four participants discussed specific components that were working well or not working well. Of those 54, 65% discussed specific components that they felt were working well, 24% discussed specific components that were not working well, and 28% of participants were unsure if specific components were working well. There was variability by participant type. Eighty-eight percent of school personnel discussed specific components that were working well, whereas 70% of parents indicated that they did not know if specific components were working well. Components identified as working well included the military point-of-contact, the peer-to-peer transition program, and the professional development for school staff. Components identified as not working well included the application process, the lack of standardization of professional development, and a lack of existing students for the peer-to-peer program.

Sixty-five participants discussed whether PSSP impacted school selection. Overall, 48% of participants indicated that whether a school is a Purple Star School does

impact school selection, 34% said that it does not impact school selection, and 25% indicated that they were unsure if it impacted school selection.

Of the 83 participants who discussed whether PSSP had an impact on student outcomes, 63% indicated that it does impact outcomes, 7% said that it has an impact, but there are caveats, 16% indicated that it did not impact outcomes, and 14% were unsure. There was variability by participant group. Eighty-six percent of school administrators and 92% of teachers/counselors indicated an impact, whereas 55% of school liaisons, 20% of program managers, 43% of command, and 46% of parents indicated an impact. Positive impacts included more awareness of military culture, improvements to school culture, and social-emotional benefits.

Of the 77 participants who discussed the presence or absence of barriers to school implementation of PSSP, 48% discussed at least one barrier. Barriers included PSSP being a “check-the-box” designation, a lack of

funding (e.g., at the state level, for a banner at the school), a lack of time for staff to support it, lack of consistency in implementation, and challenges in implementing the peer-to-peer program.

Thirty-nine participants discussed the presence or absence of barriers to students using PSSP components. Twenty-eight percent indicated that there were barriers. These barriers included staffing challenges, lack of student interest in being a peer-to-peer transition program mentor, and the components being less appealing to certain personality types.

Sixty-five participants provided specific ideas about potential improvements to PSSP. These ideas included consistency, accountability, funding, communication between schools or states regarding best practices, state-level excitement for the award, adjusting the application timing, and connecting PSSP to school-wide goals (e.g., student belonging).

Partnerships, Policy, and Coordination

Partnerships and Programs

In addition to the four initiatives explored in depth in this process evaluation, participants were also given the opportunity to discuss partnerships between military installations and schools or school districts and other programs that are available for military-connected students.

Implementation

Partnerships between the installation and the school/district, either formal or informal, were discussed by 115 (75%) participants. Table 42 highlights several commonly mentioned partnerships.

Commonly Mentioned Partnerships	
Partnership	Participants Who Discussed (#)
Installation personnel attend school board meetings	20
Regular meetings between school district and installation	11
Installation personnel attend back-to-school nights	7
Student field trips to the installation	29
School staff trips to the installation	4
Mentoring programs	9
Career day, career talks, and job shadowing	25
On-installation internships	5
Guest speakers from the installation	8
Service members volunteer at the schools (formal arrangement)	25
Adopt-a-school ²⁶	30
STEM learning opportunities (11 discussed STARBASE ²⁷)	32
Month of the Military Child events	9
JROTC	10
School Liaison	57
MFLC	58

Note. Participants may have discussed more than one partnership.

Table 42

Commonly Mentioned Partnerships

Other installation-school/district partnerships were mentioned by participants such as touch-a-truck events, social events, military band performances, and lunches with installation and school personnel. Furthermore, peer-to-peer programs were discussed frequently (n=37) and may have a connection to the military installation, a particular Service, or be a community-based program. Peer-to-peer programs commonly mentioned were Army Youth Sponsorship Program, Anchored4Life, and Student2Student. Additional programs that have a connection to the military were mentioned: school-based Boys and Girls Club (free for military-connected students²⁸), Armed Services YMCA, Army Youth Program in Your Neighborhood, and tutor.com (free for military-connected students²⁹).

Impact

Participants discussed their perception of different types of impacts that the partnerships and programs have. Impacts included promoting connection, inclusion, and school climate and influencing social-emotional outcomes, academic performance, and career readiness.

For programs like [program name], where [Service members] show up for lunch and sit at tables and talk with kids. If a kid is sitting alone, they will play with the kid or sit with the kid – a [Service member] sitting with them will bring other kids over – the kids may not have known each other, and they met for the first time because of the [Service member]. (School Liaison)

Yes, this work is creating a welcoming environment for military-connected students and their families. (School Administrator)

Increases socialization and connects kids with their military roots, along with exploring areas where they are located. (Parent)

The more the community understands the military challenges, this can only help. Partnerships are critical for us and our students. (Command)

²⁶ <https://www.armymwr.com/School-support/commanders-1/educators-school-administrators-and-units>

²⁷ <https://dodstarbase.org/>

²⁸ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/external/boys-girls-clubs-of-america-military-partnership>

²⁹ <https://military.tutor.com/home>

The Military Family Life Counselor helps families navigate many issues and helps the student find necessary resources while working with other staff to make sure the student gets the help they need on a more specialized level. (Teacher/Counselor)

MFLCs help identify some of the problems that a regular counselor would not recognize (e.g., moving, TDY [temporary duty], deployments). Especially for the lower elementary kids. (Parent)

Providing safe places for students to be during after-school hours. Giving students, either with MFLCs or in programs, giving them an opportunity to speak about their feelings around deployment, PCSing [Permanent Change of Station], social emotional aspects. (School Administrator)

Yes, it certainly improves school culture and climate, which in turn improves school learning. (School Administrator)

They are role models the kids can look up to; any time you can get different people in reading to, working with, and excited about what the kids are learning, it adds another level of excitement to the day for the kids. Your school changes because the community is involved in it. It's better for kids; it's better for the community. It's win-win all the way around. (School Administrator)

It involves them in the future workforce, engineering, science fields. Find out what they are good at, sparks interest and may help them align to a future path. (School Administrator)

Barriers

Fifty-eight participants discussed barriers to the implementation of partnerships. The most commonly mentioned barriers were a lack of time or resources, the presence of “red tape,” a lack of interest or difficulties with communication, and turnover at the schools and the installations.

Time and Resources

There need to be more school liaisons as many of the ones in [state] get overwhelmed very quickly due to the large military population. (Local Partner)

More school liaisons would benefit families. There is not enough time in the day to meet the needs of families. All school liaisons work beyond the allotted hours. (School Liaison)

Standard ops tempo – hard to stop what you are doing and find the right time to go and volunteer at the school – standard hurdle that everyone faces. (Command)

Red Tape

Paperwork with the district is difficult. District contract language is difficult, and there are many required forms. Liability is often a barrier. (Teacher/Counselor)

School liaisons are buried under layers of supervision and permissions. (School Liaison)

Lack of Interest/Difficulties with Communication

Both the commander and the superintendent have to be interested in establishing partnerships. (School Liaison)

Partnerships are dependent on what the base commander prioritizes. (School Liaison)

Turnover

Turnover. Changes in installation leadership and their support for programs and turnover at the schools. (School Liaison)

It is self-inflicted because people here turnover a lot. (Command)

Barriers to students benefiting from the partnerships were discussed by 12 participants. The two barriers discussed most frequently were the geographic distribution of the families and the difficulties with transportation.

