



ON THE *move*[®]

the official magazine of the Military Child Education Coalition[®]

COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT IN THIS ISSUE:

Featured Art from Military-Connected Kids
+ Resources to Strengthen the *Community of Support*

Military Child Education Coalition®



VISION STATEMENT

Every military-connected child is college, workforce, and life-ready.

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure inclusive, quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, transition, deployments and family separation.

GOALS

1. Military-connected children's academic, social and emotional needs are recognized, supported and appropriate responses provided.
2. Parents, and other supporting adults, are empowered with the knowledge to ensure military-connected children are college, workforce and life-ready.
3. A strong community of partners is committed to support an environment where military-connected children thrive.

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ON THE MOVE

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ON THE COVER

Estefany-Grace | Grade 11 | US Army

See page 30 for the full piece and what inspired Estefany-Grace's painting.

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MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD + PRESIDENT AND CEO

The Military Child Education Coalition's commitment to realizing our **vision** that every military-connected child is college, workforce, and life-ready remains steadfast. In pursuing this vision in 2019, MCEC is exploring convoys of social support.

Regardless of the current times, the demand and sacrifice our Nation asks of our service members and their families is always present. Service members will continue to deploy, change duty stations, and experience potential risks associated with their job duties. At the same time, their family members will continue to make sacrifices and adjust to separations, new environments, and multiple uncertainties.

As a coalition, we value and rely on our strong **relationships** with a full spectrum of supportive convoy partners: the military services, their families and children, other military and veteran service organizations and nonprofits, professional associations, corporations, foundations and trusts, our National Advisory Committee, our MCEC members, individual donors and thousands of volunteers. Together, everyone accomplishes more functioning as a convoy of social support.

To remain a **relevant** contributor to these convoys of social support, we will continue in 2019 to expand and deepen our mission impact through these essential relationships. Much of our progress to date has been accomplished through recommendations and feedback from our trusted partners and the consumers of our services, products and information.

The MCEC ethos of being a relevant nonprofit contributes to the imperative of sustaining our stellar **reputation**. In 2019 we will continue our advocacy efforts at the national, state and local levels by exercising our leadership in multiple forums such as the Secretary of Defense Roundtable, the Service Secretaries' MSO/VSO forums, the Military Readiness Family Council, the Congressional Military Family Caucus Forum, the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission and multiple conference panels. The MCEC flagship annual National Training Seminar, 23-25 July 2019, will focus on exploring the convoys of social support for our military-connected children.

Our programmed **resources** in 2019 are forecasted to allow us to reach almost 3.5 million against our annual goal of 7 million children,



parents, teachers, counselors, military personnel, community leaders, and politicians. What we have seen improve year over year is the quality and impact of each individual “reach” as evidenced in our Net Promoter Scores. Our capabilities continue to improve as we learn to navigate the challenges we are presented while endeavoring to close this reach gap.

We are humbly proud to take a leading role in exploring the convoys of social support for military-connected students in 2019 with the support of our trusting investors, those military services and school districts we have contracts with, and our generous donors, corporate, foundations, and individual. MCEC will remain resolute in our commitment to ensure inclusive quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, transition, deployments and family separation.

Our military-connected children will continue to require our best efforts as we move forward into 2019. We know the challenges will be great but we accept them willingly, knowing that through viable convoys of social support, we can provide the solutions that are needed now and tomorrow...

...for the sake of the child.

William M. Fraser III
General, USAF (Ret)
Chairman, Military Child Education Coalition

Dr. Mary M. Keller
President and CEO,
Military Child Education Coalition



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We Serve, Too: NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE Children

Written by Joan Barrett, M.S. Ed. | MCEC Program Manager, Grants and Convenings

“We serve, too!” It’s a fitting title for the new MCEC Professional Development course in support of children whose parents serve in the National Guard and Reserves (NGR). Like all military-connected children, NGR kids experience family separation, parental deployment to dangerous locations and disrupted routines. The difference is that Mom or Dad – maybe both – serve part-time in the military, training on weekends and at least two full weeks out of every year, to maintain readiness. Since 9/11, their parents have also deployed domestically and across the world in unprecedented numbers.

As Dr. Jill Biden states, they are your neighbors. While Mom and Dad uphold their military commitments, they also maintain civilian jobs and roots in your communities. Because they’re local, their children often attend the same schools from kindergarten through graduation, and they look like every other child in your classrooms. Yet, their feet are firmly planted in two worlds: the military and the civilian. Often their military lives go unacknowledged by their teachers and other significant adults simply because those adults are

unaware of the family’s military status and the implications and challenges of that life.

Breagyn, a high school senior, said “Letting my teachers and coaches know that I’m a National Guard child doesn’t just help me; it helps them.”

MCEC takes that charge seriously and, teaming with the Biden Foundation, has designed a resource-rich course for educators, as well as parents, community members, and other youth-serving professionals. It creates awareness and knowledge, while building commitment to support these children in their schools and youth organizations.

Developed side-by-side with the course will be a series of podcasts, to be aired later this Spring, that focus on support of NGR children. The MCEC is eager to work on behalf of our NGR children and youth and provide 360 degree support for all military children, regardless of Active Duty or National Guard/Reserve status.

COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT



Photo by Ece Ogutlark

Many National Guard and Reserve (NGR) families live in communities away from military bases. They are your neighbors, your colleagues, and your community leaders. But what you might not know is that they have just returned from a tour overseas or from a natural disaster in another state. And their children serve right alongside them. We need to ensure that these families can connect to resources designed to support them.

Emily, whose father serves in the Michigan National Guard and has been deployed overseas multiple times, said, "I don't think that NGR kids necessarily need special treatment or should be handled with kid gloves, but we need the adults in our lives to understand that it's really hard to have a parent away, especially knowing that they're in danger."

I am excited that the Biden Foundation has teamed up with the Military Child Education Coalition to fulfill Emily's call to action. We have developed a curriculum designed for educators and parents to better support NGR families like Emily's. These efforts are important in ensuring that NGR families have the support that they have earned. I hope that you take the time to read, listen to, and spread the word about these resources.

With love and friendship,

Jill Biden



MCEC'S "WE SERVE, TOO: NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE CHILDREN"

6-hour Professional Development on-site course. Also, available in 2- and 3-hour formats.

Contact MCEC Professional Development

PD@MilitaryChild.org
254-953-1923 x1139
for more information.

Later this Spring, look for MCEC "*For the Sake of the Child*" Podcast conversations about National Guard and Reserve Children on Podbean, Google, and iTunes.

The resources were developed in partnership with the Biden Foundation, BidenFoundation.org.

COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

PARENTS HAVE QUESTIONS *and We Have Resources*

WRITTEN BY JUDY GLENNON, MCEC Program Manager, Parent Initiatives

When we brought home our first child from the hospital, we were given diaper and formula samples and some coupons. I had an appointment for my first well-baby check-up. I had read *What to Expect When You're Expecting* and had bought a copy of *What to Expect the First Year*. That was the **easy** part. No one gave me a book or outline for educating my child. What about day care when I went back to work? What about pre-school? Public or private school? The list went on and on. Well, that was 30 years ago. There weren't as many choices and there weren't as many resources, either. For military-connected families especially, the questions and challenges can seem mind boggling.

What about day care when I went back to work? What about pre-school? Public or private school? The list went on and on.

The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) Parent Initiatives offer a range of programs for military-connected parents as they support their children's educational journeys. You've got questions....we have resources and experience. Parents assigned to a highly-mobile military installation may have heard of MCEC *Parent to Parent*[™] community-based teams. They are teams of professionally trained military-connected parents who offer workshops for parents across all ages, birth through high school. The workshops cover a range of topics from baby sign language to the college application and scholarship process and more than 75 individual workshop topics in between. MCEC *Parent to Parent* teams work with schools, libraries, churches and other organizations that have a military parent clientele. They bring research-informed workshops and resources to parents using adult learning theory and activities designed to help attendees increase their knowledge and develop skills to better



BATTLE PLAN FOR MILITARY CHILDREN'S MENTAL WELLNESS

Visit 1in5minds.org
for the **FREE Handbook**

Military life isn't easy. Families need to be prepared for constant challenges and changes. Our friends at One in Five Minds created The "**Battle Plan for Military Children's Mental Wellness**," a two-part series designed to help military parents create a supportive, healthy environment for children during difficult times.

advocate for their children. With nearly a quarter-million attendees since the program began in 2006, the MCEC *Parent to Parent* program is a great source for parents to turn to for information and resources.

Not every community has the resources to support a local community-based *Parent to Parent* team, but that doesn't mean they don't need the support or access to the great workshops and information. To meet this need, MCEC moved to digital program delivery by offering MCEC Parent Webinars in 2015. The webinar team is comprised of MCEC Certified Master Parent Educators who have years of experience working with the MCEC *Parent to Parent* program and are all military-connected parents themselves. Through the weekly "Webinar Wednesday" online workshops, parents from all over the world can come together around a topic, hear information about the latest research and best practices from the webinar team, guest hosts and Subject Matter Experts and get answers to their questions in real time, regardless of where they live. Each webinar includes access to downloadable resources and links to the latest information available on each topic, and is recorded and then posted on the MCEC website.

In 2018, MCEC took yet another step forward into digital programming by launching a parent-focused podcast series, *For the Sake of the Child*. The podcast series is available on a number of platforms and a new episode is released every Thursday. The overall theme of the podcast series is to have shared stories and resources...not just hard facts, but stories from and about our amazing military-connected kids who are living lives filled with challenges and possibilities. Through

coalition partners, MCEC is able to offer conversations with an almost boundless group of notable and interesting individuals who share a heart for military children and families. You will hear about the latest initiative from the College Board, what is happening with the Exceptional Family Member Program, Dr. Jill Biden and the Biden Foundation work for families of the National Guard and Reserve, just to name a few. Subscribers to the MCEC podcast series also get access to special presentations outside the regular Thursday schedule.

Learn More! MilitaryChild.org under Parent Initiatives



Aunt Peggie™

When you have a question about an education or transition-related issue and you don't know where to turn, **Ask Aunt Peggie™ is there for you!** You can access this virtual answer portal through [MilitaryChild.org/contact](https://militarychild.org/contact) and 'Aunt Peggie' can connect you with answers to your troubling questions. MCEC relies on solutions from experts from the Science Advisory Board, National Advisory Committee and many others within the coalition.



Part One answers common questions about effective communication, building healthy habits, correcting children successfully and organizing family life with advice from military psychology and family relations experts.

Part Two equips you to navigate the unique circumstances facing military families and helps you set up your family for success through challenges like deployments, moves, injuries and the emotional hurdles that come with those events.



NOAH'S STORY

Student2Student (S2S)[®] member and high school senior, Noah, recently sat down with MCEC Program Manager for Student Initiatives, Debra Longley, and MCEC *For the Sake of the Child* Podcast Series Producer, Tara Gleason, to share his thoughts on leadership and his strategies to meet the challenges of being a military-connected child.

Noah shared that his father has served in the Army for 24 years and Noah has moved eight times during his 18 years. He said military kids always live with the “threat” that their lives are about to change, either through a PCS move or the deployment of a parent. That threat became a reality for him once again the last morning of his junior year when his parents told him he would once again be moving that summer and would finish his senior year in a new school. For a student leader like Noah this brought immediate concerns and challenges. Moving meant he would have to relinquish his position in student government and his #1 class ranking. Though these losses were disappointing and a bit daunting as he prepared to complete college applications, Noah felt confident he could draw on his years of cultivating attributes of resilience and positivity to proactively confront this change.

Noah prides himself on being adaptable. He considers it a character strength and also a trait of a good leader. In all his years, Noah never wanted to move, but learned to look for the upside to each new location and new opportunities to grow and get involved. Some areas of consistency for Noah have been extracurricular activities including sports and participation in the S2S program. One of the most useful lessons he has applied from S2S is to look for the good and to be flexible. As a member of S2S Noah had the opportunity to attend the Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program (FHLSP) at West Point.

His foremost example of leadership is his own father. His father is a man who leads from the front and for Noah this philosophy was echoed by Frances Hesselbein's words “A good leader opens doors for others and you cannot open doors from behind.” Noah's father is that kind of leader as evidenced by a story Noah shared about a combat experience where his father, as a commander, was twice knocked down fighting in

Afghanistan but rose up and led his soldiers to an eventual victory and completion of a mission that liberated a small village from Taliban control.

“HOW CAN I CROSS THAT LINE BETWEEN ACKNOWLEDGING AND ACTING?”

This example coupled with his experiences at the FHSLP and a Model UN conference focused on the Syrian civil war, led Noah to take action once he returned home. Noah says “everyone hears about these things and thinks ‘oh its so sad what is happening in Syria’ or really any terrible situation, but what can actually be done?” “What can I do?” “How can I cross that line between acknowledging and acting?” he asked himself. In response Noah sought out a nonprofit organization called The White Helmets who rush into Syria after a battle and administer first aid and extract injured regardless of where the victim's loyalties may lie. Noah enlisted a friend to help him speak with their peers and classmates about this opportunity to contribute and together they raised \$550 to benefit the work of The White Helmets.

Just as he has learned to adapt and take initiative to turn a challenge into a strength and an opportunity for growth though his many military-connected moves, Noah is finding ways to make meaningful and personal contributions to others who face challenges and struggles both on the local level through S2S and on a global scope. **He notes that his entire life and family influencers have been all about service to others in a broad range of capacities.** Noah's vision for his future is to continue this legacy and to expand on his roots of service. He will attend college next year with a goal of studying ethics and philosophy and perhaps one day serving as a policy advisor for an international nonprofit. In the meantime, he inspires other military-connected kids as an exceptional example of resilience and adaptability in challenging circumstances.

