

AASA Toolkit: Supporting the Military Child



Guidance for school leaders on meeting the unique educational needs of children whose parents are deployed or in transition.



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Introduction to the AASA Toolkit: Supporting the Military Child

November 2009

Dear Colleague:

Some two million military children have had one or both parents deployed since 2001. Understanding the challenges facing military families -- and the resources available to assist military children -- is essential to meeting their unique educational needs.

From transferring records to streamlining course sequencing, there are steps your district can take to ensure military kids don't encounter roadblocks in achieving their educational goals.

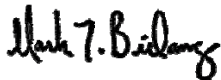
AASA is pleased to present this free toolkit on Supporting the Military Child. The toolkit provides guidance on how you can support children whose parents are deployed or in transition. It includes:

- Top 15 things school leaders can do to support military children
- Fact sheet on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, now signed by 26 states.
- Information about Impact-Aid funding for districts
- And more!

We thank the Veteran's Support Foundation, the Department of Defense Education Activity, AASA Past President Randy Collins, and Linda Spoonster Schwartz, Commissioner of the State of Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs, for their support in the development of this toolkit.

Please send AASA your feedback and let us know how you use the toolkit in your district by e-mailing Amy Vogt at avogt@aasa.org.

Sincerely,



Mark Bielang
AASA President
Superintendent, Paw Paw, Mich.



Daniel A. Domenech
AASA Executive Director

5 Things School Leaders Can Do To Build Connections

By Randy Collins, AASA Past President and Superintendent, Waterford, Conn.

The average military family moves three times more often than its civilian counterpart, according to the Department of Defense. This transiency often disrupts a military family child's friendships, academic progress, and sense of connectedness. School leaders can ensure that during the time military children are in their schools—however short that time—these students have a sense of stability and safety and stay on track toward graduation. Here are 5 things school leaders can do to build connections:



1. Develop a welcome packet for military children. Include information about the mission of the school district, graduation requirements, curriculum requirements, attendance requirements, dress code requirements, immunizations, and school calendar, as well as school-specific information about clubs and organizations, a map of the school, and bell schedule. Also include information about resources for military families, including special workshops, orientations, and transition activities. (See a sample Checklist for Transferring Students on the Military Child Education Coalition website at <http://www.militarychild.org/military-parent/checklist-for-transferring-students>.)

2. Establish a buddy program for military children at each school. The buddy is a friendly face; a key source of information about the school, its programs, extracurricular activities, sports, expectations, and traditions; and someone to sit with at lunch and at athletic events. The Junior Student to Student and the Student to Student transition programs developed by the Military Child Education Coalition are effective models (www.militarychild.org).

3. Encourage parents and guardians to be active in the school. Their presence in the school may provide a sense of comfort to ease their child's transition. Encourage their involvement in the PTA, on committees, and on school and district planning teams. In addition, parents may be able to share some insights into how the school can make their child feel more connected. Publicize volunteer opportunities in school newspapers and on the school and district websites.

4. Promote student participation in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are an excellent way for students to meet classmates and quickly feel a part of the school, so help them explore all the options. Military students may come to the school after the deadline for signing up for activities, auditioning for drama productions, or trying out for sports—encourage teachers and coaches to find a place for them anyway.

5. Encourage parents, guardians and students to become involved with national organizations. Involvement in national organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 4H will help families connect to the community. Association with national organizations also will pave the way for continued connections when the families move to a different community, where the organization can provide a sense of continuity.

5 Things School Leaders Can Do To Promote Academics

By Randy Collins, AASA Past President and Superintendent, Waterford, Conn.

The average military family moves three times more often than its civilian counterpart, according to the Department of Defense. This transiency often disrupts a military family child's friendships, academic progress, and sense of connectedness. School leaders can ensure that during the time military children are in their schools—however short that time—these students have a sense of stability and safety and stay on track toward graduation. Here are 5 things school leaders can do in the area of academics.



