

ON THE MOVE

the official magazine of  MCEC[®]

LOOKING
BACK
LOOKING **AHEAD**

01. OUR MISSION

MCEC supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.

02. OUR VISION

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

03. OUR VALUES

MCEC remains committed to meeting our Mission and Vision through collaboration, integrity, relevance, and service.



ACHIEVEMENTS



Military Child Education Coalition®

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ON THE MOVE

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09



LEADERSHIP SKILLS ENHANCED

After a year-long break, MCEC brings ten military-connected students back to West Point.

15



100% COMMITTED

North East ISD commits 67 schools to implement MCEC's S2S programs.

20



HEB's OUR BUDDY

A friend of MCEC since 2007, with unlimited possibilities in caring.

table of contents

- 04 A Letter from the MCEC Chairman
- 05 A Letter from the MCEC President and CEO
- 06 MCEC Global Summit
- 08 Live a Great Story
- 12 Because You Give...
- 16 The Character Corner
- 17 Helping MilKids Soar Webinar Series
- 18 Purple Star School Readiness
- 22 MSCs Support North Carolina's National Guard Military-Connected Kids
- 24 Get to Know SchoolQuest before Your Next PCS Move
- 25 2022 Pete Taylor Partnership of Excellence Awards

The views and opinions expressed in articles appearing in On the Move® are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Military Child Education Coalition®.



CALL FOR THE ARTS



Visual arts and writing allow us a glimpse into the world of military children — as seen through their eyes. The Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®) believes that artistic expression is a pure, sincere and candid method children use to communicate pride in their parents, celebrate their military-connected lives, acknowledge their grief or worry, and so much more.

Since the MCEC began the “Call for the Arts” twenty years ago, tens of thousands of military children — from all over the globe, from every service, and of all ages — have mailed us their drawings, poems, and interpretations of what it means to be a military child.

Thousands have seen this visual representation of our unique, resilient children. We have proudly shared and showcased their work in our publications and through exhibits across the country. Art and writing has graced the walls of the Department of Education in Washington, DC on four separate occasions, the Department of Education in Virginia, and the Naval Observatory during President Biden’s tenure as the nation’s Vice President.

We look forward to Call for the Arts each year, and invite you to participate in our 20th anniversary celebration. No one can tell the story of the military child better than you — America’s children.

Be Creative.

**Call for the Arts
begins in January!**

Details coming soon on our website,
social media pages and to our
email subscribers.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the fall edition of *On the Move*®!

This time of the year is important to my family, like so many other military families, because it allows us to welcome family and friends into our home, reflect on memories made the past 12 months, and share what we look forward to in the upcoming year.

For those who will spend this holiday season away from loved ones deployed or stationed overseas, you are in our hearts. I understand the emotions associated with not being home this time of year. Although technology substantially closes the distance, it's not the same as being together. Please know we are thinking of you, and we eagerly await their safe return and your reunions.

Though many educators are back in the classroom, I am aware that challenges remain — with staffing shortages, hybrid models of instruction, and the continued emotional toll COVID-19 takes on us all. The sprint that began with back to school is now rewarded with some well-deserved time off to focus on your loved ones — and yourselves.

This past year has been exciting for MCEC. The lessons we learned, including feedback from our 2020 Military Kids NOW Survey, played a critical role in transitions we implemented in 2021.

Following the initial year of COVID-induced restrictions for in-class instruction and face-to-face interactions, we recognized the importance of leveraging partnerships, resources, and support through technology to serve more parents, students, and educators virtually.

This led to a transition in our delivery model. While we are proud to still offer in-person services, we understand that distance should not hinder us in providing you the best support possible. More virtual delivery allows

us to meet more parents, students and professionals, and act faster to resolve together the unique transition challenges experienced by military-connected students.

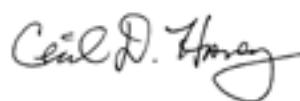
The collaborative work alongside so many valuable partners and sponsors has made it possible for us to develop, launch, and see increased impact at no cost through our Military Student Consultant team and *School/Quest*™ online resources, both made possible by USAA® Foundation.

And after a one-year sabbatical due to COVID, we brought our National Training Seminar back virtually, with our highest attendance in the past decade.

We also returned to West Point for the fall iteration of the *Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program*™ where PAE and the Long Gray Line made it possible to celebrate 10 inspiring students who make a big impact at their schools through MCEC's *Student 2 Student*® program.

Finally, we solidified our status as the National Advocate for the Purple Star School (PSS) Designation Program. Although we do not accredit schools, our advocacy has been a major factor in a majority of states — now 28 — passing legislation and executive actions adopting PSS statewide, and has helped countless schools and districts meet their state requirements and earn accreditation.

You inspired us in so many ways in 2021, empowering our ongoing mission of supporting all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve the education challenges associated with the military lifestyle. These shared successes motivate us for even more impact in 2022. I hope you enjoy this issue of *On the Move*, and I extend my best wishes for a safe and healthy holiday season and a rewarding New Year to you and your family,



Cecil Haney
Admiral, United States Navy (Retired)
Board Chair,
Military Child Education Coalition



FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

I want to begin by thanking you for the support you continue to provide MCEC. Regardless of your role or where this issue of *On the Move* finds you, our team and I appreciate so much your support for military-connected children.

Our team has spent the past few months planning and refining the look of MCEC in the new year. We are entering our 24th year with excitement!

The realignment of several teams and the creation of our Education Services department positions us to offer more resources and support in 2022. Accelerating our transition to a primarily virtual delivery model has resonated with military-connected parents, professionals, and students.

As part of that transition, we grounded our efforts in the Planning, Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation, and Maintenance (PADDIE+M) Model. This strengthened our approach to providing rigorously developed resources and support, while elevating delivery and impact through ongoing evaluation and feedback.

As we enter the new year, COVID remains significant; however, thanks to our generous sponsors and donors, we are able to offer increased virtual resources, and our signature annual event will return to Washington, D.C., in the summer of 2022.

