



ON THE *move*[®]

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

Fall 2019 **Transitions**

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.

ACHIEVEMENTS



Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) is a GuideStar Platinum Participant

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Michelle Norman, 2019 Armed Forces Insurance Navy Spouse of the Year, is a Navy wife of over 24 years and mother of a 16-year-old daughter with cerebral palsy and multiple other disabilities. Michelle discusses her hard-fought battle to reform special education in our country.



Dive Deeper

To hear more from Michelle Norman, download the **For the Sake of the Child Podcast, Episode 79: A Call for Positive Change.**

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.

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For most military families, change is constant. Leaving behind beloved friends, neighbors, teachers, places and spaces, military families are all too familiar with saying goodbye, while anticipating the new opportunities that await them. So, too, MCEC is on the threshold of unparalleled change and transformation. MCEC's long-held tradition of hailing the academic and personal achievements of our military-connected children is one that makes us especially proud and is the cornerstone of our mission. In this season of change, MCEC takes time to reflect and to renew our commitment to serve our military-connected youth.

This past July, at the National Training Seminar event in Washington, DC, MCEC commemorated the transfer of MCEC leadership in the military tradition of passing the guidon. The Change of Command ceremony evoked the symbolism of honoring MCEC's highly esteemed founder and CEO, Dr. Mary Keller, while embracing and welcoming our new CEO, Dr. Rebecca Porter, into our family. We wish the beloved mother of MCEC well as she embarks on new adventures in retirement, and we have tremendous gratitude for her wisdom and the love she has always shown for the sake of the child.

Proudly carrying the MCEC guidon, Dr. Porter will demonstrate leadership that will continue to benefit the four million military-connected children with innovative programming well into the future. As a member of the MCEC family, Dr. Porter has been a valued member of MCEC's Science Advisory Board for more than ten years. The dedication Dr. Porter has demonstrated in a 30-year Army career devoted to the study and practice of mental health for military families makes her the consummate standard-bearer.

This Fall, MCEC bid a fond farewell to board members, Robert Utley (2009- 2019), Joyce Ward (2009-2019), and Bruni Bradley (2014-2019). Each has contributed to the success of MCEC programs, initiatives and leadership development in unique and enduring ways. We honor and thank them for their ceaseless service and the many ways they have contributed to improving the lives of the children we serve. Contemplating the promise of a new season, we are thrilled to announce our newest board



members, Barbara Flora Livingston, Rene' Carbone Bardorf, and Major General (Ret) Robert Ivany, Ph.D. Bringing a broad range of experience in military culture, leadership and service, these individuals will undoubtedly move MCEC forward into new areas of growth.

Much as a parent spends two decades fostering the life and growth of an infant to young adulthood, Dr. Keller has reared and nurtured MCEC to become a thriving, formidable advocate of military families and children. She was not alone. Guidance and inspiration from staff, board members, advisors, practitioners, community partners, parents and service members all contribute to a convoy of support to ensure MCEC has all it needs to continue to grow and develop in new ways.

In all, Dr. Keller and the committed cadre of MCEC architects have carefully and dutifully carried out the vision: Every military-connected child is college, workforce, and life ready. In its 21st year, MCEC is at the precipice of new opportunities, with the challenges inherent in growth and change. Poised for the next chapter, we remain dedicated to our nation's military-connected youth and we look to the guiding hand of Dr. Porter to ensure a bright future for those who serve, no matter what missions our Armed Services may be called to complete.



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Character Corner is an ongoing series of 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. In each issue, Dr. Matthews or a guest contributor, explore character from different perspectives, with a focus on children in grades K to 12.



Parents often wonder, “Do sports really help develop my child’s character?” Just prior to MCEC’s National Training Seminar this summer, I sat on a panel at the pre-conference workshop, sponsored by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, that addressed just this question. Joining me on the panel were Dr. Andrea Ettekal, Texas A&M University, and Dr. Amanda Visek, George Washington University, both experts in the role of sports in positive youth development. We believe the answer to our question is a resounding yes!

In the panel discussion, Dr. Ettekal addressed the issue of **sports and positive youth development in the context of military children**. The readers of this column are familiar with the challenges military children face including frequent family separations, added responsibilities while a parent is deployed away from home, frequent moves, and the possibility and, sadly sometimes the reality, of grief and loss if a parent is killed or seriously wounded in combat. Ettekal’s research shows that participation in organized sports makes children feel they matter, offers social support, presents opportunities to lead others, gives a feeling of belonging and builds self-efficacy. Her work suggests that sports build both performance character (grit, self-regulation, etc.) and moral character (integrity, fairness, empathy, loyalty, etc.)¹.

The idea of engaging in sports for fun was addressed by Dr. Visek. Knowing that fun is an important factor in sustaining participation in sports, Visek designed studies to unpack just what “fun” means in this context. Visek and her colleagues engaged children in brainstorming

sessions to learn what the components of fun were from the children’s own perspective. The results were fascinating. Organized into a cluster map, they classified 81 determinates of fun into 11 more general fun factors. These 11 elements included positive coaching, team rituals, learning and improving, team friendships and positive team dynamics. Fun in terms of transient positive emotions (elation or emotional “high”) was not a primary determinant of fun in the context of sports. Rather, aspects of sport that addressed engagement or meaning and purpose (trying hard, learning and improving) were principal contributors to fun in sports. This is congruent with **findings from positive psychology that show engagement and a sense of meaning and purpose in life are more important determinants to life satisfaction than simple, hedonic pleasures**.

Visek’s research also debunks several myths about sports participation in children. **For example, winning was only ranked number 40 of the 81 determinants of fun**. And, smiling and goofing around are not indicators of fun. Rather, children who appear focused and are developing their athletic skills are having more fun than those who joke around. Perhaps the most important debunked belief is the cultural notion that fun for girls involves the social aspects of the game such as forming friendships, in contrast to boys, who are thought to derive fun from competition and skill development. In fact, Visek’s research shows that contrary to popular belief, what is most fun for young athletes does not vary much by their sex, age or level at which they play. School administrators, coaches and parents



ON THE FIELDS OF FRIENDLY STRIFE ARE SOWN THE SEEDS THAT ON OTHER DAYS, ON OTHER FIELDS WILL BEAR THE FRUITS OF VICTORY.
– GENERAL MACARTHUR



SAB

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

would benefit from learning more about Visek’s findings, and children would benefit if these findings were integrated into the design and management of youth sports².