Schools and families are geographically spread out. (School Liaison)

Transportation – not enough buses and drivers for base field trips. (School Liaison)

One additional barrier mentioned by two school liaisons was related to staffing for students who receive special education services or who have a disability.

If I bring in a program where it was just me and active duty [Service members], if a student has a one-on-one aide, but the program is an after school program, the aide is not available [because aides are only available during school hours]. (School Liaison)

Improvement

Fifty-seven participants discussed specific ideas for improvement to partnerships. Common themes were funding, communication, and additional school liaisons.

Funding for programs; funding for promotional materials. (School Liaison)

Allocating more time for the partnerships to take place, both the installation and the school; communication must happen consistently. (School Liaison)

We have a school liaison officer – that’s their job, to bridge the schools to the installations. However, we only have one officer who is working with many districts. Since she is stretched thin, it would be great to have another person like her. (School Administrator)

Have a second school liaison or an assistant. The school liaison could use the help! (Command)

Policy and Other Thoughts

Participants were given an opportunity to discuss recommendations to improve local or state policies related to supporting military-connected children and to share any information not previously discussed that would be important to know.

Out of 154 participants, 118 (77%) provided specific suggestions for policy improvement. These suggestions included the following:

Increase Funding for Schools and for Military-Connected Students

Continued opportunities, DODEA grants, those are huge, chances for school districts to propose and identify a need and have support to fill gaps and make gains. Advocate for those federal allocations. (School Administrator)

[Students receiving special education services] need more assistance in the school systems. There is a need for services as a whole. There is a shortage of occupational therapists, speech therapists, ABA [Applied Behavior Analysis] therapy. Schools need more staff and money. (EFMP-FS)

Funding. For teachers and schools. (Parent)

More Continuity Between School Districts, States, and Military Services

One organization with oversight over MSI, PSSP, and other resources. (School Liaison)

Special education and identification of categories across states could be improved. (School Administrator)

Have universal graduation requirements between states. (Command)

Increase School Awareness of Military Culture; Military Students’ Needs; and Opportunities for Programs, Resources, and Funding Related to Military Children

Additional training on behaviors and experiences of military kids. (Teacher/Counselor)

Tell teachers about opportunities for military kids so they can share and encourage. (Teacher/Counselor)

Increase Family Awareness of Available Programs and Supports

Forums to help educate families; be more transparent about the policies and laws. (Command)

Parents could be better informed of programs and policies...my children have attended 5-6 schools in total, and I have never heard of these policies while going through the process of transferring to the new schools. (Parent)

Knowing more about what is available, the services available in areas. It is hard, each state has something different, more or less services depending on where the installation is located. If there was a way to help families know what is available in each state. It would be nice to know the school policies. If there was one set of places that parents could go when trying to navigate getting policy information. (EFMP-FS)

Parents don’t know about the school liaison. The school liaison could be tapped much more. (Parent)

Allowing Virtual Courses

Offer online offerings if they can’t get the in-person offering. (Parent)

Availability of Information

Make sure information is readily available; I did not go to school for law, but I am reading legislation. (School Liaison)

Each school district should have a military-specific page on their website. (Parent)

Consultation with Various Stakeholders Before Policy Change is Implemented

Have conversation with the lowest levels to learn what needs to be improved. (School Liaison)

Get input from school liaisons before implementing new policies – look at new policies from the military point of view. (School Liaison)

Decreasing Procedural Hurdles and Increasing Procedural Safeguards

[It would be helpful to require] Service members with children to check in and out with School Liaisons. (School Liaison)

We have a lot of resources, but procedural things can limit the impact that can be made. For example, the release-of-information document for providing access to the military identifier. Since we don't always have the release, it makes it difficult to serve military-connected students. (Teacher/Counselor)

MFLCs – allow them to serve the children in an easier way. For example, if the [school] counselor was talking with a parent and the parent indicates that they want MFLC services, the counselor cannot ask the MFLC to reach out to the parent. The parent has to be the one to initiate contact. But the parent is already stressed and overwhelmed. The MFLC can do bulletin boards and lunches, but their hands are tied to do actual counseling. There are a lot of barriers to doing their job. Most people don't bother because it is so difficult. MFLCs cannot work with students with IEPs. It is double dipping.³⁰ (Teacher/Counselor)

The school liaison is under the Child and Youth coordinator, and that causes friction. Child and Youth staff tend to be required to be at their desks, answering phones. The school liaison needs to be at schools and in the community. (School Liaison)

Timing of Moves and School Assignment

Now there is a huge swap in October/November and another in January. It is destabilizing to schools. About 80% of families transfer during the school year [as opposed to during the summer]. (School Administrator)

Electives – preferential treatment for elective selection and assignment – military kids have no chance of getting the elective they want. (Parent)

Knowing where your child will attend school at least 30 days in advance would be helpful. I found out the Friday before school started on Monday that my son got into one of the [open enrollment] schools I requested. The last-minute answer about where he would attend was stressful. (Parent)

Thirty-nine participants shared information when they were asked if there was any additional information they wanted to discuss. Several responses stood out.

Some participants had comments related to positive school environments or people wanting to help mili-

tary-connected children even though there may be obstacles.

We do have a lot of staff here, other than the MFLC, that are familiar with the military students, military life. I am a military spouse. I am very familiar with the military community and can relate to the students myself. My co-counselor is a military veteran. Veterans are teachers in the building. We can relate to the kids and know what they are going through. If parents are deployed or what have you, we can connect and understand the lifestyle. It is a lifestyle; it is different. (Teacher/Counselor)

No more new programs. Increase rigor in implementation and funding into what we have. Get data and if programs don't work, close them. (Command)

Sometimes, we will see a kid who has anxiety, and we will find out that one of his or her parents are deployed. We want to be able to provide proactive and thorough support – information helps ahead of time. (School Administrator)

Conversely, some individual stories do suggest that opportunities for improvement exist.

My child turned 6 [in late June]. The school year started in August or September and my son made the cutoff for 1st grade. So, if a child turns 6 before or after [a specific date] – they have to be placed in 1st grade (before [a specific date]) or kindergarten (after [a specific date]). My son just turned 6, has never been in any school or daycare, and the law says he has to go to first grade. So, I reached out to the waiver office to get a waiver for my child from the board of education. They said, we don't do waivers for that. The school should just do that. I asked the office, what I can refer to to tell the school that. So, I searched the provided website, looked at the education code, and found the reference saying that my child could start kindergarten or 1st grade. [My spouse] told me that there was a family resource fair for military families. And if we can't do it there, we will just find another school. We met with [the school liaison]...and showed them the reference. She went to the board of education people, who said that I was right. They started making phone calls behind the scenes. I got a phone call from the secretary of the school (I thought it would be about enrolling my son in kindergarten) who called me to argue with me. The school said, technically the school is right. But I would not back down. So, the school said that my child had to do a placement test. [After the placement test,] the school said, you are right, he is not ready for 1st grade. (Parent)

³⁰ The Military and Family Life Counseling Program Guide (https://www.swcs.mil/Portals/111/MFLC-Program-Guide-6Sept2022_Final.pdf) indicates that MFLC provides outreach to eligible families. The Program Guide also indicates that MFLC cannot provide treatment related to medical or mental health disorders and cannot duplicate or replace services provided by other DoD support programs. However, MFLC can provide services that augment other services.