You are among the first to hear that our return to the nation's capital includes two changes. First, we have rebranded our National Training Seminar to better reflect its standing as the leading educational and collaborative event in the military connected education space — the MCEC Global Summit. We will offer the Summit as a hybrid in-person/virtual event, with exclusive content in each medium.

Also exciting in 2022 is the official launch of our Purple Star School readiness efforts. As the National Advocate for Purple Star Schools, MCEC has proudly supported many states in adopting legislation and guiding their schools and districts to “Go Purple for Military Kids.” We look forward to working with schools who have earned their designation, applying their lessons learned to support other schools across the country in meeting their state requirements.

2022 also marks the 20th anniversary of MCEC's *Call for the Arts*. It's inspiring that a generation of military-connected children, who submitted so long ago, now have children of their own who use this competition as a healthy way to express what life is like for them as military-connected children. Last year's top submissions in art, poetry, and photography are featured in the 2022 MCEC Calendar.

I would also like to recognize the unwavering support from so many organizations who continue to invest in you — the military-connected parents, students, and educators — around the world. Because of them, we are able to offer unparalleled support through our Military Student Consultant (MSC) Service Center, *SchoolQuest*, the spring class of the *Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program* at the U.S. Air Force Academy, and much more.

We are proud that our coalition attracts the best support for such deserving people. A reflection of support from donors and sponsors can be found throughout our resources, on our website, and across our social media.

The legacy of service we have built owes thanks to so many and, on behalf of our entire team, I want to offer my sincere gratitude to each of you.

Please enjoy this time with your family. I hope you're as excited as we are for an even more impactful 2022!



Dr. Becky Porter
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Military Child Education Coalition



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

as we return to Washington, DC, for the
2022 MCEC Global Summit!

MCEC is proud to continue serving military-connected students by convening our 24th annual event July 18-20, 2022. After the pandemic-induced hiatus, we are excited to once again welcome in-person attendees to Washington, DC, for a refreshed, reinvigorated, and revitalized professional development event, the **2022 MCEC Global Summit (MGS)**. Along with our event's new moniker, we have an inspired and renewed commitment to level-up the learning opportunities for everyone who serves and supports the educational needs of military and veteran-connected children.



MCEC[®] GLOBAL SUMMIT

After more than two decades, MCEC's annual events have evolved into a think tank for attendees to come together and learn from education innovators, senior military leaders, policy influencers, and thought leaders across all levels of government and the private sector to gain an empowered understanding of how to best serve and support our military-connected students. Over these many years, our unique convening truly has become a *global summit*. In 2022, we are pleased to again marshal this learning and networking event for students, educators, youth-serving professionals, military family members and leaders, and all advocates who serve military children.

The genesis for our 2022 MCEC Global Summit theme, *The Journey of the Military Child*, will draw on a whole child and holistic approach to military-connected youth. Emphasis will focus on supporting and nurturing all areas of development and learning while incorporating a broader view of the skills and knowledge military-connected children need for long-term success.

To highlight and build on this approach, the 2022 MGS will feature session content exploring:

- **WELL-BEING** (balancing emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental health for #MilKids)
- **ACADEMICS** (strategies and policies that provide access to opportunity and foster learning)
- **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION** (practices that promote respect, dignity, and mutual concern)

- **PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS** (MCEC is the National Advocate for this state-by-state model of best practice commitment to serving the unique needs of military-connected students)

Featuring nationally recognized speakers, the MGS will connect attendees with the resources, knowledge and community to best support military children in an educational setting. Attendees learn applicable strategies grounded in research, practice, and common sense ideas that help ensure every military-connected child is safe, supported, challenged, healthy and engaged in learning.

Our return to the Renaissance Washington, DC Downtown Hotel (soon to be The Westin Washington, DC), has been a very long time coming. The hotel has used the pandemic down time to revitalize its meeting space, and rest assured that MCEC will be thoughtfully adhering to all federal and local public health guidelines for gatherings. We want to ensure we convene our learning community with the safety and health of our attendees, speakers, and staff at the forefront of our efforts while bringing a reinvigorated and dynamic MGS agenda to both our in-person and virtual MGS attendees.

Don't miss the 2022 MCEC Global Summit!

Join us in DC next July to come together, take your place as part of a worldwide coalition, learn from the best in the field, and learn from each other.



Registration will open January 2022. Please follow us on social media @MilitaryChild and check out our website, MilitaryChild.org, for the latest news about 2022 sessions and speakers.



LIVE A GREAT STORY



BY SUSAN SELLERS



STORIES ARE MAGIC; they can create other worlds, emotions, ideas and make the everyday seem incredible. They can teach us empathy and take us on terrific voyages. They can make us laugh, cry, and then comfort us with a happy ending. Storytelling is an essential part of who we are, how we relate and understand the world around us. When a story catches our attention and engages us, we are more likely to absorb the message and meaning within it than if the same message was presented simply in facts and figures.

This is part of the reason the Military Child Education Coalition's new podcast producer Susan Sellers is embracing [#LiveaGreatStory](#) with the MCEC Podcast series.

We want to engage, inform and connect to our military community but in a way that's entertaining. We want to give the opportunity to learn from another person's experience and maybe it will shape, strengthen or even challenge our opinions and values. We want our listeners to travel on the same path as our guests as they share their journey.

Susan has been married to her active duty Army husband for 25 years. They have three children, ranging in ages from 15-19. Her family is currently stationed at Ft Bragg, NC.

Susan joined the MCEC family in 2013 and has been part of the Ft Hood and Ft Benning Parent to Parent teams.

For the last few years she has been a part of the webinar team and is now the Producer and Host of the MCEC Podcast series.

Her happy place is anywhere she can see the ocean.

Over the past year when our world was brought to its knees, the weekly conversations, brought to life on the MCEC podcast series, vividly illuminated a wide range of challenges that our military children were facing from compounded struggles with relocation to gender identity to suicide. As we look ahead, we'll continue to tackle challenging issues for our military families, including overcoming disabilities, legislation to assist military families in transition, and teen anxiety. These are difficult topics to discuss and our MCEC podcast provides a safe place to listen, reflect, learn and grow.