In the end, it is up to school administrators, coaches and parents to craft a positive environment in which children can experience the benefits of sports. Framing sports as an opportunity to build a growth mindset, to engage in challenging and difficult skill development, and to be part of a team with positive organizational values may begin to shape the type of character that General MacArthur had in mind when he said, “On the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that on other days, on other fields will bear the fruits of victory.”³



¹For a more thorough description of Ettekal’s ideas on positive youth development in sports, see Agans, J. P., Ettekal, A. V., Erickson, K., & Lerner, R. M. (2016). Positive youth development through sport: A relational developmental systems approach. In *Positive youth development through sport* (pp. 34-44). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

²For a full list and a more scientific discussion of the findings, see Visek, A. J., Achrati, S. M., Mannix, H. M., McDonnell, K., Harris, B. S., & DiPietro, L. (2015). The fun integration theory: toward sustaining children and adolescents sport participation. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 12(3), 424-433.

³General Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1964), p. 82

Changed Dreams

written by
Judy Glennon

There are so many options for our children after high school. I confess, from the moment my children were born, I thought about who they would become as adults, and what they would accomplish. All of my thoughts revolved around them being the most popular students in school, making the best grades and achieving degrees from top tier universities in programs that they were passionate about. Isn't that what most parents wish for?

As our children grew older, I noticed the subtle differences between each of them and realized that my dream was not necessarily theirs. But we

pushed. As my oldest son neared his senior year, we began to push harder. What college was he planning to attend? What did he want to study? What did he see for his future? At every question, we got a less than enthusiastic response. I had to push him to take the SAT. While his scores were certainly "enough," they weren't amazing, and I chastised myself for not pushing him harder. I should have insisted he take AP classes and more rigorous math classes. I should have limited his on-line game time. He could have done BETTER. But, his score and his grades were enough for him to get into college, so now the questions resumed:

which college? Which course of study? What do you want to BE in life? All this we were asking our seventeen-year-old son, and asking him often.

I work for an organization that recognizes college isn't the answer for everyone. I encourage parents to help their children discover their path and support them as they struggle to find out who they are and what they want to be. Yet, I was doing the exact opposite. I know all the research says the brain of a seventeen-year-old is not fully developed, yet I wanted him to KNOW and to DECIDE his entire future while he was still, in essence, a child. And I pushed.

In the end, we dropped our son off for his freshman year at a state university we had chosen for him six hours from home. Until we visited for orientation a few weeks earlier, he had never been there. In fact, he had never been away from home for more

the following summer by the time he went back to college in the fall. We kept asking him about it, trying to get him to share some enthusiasm about school. All we got were monosyllabic responses.

Finally, he told us he had decided to make a change. He was not going back to school, and he hoped we would understand. College was not for him, at least not right now. He thanked us for supporting him and told us he knew this would be a shock, but he had decided to pursue a career as a firefighter. A FIREFIGHTER? Why couldn't he get a degree and THEN be a firefighter if that is what he wanted? Where did the idea come from? How long had this been on his mind? As our son answered all our questions, we realized that the past two years had been growth years for him. He had matured into a young man who now knew what HE wanted and could weather the disappointment

It is amazing how *letting go* of our dreams for our children and embracing theirs can bring such change.

than a week in his life, and we left him standing in the parking lot of his dorm. I was not ready, but this was the cycle of life, wasn't it? What I realize now is that he was not ready, either. He had been going through the motions to please us. He chose a college we wanted him to attend. He selected his first major because he thought it would make us happy. He changed his major, again because he thought it would make us happy. All the while, my son was miserable.

He began to tell me how lonely he was. He didn't feel like he was fitting in. He wasn't connecting with other students, and his roommates were not turning out to be new friends. He hated college, but he persevered. I kept telling him it would get better. I gave him advice on how to meet and make friends. I sent him care packages with notes of encouragement tucked inside. We talked on the phone, and every conversation broke my heart. He was so sad, so lonely, so miserable.

When he returned home after his second year, I could tell he was detached from his schooling. He didn't show interest in his fall schedule, which by this time were almost all classes in his major instead of the "boring general studies" classes. He was going to have to decide on an internship for

of his parents in order to pursue his passion. Until now, he had been living for US, trying to make US happy, struggling daily under the pressure of disappointing us. The weight must have been overwhelming.

In the days since our son's revelation, I have seen a change in this young man. He is open, he is excited about the future and he cares about life. My husband and I have wrapped our brains around this change and are equally enthusiastic about this next phase in our son's life. It is amazing how letting go of our dreams for our children and embracing theirs can bring such change. What I have learned from all of this is simple, but for me, profound. We cannot dictate the direction our children's lives will take. We must encourage them to find their own path and then support them as they chart that course. Some will know before they are ten-years-old what they will be; some will take a bit longer. Others may start and change careers often before they find THEIR thing. Our job as parents is to be supportive, encouraging and open to the growth that comes from it all. They are not miniature versions of us...they are the very best parts of us! I cannot wait to watch this next chapter in his life unfold.



Purple★STARcampus

written by Michelle Kurilla

The color purple, often associated with the bravery of this country's finest, extends to school campuses across the United States. The Purple Star Designation Program recognizes schools for their diligence in supporting military-affiliated students and their families.

With over 5,000 military installations across the country and around the world in support of the United States Military, the chance of encountering a military-affiliated student or family member is relatively high. Despite this, a mere five states, Texas, Virginia, Ohio, Arkansas and Georgia, have established programs to recognize exemplary schools that support military-affiliated students. "As the child of a military family myself, it means so much to me to recognize schools that are doing an exceptional job caring for Georgia's military students and families," State School Superintendent Richard Woods said. "Being part of a military family is a lifestyle full of

transition and sacrifice. As educators and public officials, one way we can show our gratitude and respect for those who serve is providing a welcoming, supportive school environment for their families. I commend each one of these schools for their service on behalf of military families and children."

For a school to qualify as a Purple Star Campus, it must have a designated staff point of contact who serves as a bridge between military students, families and administrators, and who conducts school-wide professional training ensuring the particular needs of military students are met. A counselor, administrator, teacher or another staff member may fill this role. Additionally, schools must have a designated webpage to connect military families to relevant resources related to transition academic planning and support. Outside the two standard requirements for schools, campuses must also provide evidence they

have fulfilled at least one of the following: professional development training regarding special considerations for military students, a school board resolution publicizing their school district's support for military students and families, or hosting a military recognition event that promotes a military-friendly culture.

Military students repeatedly face unique challenges and turbulence. Watching loved ones deploy overseas to the front lines of combat and experiencing multiple moves add complexity to navigating their school years. At the same time, these students demonstrate what service to our country looks like and what true resilience means. During a Purple Star Campus awards ceremony for Eastwood School District in Ohio this past August, **State Superintendent of Public Instruction Paulo DeMaria proclaimed, "I am here to salute you and to applaud the great work that is happening in this district. -- Our new strategic plan 'Each Child Our Future' says our job shouldn't be to make us all the same,**

but our job should be to take our differences and embrace and amplify those differences to allow each of you to succeed in your own special and particular way that will make you who you are, and that will make you successful in the life that you lead after high school.