EFMP-SLP Coordination

As shown in Table 43, of the 52 participants who discussed EFMP-SLP coordination, 90% said SLP & EFMP work collaboratively, while 10% said there is not much collaboration.

Respondents Within Each Respondent Group Who Discussed Coordination between EFMP and SLP					
Respondent Type	Discussed Coordination (#)	Work Collaboratively (#/%)		Not Collaborative (#/%)	
All respondents	52	47	90%	5	10%
Program manager	0	-	-	-	-
MIC3 representative	0	-	-	-	-
School liaison	44	40	91%	4	9%
School administrator	0	-	-	-	-
Teacher/counselor	0	-	-	-	-
EFMP-FS	8	7	88%	1	13%
Command	0	-	-	-	-
Parent	0	-	-	-	-
Local partner	0	-	-	-	-

Note. Due to rounding, the sum of the percentages may not equal 100%.

Table 43

Number and Percent of Respondents Who Discussed Coordination between EFMP and SLP

Work Collaboratively

I attend EFMP meetings; if EFMP has a question about resources, the EFMP will reach out to me; if a parent reaches out about EFMP resources, I reach out to EFMP (School Liaison)

I talk to EFMP every week, two or three or four times a week. EFMP, the relocation specialist, and I all work together on a version of Smooth Moves. EFMP and I collaborate on a special education workshop every year. We have an outreach table together. I get referrals from EFMP; EFMP gets referrals from me. (School Liaison)

We are both one-deep and talk daily, serve as each other's support. Anytime a family emails about a school-age child in special education, we will cc the other person so both are aware that there is a special education student and then follow the case together. (School Liaison)

Wonderful relationship. We collaborate on families, events, everything EFMP does. We work together to serve families. (EFMP-FS)

Not Much Collaboration

The EFMP case worker only came to the base one time last year. I have regular communication with case worker, at least monthly. I include base events and happenings, and the EFMP case worker puts them in an email newsletter to families. (School Liaison)

I respect her highly, and the school liaison does an excellent job. There is little communication and very little working together. I may get five emails a year from the school liaison. There are some turf war problems. [Collaboration] only happens when I send a welcome letter, and it includes School Liaison contact info. If families have questions about school, I send the family to the school liaison. (EFMP-FS)

Some interaction. There is only interaction when there is an issue. (School Liaison)

Barriers

Only 9 respondents mentioned one or more barriers to implementation of the EFMP-SLP collaboration.

Other than hearing about families who are reluctant to sign up for the EMFP program, there is still a stigma that it will ruin a Service member's military career (School Liaison)

Families want us to be their advocates and neither the school liaison program nor EFMP are qualified to be an advocate for a child with special needs. (School Liaison)

The EFMP coordinator has a lot of other hats...the role and shoes that they have to fill to serve military-connected families. I would like case workers...to be less about being able to say they have a program and more aligned with what do families need and how can they meet those needs. More depth is needed. When the EFMP person does not have the educational experiences that school liaison does, it translates into a lack of understanding of services and programs. (School Liaison)

EFMP doesn't have a lot of cases. One family was referred to EFMP in the last school year. EFMP program reps [who are not located on the installation] got used to not visiting during COVID. There is not a policy that prevents visiting [the installation]. This is a barrier that needs to be fixed. (School Liaison)

EFMP cannot assist families in other Services [at Joint Base].³¹ (School Liaison)

³¹ Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 1315.19 Section 8 indicates that Family Support Services are available to all EFMP families regardless of Service affiliation.

School District and School Website Data Extraction

A website data extraction was conducted and consisted of a systematic review of school district and school websites. The primary purpose of the data extraction was to determine if information about the four initiatives was available. The secondary purpose was to examine what additional programs or services were available to military-connected students. The school district websites that were examined were the 22 school districts that approved school personnel interviews. School websites were examined if (1) the school was selected to participate, regardless of whether affiliated school personnel were subsequently interviewed or (2) the child of a parent interviewee attended the school. Twenty-two district websites were examined, and 47 school websites were examined. The school districts and schools were located in 11 states. These 11 states varied widely in the number of military-connected students and military installations in the state. Seven states had over 10,000 military-connected school-age children, and 4 states had less than 10,000 military-connected school-age children. Moreover, four states had less than five military installations, and seven states had five or more installations.

The first data point that was collected was whether the district or school had a web page for military families. For the district websites, 17 districts (77%) had a web page with information for military families; 5 (23%) did not. For the school websites, 13 schools (28%) had web pages with information for military families; 21 schools (45%) had no web page, but they had a link to a district web page for military families; and 13 schools (28%) did not have a web page or link to the district page. The accessibility of those web pages was also assessed. If there was a link from the district or school homepage or if the link appeared in the first page of search results (i.e., searching for “military”), then the page was considered accessible. For the districts, 16 of the 17 districts that had web pages were considered accessible. For the schools, 32 of the 34 schools that had either their own web page or a link to the district page were considered accessible.

Regardless of whether the district or school had a web page for military families, the Clearinghouse examined whether districts or schools had information on the four initiatives. Clearinghouse staff examined whether the components of the initiatives were discussed within the context of the initiatives and whether the components were discussed without being tied to the initiative. If the school just linked to a district web page (e.g., there is text that says “military families” that links to the district web page), the information found on the district page was not considered to be available on the school page. However, if there was enough information on the school web page so that one was directed to a specific piece of information (e.g., “Click here to see the protections of the Compact”) that was located on the district webpage, then it was considered to be “on” the school page.



Advance Enrollment

All school districts and schools were located in states that offer AE. However, only two school districts and none of the schools provided general information on AE. Both districts displayed this information on their web page for military families, and both provided the information in plain language as opposed to legislation. One of the two districts provided additional information about specific requirements. The timeframe within which proof of residency was required was discussed, and the school district website specified the addresses that could be used for registration. Two additional districts discussed the role of military orders in enrollment procedures. For one district, multiple documents were needed to establish residency, and military orders was just one of those. For the other district, evidence of orders being sufficient for enrollment was discussed, but additional requirements of AE for that state were not discussed.



Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

The Clearinghouse examined whether school district and school websites discussed the Compact, and whether they provided a general description and/or discussed specific provisions. Half of the school district websites (i.e., 11) provided overall descriptions of the Compact; the other half did not. Ten of those 11 district websites also discussed the specific provisions of the Compact. Eight of those ten discussed all of the protections. One district website only discussed the provision related to immunizations, and one had a link to the protections, but the link was broken. Two of the websites that discussed all of the protections provided the information using the language in the legislation instead of plain language. One district website that did not discuss the Compact did discuss their policy covering absences related to deployments without tying the policy to the Compact initiative.

Of the 47 school websites examined, three provided a general discussion of the Compact. Two school websites discussed specific protections of the Compact. One of these school websites discussed all of the protections, and one website only discussed absences related to deployments. Without tying the policies to the Compact itself, 10 schools discussed 1 (n=8) or 2 (n=2) protections of the Compact. The protections discussed were related to immunizations (n=2), deployment-related absences (n=7), and non-custodial parents (n=3).

Three school district websites provided information on whom to contact for more information about the Compact. One school district website provided contact information for the state Compact commission. One school website did provide links to MIC3; however, they were presented without context, and there were multiple broken links.