When we can collect stories, perspectives and experiences we can strengthen our community. Join us each week on our MCEC Podcast channel and listen in on some amazing stories....

MCEC Podcast can be found on iTunes and Podbean.

STUDENTS ENHANCE LEADERSHIP SKILLS AT WEST POINT



BY ROB FRAZIER

AFTER A ONE-YEAR SABBATICAL due to COVID restrictions, MCEC® brought 10 military-connected students from across the U.S. back to the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., for a week-long leadership experience, Oct. 18-22.

For the fourth consecutive year, PAE sponsored the MCEC *Student 2 Student*® *Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program*, which is one of two expeditions for premier military-connected juniors and seniors, at West Point and the United States Air Force Academy, at Colorado Springs, Colo.

“Congratulations to these outstanding students on their selection to attend the *Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program* at West Point,” said MCEC President and CEO Dr. Becky Porter. “Over the years, this program has enriched the lives of so many students and S2S programs. We are excited to be part of their journey and work alongside PAE and USMA to provide these young leaders with opportunities to grow together.”

The *Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program* is a bi-annual leadership opportunity for sophomore and junior students who are members of the S2S program at their schools.

Students selected to attend this year’s iteration at West Point represented seven states across the country and have military-connected affiliations to the U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force. This year’s class consisted of the following students:

CASSANDRA Widefield High School, Colorado Springs, Colo.

SUNNY Ft. Campbell High School, DoDEA, Ft. Campbell, Ky.

ANDREW Swansboro High School, Swansboro, N.C.

NALANI Lejeune High School, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

KARA Early College EAST, Havelock, N.C.

ANGELICA Eisenhower High School, Lawton, Okla.

KAYLIE North Augusta High School, North Augusta, S.C.

JASMINE Randolph High School, Universal City, Texas

MAVERICK Belton High School, Belton, Texas

RHEMMY Steilacoom High School, Steilacoom, Wash.

[More >>>](#)

The week began with a team-building workshop in the Center for Enhanced Performance where they worked to identify team values and relate them to personal goals and objectives. Team building continued through a virtual battle space exercise in Washington Hall. Students learned the importance of effective communication and team strategy as they worked together to accomplish a virtual real-world mission scenario.

On Tuesday, the class received an instructional presentation in Thayer Hall which focused on group dynamics and social norms. Later the leaders transitioned to a goal-setting workshop. Prior to each student's arrival, this year's class was asked to establish a goal for their individual S2S™ program. The class and presenters used S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) as the criteria for reviewing and strengthening their objectives.

The class also heard from the program's namesake, Frances Hesselbein, who discussed her personal and professional defining moments. Students bridged to discussion on their defining moments and reflected on events that have shaped their leadership thoughts and actions thus far.

In the afternoon, the high school leaders led a discussion panel for West Point Behavioral Science Cadets where

they spoke about experiences as military children, the challenges, benefits, and inspirational messages that spoke about what it means to be a military-connected child.

The middle of the week began with a Leader's Challenge exercise where students viewed a three-part scenario that revolved around a difficult situation. The class then discussed the event, the decision made by the person in the video, and expounded on which option(s) they might have made — and the potential results of their choices.

The day concluded with a character discussion led by MCEC Science Advisory Board Member and West Point Faculty Member, Dr. Mike Mathews, in Jefferson Hall. Students used results from individual VIA Institute's Character Strengths Survey to identify their top five character strengths and the impact to their respective leadership roles in their S2S programs.

Thursday...

Students began Thursday with a Leaders of Character tour where they learned the rich history about the U.S. Army's leaders and the character traits reflected by notable graduates and military leaders. Lunch and a fireside chat followed with West Point Class of '62





graduate, 33rd Chief of Staff of the Army, and MCEC National Advisor, Gen. (Ret) Dennis Reimer. Gen. Reimer shared his experiences and defining moments as a professional. He also discussed his long friendship with Frances Hesselbein.

In the afternoon, Gen. Reimer, along with Dr. Porter surprised class member Kaylie, the daughter of a Sailor and a junior at North Augusta High School, Aiken

S2S has always been a student-led program that brings military and civilian students together to welcome new students, create a positive environment, support academic excellence, and ease transitions. Founded in 2004, MCEC grounds the S2S programs for schools – at all levels – under the following values: Leadership, Academics, Service, Finding the Way, and 100% acceptance.

“100 percent acceptance is something we need in order for people to feel included,” said Kaylie in her Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program application. “I have always appreciated people who accepted me for who I was growing up – especially because I moved so often as a military child. I believe that people should show the same courtesy.”

Over the past year, Kaylie has been part of several projects with her program including overseeing the reorganization of a book room at her school. She was also selected to participate in the MCEC virtual meeting

I have always appreciated people who accepted me for who I was growing up – especially because I moved so often as a military child.

County Public Schools, in South Carolina, with the announcement that she was the inaugural recipient of the MCEC *Suzy Carlton Student Leadership and Civic Responsibility Award*.

The award is named after Suzanne “Suzy” Carlton who was a military-connected wife and mother. Suzy honorably and selflessly worked to support others as a Department of the Army Civilian and special assistant to two Army Chiefs of Staff, including Gen. Reimer.

Following Suzy’s passing in December 2020, Gen. Reimer, on behalf of Suzy’s family, chose to spearhead efforts to honor her legacy of service and civic responsibility.

In addition to her part time job at Starbucks and activities at school, Kaylie is also a member of the reigning MCEC Student 2 Student® High School Team of the Year at North Augusta High School.

and discussion with First Lady of the United States Dr. Jill Biden in the spring and stated she looks forward to applying lessons learned from her time at West Point to working with her team as they mentor and train the members of the district’s junior high S2S team.

“What an honor to recognize outstanding military-connected kids like Kaylie who embody the spirit of selfless service and civic responsibility that Suzy showed throughout her life,” said Porter. “The impact Kaylie has made, along with her vision to work with others to do more in her community, exemplifies the intent of this worthy recognition and reflects the very best of all military-connected students.”



Learn more about S2S, the Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program and details on the spring class at the Air Force Academy on our official website at MilitaryChild.org.