The Purple Star Award is a part of that. It recognizes that when a child is part of a military family, that reflects a particular need." Military-connected students bring particular needs and circumstances to schools, but they also bring exceptional assets and experience. Districts and campuses that invest in creating an environment that recognizes these children's strengths and addresses their challenges helps ensure success for these students and for all students.





PATHWAYS TO SUSTAIN GROWTH

New MCEC Instructional System Design Branch (ISD)

Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) has always had a strong commitment to thoughtful and scientifically-backed, development and delivery of programs, products and services. In our quest to maintain these standards and fulfill our mission and vision for military-connected children, MCEC has implemented an office of program management known as the MCEC Instructional System Design (ISD) branch. As MCEC continued to expand and grow, to take on new projects and to constantly evaluate programs for rigor, the need to restructure our internal processes to address future needs became apparent.

“THE MISSION OF THE ISD BRANCH IS TO DESIGN EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF MILITARY-CONNECTED CHILDREN. As such, we are committed to understanding the needs of military-connected children, their parents, and the professionals that support them while ensuring MCEC resources are relevant, reliable and empowering.” The ISD branch includes a data research team, an Instructional Designer, a Digital Librarian and an overall Instructional Design Manager. The group works together to apply an eight-part process to both current and new projects. This method includes planning, analyzing, designing, developing, and implementing, as well as ongoing evaluation and maintenance phases. While these elements were always present in MCEC processes and procedures, the responsibility now lies with the ISD branch. The significance of this shift is in MCEC’s increased capacity over content management and a continued ability to maintain excellence and organizational norms while having the power to evolve, refresh and remain adaptable over time and with new audiences.

Our commitment to conscious, research-based, relevant development and delivery of content is strengthened with this consolidation of oversight and management. This approach to internal structure paves the way for MCEC’s vitality and growth in the coming years. It allows MCEC to consistently meet customer needs via standardized delivery, whether that be in a face-to-face forum or via technology portals, all while remaining flexible enough to incorporate results and emerging research into the revision of deliverables. ISD branch Instructional System Design Manager Helen Mowers shares, “Innovation is a key word for the ISD branch. We are focused on providing high-quality resources that are evidence-based, responsive, and informed by feedback. There’s a wealth of information and strategies that exist, and it’s exciting to think of new ways to analyze, present and implement information that best supports our military children. It’s one more way MCEC brings constant value to our stakeholders.”



THE CASE FOR STATE MILITARY STUDENT LIAISON COORDINATORS

written by Michelle Kurilla

The coming and going of military-connected students and their families throughout each of the fifty states is a reality of the fluctuating nature of military service. Yet, the department of education in each state lacks the consistent, universal support for such students. This support currently exists in the form of a state-level military student and family specialist, sometimes designated as a state military student liaison coordinator.

In keeping with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (MIC3), all 50 states and the District of Columbia are in agreement with standard policy to resolve educational inequities of military children such as graduation requirements, transfer records, and course placement. Upholding the compact ensures military students and their families have the same educational opportunities as their peers, averting delays that impede the achievement of academic goals. State-level student liaison coordinators support the implementation and tracking of programs such as the Purple Star Campus designation, and MIC3 compliance.

Competencies essential to the position encompass considerable knowledge of local, state and federal education policies and administration practices, particularly policies impacting military children, as well as an acute understanding of military culture. In this position, experts serve as analysts, advocating for policies affecting military-connected children. Coordinating among agencies, they can be more decisive in addressing the types of concerns military children face resulting from frequent moves across state boundaries, and the deployments of parents overseas for long durations.

Modeled after the states of Texas and Virginia, the Military Student and Family Specialist acts as a conduit among the state agencies of government, local school districts and military installations. The states mentioned have high military populations and multiple branches of the Armed Forces represented at various locations throughout each state in addition to significant National Guard and Reserve-associated families.



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Military Student and Family Specialists have developed reputations for their military-friendly policies and innovative coordination models at the state and local levels. A key component of that success is the presence of a state level military student specialist.

Transferring from school district to school district - often during the high school years, military children are sure to face unique challenges that require attentive care - available in the Military Student and Family Specialist position. Many military-student-heavy districts across states already benefit from current local school liaison officer positions. Establishing an over-arching coordinating position at the state education agency level would increase capacity, assuring a standard delivery of services and sustainability of programming for district employees and military families. Ultimately, the enormous sacrifices of military families are deserving of an education system committed to quality, excellence, and consistency.

MILITARY STUDENT IDENTIFIER – Implementation –



Every parent wants to know their child counts. Parents want assurance their student's challenges, and strengths, matter to entrusted schools and educators. For parents of military-connected children, a new metric, the Military Student Identifier (MSI), may aid in demonstrating this.

Now in its second year of implementation, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has yielded a more in-depth student data set as well as lessons learned in the collection and application of that data. A component of ESSA is gathering the most precise student education data to capture student performance accurately. Significantly, for military-connected students, the legislation included the MSI as a distinct requirement for education data collection. Recognizing military-connected students as a new sub-group now informs parents, educators and lawmakers. This inclusion also enables the translation of data by student identifier which is essential in the quest to obtain an accurate picture of the successes and potential paucities in programming for military-connected students at the school, district and state level.

The advent of the ESSA during the 2017-2018 school year, revealed a breadth of standards and efforts across states and at the Local Education Agency (LEA) level. Exemplary implementations included both an expanded definition of military-connected students, and a less complicated data collection method. Additionally, these examples demonstrated elements of easily accessible reporting, downloadable in multiple formats, and, most importantly, disaggregated data by student identifier.

The caliber of MSI data empowers MCEC's long-range strategic objectives, immediate programming needs, advocacy, partnerships and instructional design, all of which enables educators to identify specific needs and appropriate services for parents of military-connected, school-age children. It is worthwhile noting that although ESSA mandated the inclusion of the MSI, their definition of military-connected students did not include the children of the National Guard and the Services' reserve components. Legislation in some states, such as Texas and North Carolina, is voluntarily inclusive of children

Every parent wants to know that their child **counts**.

of National Guard and Reserve Service Members. Other states neglect to capture those numbers, potentially omitting valuable data that could demonstrate or reveal the impact of a parent's military service, separations, deployments and transitions on educational outcomes.

Specifically for military-connected families, the MSI requirement is capturing a longitudinal picture of student populations and achievement. Access to MSI data allows parents to advocate for school planning processes based on annual data outcomes.