To hear Noah's thoughts in his own voice, please visit [MilitaryChild.org](https://militarychild.org) or visit your app store to listen to full *For the Sake of the Child* podcasts.



COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT



PODCAST PREVIEW Convoys of Social Support

In a recently recorded *For the Sake of the Child* Podcast conversation, producer Tara Gleason sat down with MCEC Science Advisory Board Co-Chairs Dr. Stephen Cozza, Professor, Department of Psychiatry - F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine, Uniformed Services University and Dr. Richard Lerner, Bergstrom Chair in Applied Developmental Science and Director, Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, Tufts University, to explore the concept of Convoys of Social Support.

As a preface, Dr. Lerner shared, the phrase is a combination of two ideas. The concept of a convoy was first introduced in 1980 by Toni Antonucci and Robert Kahn at the University of Michigan. Their work emphasizes the evolving, changing support roles of relationships in a young person's development as he/she moves toward adulthood with the eventual goal of them contributing back to their communities and other young people. As a specialist in youth development, Dr. Lerner notes that positive outcomes stem from healthy relationships and from a child perceiving their place of value within the broader community and the social support they receive from that community.

Coupled, the terminology references the fluid, dynamic nature of social support that contributes to the development of positive relationships and connections in the life of a child. Dr. Cozza feels this concept echoes the mission of the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC). As it has for more than 20 years, MCEC recognizes this call to action to re-instill a sense of community across the United States of America on behalf of children, especially for military-connected kids. The "Coalition" moniker of the MCEC name alludes to a group with broad reach. MCEC serves to aid members of the group in recognizing how their roles and capacities may intersect or engage at critical times on the continuum of a child's life.

According to Dr. Lerner, the needs or challenges are dynamic and changing and so may the roles of social support need to shift to bolster the child in large and small ways toward maturity.

MCEC plays a critical role in the life of a military child by cultivating partnerships among parents, educators, policy makers, community service providers, as well as military support agencies and by providing relevant research, training, and policy recommendations. From Dr. Cozza's vantage point, MCEC empowers the process by convening convoy members from multi-disciplines. This creates an opportunity for contributors to see both their unique and combined roles in the life a military-connected child. Both Dr. Cozza and Dr. Lerner feel the challenge for convoys of social support related to military kids is to sustain connected elements to facilitate an inter-generational system that can be maintained and accessed across time, location, and multiple transitions in order to complete the mission. The challenge for MCEC lies in helping create an understanding of the presence of military-connected children in all zip codes and the value of the convoy of social support in all locations as it applies to all children.

**THE FULL CONVERSATION
AIRS MAY 2019.**



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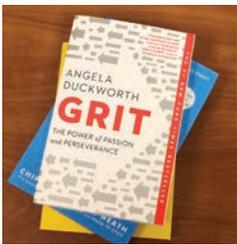


MCEC STORE

for the sake of the child

NATIONAL TRAINING SEMINAR

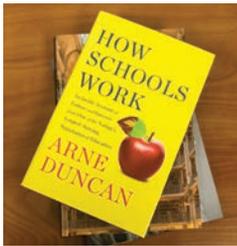
>>Reading List<<



GRIT: THE POWER OF PASSION AND PERSEVERENCE

\$13.95

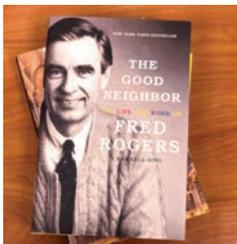
In her instant, multi-month New York Times bestseller, Angela Duckworth shows anyone striving to succeed that the secret to outstanding achievement is not talent, but a special blend of passion and persistence she calls "grit." "Inspiration for non-genius everywhere" (People).



HOW SCHOOLS WORK

\$21.95

This book merits every American's serious consideration" (Vice President Joe Biden); from the Secretary of Education under President Obama, an exposé of the status quo that helps maintain a broken system at the expense of our kids' education, and threatens our nation's future.



THE GOOD NEIGHBOR

\$24.95

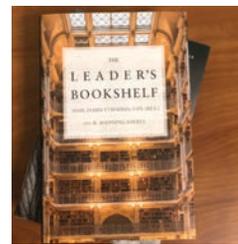
Fred Rogers (1928–2003) was an enormously influential figure in the history of television and in the lives of tens of millions of children. As the creator and star of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, he was a champion of compassion, equality, and kindness.



THE POWER OF MOMENTS

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Gildan Softstyle Ring Spun 65% polyester/35% cotton blend T-shirt. Available in a variety of colors. Sizes small-2X.



The Character Corner is an ongoing series for *On the Move*[®]. Dr. Michael D. Matthews, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, U.S. Military Academy and MCEC Science Advisory Board member, is the editor of the Character Corner. Each issue, Dr. Matthews or a guest contributor will discuss character from different perspectives, with a focus on children in grades K to 12.



The theme for this issue of *On the Move*, Convoys of Social Support, is something that is grounded on positive character. We don't live our lives in a vacuum. We rely on other people – friends, family, coworkers – to help us to be at our best. And in turn, we owe it to others to provide the support and encouragement needed so they, too, can flourish. Talent is not enough to be successful in school, work, or our personal lives. Without positive character, trust erodes. And when trust erodes, we suffer personally and socially.

Psychologists believe that humans possess 24 different strengths of character, categorized into six moral virtues. These moral virtues are Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Justice, Humanity, Temperance, and Transcendence. Some individual strengths that are vital to social support include perspective, integrity, teamwork, fairness, leadership, capacity to love, kindness, social intelligence, forgiveness, modesty, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality. These individual strengths are scattered across the six moral virtues and, collectively, enable one to be a supportive and respected member of his or her family, school, or job.

To have optimal social support and nurture positive character in children, everyone with influence on the child should not just recognize these positive character strengths but must endeavor to display and model them. Any parent or teacher will agree that children are quick to identify hypocrisy. Even small things matter. In my job as a West Point professor, I am fully engaged in character development of young people, and I try to model the character strengths in my own behavior that I and West Point expect of cadets. I once had a colleague who would punish a cadet for being even 10 seconds late for a scheduled meeting. But he made little effort to be on time himself. On several occasions, I found a cadet outside of this captain's office, waiting for him to arrive (late!) for a scheduled

meeting. The captain always had a good reason to be late (so he thought) but would never give that benefit of the doubt to a cadet. It doesn't take much thought to see what lessons cadets learned from this officer.

“WITHOUT POSITIVE CHARACTER, TRUST ERODES. AND WHEN TRUST ERODES, WE SUFFER PERSONALLY AND SOCIALLY.”

Developing and nurturing character strengths in children, both within the family and in school settings, is equally important to the development of a child as are academic or physical skills. As I wrote about in the last issue of *On the Move*, we should not leave the development of positive character to chance. Positive and sustained mentoring by all who surround the child, a systematic character skill building curriculum in schools and other organizations children operate in, and providing opportunities for children to practice character by leading others are ways to optimize character development.