BECAUSE
YOU GIVE

Military kids can:

CONNECT

INSPIRE

LEAD

SERVE

When you give to MCEC®, you help support programs that can make all the difference in the life of a military child. For example, imagine the apprehension any student feels upon arrival at a new school. A program like MCEC's *Student 2 Student*® (see page 15) replaces that apprehension with confidence and enthusiasm complete with new friends and a warm welcome.

Thanks to donors like you, *Student 2 Student* succeeds in schools around the globe, creating opportunities like the *Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program* held at West Point and the U.S. Air Force Academy. These amazing opportunities — shown here and featured on pages 9-11 — offer deserving students profound perspectives and lasting benefits.

MCEC's work cannot happen without YOU. Please make a gift to MCEC today, and make a difference in the life of a military child forever.



*Give a gift this holiday season
in honor of someone who serves
or their military child.*

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FREQUENCY: ☐ Once ☐ Monthly ☐ Annually

**YOUR
GIFTS:**

This year, in addition to the **Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program**, philanthropic gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations enabled MCEC to provide:

- **Military Student Consultants** giving personalized support, direction, and problem-solving assistance for military families
- **SchoolQuest** offering tips, tools, and tactics for planning a student's academic journey
- Peer-to-peer support and **Transformational Leadership** training for students
- **Empowering information** for parents through workshops, webinars, podcasts, and resources, in both English and Spanish
- Training with **insight, inspiration, and solutions** for educators and other professionals
- **Research** into how pandemic-related issues had an impact on schools and the efficacy of the **Purple Star Schools** initiative, including its impact on military families.



North East ISD Commits *67 Schools* to Implement S2S Program

The Military Child Education Coalition® (MCEC®) and North East Independent School District (NEISD) in San Antonio are engaging in a partnership that will benefit military students and their families, as well as all mobile students in the district.



MCEC is excited to announce that in September 2021, **seven high schools, all 14 middle schools, and 46 elementary schools in North East ISD have participated in official certification trainings to establish Student 2 Student® programs on every campus.** Knowing that San Antonio is home to thousands of military families, NEISD and Superintendent Dr. Sean Maika strive to support the needs of this special constituency. Student 2 Student fits the needs of these mobile families.

The MCEC S2S™ Program has a proven legacy of impact. Since 2004, MCEC has certified students and sponsors in more than 700 schools. S2S makes it possible to welcome highly-mobile, military-connected students into new school environments and offers the kind of social-emotional and academic support needed to help decrease the burdens caused by military moves and transitions.

MCEC and NEISD have worked together for the past three years to ensure that military-connected students acclimate smoothly to their new schools and receive the advantages of the superior academic and extra-curricular offerings that NEISD has in place. Seeing S2S students grow in confidence and leadership — which enables them to reach out to new students with empathy and care — is exciting for faculty and parents.

“The opportunity to bring S2S to the students, faculty, and staff across North East ISD is exciting. We look forward to working alongside every sponsor and student to help them meet their ongoing mission to challenge and encourage each student to achieve and demonstrate academic excellence, technical skills and responsible citizenship,” said MCEC Vice President of Educational Services Amanda Woodyard.



During the certification process, MCEC trainers work with selected students and sponsors on the process of establishing the S2S program, incorporating the S2S Values, and exploring opportunities to plan, promote, and integrate their program through events and activities.

“North East ISD is proud to partner with MCEC and work toward a common vision of having a Student 2 Student Program on every NEISD campus,” added North East ISD Student 2 Student District Coordinator Kyra Bush. “Our collaboration and teamwork is leading us toward our goal of each school receiving the Texas Education Agency’s Purple Star Designation.”

“Our partnership with North East ISD has already made an impact in Military City, USA,” added Woodyard. We look forward to working with Dr. Maika and the district to continue their strong legacy of service to military-connected students.”



THE CHARACTER CORNER

BY MICHAEL D. MATTHEWS, PHD

SAB

When you ask parents to identify the most important outcome in raising their children, most say that they want their children to grow into adults high in the character strengths of integrity, honesty, fairness, kindness, and other positive attributes. Yes, they want their children to be smart and do well academically, but being a good person is an even more fundamental outcome. Without positive character, lasting achievement and success is impossible.

In our recent book, *The Character Edge: Leading and Winning with Integrity*, retired Army Lieutenant General Robert Caslen and I presented a character risk model. Among adults, risks to good character come from three sources:

1. Intrapersonal risk factors refer to negative personality traits that limit a person's ability to be honest or establish genuine and positive relationships with others. Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and sociopathy are extreme examples of intrapersonal traits that prevent positive character.



2. Environmental threats come from extreme settings we sometimes face. An environment that prevents good sleep, that is dangerous, or that is unpredictable may have detrimental effects on character.



3. Social and organizational factors are perhaps most important in supporting positive character. People who lack positive role models or work in an organization that cares only about the bottom line may find it challenging to regularly display positive character.



Recognizing these threats to positive character may inform parents, educators, and others with a vested interest in child development on how to optimize positive character development. A warm, loving, and supportive home environment helps children develop positive personalities. Parents, siblings, and extended family members provide positive role models and feedback

when character mistakes occur. Similarly, ensuring that the child's physical environment is safe and predictable reduces external threats to positive character. Finally, ensuring that schools, sports teams, clubs, and other social organizations that children spend time in embrace and prioritize positive character is *essential* in guarding against character failure. When you think about instances where children fail in character, it is often associated

We all fail from time to time. Our research shows that failure, however bad it may be, also provides an opportunity to learn.

with this last factor. Bad companions make for bad character habits.

No child or adult is perfect. We all fail from time to time. Our research and practice at West Point show that failure, however bad it may be, also provides an opportunity to learn. Cadets who violate West Point's treasured honor code but are allowed to complete remedial education and training often emerge from their experiences with a deeper understanding of honor than they otherwise would have developed. A broken bone, properly set, grows back stronger than it was before the injury.