The National PTA and the non-profit Data Quality Campaign (DQC) encourage parents to advocate for complete and accurate student data collection and reporting by asking school leaders the following series of questions:

- 1 Where can I find more information about publicly reported education data on my child's school, such as report cards?
- 2 How does our school help educators and personnel understand education data and use it to personalize learning for my child?
- 3 Does our school offer professional development opportunities each year for teachers, principals and other school employees to learn how to use education data to improve academic outcomes for students?

4 Does the school or school district provide training or workshops for parents that I can take to better understand and use education data?

5 When our school gets annual test results back, how is that information used to improve student success and academic outcomes?

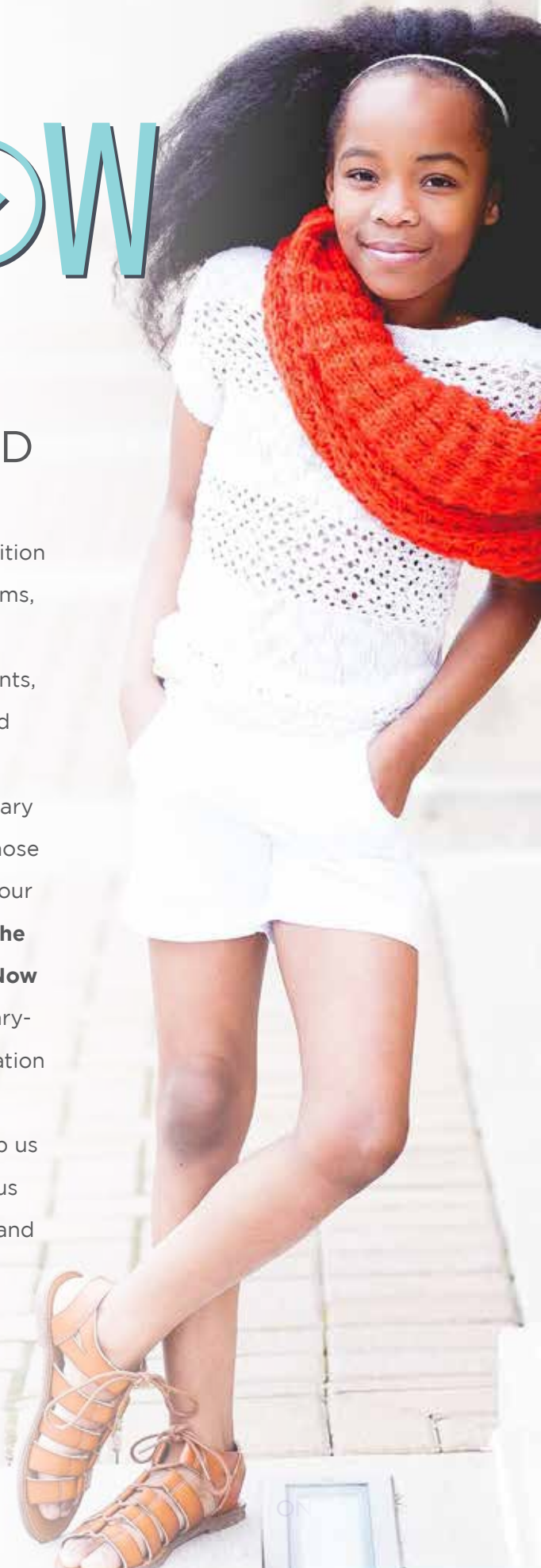
The DQC tracks education data reporting across the 50 states and promotes excellence in the collection, conveyance and utilization of student data. Their website paints a broad picture of the range of techniques and approaches State Education Agencies (SEA) use to meet ESSA requirements. The campaign translates the pros and cons of each state's ESSA implementation and tracks improvements in collecting and reporting. Notable examples include Alaska and Arkansas for refinements in clarity, accessibility and depth and Mississippi for rapid reforms in implementation and reporting.

While the progress on all fronts is exciting, more work is needed. MCEC will continue to push for an expansion of the MSI definition in the ESSA at national, state and local levels. Grassroots efforts by military leaders and parents should motivate LEAs to be thoroughly inclusive in their MSI definitions and to provide comprehensive, clear correlations between student data and the impact of military presence; thus representing an in-depth understanding of military-connected students' academic achievements and educational needs in students' state or district.

MilKidsNOW

SECURING THE FUTURE OF MILITARY CHILDREN TODAY, TOMORROW AND IN THE FUTURE.

Since its inception, the Military Child Education Coalition has dedicated itself to delivering high-quality programs, services, and professional development in order to meet the needs of military-connected students, parents, and professionals. And while we remain laser-focused on supporting military children, 2020 seems like the perfect time to assess the challenges facing our military families and how the MCEC might best respond to those challenges. In order to get a clear picture, we need your valuable feedback, so this is our call to arms! **Be on the lookout in the Spring of 2020 for MCEC's #MilKidsNow campaign!** It will be a fantastic opportunity for military-connected students and parents, as well as for education professionals who support them to sound off about their experiences. We'll also be looking to you to help us spread the word! Let your voices be heard and help us continue to serve military children today, tomorrow, and in the future!



EXPLORING CONVOYS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

The convoy of social support for military kids refueled at **MCEC's National Training Seminar in Washington D.C. July 23-29**. Nearly 900 attendees gathered to learn, share and celebrate.

Admiral (Ret.) James G. Stavridis revved up the opening session by giving attendees keys to cultivate their leadership qualities. "Good leaders listen to others, read, innovate, have values; but at heart, a leader is a dealer in hope," he admonished. He outlined how leadership development is an investment; one by-product is a more capable people. It is also self-realizing in that when you create leaders, they can take over and help develop other leaders. Admiral Stavridis noted "leadership today cultivates the leaders of tomorrow and paves the road for growth."

Over three days, attendees had the opportunity to network, be inspired and pack their toolkits with resources on a wide range of topics affecting military-connected kids including academic achievement, mental health, early development, LGBTQ issues, impact aid and bullying. MCEC, too, gained valuable insight into its role in the convoy of social support as we continue together down the path in support of military-connected kids. Presenters shared resources for creating a continuum of support, scientists provided critical road trip planning tools to apply to support efforts, and networking opportunities at NTS built bridges for convoy members to make progress toward cultivating military-connected kids that are college, work and life ready.

Dr. Toni Antonucci shared the science behind the concept of convoys of social support. She stressed that social support means not only depth and sustainability, but also the ability to shift and reroute across the spectrum of a lifetime, which speaks to MCEC's mandate to serve military-

connected kids birth through college age. For highly mobile children, this has particular applications. Adaptations will be needed to nurture a healthy individual capable of personal success and happiness, but also one that, in return, can support others.