The more I study character, the more I see that all of us must recognize our own role in nurturing it in others. There is an old saying in psychology, “don't blame the rat.” This means that the rat will always behave according to the conditions arranged by the experimenter. If the rat fails to behave as expected then the fault is not that of the rat, but rather that of the psychologist training the rat. Character failures are much the same. True, some individuals – both children and adults – are prone to character failures, and these must be

COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

dealt with. But widespread character failures within a school, family, or workplace are a sure sign that a culture of positive social support does not exist.

So, I will leave you with this thought. Make developing a culture of positive social support a priority. Reflect on what you can do better to support others. Be a good role model. Enforce standards, but live by them yourself. By doing this, you can make day-to-day contributions to your family, school, or workplace. And in turn, you will raise up those around you.



SAB

*Dr. Michael D. Matthews,
Department of Behavioral Sciences and
Leadership, U.S. Military Academy and
MCEC Science Advisory Board member*

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OUR HEARTS
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Exploring Convoys of Social Support
2019 NATIONAL TRAINING SEMINAR
JULY 23-25, 2019 | WASHINGTON DC



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NATIONAL TRAINING SEMINAR PREVIEW

The term convoy evokes an image of multiple vehicles assembled and moving in a long, continuous line. The term is military in origin and for those associated with the U.S. Armed Services, those vehicles are probably light brown or green and carrying personnel and supplies. The image is emblematic of synchronized support. Though the vehicles each carry different items or specialists, they are unified in purpose and destination. In her column *Brain Waves, Why You Need a Social Convoy for Psychology Today*, Lydia Denworth writes, “Convoys are meant to provide protection. You might think of camels traveling through the desert, long-haul truckers, or navy ships banding together to ward off enemy submarines. But the concept can apply to people, too. Your social convoy is the core set of supportive relationships — close friends and family — that move with you through life.”

Dr. Mary Keller, MCEC President and CEO outlines, “Our 2019 theme, Convoys of Social Support, is an excellent fit with your continued advocacy for all children to have access to meaningful opportunity. Convoys of Social Support serves as a metaphor underscoring how each of us can and must do our part for our future, for our security and, ultimately, our democracy.” This concept is a natural fit for both the National Training Seminar theme and the enduring MCEC Strategic Goals:

Military-connected children’s academic, social and emotional needs are recognized, supported and appropriate responses provided.

Parents, and other supporting adults, are empowered with the knowledge to ensure military-connected children are college, workforce and life-ready.

A strong community of partners is committed to support an environment where military-connected children thrive.

The National Training Seminar will gather in one location varied members of the convoys of social support whom MCEC seeks to help cultivate on behalf of highly-mobile children everywhere. Through the National Training Seminar, MCEC connects attendees with the resources, knowledge and community to best support military children in an educational setting. Attendees gain professional knowledge based on research, practice and common sense ideas that help ensure every military child is safe, supported, challenged, healthy and engaged in learning.

ADVOCACY & OPPORTUNITY

This year's agenda is an exciting departure from previous years. While the exceptional quality and expertise of the docket of speakers is consistent of MCEC standards, the tempo of events will allow attendees greater flexibility to build a range of seminar experiences and knowledge gathering opportunities most relevant to their own applications including several timely "hot topics" such as a session on school safety led by Dr. Melissa Brymer & Dr. Paula Rauch. The flexible time schedule also encourages attendees to embrace unstructured time to forge connections and conversations with other professionals and community services providers.

The National Training Seminar provides each attendee:

New Professional Connections and Resources that expand their professional learning community and provide them with support and guidance.

Clarity, Knowledge, Direction, and Inspiration that can be applied to advance learning opportunities for military connected children.

Initiatives and Proven Solutions that support military youth and can be implemented in classrooms, schools, and communities.

Understanding of public policy perspectives and the implications for programs and services.

NATIONAL TRAINING SEMINAR PREVIEW

MORE THAN 700 ATTENDEES ARE EXPECTED FOR THE 2019 NTS.

The registration fee will include 3 meals (2 lunches + 1 dinner) and refreshment breaks.

The agenda will feature 6 General Sessions, Master Classes in our main ballroom and 16 Distinguished Lectures.

A Resource and Leadership Expo will be highlighted as well as 8 Pre-Seminar Professional Development Trainings.



SPECIAL SCREENING! *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*

FEATURING FACILITATED DISCUSSION AND HANDS-ON APPLICATION ACTIVITIES.

A documentary by Morgan Neville, *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, is a tribute to the work and life of Fred Rogers, star of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." For more than 30 seasons, Fred Rogers addressed topics and complex social issues in a way that children could relate to and

understand. His lessons and message of greeting each day with wonder and always striving to accept others and treat them with kindness resonated with generations of young children. Following the screening, join your fellow viewers for a facilitated discussion highlighting how all of us can apply the lessons we've learned from Fred Rogers to bring children's social emotional learning to the forefront.

WE HOPE YOU
WILL JOIN US
IN D.C.
AS WE LOAD
OUR CONVOY OF
SOCIAL SUPPORT
AND HIT
THE ROAD
TO SUPPORT
MILITARY-
CONNECTED
CHILDREN IN
THEIR JOURNEY

Over the past 20 years, our National Training Seminar (NTS) has evolved into a think tank for attendees to come together and learn from senior military, education, and thought leaders to gain an empowered understanding and knowledge of how to best serve and support our military connected children.



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Fred Rogers always encouraged us all to “look for the helpers.” MCEC has always looked for the helpers on behalf of military-connected kids and NTS is a unique opportunity to cultivate connections between those helpers; those convoy members. It is key to note that some elements of the convoy carry supplies critical to assisting other convoy members reach their destination successfully. The convoy supports one another as well as those awaiting support. This is why the MCEC takes a broad view of inclusivity when forming the convoys of social support necessary to nurture children. We all have a role to play. We are all helpers.

Our 2019 curriculum theme is built around “Convoys of Support.” As I shared, we are thinking about “convoy” in terms of each person’s talents and abilities to connect, understand and supply the convoy. Our concept is to shape our NTS components in ways that emphasize purpose, mission and belonging in any cause or task to help others or to have the confidence (and respect) to call upon others.

GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS



Angela Duckworth, Author,
Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance



Arne Duncan, Former U.S.
Secretary of Education



Ellyn Dunford, Senior Military
Spouse and Mentor



Gen. David L. Goldfein, USAF,
Chief of Staff of the
U.S. Air Force



Admiral (Ret.) James Stavridis,
Former Supreme Allied
Commander Europe



Understanding the Experiences and Meeting the Needs of LGBTQ Military-Connected Children

Written by Keith Lemmon, M.D.  and KJ Ward, Ed. M.