When a child fails to live up to standards of character, a learning opportunity presents itself. Some mistakes are self-correcting. A child who falls and is injured while roughhousing receives immediate and powerful feedback from pain. In contrast, feedback on character failure does not occur automatically. It is up to others to provide it. Parents, teachers, coaches, siblings, and others need to provide it.

Age-appropriate conversations and consequences that address the character failure combined with a warm family setting, a safe physical environment, and a positive social network allow children to

learn and benefit from their errors. Like a bone that grows back stronger following a break, character failures enable children to better understand and internalize what it means to be a person of character. It is thus incumbent for people with a stake in a child's development to understand the powerful role they play in setting the broken character bone.

and practice at West Point show provides an opportunity to learn.



The Character Corner is a regular feature in *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 discusses character from different perspectives, with a focus on children in grades K to 12. For more insights on character, see Dr. Matthews' most recent book, cowritten with Lieutenant General Robert Caslen (Ret): *The Character Edge: Leading and Winning with Integrity* (St. Martin's Press, 2020).

WEBINAR SERIES

Helping MilKids Soar

BY LOUISE WEBB

As we close out 2021, MCEC® has another tremendous opportunity available for military-connected parents, educators, and students.

Thanks to generous support from Lockheed Martin, we are offering 30 webinars on topics that address the current and emerging issues facing military-connected children.

Research shows that although stressors can have a social and emotional impact on all students, the numbers dramatically increase amongst highly mobile military-connected students. Specifically, remote learning, compounded by moves, parental separations and other transitions, can have a significant effect on a student's mental health and well-being. Through selected topics, these webinars address some of the challenges taking place in today's world. Our team of educators created these webinars as 8-to-12-minute modules for easier viewing.

Each of the 10 topics have content specifically tailored for educators, parents, and students. Our hope is that you will find value in the information provided and explore opportunities to generate discussions.

Join us online to learn more about:

- Food Insecurity in the Military
- The Importance of Fostering Connections
- Fitting In
- Choosing a Better Tomorrow
- Military Separations and Reunions
- Managing Stress
- Coping with Challenges when a Parent Leaves the Military

Additionally, three of our topics include industry-leading subject matter experts. These leaders join us to share valuable insights for these topics:

- Addressing Behavioral and Mental Health Concerns
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Coping with the Loss of a Family Member or Friend

The On-Demand Webinar Series is available now on the official MCEC website.

Scan the QR at right, or go to **MilitaryChild.org/helpingmilkidssoar**



Scan me

for Purple Star Schools

BY TIM FARRELL & TERRI WHIDDON

AMERICA'S MILITARY-CONNECTED CHILDREN

experience academic and social-emotional challenges as they relocate to new schools, with approximately 200,000 students transitioning to a new school in any given year. With an estimated 1.2 million active-duty military-connected U.S. children enrolled in schools in the United States and abroad — and that number rises dramatically when factoring in children of National Guard, Reserve and veteran families — the number of children affected by these transitions is significant.

These transitions create unique challenges, since schools often have differing cultures, curricula, standards, course offerings, schedules and graduation requirements. As a result, many students struggle to stay on track. This is among the reasons why many military parents look for schools that carry the Purple Star School (PSS) designation. The designation lets military parents know that a school is dedicated to helping their child gain the educational skills necessary to be college-, work- and life-ready. It signals that a school also supports the social and emotional wellbeing of

military kids adjusting to new schools and the absence of a parent during separations such as deployment.

MCEC is proud to serve as the National Advocate for Purple Star Schools, leveraging the extraordinary passion, networks, research, and legislative and executive momentum towards best-in-class commitment to resolving these unique challenges military-connected students navigate during their K-12 journeys.

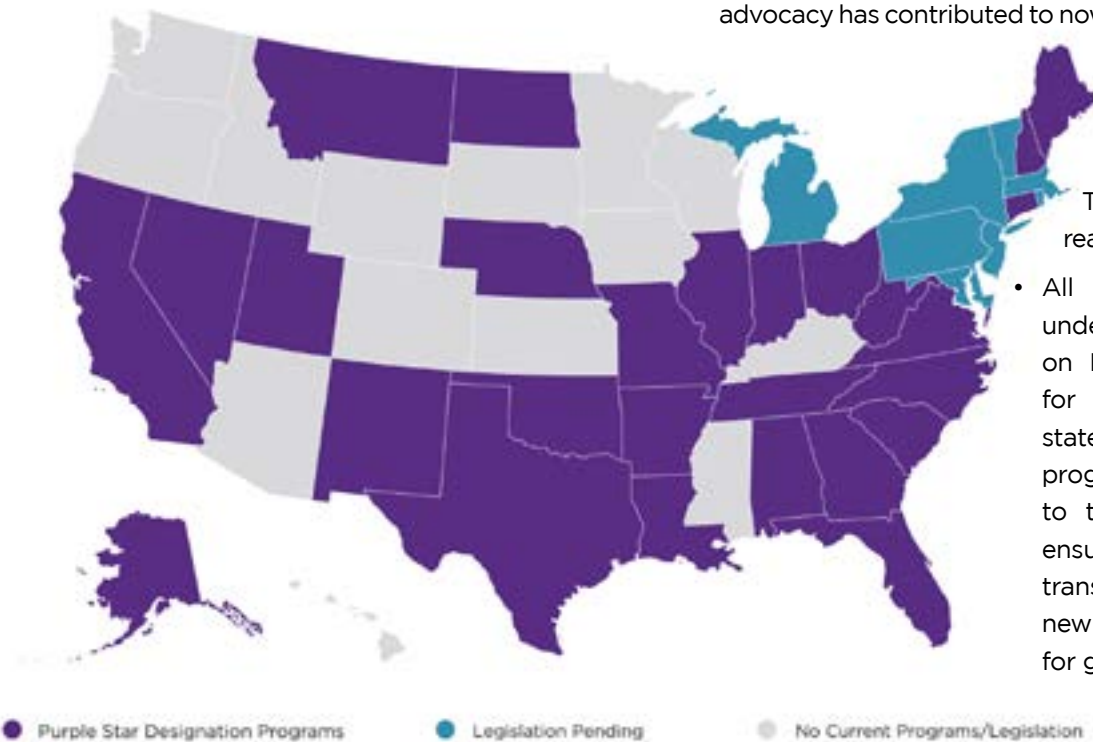
A statewide Purple Star School pro
Compact's goals of ensuring that milit
into new schools and stay on track fo

2021 started with 9 states having adopted statewide Purple Star School designation programs. Alongside extraordinary national partners like the Office of the Secretary of Defense's State Liaison Office and many others, MCEC's advocacy has contributed to now 28 states – and counting

- having adopted statewide programs, with 8 more states pending legislation.