Dr. Angela Duckworth gave NTS attendees insight on developing personal grit and how to cultivate grit in others. Her definition of grit is a combination of passion and perseverance. Dr. Duckworth's research demonstrates that character strengths of heart, mind and will develop through mindsets, skills and environmental factors. As a component of the strength of will, grit is a long-haul concept, not one applied intermittently or in a sprint.

Rosemary Williams, a military advocate, public servant and broadcaster, along with members of the S2S student advisory board, conducted a joint interview with Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant First Class (Ret) Melvin Morris. During the interview, they discussed how to cultivate a sense of well-being and perseverance across a lifetime. Morris counseled, "Love what you do and do what you love. Always do your best, and always continue to learn. For young people, courage, honor and integrity are key character components. Courage comes from a commitment to what you love. Be honest with yourself and others so you can be proud of your actions and can lift others instead of put them down." He urged the students and NTS attendees, "Our legacy is in keeping people free. - Always be asking, 'What could I do?' 'Could I do more?' 'Could I encourage others to do more?'"

Fueled, renewed and energized, convoy members continued down the road on their mission to deliver support to the more than 4 million military-connected kids who also serve.

"Great opportunities to interact with individuals dedicated to the common goal of helping military-connected children."

- 2019 Attendee -



#MCECNTS2019

BY THE NUMBERS



The National Training Seminar in itself serves as a convoy of support for all those who help military-connected families. The networking, connections and information taken away from the seminar are too valuable to pass up.

2019 School Personnel Attendee



3.4 million

SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

718

VOLUNTEER HOURS

43

STATES
+5 COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED

97%

of surveyed attendees
interested in returning
in the future.

862

ATTENDEES

Professionals and Family Members

129

S2S and JS2S
STUDENT
LEADERS

INNOVATION CAN BE AS SMALL AS A POST-IT OR AS BIG AS A MOON SHOT. INNOVATION CAN BE AS CRAZY AS THE IDEA OF PUTTING AIRPLANES ON SHIPS."

ADMIRAL (RET.) JAMES G. STAVRIDIS | KEYNOTE SPEAKER

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS FOR MAKING THIS POSSIBLE

SAVE THE DATE | 2020 NATIONAL TRAINING SEMINAR | JULY 27-29, 2020
RENAISSANCE WASHINGTON, DC DOWNTOWN HOTEL

FOSTERING RESILIENCY IN MILITARY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

 Eric Flake, Col, USAF MC,
Program Director of Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics,
Associate Professor Uniformed Services University



Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF): Policymakers can help military children and their families cope with the stressor of being in the military to include deployment and uncertainty by, among other things, strengthening community support services and adopting public health education measures that are designed to reduce the stigma of seeking treatment for psychological distress. However, much recent research on military children's response to deployment is flawed in various ways, and better-designed, longer-term studies, as well as more rigorous evaluation of existing and future support programs, are required to accurately describe the current experiences of a military child.

Background of Military Children

Military children and their families negotiate the many transitions in military life that are familiar and expected—frequent moves, job reassignments, changing friends and communities and new schools in different states and even different countries. These transitions may be rewarding, with opportunities for growth and adventure; but they may also be disruptive, with changes in routines and support networks for children and adults alike.

The cumulative stress of separation from a loved one in the context of danger is one of the most unique types of stress that define a military child. Children have said goodbye with the pervasive worry that their mother or father might return injured, or might not return at all. Multiple deployments mean that military children may experience this type of separation many times, from infancy to adolescence. Even if they themselves aren't directly affected, most military children know another child who has lost a loved one or seen a parent or sibling return injured from war. These children often know how hard it is to reconnect with a parent who suffers from traumatic brain injury, posttraumatic stress or a serious physical disability. Deployment and its dangers can threaten children's sense of security in their primary caregiving relationship.

About four million military-connected children live in the United States, or about 5 percent of the total of 80 million children. More than two million children have a parent on active duty or in

the National Guard and Reserve, and another two million have a parent who is a veteran. In addition 90,000 children are born annually to active-duty servicemembers. An even greater number of children have been affected by a sibling's military service. In essence, these children serve along with their family members, often without recognition for their contributions and sacrifice. Though some of them live on military installations, many do not; military-connected children are embedded throughout our civilian communities.

Only 50 percent of military children receive medical care on-base, and 80 percent of them attend civilian schools. Currently, 2.3 percent (52,322) of individual service members live in dual-service families with children, about 30 percent of female service members are mothers, and 6.9 percent (155,000) of service members are single parents. More than 100,000 military families have children with special health-care needs. These military children experience sources of stress that the majority of their peers do not.

Foster Resilience by Ensuring High Quality Programs

Over the past decade, communities, military bases, the service branches and the Department of Defense have rolled out a multitude of psychological health and family support programs for military families. Unfortunately, most of these programs lack scientific evaluations that could be used to determine their effect on the target population or to compare their costs against their benefits.

If we establish processes to assess and rigorously evaluate interventions, we can find the most effective programs and the best ways to implement them. Certainly, we must pay attention to intervention fidelity, training, integration into military communities and customization for particular settings and specific stresses. In this way, we may advance not only the care of military families, but of children and families affected by other types of adversity as well. Fortunately, a range of innovative partnerships between military and civilian systems are underway and these need to be highlighted.

“Understanding these individual life experiences remains a national priority, so that we can tailor our support for military children regardless of their situation.”

Foster Resilience by Conducting Research to Understand Military Children and Families

More research initiatives are needed to rigorously evaluate the impact of various preventive and treatment interventions for military families. Assessment and intervention research on military children and families has been identified as a national and military research funding priority. Despite these advances, barriers to conducting research with military-connected children and families persist. For example, we need to streamline institutional review and data-sharing across academic, Veteran’s Affairs and military institutions. More longitudinal studies with a large, representative sample, which accounts for differences among the service branches, would help us pin down how the stresses of military life and deployment affect family functioning and child wellness in the long run. In particular, we need to clarify whether deployment and other family separations in the context of war and combat have effects that differ markedly from the separation effects we see in studies of civilian populations. These studies could also help to clarify the role that developmental cascades play in the military child’s life. Longitudinal research based on the cascade model could help tell us how deployment and military life interact with other factors over time. Such research could also help us to identify critical points during deployment and reintegration when

we can build on positive cascades and interrupt negative ones, as we have done for non-military populations.

Research on military children can also benefit civilian families. Military families are certainly not unique in having at least one parent whose work requires separation from their children. For example, truck drivers and pilots also spend a lot of time away from home. Nor are military jobs the only ones that involve dangerous duties; firefighters and police officers, for example, face danger every day. We anticipate, then, that research on military children who face the stress of deployment and military life will help us develop preventive interventions that can be translated to civilian children.