The barriers to health and well-being, the search for acceptance, and the path to empowerment that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth experience, in general, are well documented. We wanted to better understand the unique experiences of military-connected LGBTQ youth, so we posed some questions to two LGBTQ military students and to one LGBTQ adult who grew up in a military environment. We also wanted to explore perspectives on the landscape of resources and how to best support young people and their families. In addition to asking the students themselves, we talked to student services professionals, behavioral health professionals, and parents of military-connected LGBTQ children.

TODAY'S LGBTQ MILITARY-CONNECTED YOUTH

Melissa is a 16-year-old young woman who identifies as bisexual and attends a senior high school off post. Her father is a Lieutenant Colonel who retired from the Army two years ago after serving for over two decades, including two deployments to Iraq and three to Afghanistan. Melissa's boyfriend, Joel, is a transgender young man (assigned female at birth and identifies as male) who is also part of a military family.

Melissa and Joel (not their real names) have been dating for about nine months and recently bought thoughtful Valentines gifts for each other. Melissa states that around seventh grade she realized she was definitely attracted to girls as well as boys. Her elementary education was in a Catholic school and she admits to early feelings of guilt and shame surrounding her sexual orientation. Since coming out, she has dated both boys and girls, but has recently found her relationship with Joel to be especially comfortable. "People basically treat us like a straight couple," she says. Melissa's family has evolved over the last few years in relationship to her sexual orientation. She says her mom initially reacted negatively to finding out about her being bisexual but has come a long way in support and acceptance. As for her father, Melissa said that being a military officer played a big part in the way he looks at issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

The military took up a lot of his life so he adapted to certain mindsets, the way he views my sexual orientation and my relationship with Joel. I feel he is more strict and traditional and more secure in his judgment of the world based on values he adopted from being in the military.

Melissa says that her dad was initially "chill" with her bisexuality. They never really talked about it much, but since

COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

For children in military families, serving in the Armed Forces themselves one day is an idea that is almost certainly pondered. At the same time, there are few professions where explicit policies regarding sexual orientation and gender identity have defined the potential to serve.

Melissa started dating Joel, a young trans man, Melissa said her father has had difficulty accepting the relationship. “When Joel comes over, there is a lot of tension between him and my dad. It has gotten better; they now make small talk with each other,” she said and to which Joel added, “after three hours of not talking.”

Melissa feels that her mom just needed to “wrap her mind around it.” She says her mom continues to make effort toward being more open and accepting of her sexual orientation and relationship with Joel. Melissa points out that although her parents’ initial acceptance of her sexual orientation and new relationship was rocky, they have both come a long way toward understanding and acceptance. As for Joel’s parents, they really like Melissa. She says she and Joel’s mom often “gang up on him” in a fun, loving way.

For children in military families, serving in the Armed Forces themselves one day is an idea that is almost certainly pondered. At the same time, there are few professions where explicit policies regarding sexual orientation and gender identity have defined the potential to serve. We talked about a few policies related to LGBTQ service in the military and their implications: the implementation of the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) policy in 1993, the 2011 repeal allowing LGB members to serve openly, the 2016 rules that permitted currently serving personnel to disclose their transgender identity, the 2018 policy that permitted openly transgender people to enlist, and the 2017 Presidential Memorandum on Military Service by Transgender Individuals that would ban transgender people from serving openly.



We asked Melissa and Joel if they thought they would be allowed to join the military one day if they wanted to. Joel hadn’t known the detailed history of these policies but said that he was aware there is “a lot going on in the military.” He said that it would likely be difficult for him to join if he wanted to. Given the January 22, 2019 5-4 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of the Trump administration’s request to lift two of the injunctions on its transgender ban, Joel’s assessment of his military prospects might be quite valid.

“Support looks like believing them when they talk about their complex experiences.”



PFLAG AND GENDER SPECTRUM ARE WONDERFUL RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO ADDRESS THEIR OWN KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND BECOME HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SUPPORT

For parents, educators and providers wanting to know how to best support LGBTQ young people, the first step may be

Freeman emphasized the importance of family-level support as a foundation while also stating the importance of support at the community and larger, structural levels.

relatively simple. When we asked Hope Freeman what support for LGBTQ young people actually looks like she said, “Support looks like believing them when they talk about their complex experiences.” Freeman is the director of the LGBT Center at Tufts University. She warned against a tendency for adults to discount the experiences of young people and assume “that they are too young to know anything about their own lives.” Freeman also told us about the added complexity “when it comes to being queer, a person of color, and a young person,” noting a changing set of unique challenges tied to the other aspects/identities that an LGBTQ person brings to the table. This reference to intersectionality may be especially important when considering the added complexity of an identity as (and experience of) a military-connected young person.

Freeman emphasized the importance of family-level support as a foundation while also stating the importance of support at the community and larger, structural levels. One example

of affirmation at the institutional level is new legislation in New Jersey that requires the teaching of the contributions of prominent LGBTQ individuals in history. Additionally, a group of parents of transgender children gave testimony to Congress in late January of this year, further highlighting the importance of acceptance and even offering a perspective from a family whose child is enrolled in a Department of Defense school.

SUPPORTING THE SUPPORTERS

Even when being supportive is the goal, getting there can be difficult for parents. Atlanta-based clinical social worker Mick Rehrig acknowledges the gap between the desire of parents to “support and validate” their LGBTQ children on the one hand and their ability to offer support on the other hand. In his work supporting transgender/non-binary youth and their families, he has seen the middle ground between flat-out rejection and complete affirmation.

Often the young person's guardians are struggling with how to be loving and supportive due to...their own upbringing and biases pertaining to gender and sexual diversity. This is where education and outside referrals for guardians to work through some of that...are key.

Rehrig told us that PFLAG and Gender Spectrum are “wonderful resources for families” who are looking for ways to address their own knowledge gaps and become helpful resources for their children. Additionally, the American



Academy of Pediatrics has a large repository of resources for parents, health care providers, and youth-serving professionals based upon scientific studies of LGBTQ youth and the vast experience of clinicians who care for them (see the resource section for more details).

RALLYING SCARCE RESOURCES

In addition to personally acknowledging and validating the internal identity and external experiences of LGBTQ young people, concerned parents and other adults might also consider the set of outside supports and resources. One military spouse—who answered our questions but asked that we keep her family’s identity confidential—highlighted the importance (and scarcity) of resources vital to the well-being of her transgender teen:

**ARE FAMILIES THAT HAVE
MANAGED TO COBBLE
TOGETHER A COMPREHENSIVE
NETWORK OF WRAPAROUND
SERVICES POTENTIALLY JUST
ONE PCS AWAY
FROM NO LONGER HAVING
ACCESS AT ALL?**

For my transgender teen, I feel that professional involvement is most important. Specifically, there is only one doctor in our city and probably within an hour drive all around the city, who has experience working with transgender youth and having the doctor prescribe hormone blockers has been important. Then, finding a therapist who has experience working with transgender clients was challenging, but I managed to find a very understanding one who meets with my child once a month. And luckily, in our city, there is a center that has biweekly meet-ups for transgender teens, as well as a meet-up for parents.