There are compelling reasons for this momentum.

- All states have obligations under the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. A statewide Purple Star School program shows commitment to the Compact's goals of ensuring that military children transition successfully into new schools and stay on track for graduation.



- It can help protect state revenue. The quality of K-12 schools near military facilities can impact future basing decisions. Communities with Purple Star Schools can help retain missions and attract military families who bring economic benefits.
- Purple Star Schools foster diverse, inclusive and supportive school environments which serve all students, regardless of military connection.

Among our goals for 2022 is continued, convincing advocacy and support that results in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories adopting statewide PSS designation programs.

Although every state establishes individual criteria, most states' designation requirements include:

- There must be a school staff member who serves as a point of contact for military-connected students and families;

Program shows commitment to the
military children transition successfully
to graduation.



- Each school must have a student-led, school-based organization to welcome new students and help to create social connections (one way schools can do this is through the MCEC Student 2 Student® program);
- A webpage on the school or district website designed specifically for military families;
- Professional development opportunities for school faculty and staff to help them understand the dynamics of what it means to be a military-connected student.

MCEC engaged the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL) at Columbia University to conduct a study of the program across four early-adopting states. Together we found that the Purple Star School program has already gained traction and motivated hundreds of schools and scores of districts to improve services for military-connected students and families. This is especially notable given that the program has been in place for less than three years in most states, with much of that time overlapping the COVID-19 health crisis. A number of simple steps — outlined throughout this report and accessible through the QR code adjacent to this story — can help states, districts, and schools refine Purple Star School programs and offerings.

To assist districts and states, MCEC has created a Purple Star School Readiness comprehensive training and support package, a portion of which we began delivering monthly in September as part of our Back to School Initiative. We are continuing these online overviews monthly. Details on date, time, and ways to register for these virtual events are available on our official website at MilitaryChild.org and on our social media accounts.

MCEC can't overstate how important and beneficial statewide Purple Star School adoption will be in ensuring each state's optimum compliance with its Interstate Compact responsibilities, but more importantly in continuing and extending each state's leadership in supporting military families, which ultimately supports retention and military readiness. Join our movement as we help states administer their program, and prepare schools, campuses and districts for their state's designation requirements.

*Scan the QR code and take the
step to Purple Star Readiness.*



Tim Farrell is MCEC Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. In uniform, Tim served our nation for more than 23 years as an American Airman, rising to the rank of colonel, and deploying multiple times as a veteran of Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn. Tim holds a Bachelor of Arts in economics from Rutgers University, a Master of Science in administration from Central Michigan University, and an executive certificate in transformational nonprofit leadership from the University of Notre Dame. Tim and his spouse Gina's two sons are current and graduated military-connected students of Purple Star designated schools in North East Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas.

Terri Whiddon is a Military Student Consultant with MCEC. Prior to her current position with MCEC, she was a Military Student Transition Consultant, serving military students in the Vernon Parish School District in the Fort Polk community in Louisiana. Terri is also a retired educator with experience in teaching students in every grade from K to 12 and in areas from Family and Consumer Sciences to reading intervention. She is married to a career educator and has two adult children and one grandson.

HEB:



A Friend with Unlimited Possibilities in Caring

BY LEE ANN DEAL

When in 1905 a Texas woman, concerned about how she would care for her three young children and a husband in ill health, takes her last \$60 and starts a company that through the years expands to over 350 stores, she also creates a culture of unlimited possibilities. Today, the HEB Grocery Company, headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, is far more than just the neighborhood store Ms. Butt originated. Customers are extraordinarily appreciative of, and intensely devoted to, their HEB stores and the culture they represent, as exemplified by their motto: "We're in the People Business. We just happen to sell groceries."

HEB, honored many times in the business world and often ranked in the top 10 places to work in the USA (Glassdoor.com), has been a wonderful friend to MCEC® since 2007. Because HEB's values match seamlessly with those of MCEC, we have worked together through their Operation Appreciation Program to

honor and support military veterans, active duty military members, and their families in myriad ways.

Through HEB's generosity, MCEC established a Parent Education team in San Antonio to offer workshops with pertinent information for parents of school-age children,

empowering them to be their child's best advocate. HEB has underwritten several MCEC *Tell Me A Story*® early literacy events, enabling the youngest military-connected children the opportunity to explore difficult subjects while also instilling in them the joys of reading. HEB has also supported Military Student Transition Consultants (MSTCs) in the greater San Antonio area. MSTCs are MCEC staff embedded in schools to aid military families moving into and out of those schools, and to address the educational, emotional, and social issues that can be associated with the military lifestyle.

HEB supports military-connected students at all levels — elementary, middle, and high school — through the MCEC *Student 2 Student*® (S2S) program. Through HEB's generosity, MCEC helped create S2S programs in over 40 schools with heavy military student enrollment in the San Antonio area. S2S teams are trained to help all new students acclimate quickly to their new environment by making new friends, learning the unspoken rules, and connecting with academic support and extracurricular activities.

HEB exemplifies selfless corporate citizenship through their many programs aimed at giving back to the communities they serve. For years they have been known for supporting education through many activities, including: awarding the highest monetary award to





outstanding teachers in San Antonio, providing disaster relief (especially during hurricane season), donating to hunger relief through various food banks, and hosting their state-wide Feasts of Sharing each year during the holidays.