Military Student Identifier

Out of the 22 school district websites and 47 school websites, 2 district websites and no school websites provided a general discussion of the MSI. Project staff were unable to locate any discussion or examples of the data collection form, and, as such, no response options were identified. The two school district websites that did provide information on the MSI discussed the legislative basis of the MSI, who is to be counted in the MSI (i.e., per ESSA), and a discussion of the benefit of the MSI.



Purple Star Schools Program

Clearinghouse staff examined whether school district and school websites discussed PSSP by providing a general description or discussing specific components. Not all districts or schools were in states that had PSSP. Seventeen districts and 38 schools were in states with the program. Of those 38 schools, 20 had been designated Purple Star schools.

Table 44 displays how many of the 17 school district websites and 38 school websites had information related to PSSP. The four columns show the following: (1) the number of district websites that discuss PSSP and/or specific requirements of PSSP, (2) the number of district websites that provide information or discuss activities that are consistent with PSSP criteria without being tied to the initiative, (3) the number of schools with a Purple Star School designation that discuss PSSP and/or the specific components of PSSP, and (4) the number of schools without a Purple Star School designation that discussed activities that are consistent with PSSP criteria.

All states with PSSP include in their requirements a web page for military families³². There were several combinations of possibilities related to PSSP status and the presence of a web page for military families. Individual schools may or may not have a web page, schools may link to a district web page for military families, schools may or may not have Purple Star designations, and PSSP may or may not be available in the school's state. Table 45 shows how many schools fall into each combination of website availability and PSSP availability.

32 https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_report_speakmc_initiatives_20240220rev.pdf

PSSP Components Discussed as Related to the Initiative or Discussed But Not Tied to the Initiative				
Component	District		School	
	Related to Initiative	Not Tied to Initiative	Related to Initiative ^a	Not Tied to Initiative ^b
General discussion	8	n/a	n/a	n/a
Specific components discussed	3	n/a	n/a	n/a
Designated staff member for military families	3	0	5	0
Web page for military families	3	0	8 (10) ^c	5
Enrollment ^d	0	1	4	0
Academic planning	0	1	3	0
Graduation requirements	0	2	0	0
Counseling or other support services	0	1	7	1
Designated military families staff information	0	0	2 ^e	1
Transition planning	1	3	4	0
Resources and opportunities	0	0	1	0
Peer-to-peer transition program	0	1	5	2
Special education services	0	1	3	0
Military-recognition events	0	0	3	0
Mental health challenges of military-connected students	0	2	1	0
Compact	0	1	3	0
Peer-to-peer program	3	1	6	2
Other requirements	3	n/a	12	n/a
School resolution supporting military families	2	0	0	0
Recognition of the Month of the Military Child or similar	3	7	9	4
Partner with installation	0	2	1	1
Military-appreciation night at sports event	0	1	1	0
Public military display	0	0	0	1
Partner with school liaison	2	1	4	2
Service projects	0	0	1	0
Other military-recognition events	0	1	5	0
Staff professional development related to military families	1	0	1	0
Video/pictures of school	0	0	0	3
JROTC	0	4	0	1

Note. ^a Schools that have a PSSP designation. ^b Schools that do not have a PSSP designation. ^c Eight school websites had their own web pages for military families; 10 school websites linked to the district page. ^d If not tied to the initiative, components must have been discussed in relation to military families, but the components did not have to be located on a web page for military families. ^e Three schools with Purple Star School designations that did not have a web page for military families did have information on the designated staff member for military families located on other school website pages (e.g., staff pages, the handbook). n/a = not applicable.

Table 44

Purple Star Schools Program Components Discussed as Related to the Initiative or Discussed But Not Tied to the Initiative

Number of Schools in Each Website and PSSP Availability Category			
PSSP Availability	School Web Page for Military Families	Links to District Web Page for Military Families	No School Web Page for Military Families & No Link to District Web Page for Military Families
Has PSSP designation	8	10	2
Does not have PSSP designation	5	7	6
Designation not available in state	0	4	5

Table 45

Number of Schools in Each Website and PSSP Availability Category

Finally, six school district websites provided information that discussed which schools in the district had received the Purple Star designation. Two of these districts provided this information on the web page for military families; the remaining four districts provided the information on other web pages (e.g., press releases).

Other Programs and Supports for Military-Connected Students

School and school district websites often included additional information about programs and supports that were specifically for military-connected students or that were highlighted in relation to military-connected students (e.g., on a web page for military families). Table 46 lists the programs and supports that were identified and the number of school and school district websites that included them. In addition, eight school district and five school websites list the number or percent of military-connected students in their district or school.

Other Programs and Supports for Military-Connected Students Identified on School and School District Websites		
Program/Support	Districts (#)	Schools (#)
Other staff for military families	8	6
Special education department	7	5
Gifted programming	4	1
Tutoring (tutor.com)	14	7
Student2Student	4	8
Anchored4Life	3	6
Army Youth Sponsorship Program	1	1
Homegrown/unspecified peer-to-peer program	1	2
STARBASE/DoD STEM programs	1	0
School Quest	1	0
School liaison	14	11
MFLC	10	17
Partnerships with DODEA	11	1
Installation services	8	0

Table 46

Other Programs and Supports for Military-Connected Students Identified on School and School District Websites

Measures of School Characteristics

School- and District-Level Measures

Recently, there has been interest in quantifying the extent to which schools may be able to serve military-connected students. Indeed, some of the Services are evaluating the school districts outside of military installations as part of 10 USC Sec 1781b. One goal of this project was to identify metrics that could be considered as Services and parents seek to evaluate or choose school districts in an installation area. This idea presents a challenge due to several factors, such as (1) states using different metrics to assess students and school outcomes and (2) parents prioritizing different school qualities (e.g., high military population, AP offerings). Table 47 presents 43 publicly available measures that Services and parents may be interested in considering as they evaluate local school districts or select school districts or schools in which to enroll their children. Not all measures may be important to all parents, and additional measures, for which publicly available data may not be available, may also be important. Furthermore, standardized test scores and graduation rates are important; however, they do not capture the

whole story of the academic performance of students in a school or a school district. Thus, the list is not intended to be a formula for determining high-quality schools; rather, it presents factors that Services and parents may want to consider when evaluating or choosing a school district or a school.

Many of the listed measures can be used at the school level or the school district level. For example, if one wanted to examine math proficiency, one could look at the percentage of students who meet or exceed expectations at a specific school or the percentage of students who meet or exceed expectations in the school district. Furthermore, one could examine a particular area of interest (e.g., part of a district or within two districts) by examining the percentage of schools that have a pre-determined percentage of students who meet or exceed expectations. If examining an area, the catchment area for districts/schools included in the metric should be the furthest distance one would reasonably expect a Service member to travel to get to the installation for work every day (e.g., 30 miles).