Foster Resilience by Utilizing Innovation to Better Connect Military Families

Military connected children, particularly those who live far from military installations, can be difficult to reach through traditional program delivery strategies. Taking an ecological perspective, we should develop delivery platforms that engage virtual as well as physical communities. Innovative web-based and mobile-application strategies can help us deliver education, prevention and intervention to geographically dispersed children and their families. These programs hold promise for reaching greater numbers of children and families by reducing physical barriers, easing the burden of travel and minimizing the stigma associated with

mental health services; therefore, they warrant further rigorous study.

A family focus is central not only to military readiness, but also in the larger context of support for our returning warriors. The ecological framework suggests that we should enhance existing systems of care to more effectively respond to the needs of military and veteran families. Community-based systems, including schools, child-care providers and health care and mental health facilities, should develop protocols to identify military-connected children. They should also receive training to provide relevant services based on sound evidence of their effectiveness. As the nation has recognized strengthening systems of care in civilian communities is central to building resilience in military children, initiatives and partnerships have sprung up among local, state and national organizations, and these should be encouraged.

Military life affects children far beyond military installations. If resources are concentrated on or near installations, Guard and Reserve families can be isolated from services and community support. Similarly, veterans and their families are dispersed across the nation. Reintegrating into civilian society often means fewer resources, fewer services, and separation from the structure and identity inherent in military life. Understanding these individual life experiences remains a national priority so that we can tailor our support for military children regardless of their situation.

Resilience and Military Families

Military children and families strengthen our national security. When a military father or mother volunteers to serve our country, their children do so as well. Their mission requires constant change, poses continual and unforeseeable demands, and can be both challenging and rewarding. Even though the stress of military life has escalated in the past decade, military families continue to report high levels of strength and endurance.

As a nation of individuals, families, communities and systems of care, we share a responsibility to support military children and families by investing in research, services and policies that honor their service and sacrifice. The best way to show our national gratitude is to respond effectively to their needs. Clinicians, researchers and community members must work together to understand the challenges that military-connected children face and to tackle the long-term implications for public health. A successful national public-health response for military-connected children and families requires policies that help military and civilian researchers—as well as communities and systems of care—communicate, connect and collaborate with one another. ■■■



ADS, Inc. has announced that **Kellam High School graduate Holly Hertzog** is the 2019 Mission Give Back Scholarship Awards Program recipient. The scholarship is awarded annually to dependents of U.S. military, law enforcement and first responders who have fallen, been injured or missing in action in the line of service.

At Virginia Beach's Kellam High School, Holly Hertzog was the varsity swim and dive team captain, as well as a member of the National Honor Society and MCEC Student 2 Student. She also volunteers her time with Operation Smile and CHKD Children's Hospital.

"Holly is an honors graduate with a record of volunteerism in the community and strong participation in extracurricular school activities," ADS CEO Jason Wallace said. "She is just the type of student and future leader we envisioned when we established the Mission Give Back scholarship. She makes our entire community proud."

Hertzog plans to study nursing at UVA this Fall. She is the daughter of Master Chief Edward Joseph Hertzog III, a US Navy SEAL with 25 years of service to our country.

Applications are now being accepted for next year's scholarship program. Those applying must be high school seniors and dependents of U.S. military, law enforcement or first responders who have fallen, been injured or listed as missing in action in the line of service. Scholarship amounts range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 each.

Full details and application requirements can be found at MissionGBF.org



MilKid Expressions




I am From.

Fiona Stewart

I am from Army boots.
From deployments and reassignments.
I am from the heart of Texas,
The brutal winters of Alaska
The flat plains of Kansas,
And the diversity of D.C.
I am from American Flags,
that bleed red, white and blue.
I'm from saying goodbye and re-acclimating.
From courage and loyalty.
I'm from the chow hall and the PX.
From counting down the days and begging not to leave.
I'm from the stern and the respectful.
I'm from a military dad,
who taught me what I know
from the lifestyle we lead.

*“A social movement that only moves people is merely a revolt.
A movement that changes both people and institutions is a revolution.”
Martin Luther King Jr.*



Reform on the Horizon for Special Education

written by Michelle Norman, 2019 Armed Forces Insurance Navy Spouse of the Year

A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step and I believe a grassroots movement should not be underestimated. In fact, Special Education was birthed in the United States after dedicated parents advocated on behalf of their children. Prior to that, a student with unique learning needs had no right to a quality education. History teaches us that as parents spoke up, landmark decisions were made, laws were passed and hard victories were won. Special Education has come a long way since the first laws were established in 1973, but the battle continues because injustice remains, especially for our military-connected children.

Special education is regulated by federal law, namely the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which has been revised several times over the past 40 years. IDEA provides rights and protections for students with disabilities and ensures these students are provided a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). States are charged with supervising IDEA implementation in public school districts. However, each State's implementation is unique and each state's Department of Education is limited in enforcing public schools IDEA compliance.

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) is the overarching enrollment program that works with military and civilian agencies to provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach for community support, housing, medical, educational and personnel services to military families with special needs. Approximately 12% of our military families are currently enrolled in EFMP. **A common myth is that the EFMP or School Liaison Officers offer comprehensive educational support to exceptional children. The reality is that they do not. In fact, EFMP is not standardized across the service branches. Furthermore, School Liaison Officers are not trained or allowed to advocate for EFMP families, leaving military families to fend for themselves.** Factor in the obstacles of mitigating differences in special education programs across state lines and you have a recipe for disaster.

Historically, special education has been overlooked for military children. In 2011, the Department of Defense studied special education and military children. The report noted problems, but concluded that more data was needed to enable legislators to make changes to improve supports and services. Almost a decade later, the same issues exist. No substantial data was ever gathered. Many are recognizing this critical data is essential to accurately reflect the growing problem. Even in states who participate in the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3), there has not been a substantial focus on gathering such data.

Growing awareness of special education challenges has inspired recent robust efforts to examine best practices among the service branches. One potential solution is to replicate the US Marine Corps EFMP incorporation of special education attorneys. Expanding this highly successful concept to the other service branches would greatly improve support for our most vulnerable military children. USMC families report the fewest special education complaints because they do not have to pay for legal experts to represent them when school districts are not following IDEA. To that point, we need transparency in public schools' use

of the millions of dollars the federal government allocates to them to enable compliance with IDEA. When impact aid is directed into a school district's General Fund, there is no way to know if the very money given for our military children is used by school board attorneys to fight these same families. Auditing of those funds should be of the highest priority.

Despite slow movement from the Department of Defense (DoD), recent advocacy from military spouses is making great strides within Congress, the Commonwealth of Virginia and across service branches, with the goal of obtaining greater special education support for military families.