This family has the benefit of appropriate medical, behavioral health, and support resources now, but what this parent goes on to say highlights the relative precariousness that military families with LGBTQ children may find themselves in.

“Had we not lived where we live, my child would possibly not have access to all of this and may not be doing as well as she’s doing,” she said. Even with the limited number of relevant services in her region, she believes that resources are even more limited in other places. Are families that have managed to cobble together a comprehensive network of wraparound services potentially just one PCS away from no longer having access at all?



LGBTQ children who feel supported and affirmed at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods simply have better health and education outcomes.

REFLECTIONS OF A SELF-DESCRIBED ADULT LGBTQ “BRAT”

Amy Whitehead-Pleaux grew up in various Army communities in the 1980s and early 90s. She shared her experience of fully coming in to her identity as a lesbian in college and deciding not to come out to her parents until after she had graduated “out of fear they’d withdraw their support.” What complicates this story, however, is how she understood the process at the time.

I remember thinking that my experience as an Army brat gave me both the skills to hide the parts of me that weren't socially acceptable and the courage to pursue a fresh start with my new LGBTQ+ community. As an Army brat, I'd gotten comfortable assimilating seamlessly into new environments while protecting the deepest parts of myself, and I relied heavily on those skills as I navigated the sometimes treacherous waters of coming out. My upbringing made me curious about people and their motivations. I studied psychology and turned to books and resources whenever I had a question. This served me well when I was coming out because

although I was afraid of what [it] meant for my future (would I be able to work...without the fear of being pink-slipped because of my sexual orientation? Would my family and friends still love me?), I knew I could find answers and comfort by staying curious and doing my research.

In thinking about the specific challenges that growing up in military communities might present to LGBTQ young people, keeping the unique assets in mind, as Amy describes, might also be helpful. Today, Amy uses her graduate degree in applied child development to develop and implement statewide early education policy. She and her wife of 18 years are the parents of a middle-schooler.

MOVING FORWARD

Supporting the healthy development and well-being of LGBTQ military-connected children may start with acknowledging and affirming their humanity at every turn. LGBTQ children who feel supported and affirmed at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods simply have better health and education outcomes, and resources exist for parents who want to affirm their LGBTQ child but struggle. And,

if Amy, Melissa and Joel's stories are at all characteristic of the general experience of growing up LGBTQ in military communities, then interventions designed to support young people might leverage a range of protective factors that are cultivated in military environments in order to address the various vulnerabilities.

When we asked Melissa to describe the advice she would give other military kids going through similar situations with growing up and navigating relationships with parents, she said:

Don't give up if your family is giving you a hard time. Once you can handle that, everything else will be so much easier. If people are judging you on expressing an identity or attraction you know is authentic to you, don't give in to them. That will ultimately make it harder. Sexual orientation and gender identity are just a small part of the overall person that we all are.

Melissa feels that other LGBTQ friends can and do come to her for support but not so much because she is a young bisexual woman dating a young trans man, but because she is a supportive, non-judgmental and trustworthy person. Joel and Melissa feel that they are mature enough in their identities that they no longer need substantial support of adults and other kids regarding this aspect of their lives. However, they do acknowledge that attending a high school in a progressive state like Washington has created an environment where they can feel safe and supported even though their relationship is somewhat askew from societal expectations.



FAMILY RESOURCES

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

AAP.org (search LGBTQ)

LGBTQ resources, policy statements, and technical reports from the American Academy of Pediatrics

PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS (PFLAG)

PFLAG.org

Founded in 1973 after the simple act of a mother publicly supporting her gay son, PFLAG is the nation's largest family and ally organization.

GENDER SPECTRUM

GenderSpectrum.org

Gender Spectrum helps to create gender sensitive and inclusive environments for all children and teens.

COMMON SENSE MEDIA

CommonSenseMedia.org (search LGBTQ)

Common Sense is the leading independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology.



FREE
NATIONWIDE
RESOURCE

AN MCEC PARTNERSHIP WITH

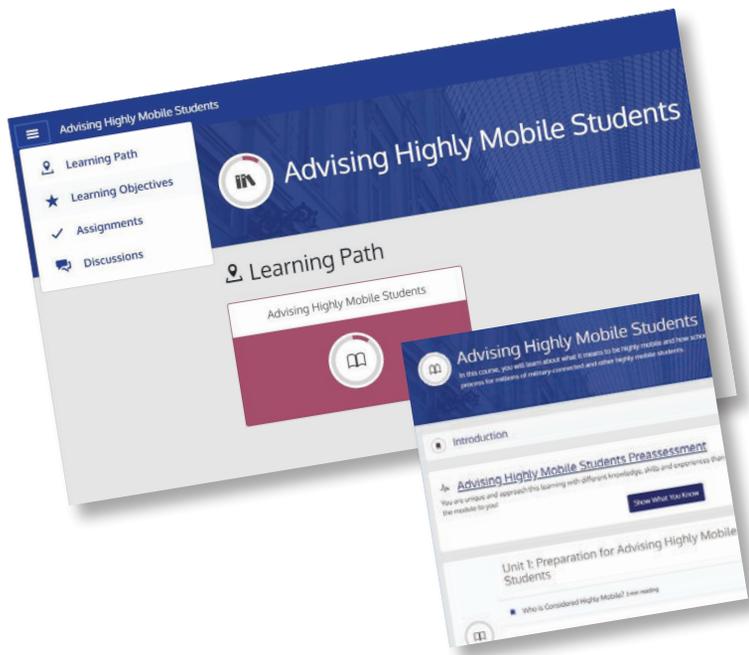


ON ADVISING HIGHLY MOBILE STUDENTS

The Military Child Education Coalition and Texas OnCourse recently partnered to develop and offer a free national resource to support professionals advising mobile students. Through a grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the course launched online in October of 2018. The module is a part of the Texas OnCourse Academy, an on-demand learning platform for education professionals which utilizes AI technology to gear the training to a participant's particular needs and knowledge base. To date, more than 460 users have accessed the course and 71% of those enrolled have mastered the course material.