Measures That Services and Parents May Want to Consider When Evaluating or Selecting a School or School District

Academic Performance				
Measure	Metric	Purpose	Limitations	Location of Publicly Available Data
Overall English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency	% of students who meet or exceed expectations	Provides overall snapshot of school ELA performance	Tests vary by state	State education data websites
Overall Math Proficiency	% of students who meet or exceed expectations	Provides overall snapshot of school math performance	Tests vary by state	State education data websites
Overall Science Proficiency	% of students who meet or exceed expectations	Provides overall snapshot of school science performance	Tests vary by state	State education data websites
MSI ELA Proficiency	% of students who meet or exceed expectations	Provides overall snapshot of how military students in the school are performing in ELA	Cannot determine if scores are due to current school district or past school districts; definition of “military student” varies by state	State education data websites
MSI Math Proficiency	% of students who meet or exceed expectations	Provides overall snapshot of how military students in the school are performing in math	Cannot determine if scores are due to current school district or past school districts; definition of “military student” varies by state	State education data websites
MSI Science Proficiency	% of students who meet or exceed expectations	Provides overall snapshot of how military students in the school are performing in science	Cannot determine if scores are due to current school district or past school districts; definition of “military student” varies by state	State education data websites
Accessibility of MSI Data	Whether MSI data are easily accessible	Provides information on whether MSI data are easily accessible	—	School or state education data website
Academic Growth Scores	School academic growth rate	Provides overall snapshot of a school’s academic growth from the previous year	Higher performing schools have less potential for growth	State education data websites
Graduation Rates	Graduation rates at the school (if high school)	Provides an overall snapshot of graduation rates	Graduation standards vary by state	State education data websites
School Grade or Score (ESSA)	Grade/score given to the school based on state-developed metric	Provides an overall snapshot of school quality as determined by state standards	Calculations and categories vary by state	State education data websites
Annual Meaningful Differentiation	Determination of a school’s need for additional support	Provides an overall snapshot of whether a school has been identified for improvement or support	Criteria vary by state	State education data websites

Future Readiness				
Measure	Metric	Purpose	Limitations	Location of Publicly Available Data
College/Career/Military Readiness	% of students who meet or exceed expectations	Provides an overall snapshot of a school on measures of college, career, or military readiness	Criteria vary by state	State education data websites

School Characteristics				
Measure	Metric	Purpose	Limitations	Location of Publicly Available Data
School Climate	The score on a school climate survey	Provides an overall snapshot of school climate	Criteria vary by state; may not be publicly available for all states; measures may not be valid/reliable	State education data websites
Military Student Prevalence	% of military-connected students	Provides an overall snapshot of the concentration of military-connected students in the school	Definition of “military student” varies by state	State education data websites

School Characteristics				
Measure	Metric	Purpose	Limitations	Location of Publicly Available Data
Funding Per Student	Current expenditures	Provides data on funding for the school district	Does not provide details on how money is spent	https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/
Student/Teacher Ratio	The number of students per teacher	Provides data on class size	—	https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/
Teacher Experience	% of teachers in their first year of teaching	Provides overall snapshot of the prevalence of teachers with little experience	Does not provide details about why there may be a large number of new teachers	https://ocrdata.ed.gov/
Guidance Counselor Support	# of counselors	Provides data on extent of counselor support available	—	School website
Mental Health Support	# of mental health support personnel	Provides data on extent of mental health support available	—	School website
School Nurse Support	# of school nurses	Provides data on the extent of physical health support available	—	School website
Chronic Absenteeism	% of students in a district who are chronically absent	Provides data on the number of students who are absent 10% or more school days	—	https://ocrdata.ed.gov/
In-school Suspension Rate	Number of in-school suspensions	Provides data on disciplinary actions in the district	—	State education data websites
Out-of-school Suspension Rate	Number of out-of-school suspensions	Provides data on disciplinary actions in the district	—	State education data websites

Program Offerings				
Measure	Metric	Purpose	Limitations	Location of Publicly Available Data
Pre-K Availability	Availability of pre-K within elementary schools	Provides data on the availability of pre-K in public schools	—	School website
Kindergarten Availability	Availability of tuition-free, full-day kindergarten within elementary schools	Provides data on the availability of kindergarten in public schools	—	School website
Gifted and Talented Programming	Gifted and talented programming offerings	Provides data on the availability of gifted and talented programming	Does not address the quality of the programming	https://ocrdata.ed.gov/
AP Course Offerings	# high school AP course offerings	Provides data on the availability of AP courses	—	https://apcourseaudit.inflexion.org/ledger/
International Baccalaureate (IB)	Availability of high school IB program	Provides data on the availability of the IB program	—	https://www.ibo.org/programmes/find-an-ib-school/
Extra-curricular Activity Opportunities	# of extra-curricular activities offered by the school/district	Provides data on the breadth of opportunity for extra-curricular activities	Does not address the quality or depth of the programming	District/school website
After School Care	Availability of elementary schools before/after school care	Provides data on the availability of before/after school care in public schools	—	District website
Degree to Which Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is Implemented	# of domains covered in district implementation of MTSS (i.e., academics, behavior, social-emotional learning [SEL])	Provides data on the extent to which MTSS is implemented	—	District website

Program Offerings				
Measure	Metric	Purpose	Limitations	Location of Publicly Available Data
SEL Programming	Whether district includes SEL programming in its curriculum	Provides data on implementation of SEL curriculum	—	District website
Online Learning Opportunities	Whether district provides online learning opportunities	Provides data on whether online learning opportunities are available	—	District website
Dedicated Staff for Military or Transitioning Students	Whether school or district has a dedicated staff member for military or transitioning students	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website
Military Families Webpage	Presence of school district or school web page with information for military families	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website
Military Social Workers	Whether district has military social workers	Provides data on whether the school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website
Military-Related Support Groups	Whether district or school has military-related support groups	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website
MFLC	Whether district or school has MFLCs	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website
Partnerships Between the School and Installation	Whether district or school has a partnership with the installation	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website
Availability of AE in State	Whether the state has AE	Provides data on whether the state has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/emeritus-status-tracker/advance-enrollment
Availability of PSSP	Whether the school district or school has received the Purple Star School designation	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	State education department website; district/school website
Peer Ambassador/Peer-to-Peer Support Program	Whether district or school has a peer ambassador or peer-to-peer support program	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website
Staff Professional Development Related to Military Culture	Whether district or school provides professional development for staff related to military culture	Provides data on whether the school or school district has policies/staff intended to mitigate the challenges of military life	—	District/school website

Table 47

Measures That Services and Parents May Want to Consider When Evaluating or Selecting a School or School District

Themes Across Initiatives and Programs

In addition to findings within each individual initiative, several themes emerged across initiatives, partnerships, and programs. Across all initiatives, participants reported that when initiatives were implemented as intended, there are many successes. Effective implementation of the Compact and AE results in reduced stress for military families during a PCS move and students being able to enroll in the classes that they need or want. Participants indicated that successful implementation of AE leads to positive impacts for students and schools, including less out-of-school time for students; more timely access to services; and, in general, school staff being more prepared for the students' arrival. When implemented as intended, participants indicated that the Compact had a positive effect on credit transfers, graduation, and extra-curricular activity participation. Furthermore, when MSI is used to the fullest extent, its use results in additional services (e.g., MFLCs, additional student services and programs) and improved interactions with students (e.g., increased sensitivity, connecting students with services). Participants reported that PSSP and installation-school partnerships result in improvements in school climate and culture, a better understanding of the military lifestyle, and positive social-emotional outcomes. Finally, regardless of whether implemented as part of PSSP or independently, participants indicated that peer-to-peer support programs, when implemented well, help new students integrate into the new school.