- 1. Promote a district policy that supports military students' academic success.** This policy encompasses a variety of issues, including ensuring seniors who transfer during the year are allowed to enroll in classes necessary for graduation; providing methods for students to preserve credits already earned (credit by exam, reciprocity of diplomas); and allowing students in kindergarten to continue their enrollment at the same grade level in a new school, regardless of age.
- 2. Maintain a district webpage specifically for military families.** Include the information military parents need about transfer of academic records, enrollment procedures, graduation requirements, immunization requirements, academic counseling, college admissions, and other support resources. (Examples include the "Military Connect" page on the Geary County, Kan., Schools website at <http://www.usd475.org/military.htm> and the "Information for Military Families page" page on the San Diego Unified School District website at <http://old.sandi.net/parents/military/index.html>.)
- 3. Schedule workshops for educators that focus on understanding the unique challenges of military children.** Topics might include establishing a safe and stable classroom environment, recognizing signs of stress, and sending positive messages.
- 4. Ensure students with special needs have comparable services.** Ensure district and school personnel have the most current IEP and can provide reasonable accommodations to address the needs of incoming students with disabilities.
- 5. Make exceptions.** Be compassionate. For example, allow additional excused absences for children to visit with a parent or guardian who has just returned from deployment, is on leave, or is getting ready to deploy. Understand that student misbehavior may be a response to stress or anxiety about the safety of a parent in combat.

5 Things School Leaders Can Do To Offer Support

By Randy Collins, AASA Past President and Superintendent, Waterford, Conn.

The average military family moves three times more often than its civilian counterpart, according to the Department of Defense. This transiency often disrupts a military family child's friendships, academic progress, and sense of connectedness. School leaders can ensure that during the time military children are in their schools—however short that time—these students have a sense of stability and safety and stay on track toward graduation. Here are 5 things school leaders can do in the area of support.



Offer Support

- 1. Set up transition centers at schools.** Establish a place where military children—and their parents and guardians—can get together to talk about their emotional concerns. Have information about family support organizations and services available at the district office and in each school.
- 2. Hold parent workshops** periodically through the year that focus on helping students make a smooth transition into and out of the school. Invite representatives from local military family support organizations to speak at a PTA meeting.
- 3. Provide counselors trained specifically in helping military families deal with change, deployment and grief.** These counselors should understand the challenges of families who are in transition, who may be reluctant to ask for help in dealing with emotions, and who are hesitant to make connections that they will have to break two years down the road.
- 4. Keep records of the military parents' units and plans for deployment.** Check them regularly and let teachers and other staff know if a student's parent is preparing to deploy. That should be a signal for them to prepare to offer additional academic and emotional support if necessary.
- 5. Work with military school liaisons.** School liaison officers are members of the military who work with military commanders to help school-aged children of military parents succeed in school. They also work with local schools to provide caring adults to enhance the education experience. Educators can work with liaisons to promote parental involvement and ease military children's transitions into and out of schools.

Fact Sheet on the Military Child

Did you know that:

- Approximately two million military children have experienced a parental deployment since 2001.
- There are currently 1.2 million military children of active duty members worldwide.
- Nearly 80 percent of military children attend public schools throughout the United States.
- The average military family moves three times more often than their civilian counterpart.
- The repeated and extended separations and increased hazards of deployment compound stressors in military children's lives.
- One third of school-age military children show psychosocial behaviors such as being anxious, worrying often, crying more frequently.¹
- The U.S. military consists of approximately 1.4 million active duty service members and 810,000 National Guard and Selected Reserve. Active duty military families live on or near military installations worldwide. National Guard and Reserve families might never live near a military installation, and look within their community for educational services, friendship and support.
- A positive school environment, built upon caring relationships among all participants—students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community members—has been shown to impact not only academic performance but also positively influence emotions and behaviors of students.²
- Supporting the military child takes a school-wide effort, and professional development opportunities to inform school staff of the academic and social-emotional challenges military children face.