Last spring, military spouses worked with Congressional leaders to successfully insert the following language in the The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2020: **“The Committee is concerned that many families participating in the EFM Program are not provided consistent educational opportunities throughout each Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move. The Committee is concerned that each PCS is disruptive to the educational plans for the child, as the services provided to special needs children can differ vastly between states and school systems, and that each PCS is disproportionately more difficult for EFMP families, who may need more time and information to make better educational choices. The Committee is also concerned the Department of Defense and Services lack the common performance measures and metrics to assess assignment coordination and family support.”** The Committee tasked the Secretary of Defense with completing a report on this issue by February of 2020. Our hope is this study will provide critical data necessary to ensure all needs are considered and create a baseline for further in-depth studies.

On October 9, 2019, the Congressional Military Family Caucus held the annual Homefront Readiness Summit. This year, they recognized the need to address the special education challenges of military-affiliated children. A panel

of five military spouses with exceptional children representing all service branches shared our children's public school stories and provided concrete solutions to include: educating families on their rights, data collection, EFMP reforms and Impact Aid audits.

Other proactive efforts include the Commonwealth of Virginia setting a precedent by slating legislation for their 2020 session which will appoint a military spouse to the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. Once this becomes law it charts the course for military spouses in other states to campaign for inclusion. Additionally, the Military Student Support Process Action Team provided the council with insightful revision recommendations for the Virginia Department of Education Guidance for Military Families with Students in Special Education handbook which serves as the premier guide for navigating special education in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Special education is a broken system for our military-connected students. We can no longer assume schools follow the law or maintain an awareness of the unique challenges our students face. We must advocate. We must speak for those who cannot. This difficult and uncomfortable conversation has been avoided for far too long, and our military families are suffering. Congress and the DoD recognize military readiness and retention will significantly improve when the quality of our children's education takes top priority. Thankfully, the momentum our military spouses are generating is bringing positive change on behalf of our students – this is our battle and victory is crucial.



Dive Deeper

To hear more from Michelle Norman, download the **For the Sake of the Child Podcast, Episode 79: A Call for Positive Change.**

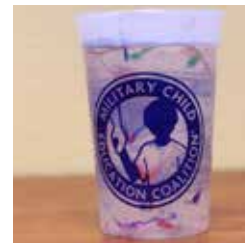
To learn more about the difference between 504 and IEP plans, visit understood.org for details.



Michelle Norman, 2019 Armed Forces Insurance Navy Spouse of the Year, is a Navy wife of over 24 years and mother of a 16-year-old daughter with cerebral palsy and multiple other disabilities. In a long legal battle to ensure her daughter receives the minimum education required by law, she realized that many other families have similar problems with public schools. Motivated by making positive changes for many children, she created a now-approved Congressional study of military children education needs. Additionally, at the national level, she is raising awareness of the issue by participating in the Congressional Military Family Caucus Summit and is one of many military parents actively working for EFMP reform. Locally, Norman enacted change by supporting bills that will help low income military families access an appropriate education and co-founded the support group Parents for FAPE. She is a participating as a member of the Virginia Department of Education's Military Student Support Process Action Team and is lobbying for stronger military spouse participation in organizations that have significant impact on our children's education.

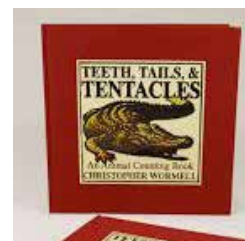


>> FEATURED Items



Rainbow Confetti Cup
\$1.75

A clear plastic MCEC cup with splashes of color that appear brighter when there is a cold beverage in it.



Teeth, Tails & Tentacles
\$0.50

In this colorful counting book, which introduces numbers 1 through 20, the author uses pictures of exotic and familiar animals.



Dandelion Pin
\$3.50

The Dandelion is the official flower of the military child. Why? The plant puts down roots anywhere and is almost impossible to destroy. Share your pride of the military child with this patriotic (red, white & blue) lapel pin.



>> CHILLY WEATHER IS HERE!
Grab these cozy items to stay warm

Soup/Latte Mug \$7.95
Purple Socks \$10.95

The holidays are coming!
Great gifts for friends, family or staff
store.militarychild.org

>> REDUCED ITEMS! while supplies last



Wild About Books GLU Kit
\$13.95

The Wild About Books GLU Kit was developed to nurture children's early passion for learning, instill in them a strong love of literature and reading, and help guarantee their success in school and life.



Teeth, Tails & Tentacles GLU Kit
\$8.95

The Teeth, Tails & Tentacles GLU Kit builds math and art literacy skills simultaneously by asserting that math is everywhere and fine art is accessible and appropriate for all ages.

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.

For military parents, perhaps the most distressing part of a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) is ensuring a seamless educational trajectory for their children. Educational programming and curriculum components, as well as environmental factors for students' overall development as a person, a citizen, and their social-emotional health, must be considered. Increasingly, military families are voicing concerns about the quality of education available to their children and how it influences perceptions of service and the armed services career track. Legislators, educators, psychologists, and caring community members have promoted various models to reduce this stress.

One particular emerging piece of Congressional legislation includes H.R. 1605 (introduced to the 116th Congress, March 2019) which is intended to allow parents of eligible military dependent children to establish Military Education Savings Accounts. Similar to a voucher system, specified funds are deposited annually for each eligible military-connected student. For the first year of enrollment in the program, \$6,000 is deposited into the child's account. In accepting these funds, parents must agree to not enroll their child in a public school on a full-time basis while participating in the program. Families can use the money to pay for a variety of educational services: private school, nonpublic online learning programs or course providers, higher education state institutions, such as community or technical

college, private tutoring, text books and other instructional materials, computer hardware and software, uniforms, and numerous comparable services.

There are passionate and varied opinions and analysis of the benefits and potential pitfalls of this concept.

ESA proponents cite parents' ability to tailor resources to fit the child's needs and provide better educational opportunities regardless of zip code. For families who often feel they don't have choices, increased access to education alternatives not constrained by finances could alleviate stress. On the question of the appropriate use of Military ESA federal funds, The Heritage Foundation Action suggests that extending education choice to military families correlates with the retention of trained, qualified personnel and overall national security. And what's more, the promotion of education choice is a policy consistent with the U.S. Military's broader goal of adopting market-based solutions that recognize service members' talents and personal interests.

Counter-arguments claim ESA will negatively affect schools near military bases that rely on impact aid and federal funding. Concerns that federally funded education programs already serving military children – Head Start, afterschool, and Title I and IV funding – could face a funding reduction. Additionally, private entities receiving funds through the ESA program are not subject to the requirements of the Military Interstate Children's Compact and as a result military-connected students may lose those protections while enrolled in an ESA program. There is also the risk that private schools receiving these federal funds would be free to refuse students based on gender, sexuality, religious beliefs, or even special education needs. Detractors fear Military ESAs

create another bureaucratic layer of oversight on an education marketplace with little true accountability or measures on quality of products or services.