Participants, however, also highlighted multiple barriers to the successful implementation of the initiatives, partnerships, and programs. Lack of awareness was commonly discussed across all initiatives. This included lack of family awareness and lack of school awareness. Lack of family awareness included a complete lack of knowledge of one or more initiative, knowledge of the name of the initiative but lack of any substantive knowledge about the initiative, and families being misinformed about the purpose of the initiative. Participants identi-

fied certain characteristics that may be associated with the lack of knowledge, such as families with children in elementary school as opposed to middle school or high school; families being in the Service for a shorter amount of time, yet participants did provide anecdotes of families who had been in the Service for many years who were still unaware of initiatives; and families having moved from a state without the initiative. Furthermore, participants discussed challenges to parents obtaining information such as information overload, the information being provided to the Service member parent (as opposed to the spouse who may be more likely to enroll the children in school), and general difficulty finding information about the initiatives. Participants also identified several characteristics that may make it more likely that school personnel are unaware of the initiatives. These include schools with fewer military families, schools where there is high turnover at the school, and schools being an elementary school.

A lack of accountability or enforcement was also discussed across all four initiatives. Participants discussed instances of general noncompliance related to AE, the Compact, and the MSI. They also discussed instances of lack of ongoing compliance with the required components of PSSP (e.g., obtaining the designation and then not continuing to implement the components) and situations where the PSSP designation was a "check-the-box" designation, and the school had no meaningful support for military families.

The absence of consistency across schools, school districts, and states also emerged as a common theme across all four initiatives. This included general comments about lack of consistency. It also included specific areas, including the processes and services for students with an IEP or 504 Plan (e.g., evaluation policies, who qualifies for services, therapies that cannot be used in schools in specific states, differences in funding for special education, the availability of services), differ-

ences in criteria and programming for gifted students, and variability in how the MSI is collected and used.

Several factors related to housing were mentioned by participants. First, some participants discussed a lack of military housing or a lack of housing availability near the installation. Participants mentioned that this was pushing families into communities that were further away from the installation. These communities may not have the knowledge or resources to support military-connected students, may not have as many military families to act as a support system, may be less likely to have MFLCs, and may be impacting school liaison resources as these additional schools could be added to the school liaisons' workloads. Second, although some participants discussed the benefits of open enrollment, other participants discussed some challenges related to open enrollment policies. One challenge is that schools have a lower military population because students are no longer clustered around the installation. Another challenge is that, in combination with AE, families may select schools before they know where they will live. This may result in long commutes to school or in families having to provide transportation.

Similarly, challenges were also discussed related to geographic considerations. The challenges of being in a large metro area with many school districts and a sizeable geographic spread were discussed, as were the challenges associated with being in a rural area. The specific challenges would vary based on the specific geographic considerations, and solutions that have worked in one area may not translate to a different type of geographic area. Therefore, strategies that may work in one area may not work in another area.

Challenges related to staffing and resources were discussed in relation to several topics. For instance, lack of resources was discussed in reference to students with an IEP or 504 Plan and how staffing problems and a lack of resources impacted getting the appropriate level of services. Lack of resources was also discussed in relation to PSSP and how some of the requirements were a challenge for already overworked staff. Furthermore, these challenges were discussed in relation to school-installation partnerships. Specifically,

respondents talked about time constraints related to Service member volunteers. Participants also discussed school liaisons who were beyond capacity and who did not have enough time to fully support military-connected students and help facilitate partnerships between the schools and installations. Indeed, four different participant types (i.e., school administrator, command, local partner, school liaison) indicated that additional school liaisons at their location would be beneficial. The point participants made about school liaisons also relates to the previous discussion about school and family awareness of the initiatives and about housing and geographic considerations. If there are many schools or school districts surrounding the installation or if families are moving further away from the installations, this may increase school liaisons' responsibilities, which could result in reduced family and school awareness and reduced support.

Participants also mentioned funding. This was discussed specifically related to AE, the MSI, and PSSP. Participants believed that without funding associated with these initiatives, compliance was difficult. Furthermore, school personnel discussed having to use school funds to purchase a plaque or banner celebrating their Purple Star School designation as opposed to these items coming from the state.

The timing of certain events was also discussed related to multiple initiatives. Participants discussed that the timing of PSSP applications and the MSI data collection were challenging because they occur at the beginning of the school year and at the same time as other data requests. Relatedly, the timing of information provision was discussed. Some participants reported that families are overloaded with information at certain times and that makes it difficult for them to retain the information. Related to enrollment and AE, challenges were discussed related to mid-year moves and changing move dates. These moves and changing move dates resulted in classes being at capacity when students enroll and students not getting the classes they may need or want. Finally, schools being assigned at the last minute, just days before school started, was extremely stressful for families.

Participants made several suggestions related to improving technology or leveraging technology to improve experiences for military families. Participants discussed ensuring that enrollment websites have mobile compatibility, collecting MSI data electronically instead of via a paper form, having virtual meetings before students arrive, and providing virtual courses if classes are full or not available (e.g., foreign language classes).

Participants also made specific comments regarding communication methods and stakeholder buy-in. School liaisons discussed advertising the initiatives at various types of school and installation events. Participants also talked about information dissemination methods that

specifically target the parent who enrolls the children in school (i.e., typically the spouse, not the Service member). Participants discussed relaying information via spouse briefs and FRGs. In addition, participants discussed framing PSSP implementation within how it aligns with overall school goals. Furthermore, participants mentioned advertising the benefit of the initiatives (i.e., benefits to students and schools) in order to increase buy-in from stakeholders and suggested command provide formal support for certain initiatives (e.g., MSI). Participants also mentioned general information overload and a lack of information (e.g., MSI data availability). Finally, participants mentioned communication challenges related to school-installation partnerships.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on findings from the data gathered during the preparation of the literature review, the state-level initiatives report, and the current report. The recommendations are framed as steps that DSLO can take to support military-connected students. Some recommendations require DSLO to work collaboratively with specific partners to help improve the experiences of military-connected students and their families. As applicable, recommendations in this report are linked to associated recommendations in the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) 2019 report titled, “Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society.”³³

Recommendation 1

To address the inconsistency in data collection, data reporting, and definitions of “military-connected students” across initiatives and states, advocate for standardization of data collection related to military-connected students, to include operationalization (i.e., how “military-connected student” is defined), data collection, and data reporting.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 36-37, 40-44 and 68-69 of this report and pages 4, 17-21, and 40-51 of the state-level report. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendation 1 in the NASEM report, which advises standardizing definitions in order to “facilitate synthesis and comparison of information” (p. 326).

Recommendation 2

To address awareness challenges related to the initiatives, support the development, implementation, and sharing of evidence-informed³⁴ practices for strategic communication of the initiatives to parents and school personnel.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 15-17, 20-27, 31-46, 52, 56, 67, and 69 of this report. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendation 10 in the NASEM report, which advises optimizing program delivery in terms of service delivery timing, dose, and format. This also applies to information delivery.

Recommendation 3

Given the inconsistencies in implementation across states and school districts, advocate for information transparency and expectation management related to the specific ways the initiatives are implemented in each state and school district.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 20-23, 26, 28, 31-35, 37-38, 40-44, 50, 52-53, 56, 59-61, and 67 of this report and pages 3-27 of the state-level report. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendation 5 in the NASEM report, which advises understanding the unique aspects of communities surrounding military installations.