References

1. Flake, E.M.; Davis, B.E.; Johnson, P.L.; Middleton, L.S. (August 2009). "The Psychosocial Effects of Deployment on Military Children." *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*. 30, 4:271-278.
2. Blum, R. "Best Practices: Building Blocks for Enhancing School Environment." *Military Child Initiative*. http://www.jhsph.edu/mci/resources/Best_Practices_monograph.pdf

Fact Sheet on Impact Aid

Federal impact aid is available to help school districts handle the cost of educating children from military families.

Background

Since 1950, Congress has provided financial assistance to military-impacted local education agencies (LEAs) through the U.S. Department of Education Impact Aid Program. Impact Aid was designed to compensate local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt federal property, including military installations, or that have experienced increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children, such as military and Indian students.



- Impact Aid is a function and responsibility of the U.S. Department of Education. The Department of Defense plays no part in the development, determination, or distribution of resources.
- Impact Aid is an important source of funding for LEAs that educate military children.
- Impact Aid funds *do not cover the full cost of educating military students*.
- Impact Aid funds help to ensure military children are provided a quality education.

Applying for Impact Aid

- LEAs provide parents with a survey in which the federal (military) status of parents is documented, to determine the total number of military-connected students in each LEA. This anonymous information is provided to the U.S. Department of Education to determine if the LEA meets the minimum requirements for receiving Impact Aid funding.
- The enrollment of federally-connected children in the LEA must be at least 400 or 3 percent of the average daily attendance. Thus, not all LEAs educating military children receive Impact Aid.
- Some LEAs may decide not to apply for Impact Aid if they view the cost of doing the required attendance survey as approximately equal to their projected payment.

National Guard and Reserve

- Children with a parent in the Reserve or the National Guard may be eligible to be claimed on the Impact Aid application *if the parent is on active duty on the survey date as the result of a presidential order*.

- Guard and Reserve applicants must have documentation of the parents' status, either a copy of the orders for the individual service member or a service component certification for the unit with the names of individuals.

Use of Impact Aid Funds

- Impact Aid funds are deposited into the general fund of the recipient LEAs and most recipients use these funds for current expenditures.
- LEAs may use the funds in whatever manner they choose in accordance with their local and state requirements and are spent on wide variety of expenses, including the salaries of teachers/teacher aides, purchasing textbooks, computers and other equipment; after-school programs and remedial tutoring; advanced placement classes; and special enrichment programs.
- Funds are not earmarked for any specific school and do not follow the child, but are used to support the LEA as a whole. Impact Aid is the federal government's "tax payment" to the LEA for property taken off the local tax rolls; therefore, Impact Aid funds are intended by law to be treated as other local tax revenue.



DoD Impact Aid

- Since the early 1990's, Congress appropriates a smaller amount of funds for the DoD Impact Aid to support LEAs that educate military children.
- DoD Impact Aid has three components: the Supplement, Children with Severe Disabilities, and Large-Scale Rebasing.
- Supplement funding is divided among "heavily impacted" LEAs in which military children make up at least 20 percent of the enrollment. Data provided by ED is used to determine eligible LEAs and approximately 100 service-wide military impacted LEAs receive the DoD Impact Aid Supplement annually.
- Funding for Children with Severe Disabilities reimburses LEAs for money previously spent on military dependent children with severe disabilities through an application process.
- When funds are appropriated by Congress, the DoD Impact Aid for Large Scale Rebasing Program provides financial assistance to LEAs that are heavily impacted by the increase or reduction in military dependent student enrollment resulting from large scale rebasing.
- Like the ED Impact Aid Program, funding for the DoD Impact Aid supports the district as a whole and does not follow the student specifically.
- Money is provided because of the presence of military students and in the recognition of the unique stresses this population can place on an LEAs resources.

What You Can Do

- Ensure that LEAs are getting as much Impact Aid as possible by supporting efforts to get 100 percent of the military families to complete the ED Impact Aid Survey that helps a school qualify for funding.