During the 2021 Month of the Military Child, MCEC teamed up with HEB's Operation Appreciation to provide fun, safe, and entertaining events to benefit military families. In the Fort Hood area, HEB and MCEC volunteers shared joy, books, and bags full of treats with almost 1,000 military families, and showed their appreciation with smiles, cheers, and words of gratitude for the families' service and sacrifice. In San Antonio, MCEC and the University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA) Center for Military Families partnered with HEB who provided Purple Bags & "Proud to be a Military kid" T-shirts. UTSA distributed college readiness information. MCEC circulated

information about *SchoolQuest* and supplied children's books. The event was held during a drill weekend to enable all soldiers on duty at the Texas Army National Guard at Fort Sam Houston to receive gifts and be thanked for their service and dedication. Soldiers chose T-shirts in sizes for themselves and their children; they were also able to choose age-appropriate books for their kids.

In May, HEB chose Military Spouse Appreciation Day to honor military families in San Antonio. HEB supplied the flowers and MCEC facilitated the distribution of 1,000 bouquets that students at Randolph, Fort Sam Houston, and Lackland Elementary Schools took home to their parents. The love and excitement were palpable!

At the Schertz/Cibolo/Universal City ISD STEM Camp for Military Students in June 2021, HEB provided the "Proud to be a Military Kid" T-shirts



that MCEC distributed along with information about *SchoolQuest* and other MCEC resources.

MCEC is honored, grateful, and proud of the long-time partnership we have enjoyed with HEB and all that we have accomplished together to benefit military and veteran families. We look forward to many more opportunities to team up with HEB as we work to strengthen the educational and emotional experiences of "those who also serve" our country. HEB continues to directly and repeatedly inspire and facilitate unlimited possibilities for these worthiest of citizens.

ALWAYS READY, ALWAYS THERE

to Support NCNG Military-C

BY MARK PATTON

An organization like the North Carolina National Guard (NCNG) employs a huge team, equivalent to an Army division or a numbered air force. The NCNG has more than 11,000 service members operating in 93 armories

or Asheville to the Atlantic Ocean, you'll be able to spot a military-connected kid. Both through my duties at the Military Child Education Coalition® and my volunteer pursuits across my home state of North Carolina, I've had



across the state, and where these service members live, so do their military-connected children.

According to the North Carolina Department of Instruction (DPI), there are more than 9,000 NCNG-connected children. This means that there's a high probability that no matter where you look, from Winston-Salem to Charlotte

the honor of serving these families, whose experiences reflect National Guard and Reserve communities across the nation.

While National Guard families do not transition duty locations as often as their active duty counterparts, when it comes to the social-emotional aspects of being a

onconnected Kids



military-connected kid and dealing with barriers, National Guard kids experience similar frustrations as their active duty peers. Whether it's monthly battle assemblies, two-week annual trainings each summer, or unknowns about last minute missions to support state and national security missions, National Guard kids feel the impact.

To help resolve these unique challenges, MCEC® has well-established relationships with parents, schools, and youth-serving professionals not just in active duty communities, but across many states where more National Guard and Reserve families live and educate their children. From our Student 2 Student® programs at the elementary, junior, and high school levels, to parent and professional educator development programs,

colleagues and I work together to be the go-to points of contact for questions and concerns military-connected parents and youth-serving professionals have. We work one-on-one with you to address issues and then, if needed, connect you with installation resources, school liaison officers, and/or other points of contact who can provide sustainable solutions for you within your communities. When you need answers, we've got you. Please reach out at any time.

We look forward to continuing to serve all military-connected children nationwide regardless whether active, Guard or Reserve; and, just like our NCNG partners, pledge to be **Always Ready, Always There!**

MCEC is 100 percent inclusive when it comes to identifying "military-connected."
Regardless of how your child is affiliated through your service, we are here to help.

to advocacy and support of the Purple Star Schools Initiative, we remain proud of the strong partnerships we have throughout the Tarheel State and many others.

As a retired military officer and parent, I know firsthand the importance of establishing a community of care to support service members, their families, and especially their kids. MCEC recognizes this, too, and that is one reason why working at MCEC is so rewarding. Other reasons include the partnerships and friendships created through the development and delivery of resources and support tools, and seeing so many military-connected students, parents, professionals, and communities thrive.

MCEC is 100 percent inclusive when it comes to identifying "military-connected." This means all branches of the military, all duty statuses (veteran, retiree, prior service), and all components (Active, Reserve, and National Guard). Regardless of how your child is affiliated through your service, we are here to help.

It's also important to share the role of the Military Student Consultant (MSC) Support Center, which our relationship with USAA has made possible. Through the MSC, my

Mark Patton is a retired U.S Air Force officer, father of two, and a proud grandfather. He grew up as a military kid, living overseas in Germany and graduating high school in Fayetteville, N.C.



Families find it easy to talk with Mark. His easy-going, down-to-earth personality endears him to so many. After spending nearly 40 years serving members of the military community, Mark understands all too well the stressors military-connected students face, enabling him to quickly and effectively help resolve these unique challenges.

Prior to serving with MCEC, Mark served as a high school counselor and as a Senior Aerospace Science Instructor for the Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program in Nash County and Cumberland County Schools. He holds a Master of Education in Human Relations with a specialization in organizational behavior and counseling.

Learn more about the MSC team and how they can work with you online at:

 MilitaryChild.org/MSC

GET TO KNOW **SCHOOLQUEST** BEFORE YOUR NEXT PCS

"It really did save me hours of digging and endless frustrations like I have had in past moves."

Military Parent

SchoolQuest™ is a free, interactive tool that is designed to support highly mobile military-connected parents and students with making the best choices before, during, and after a transition to improve academic success and social well-being.



"I like how comprehensive it is. It is filled with the kind of information I wish I had when we first started military life with children."

Military Parent



MCEC®
SchoolQuest™



Scan the QR code to register for free and learn more.



ACADEMIC TRACKER: Monitor and plan your student's academic career progress from 6th to 12th grade.



STUDENT PROFILES: Customize to each student. Track deadlines, courses and topics of interest.



RESOURCES: Browse a variety of academic topics, including scholarships, and save your favorites.



CHECKLISTS: Choose from a library of useful checklists or create your own.