Recommendation 4

In order to take advantage of modern technology that could be used to enhance support of military families and promote consistency in initiative implementation, encourage states to leverage technology to directly support military families and to support effective implementation of the initiatives.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 20-23, 26, 28, 31-35, 37, 40-44, 47, 50, 52-53, 56, 67, and 69 of this report and pages 3-27 of the state-level report. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendation 10 in the NASEM report, which advises “harnessing new technologies for program delivery” (p. 338). Use of technology may be similarly advantageous in the school setting.

³³ <https://doi.org/10.17226/25380>

³⁴ Evidence based: “demonstrates impact on outcomes of interest through application of rigorous scientific research methods...that allows for causal inference”. Evidence informed: “developed...with the best available external evidence from systematic research and a body of empirical literature...demonstrates impact of outcomes of interest through application of scientific research methods that do not allow for causal inference” (NASEM, 2019, p 9).

Recommendation 5

In light of findings related to inconsistencies in implementation, a lack of enforcement, and varying perceptions of impact, support initiative standardization, enforcement, and evaluation.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 20-23, 26-28, 31-35, 37, 39-44, 48, 50, 52-53, 56-57, and 67 of this report, pages 3-27 of the state-level report, and pages 24-25 of the literature review. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendations 2 and 7 in the NASEM report, which advise the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches and the use of program evaluation and continuous quality improvement in order to support military family readiness.

Recommendation 6

To address findings related to (1) persistent challenges with IEP transfers and (2) variability experienced by students in gifted programs, consider ways to increase (1) IEP transportability and (2) standardization of gifted qualifications and programming.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 17-18, 21-23, 31-32, 34-35, and 67-68 of this report and pages 18-20 of the literature review.

Recommendation 7

To address challenges related to parent and school personnel awareness, consider the ways in which increasing the capacity of the School Liaison Program and standardizing school liaison duties may improve parent and school personnel awareness of the initiatives.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 15-17, 20-22, 24-27, 31-38, 43-46, 52, 55-56, and 67-68 of this report.

Recommendation 8

Based on the variability across states in how the MIC3 state commissioner duties are executed, consider how the selection and implementation of the MIC3 state commissioner position (e.g., whether it is a paid position or additional duty, the location of the commissioner

within the education system) may impact the execution of MIC3 commissioner duties.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 31 and 33-34 of this report.

Recommendation 9

To address concerns that lack of funding affects implementation, advocate for states to fully fund the initiatives and support the use of existing and potential funding mechanisms to improve the implementation of the four initiatives and to implement other programming that is evidence informed or evidence based.

Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on pages 22, 34, 42-44, 50, 52-53, 56-57, and 68 of this report.


Recommendation 10

Given the lack of quantitative research around military-connected students' transitions to new schools and the lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of programs and initiatives for military-connected students, support research to understand the scope of successes or difficulties during transitions to new schools and evaluations to ensure evidence-informed and evidence-based practices are used to support students during those transitions.


Note. This recommendation is based on findings reported on page 57 of this report and pages 16-21, 24-25, and 27 of the literature review. This recommendation is consistent with Recommendations 2 and 7 in the NASEM report, which advise the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches and the use of program evaluation and continuous quality improvement in order to support military family readiness.


Appendix


Semi-structured Interview Questions

 Advance Enrollment <i>(for the 34 states with the policy)</i>		Respondent Type									Question Category
		Program Manager	School Liaison	Teacher/Counselor	School Administrator	EFMP-FS	Command	Parent	Local Partner	MIC3 Representative	
1	Are you familiar with Advance Enrollment? If yes, what is the purpose of Advance Enrollment?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	X	Awareness
2	Are school staff aware of Advance Enrollment and its purpose?	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Awareness
3	Are students/families aware of Advance Enrollment and its purpose?	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	Awareness
4	Do you know or have a sense of approximately what percent of the military families [for school personnel: in your school] [for SL: in your area] have requested Advance Enrollment in the last year?	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
5	In the past year, approximately what percent of the military families in your school enrolled based on military orders as opposed to having a physical residence in the school district? This answer may or may not be different than the answer to the previous question.	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
6	Is there any difference in the way Advance Enrollment is implemented for students in special education/with a disability vs. in general education?	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	Implementation
7	In what ways is Advance Enrollment having an impact on student outcomes? (If participant says that it is not: Do you have any thoughts on why it is not having an impact)?	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	Impact
8	Please discuss any differences in impacts on students based on whether the student is in general education vs. in special education/has a disability.	-	X	-	X	X	-	(X)	-	-	Impact
9	What are barriers to schools implementing Advance Enrollment?	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Barriers
10	Are there any real or perceived barriers to families using Advance Enrollment? If so, please describe.	-	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	Barriers
11	Do families with a student who receives or is eligible to receive services under an IEP or 504 plan experience any barriers to using Advance Enrollment?	-	X	-	-	X	-	(X)	-	-	Barriers
12	Can you think of anything that could be done to improve Advance Enrollment or its implementation?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	-	Improvement
For States Without an Advance Enrollment Policy											
1	Does the state, school district, or school allow military-connected students to be enrolled in school before they are physically present in the district (e.g., on the basis of military permanent change of station orders)?	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	n/a

Note. (X) indicates that this item will be asked instead of the previous question if the parent has a child who receives special education services or has a disability. (*) Indicates that the question will be asked if it is relevant to that local partner.

 Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children <i>(for all 50 states and DC)</i>		Respondent Type									Question Category
		Program Manager	School Liaison	Teacher/Counselor	School Administrator	EFMP-FS	Command	Parent	Local Partner	MIC3 Representative	
1	Are you familiar with the Compact? If yes, what is the purpose of the Compact?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	-	Awareness
2	Are school staff aware of the Compact?	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Awareness
3	In general, are students/families aware of the Compact and its purpose?	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	Awareness
4	Are school personnel making use of the Compact to help with course placement, extra-curricular activity participation, graduation, and special education services implementation? If yes, in what way? If not, why do you think they are not?	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	Implementation
5	Please discuss any difference in the way the Compact is implemented for students in special education/with a disability vs. in general education?	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	Implementation
6	When military-connected students with an existing IEP or 504 plan transfer into schools in this area, how long does it typically take for them to receive comparable services?	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	Implementation
7	Under what circumstances do military-connected students with an existing IEP or 504 plan who transfer into schools in this area receive a new evaluation?	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	Implementation
8	On average, how long does it take for a new IEP/504 evaluation of a military-connected student to occur upon moving to the area?	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	Implementation
9	Is the Compact having an impact on students' experiences and outcomes during school transfers? If yes, in what way? If no, why do you think it is not impacting students' experiences?	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	X	Impact
10	Is there any difference in the impact on students based on whether the student is in general education vs. in special education/with a disability. If answer yes: What are those differences?	-	X	X	X	X	-	(X)	-	X	Impact
11	How does the Compact address or impact the transfer of students from OCONUS DODEA schools or to OCONUS DODEA schools?	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	Impact
12	Have you encountered any barriers in the implementation of the Compact?	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	Barriers
13	Are families experiencing any real or perceived barriers when attempting to use the Compact?	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	Barriers
14	Are there any real or perceived barriers for families when attempting to use the Compact for children receiving special education services or with a disability?	-	-	-	-	X	-	(X)	-	-	Barriers
15	Can you think of anything that could be done to improve the Compact itself or how it is implemented?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	X	Improvement