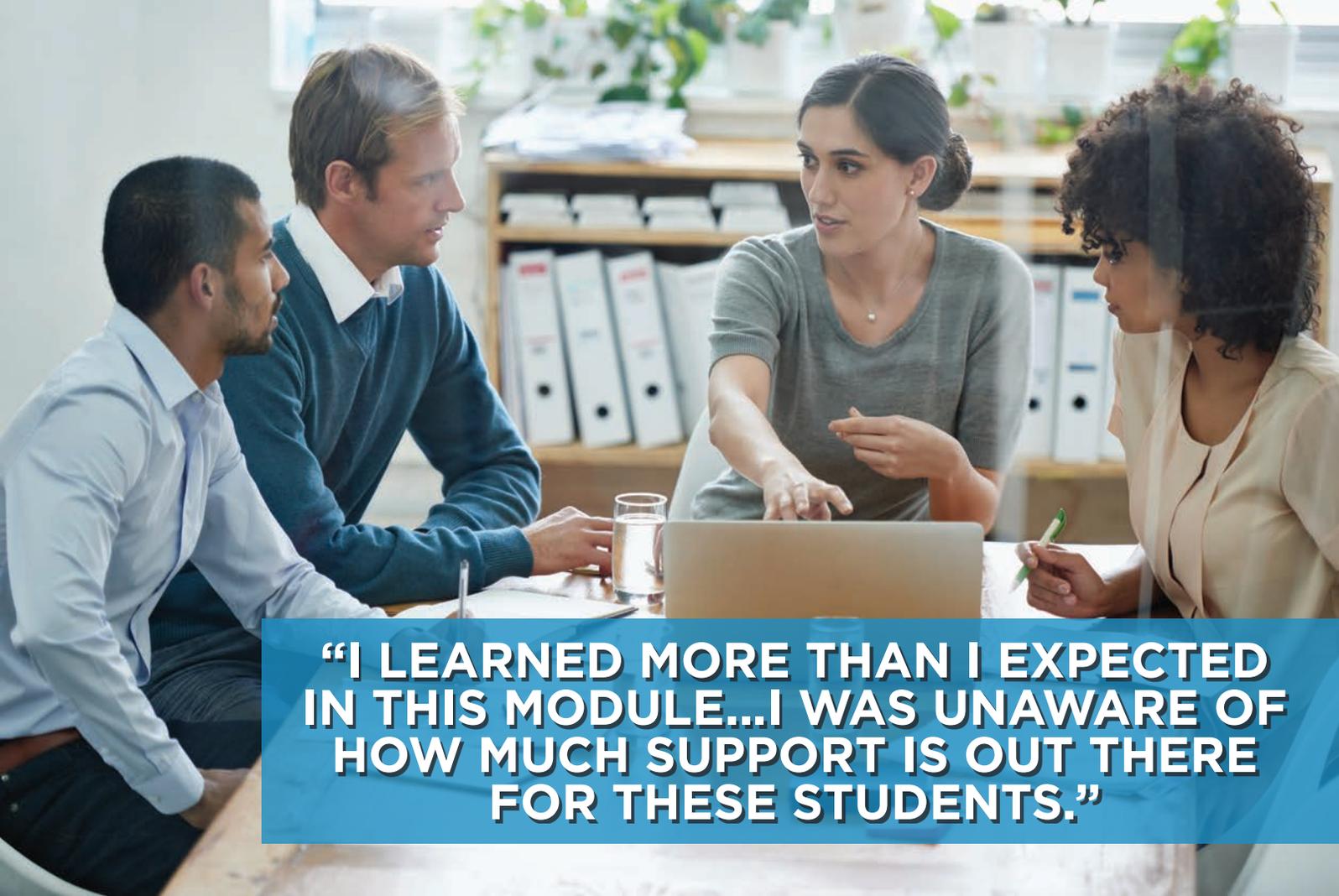
This new resource for counselors, advisers and other educators who support highly mobile students is offered through the Texas OnCourse Academy. The course, "Advising Highly Mobile Students," addresses these students' common needs as well as introduces best practices for helping their transitions from high school to best-fit postsecondary options. Course participants report, "The module is very informative and I was actually able to provide some of the resources to my nephew (active in U.S. Navy) and his family as they are awaiting orders for their newest relocation date" and "this was awesome." I learned more than I expected in this module and took notes

"THESE CHILDREN HAVE UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND MCEC IS PROUD TO WORK WITH TEXAS ONCOURSE TO OFFER THIS INTERACTIVE TRAINING FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS WHO SUPPORT THEM AS WELL AS OTHER STUDENTS IMPACTED BY FREQUENT MOVES."



so that I could share the information with fellow educators. I was unaware of how much support is out there for these students."

The collaboration brings together MCEC's expertise as a leader in education transition programming for military-connected students with Texas OnCourse, a recognized resource for college and career planning. "On average, military-connected children experience 6 to 9 changes in schools during their K-12th grade education," said Dr. Mary Keller, President and CEO of MCEC. "These children have unique educational needs and MCEC is proud to work with Texas OnCourse to offer this interactive training for education professionals who support them as well as other students impacted by frequent moves." The online course was developed for academic advisors, counselors and other educators who work with students who frequently change schools. These professionals



**“I LEARNED MORE THAN I EXPECTED
IN THIS MODULE...I WAS UNAWARE OF
HOW MUCH SUPPORT IS OUT THERE
FOR THESE STUDENTS.”**

play an important role in smoothing the transition before, during and after each move and monitoring academic risk factors.

Lauren Brennan, Director of Texas OnCourse points out “Advising Highly Mobile Students” is not just for Texas educators. “We are excited to offer free access to a professional audience nationally. All students and their families deserve high quality information about their postsecondary options, so they can make informed decisions about what comes after high school,” she said. As Texas’ definitive resource for college and career preparedness, Texas OnCourse equips middle and high school students for post graduation success. With Texas OnCourse, all Texas graduates, no matter where they come from or where they’re headed, have a plan for what’s next.

Texas OnCourse is an initiative from The University of Texas at Austin, in partnership with other institutions of higher education, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.



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Celebrating Month of the Military Child Original Art from Military Kids



When the nation calls persons to defend her, the families affected by one of their members answering the call face worries and changes in their daily lives. This image symbolizes those who must share a loved one with the nation. Purple is the color of military kids and the color of the sky in my painting. Yellow ribbons on the trees symbolize waiting for someone to return.

Estefany-Grace | Grade 11 | US Army



I REMEMBER

I remember,
the smell of airports,
new schools, new faces.
Hanging up belongings each few
years in new spaces.
Leaving old friends, and meeting
the new, piecing my life together
with cheap glue.
Should I stay or should I go?
Do I even have a choice?
How do you feel about moving here?
Do I even have a voice?
But now the cheap glue is starting
to hold, and the journey that I'm on
will slowly unfold.
I've gotten experiences not many get,
a lot of people I'm glad to have met.

Living this life
has its many perks you see,
being a Military Child
is fine with me.



Kyron | Grade 2 | Marines

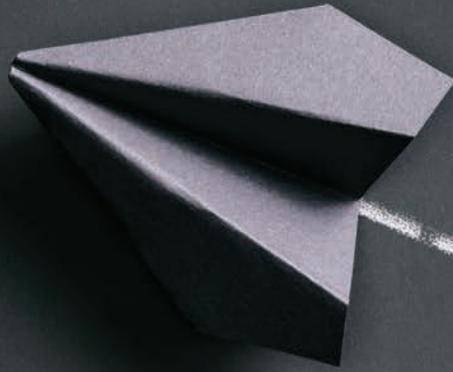
What inspired me to draw this picture was my dad. He was in the Marine Corps. When I grow up I want to be just like my dad and join the Marines. I think everyone should know that being a military kid is hard because we are always moving and missing our family like grandma, grandpa, aunties, uncles and cousins. I still love being a military kid.