SCHOOL SEARCH & RELOCATION: Guidance on school comparisons and note-taking space for easy reference. Access to transition information for each state, DoDEA and D.C.



SchoolQuest.MilitaryChild.org



(254) 953-1923 ext 1142



Sponsored by

**THE USAA
FOUNDATION**

"Goodness happens at the local level."



Are you a part of an amazing community partnership that is encouraging military- and veteran-connected children? Are students excited by the creative and innovative ways that your partnership meets their needs? How has your partnership positively impacted the military- and veteran-connected children in your community?

The Military Child Education Coalition® will recognize outstanding community partnerships at the MCEC Global Summit in Washington, DC, July 2022.

Applications will be available on the MCEC website in January, 2022.

Applications are due by May 2, 2022.

This year, you may include a 60-second video of your partnership in action. How fun it will be to see students interacting with your partners!

There are two major categories for K-12 applicants:

1. Total community partnership

The total community partnership should include the numerous projects/ways that the partnership serves and describe the installation, school district, and community involvement.

2. Individual program/project

An individual program/project will have one central theme such as writing appreciation letters to all veterans in the area.

Judging criteria for this award includes not only magnitude of partnership impact, depth of partnership, and positive outcomes, but also rewards innovation and creativity.

Show off your partnership to the world and spread the goodness!

MCEC —STORE—

*The holidays are here,
let us help with your gift list!*

Silicone Wristband (Adult & Youth) \$1.25

"Kids Serve Too." Show your support for military-connected children.



MCEC Latte/Soup Mug \$11.95

Relax with MCEC and chase the chill away with a large, warm mug of soup or a generous morning latte.



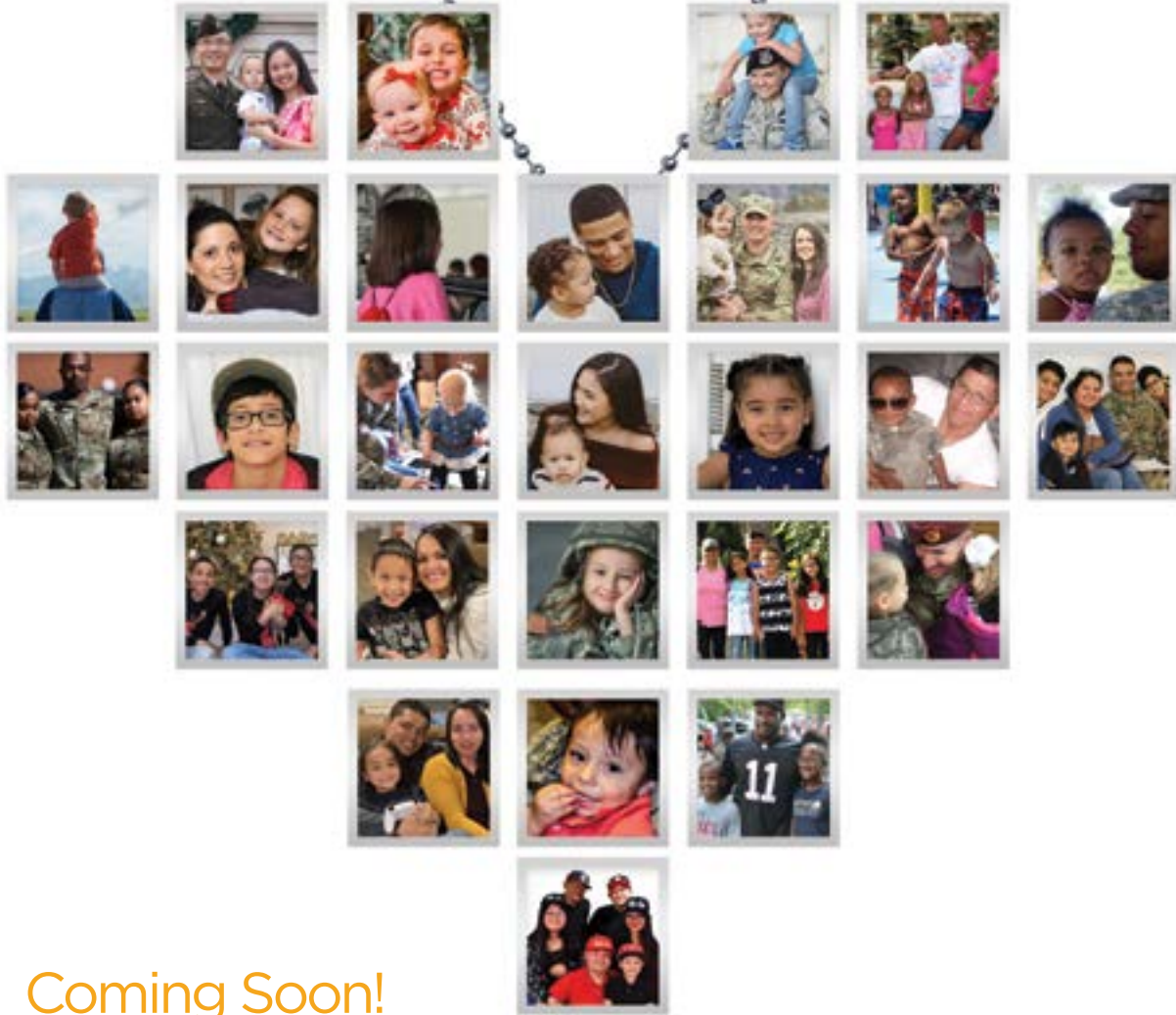
T-shirt \$10.00

Soft heathered purple shirt comes in both V-neck and crewneck. Adult sizes, S-4XL



store.MilitaryChild.org

WE SALUTE
you!



Coming Soon!

MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

MCEC is proud to recognize all military-connected children for their resiliency and tremendous sacrifice. They serve, too.

April is right around the corner. We look forward to Month of the Military Child and hope you will join in the celebration of the most amazing kids in the world!

Stay tuned as we prepare our Month of the Military Child Toolkit and "Purple Up" for Military Kids!