 Military Student Identifier <i>(for all 50 states and DC)</i>		Respondent Type									Question Category
		Program Manager	School Liaison	Teacher/Counselor	School Administrator	EFMP-FS	Command	Parent	Local Partner	MIC3 Representative	
1	Are you familiar with the Military Student Identifier? If yes, what is the purpose of it?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	X	Awareness
2	What data are collected (e.g., only active duty, reserve/national guard, deployments)?	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
3	How frequently is it collected (e.g., only upon enrollment, beginning of each school year, monthly)?	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
4	Do you believe that most military families, are self-identifying as such? Why or why not?	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
5	Are/how are the data used by the school, the district, and the state?	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
6	Do teachers use the data? If yes, how do they receive the information (e.g., receive a list of military-connected students; information is available on a student's profile)? If yes, how do they use the data?	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
7	Is there any difference in the way the Military Student Identifier data are used for students in special education/with a disability vs. in general education? If yes: In what way?	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
8	Do you use Military Student Identifier-related data to help you make decisions about for your children's education? If yes, in what way?	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	Implementation
9	Is the Military Student Identifier having an impact on student outcomes? If yes, in what way? If no, why do you think it is not having an impact?	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	-	-	Impact
10	Please discuss any difference in the impact of the Military Student Identifier on student outcomes based on whether the student is in general education vs. in special education/has a disability.	-	X	-	-	X	-	(X)	-	-	Impact
11	Have you encountered any barriers in the implementation of the Military Student identifier?	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Barriers
12	Do families encounter any real or perceived barriers to identifying as military families or to using Military Student Identifier data?	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	Barriers
13	Are there any real or perceived barriers to identifying as military families or to using Military Student Identifier data for families with children receiving special education services or with a disability?	-	X	-	-	X	-	(X)	-	-	Barriers
14	Can you think of anything that could be done to improve the Military Student Identifier itself or how it is implemented?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	-	Improvement

 Purple Star School Program (or similar) <i>(for the 30 states with a program)</i>		Respondent Type									Question Category
		Program Manager	School Liaison	Teacher/Counselor	School Administrator	EFMP-FS	Command	Parent	Local Partner	MIC3 Representative	
1	Are you familiar with the [Purple Star School Program/ name of that states' military-friendly school designation program]? If yes, what is the purpose of it?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	X	Awareness
2	Are school staff aware of it and its intention? (regardless of whether it is being implemented in the school)	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Awareness
3	Are students/families aware of it and its intention? If so, does it impact decision-making around school selection?	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	Awareness
4	Is the Purple Star School (or other name) designation being implemented in your<school/installation area>?	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
5	If yes: How is it being implemented in the school – what are the components of the program?	-	-	X (IBI)	X (IBI)	-	-	X (IBI)	-	-	Implementation
6	Overall, what components work well and what components do not work well in the implementation of the Purple Star School (or other name) designation?	-	X (IBI)	X (IBI)	X (IBI)	-	-	X (IBI)	-	-	Implementation
7	Are there any differences in the way specific components of the Purple Star School (or other name) designation is implemented for students in special education/with a disability vs. in general education? If yes: Can you please discuss the differences?	-	X (IBI)	-	-	X (IBI)	-	-	-	-	Implementation
8	Is the Purple Star School (or other name) designation a one-time application process, or do schools have to renew?	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Implementation
9	Is the Purple Star School (or other name) designation having an impact on student outcomes? If yes, in what way? If no, why do you think it is not having an impact?	X	X (IBI)	X (IBI)	X (IBI)	-	X (IBI)	X (IBI)	-	-	Impact
10	Please discuss any difference in the impact of the Purple Star School (or other name) designation on students based on whether the student is in general education vs. in special education/with a disability.	-	X (IBI)	-	-	X (IBI)	-	(X) (IBI)	-	-	Impact
11	Have you encountered any barriers with the implementation of the Purple Star School (or other name) designation?	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	Barriers
12	Are there any real or perceived barriers to students using the services/programs used to obtain the Purple Star School (or other name) designation?	-	X (IBI)	-	-	-	-	X (IBI)	-	-	Barriers
13	Are there any real or perceived barriers to students who receive special education services or have a disability using the services/programs used to obtain the Purple Star School (or other name) designation?	-	X (IBI)	-	-	X (IBI)	-	(X) (IBI)	-	-	Barriers
14	Can you think of anything that could be done to improve the Purple Star School designation (or other name) itself or how it is implemented?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X(*)	-	Improvement

Note. (IBI) indicates that a question will be asked if the Purple Star Schools Program (or similar) is being implemented in the school (i.e., for school personnel and parent) or in the installation area (i.e., for school liaisons, EFMP-FS, command, local partners).

Installation-School/School District Partnership (for all 50 states and DC)		Respondent Type								Question Category	
		Program Manager	School Liaison	Teacher/Counselor	School Administrator	EFMP-FS	Command	Parent	Local Partner		MIC3 Representative
1	Is there a formal partnership/relationship between the installation and the school district/school (e.g., a formal arrangement for interaction between the two)? If yes: Please describe.	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	X	Implementation
2	Are there any informal relationships between the installation and the school district/school (i.e., any informal information/resource sharing [e.g., educational field trips to the installation that are not part of a formal agreement])? If yes: Please describe.	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	-		Implementation
3	If participant answers yes to question 1 or 2: Please discuss any difference in the way installation-school partnerships are implemented for students in special education/with a disability vs. in general education?	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	Implementation
4	If participant answers yes to question 1 or 2: Is the partnership/relationship having an impact on student outcomes? If yes, in what way?	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	Impact
5	If participant answers yes to question 1 or 2: Please discuss any difference in the impact of formal or informal installation-LEA partnerships on students based on whether the student is in general education vs. in special education/with a disability.	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	Impact
6	Are there any barriers to implementing partnerships between the installation and the school/school district?	-	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	Barriers
7	If participant answers yes to question 1 or 2: Are there any barriers to students benefiting from any part of a partnership between the installation and the school/school district?	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Barriers
8	If participant answers yes to question 1 or 2: Are there any barriers to children receiving special education services or who have a disability benefiting from any part of a partnership between the installation and the school/school district?	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	Barriers
9	Can you think of anything that could be done to improve installation-school partnerships?	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	Improvement

Note. MIC3 representatives were asked about formal and informal partnerships in one question.

Coordination		Respondent Type									Question Category
		Program Manager	School Liaison	Teacher/Counselor	School Administrator	EFMP-FS	Command	Parent	Local Partner	MIC3 Representative	
1	Please describe your working relationship with the EFMP Family Support Coordinator or case workers (for EFMP staff: the School Liaison).	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	Coordination
2	To what extent does SLP and EFMP collaborate to serve families with children who are eligible for special education services or who have a disability?	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	Coordination
3	How does EFMP (for EFMP staff: SLP) policy and/or implementation impact the work you do as a school liaison (for EFMP staff: an EFMP staff member)?	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	Coordination

General/Concluding Questions		Respondent Type									Question Category
		Program Manager	School Liaison	Teacher/Counselor	School Administrator	EFMP-FS	Command	Parent	Local Partner	MIC3 Representative	
1	What programs or initiatives are available for military-connected students that we have not discussed so far?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Implementation
2	If there are any programs/initiatives: What impact are they having on military-connected students?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	Impact
3	What would you recommend to improve local or state policies related to supporting military-connected children?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	Improvement
4	Is there anything that we have not discussed that you think would be important for us to know?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Other