

The Purple Star School Program

The Purple Star School program is designed to help schools [respond to the educational and social-emotional challenges military-connected children](#) face during their transition to a new school and keep them on track to be college, workforce, and life-ready.

Why create a Purple Star School designation program?

[A 2020 Columbia University/MCEC study](#) found that Purple Star programs have motivated hundreds of schools and scores of districts to [improve services for military-connected students and families](#). The Columbia study of initiatives in four states found that the program:



Centralizes and makes knowledge accessible to all stakeholders

Purple Star programming helps schools and districts aggregate and centralize knowledge so that critical information is easily accessible to students, families, as well as school and district faculty and staff.



Develops stakeholder networks

The program has enormous potential to create robust networks of local, state, and national stakeholders. In just a few years, the program has already spurred the development of local and regional networks



Helps schools cultivate and demonstrate cultural competency

Purple Star program helps schools (a) build the cultural competency needed to serve military students effectively and (b) communicate that fluency and effectiveness with incoming families.

How can my state set up a program?

States can set up programs in one of two ways: by [passing legislation](#) or by enacting the program [through the state department of education](#). The legislative approach opens the possibility of budget allocations, while management by the state education agency may accelerate the process of establishing the program.

Once established, states should plan to appoint a designation body to assess applications annually.



How should our state's program be designed?

There is no need to reinvent the wheel! Effective and galvanizing Purple Star efforts are in place or in development in 11 states nationwide. State-level Purple Star leaders recommend using other state's programs as a template when implementing a new program.

The following table summarizes the research-backed designation requirements that other states have opted to include and recommendations for implementation. [For detailed study findings and recommendations, access the full Center for Public Research and Leadership/MCEC report.](#)

Component	Function	Recommendations
Designating a staff point of contact (POC) for military students and families	POCs serve as the primary link between the school and military-connected families, helping students navigate the transition into and out of the school and connecting them to resources and information on an ongoing basis.	States should set clear expectations for the POC role. The best POCs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are trained in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, • have passion for and knowledge about the military lifestyle, • have time to commit to the position, and • are accessible to families 12-months of the year.
Establishing and maintaining a dedicated webpage with resources for military families	Dedicated webpages signal military friendliness to incoming families, centralize critical information about enrollment and school life, and provide families with links to relevant resources and supports.	States should include in the designation application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a recommended template for dedicated pages, • links to model pages, and • a list of vetted resources to consider including on the page.
Enacting a student-led transition program	New student transition programs help incoming students acclimate to their new campus and community, spurring ongoing connections in the school.	Student-led transition programs are currently the least common component across state initiatives. States should commit to including them as a Purple Star program requirement.
Providing professional development for staff	Professional development for all staff helps familiarize administrators and faculty with the Compact, cultivates awareness of and empathy for military-connected students, and equips staff to support families and students.	States can support training efforts by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing standard, state-level PD modules • establishing state-level repositories of vetted materials, and • leading the development of practitioner network that share resources and best practices.
Hosting military recognition events	Events honor and increase awareness of military-connected students, families, and staff and help families integrate into their new communities.	States can support the hosting of military recognition events by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a list common activities, • suggesting points of outreach, and • identifying common dates for holding such activities.