A 2019 survey by edChoice, *What America's Active-Duty Service Members and Spouses Think About Military Life and K-12 Education*, found respondents overwhelmingly support choice driven education policies and programs. Although school choice initiatives are expanding in states across the country, the federal government, which oversees the national defense, is the only entity that can establish an educational choice proposal

like ESAs to be portable for military families across state lines. ESA families in Arizona and Mississippi report high levels of participant satisfaction in those state run programs. As Congressional legislation continues to take shape on Capitol Hill, the concept warrants close attention to determine the future of ESA to help or harm military families and the communities that support installations. The importance of high-quality education choice is critical to military-connected parents and students and demands a continued commitment to monitor progress and expansion through innovative and inclusive solutions for these families.

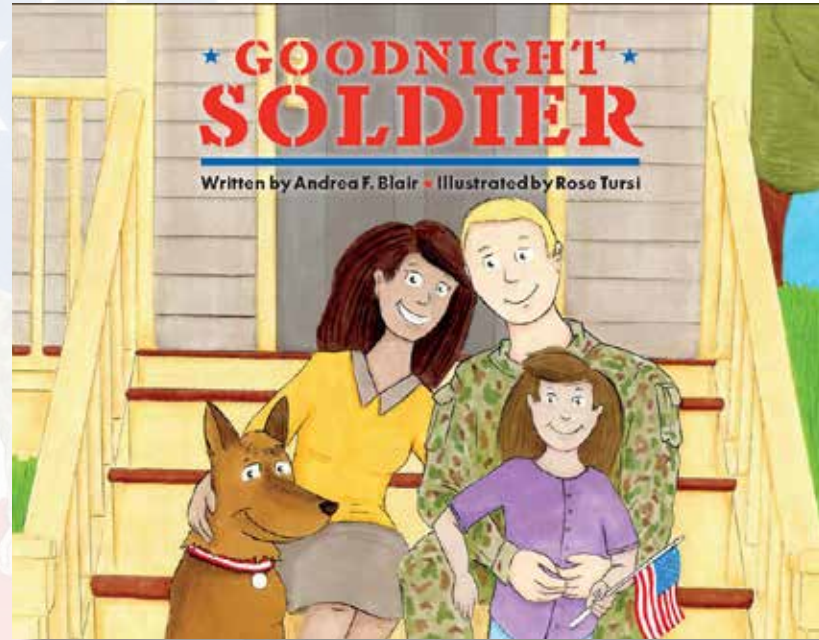
Increasingly, military families are voicing concerns about the quality of education available to their children and how it influences perceptions of service and the armed services career track.



GOODNIGHT SOLDIER

Sharing a good bedtime story brings families together, especially when service members are deployed.

“Goodnight Soldier,” is a children’s book for military-connected kids created by Army spouses. MCEC will receive a portion of the proceeds from book sales. Order your copy today at goodnightsoldierbook.com



MEET THE NEW MCEC BOARD MEMBERS



Barbara Flora Livingston



René Carbone Bardorf



Major General (Ret) Robert Ivany, Ph.D.

“My family has not only a legacy of service in education, but as a daughter of a WWII veteran and proud military spouse of 42 years, I recognize the challenges and struggles of military families. Now the mother of four grown children who endured multiple deployments and grandmother to 11 grandchildren experiencing what service and resilience look like as their fathers step away from the family to serve our country, I know the significance organizations such as MCEC hold. As a continuation of my family’s focus on military service and the importance of education, it was such an honor for me to be asked to join the MCEC Board. I welcome this new avenue to work with MCEC to provide educational opportunity and support to military children.”

“As a military mom, there have been countless times that I’ve relied upon MCEC for support as we navigated grade school thru college. The organization, staff and volunteers have never let our family down. After over a decade of work with MCEC, it is my honor to join the Board of Directors. In my professional experience as a colleague and grantor, I’ve respected and admired the Board as it grew from a small kitchen table group to an organization that is making a difference across the country and overseas. It is my hope that my experiences in government and the nonprofit sector may help bring a unique perspective to MCEC as it continues to grow.”

“Countless numbers of military children have benefited from the tremendous contributions of Mary Keller. All of us are now looking forward to continuing our support for military families with our new leader, Becky Porter.”

**Want to Learn More?
Read full bios
for all MCEC
Board Members
at militarychild.org**




MilTeenChat App Connects Military Teens

A grant awarded to the University of Pittsburgh funded the development of a first-of-its-kind mobile app designed to support military-connected teens. A team from the University of Pittsburgh Schools of Nursing and Medicine (Psychiatry), the Center of Military Medicine Research, MCCG, Pt. Pal, and Bark Technology developed the app, which launched in 2016. During workshops, military-connected teens shared personal experiences with the group and suggested the app should address military lifestyle challenges, loneliness, relocation and transition stress, supporting parents and siblings during separation, educating those unfamiliar with military life, and connecting with other military teens.

Visit milteenchat.com for more!

4 MILLION KIDS



1 MISSION

ENSURING
OPPORTUNITIES
for a GREAT
EDUCATION

SUPPORT

Your donation helps sustain and grow our programs to ensure every military-connected child is college, workforce and life-ready. Every gift, large or small, can make a profound difference in a child's life. Please consider a tax-deductible contribution by visiting [MilitaryChild.org/Donate](https://militarychild.org/Donate)

MCEC Student INITIATIVES

Military-connected and civilian peer-to-peer, student-led leadership, and mentoring programs help ease transitions and create a positive environment for new military students in grades K-12. The Frances Hesselbein Student Leadership Program™, a signature MCEC student initiative, offers an intensive experience for select students to enrich their leadership and team-building skills.

MCEC Parent INITIATIVES

Parent to Parent programs empower parents to advocate for military children's educational and social well-being. With support from trained community-based teams near military installations, parents receive information using the most current research impacting military families. Additionally, Parent to Parent's weekly webinars are an invaluable resource for parents.

MCEC Military Student Transition CONSULTANTS

Military Student Transition Consultants, MCEC's school-based first responders, are the go-to experts on school moves, military lifestyle, navigating the special education process, academics, college and career readiness, social-emotional issues, and conflict resolution.

MCEC Professional DEVELOPMENT

MCEC is committed to delivering high-quality professional development opportunities grounded in research and responsive to the complex needs of military-connected children and youth. Across disciplines in education, healthcare, childcare, and business, MCEC facilitators train professionals to respond effectively to the unique challenges of military children.

Join the Conversation!



@militarychild