Madilyne | Grade 8 | Marines

COMMUNITY
OF SUPPORT

Success Stories Along the Route



Transitioning students may need support in a range of areas, which is why the MCEC MSTC program was developed to be comprehensive in its capabilities and inclusive of all participants, and elements that may be able to contribute to the positive transition of a military-connected student to a new school district. School age children spend at least a third of their hours in the education setting and related extra-curricular activities, therefore the need to facilitate continuity and positive experiences of support and connection is key to the growth and resilience of the child. MSTCs are embedded experts within a school district who assist children and families as they navigate any twists and turns in their educational path. These experts are hired at the local level and therefore have not only broad knowledge of the issues faced by military-connected children, but also internal district insight beneficial to parents and students new to the area.

A yellow paper airplane is positioned in the upper left quadrant, and a black paper airplane is in the lower right. A white chalk line starts from the yellow plane, curves down and right, loops around the black plane, and then curves back up and left towards the bottom left corner. The background is a dark grey chalkboard.

Military Student Transition Consultant



The following stories from MSTC professionals in the field illustrate the spectrum of encounters and challenges they and the students they serve may face and the ways in which they see the positive impact of this MCEC program on individual families.

ADRIAN TODD, FROM VERNON PARISH SCHOOL BOARD, shares a story of the complexity a student may face in transition. A family preparing for an overseas move from Korea to Louisiana and from homeschooling to public school contacted her for counsel on how to best approach their range of issues. Their desire was to address potential roadblocks prior to their arrival in a way that minimized the need for additional student testing and assessment, but made sure he was placed in the best courses and programs to meet his needs and strengths. Adrian immediately sent an enrollment packet to assist the family in gathering all the necessary documents for enrollment. She linked the parents with their school campus and transportation options within the Vernon Parish School Board and the counselors and homeschool association specialist for the district who could help translate the student's achievements and credits to district requirements and programs. With Adrian's guidance the family was less intimidated about navigating this complex transition and was able to move forward in preparation prior to their arrival in order to limit the chaos and disruption of the student's academic progress.

“...THE FAMILY WAS LESS INTIMIDATED ABOUT NAVIGATING THIS COMPLEX TRANSITION...”

One of **JULIE'S YERKES'S** favorite success stories illustrates yet another element of support the MSTC program may provide; that of social-emotional support in the form of connections and resources for students and families. Some MSTCs create small group curriculum on campuses in need of additional social emotional supports for their students. Military-connected students are invited to participate in small groups led and facilitated by MSTCs. The curriculum is specifically designed to address relevant, local, trending topics including deployment, reunification, character traits, and friendship management. Julie's favorite transition story relates to the Muscogee, Georgia Deployment Bears Program. Last year, her grant team, funded by a Department of Defense Education Activities grant, started purchasing deployment bears with a recordable device for those students whose parents were or had deployed. When Julie learns that a service member parent is deploying, she requests the parent's permission to gift to the child a bear.

Julie shares, “A few weeks ago, during our group meeting, a first grade girl told me twice that her mom ‘needed’ to call me. She was adamant and even teary as she told me this. I took her aside after group, and learned that her dad would soon be deploying. She wanted me to talk to her mom. I reached out to her mom and, after a few days, mom returned my call. Their mom (she also has a second grade son) was working a job with little flexibility and I could tell that the family was under a great deal of stress. I not only obtained permission from Mom, but I found this family that otherwise would have stayed “under the radar.” I can now reach out and connect them to resources that they may need during this time. Now, the principal at this school is helping give the bears to her students with a deploying parent! These kids get so excited to have their principal supporting them during this time! One teacher recently said (after I brought the bear), “Thank you, this explains this child's behavior. I had no idea that his father was leaving in a couple of days!” Due to the nature of the embedded model and their consistent presence in the schools, MSTCs have the full confidence of the staff and are seen as a trusted resource in addressing the social-emotional needs of students.

SHARON GLENDENING, WORKING IN THE KILLEEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT OUTSIDE FORT HOOD, TEXAS

shared another story with equal, but completely different, complexity. The family she assisted was not only feeling the stress of being new within a school district, but also new to life as a military family. A middle school student making his first ever school transition; with Sharon's guidance, he met the challenge with resilience and worked hard to qualify for early college classes. He was admitted to the selective program for the upcoming fall semester only to find out the family would be moving again that summer. Fortunately, Sharon was able to share with the family the chance to request the receiving district in Colorado honor this qualification due to the MIC3 legislation. Additionally, she was able to advocate for this student by sharing the legislation with district administrators, which will benefit future military-connected transfer students. Part of the MSTC mandate is to educate on the local and national laws that exist to support and ease the challenges associated with military service, especially those experienced by military-connected children. In this particular case, Sharon felt great success in being able to facilitate a continuity of services and earned opportunities for this student. She and all MSTCs exercise a professional skill set that enables warm student hand-offs between districts and even across state lines.

“...HE MET THE CHALLENGE WITH RESILIENCE AND WORKED HARD TO QUALIFY FOR EARLY COLLEGE CLASSES.”

These brief examples of success within the MSTC program are not only heart-warming and fulfilling the intent of the program, but also, as an extension, perfectly illustrate the Convoys of Social Support concept adopted this year by the MCEC as a theme for the NTS, in professional development curriculum and incorporated into other initiatives. The MSTC program is an excellent example of a convoy member who can both deliver direct support to the developing student, as well as link other convoy members to each other in order to create a continuum of support for families.



THE MANDATE OF THE MSTC PROGRAM INCLUDES:

Coordinate and support efforts to solve problems related to military life / culture. Resolve challenges and provide a continuum of care while addressing secondary issues that may require an action plan with consistent feedback.

Assist in the translation and transfer of student academic records; serve as subject matter expert on state graduation requirements.

Work with student, family and school personnel to facilitate connections to district Special Education and 504 Experts, Gifted and Talented services, and navigation of the English as a Second Language (ESL) education process.

Build capacity and strengthen understanding for school personnel, students/families, community members, and installation representatives with the creation and delivery of Local Education Agency (LEA) specific and targeted professional development.

Coordinate and support efforts to build awareness of installation, community and district resources bridging the connections for students & families.

Develop and nurture community visibility ensuring positive relations among all stakeholders.

10:42



Hey! Are you going to MCEC's National Training Seminar next year?

Of course! Wouldn't miss it! What are the dates?

July 27-29, 2020! Save the Date!

I'm in! Putting in my calendar now 😊
Can't wait!

Perfect! See you in DC!

Save the Date! July 27-29, 2020
TELL YOUR FRIENDS + COLLEAGUES