Additional Information on Impact Aid:

- Department of Education Impact Aid Program Office
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ose/impactaid/index.html>
- DoDEA Educational Partnership Branch
<http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu>
- National Military Family Association
<http://www.nmfa.org>
- Military Impacted Schools Association
<http://www.militaryimpactedschoolsassociation.org>
- National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
www.nafis.org

Fact Sheet on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Legislation aims to ease school-to-school transfers for military children.

November 17, 2009 - In only 18 months, 26 states, including most with large military populations, have passed legislation to join the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, thus covering roughly 70 percent of school-aged children. This is the fastest acceptance of any large-scale interstate compact in history. While the Compact is not exhaustive in its coverage, it does address the key school transition issues encountered by military families: eligibility, enrollment, placement and graduation. Read on to find out what the Compact does and does not include and how it works.

Goal of the Compact

The mobile military lifestyle creates tough challenges for children who attend, on average, six to nine different school systems from kindergarten to 12th grade. In addition, these children often endure anxiety as a result of parental separation during deployments.

To help overcome these educational transition issues of children of military families, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, working through its Defense-State Liaison Office, collaborated with the Council of State Governments to develop the Compact. A variety of federal, state and local officials as well as national stakeholder organizations representing education groups and military families were included in the creation of this interstate agreement.

The goal of the Compact is to replace the widely varying treatment of transitioning military students with a comprehensive approach that provides a uniform policy in every school district in every state that chooses to join.

Quick Example of the Compact in Action

The following scenario is just one way the Compact can help children of our military families as they move from state to state:

Cathy's father was deployed to Iraq during her junior year, leaving her and her mother in Maryland. When he returned this spring, he was reassigned to Texas where Cathy and her mother joined him in May. While Cathy had passed the Maryland state assessment requirements and just needed to finish a few credits in order to graduate, she was told that she would not be able to complete those credits, plus the four additional needed to meet the Texas graduation requirements in time to graduate in June. She was also told that she needed to pass all of the Texas assessment requirements in order to be eligible to graduate. Because Maryland and Texas both belong to the Compact, the school district in Texas was able to work with the

school district in Maryland to get Cathy her diploma. Thus, she was able to graduate on time instead of having to go to summer school and take tests that measure standards in a state where she had not attended school.

BACKGROUND

What Is an Interstate Compact?

Interstate compacts are a powerful, durable and adaptive tool for ensuring cooperative action among the states. Unlike federally imposed mandates that often dictate unfunded and rigid requirements, interstate compacts provide a state-developed structure for collaborative and dynamic action: developing and enforcing stringent standards, while providing an adaptive structure which can evolve to meet new and increased demands over time.

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children is, in essence, an agreement among member states that they will address certain school transition issues for military children in a consistent manner; however, there are limitations to what it covers. The Compact is designed to resolve transition issues (primarily procedural and policy concerns) only and does not impact the quality of education nor require a state to waive any of its state standards or exit exams. The Compact provisions specifically provide for flexibility and local discretion in course and program placement and on-time graduation within the criteria established by the state.

The Compact is a living document. Each member state passed very similar pieces of legislation that outline agreement to general policies. The Interstate Commission, made up of the commissioner from each state, meets annually and develops any specific rules necessary to clarify the provisions of the Compact. Updates will be posted on the Compact website at http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil/portal/page/mhf/USA4/USA4_HOME_1?current_id=22.60.30.0.0.0.0.0&content_id=248693. The rule-making process is a public one, and families and schools will be permitted input during the process.

What the Compact Does and Does Not Include

Compact provisions apply only to students transferring between member states. If either state is not a member of the Compact, they are not required to comply with its provisions.

The remainder of this article clarifies some of its key components to let military families and school districts know what the Compact does and does not cover.

I. ENROLLMENT

A. Educational Records

When a family leaves a school district in a member state, they may request a copy of a complete set of unofficial records to carry to the new school. What constitutes “a complete set” will be determined in the rule-making process of the Compact Commission. It will probably include those papers needed to enroll the child in the new school such as current schedule, grades and test scores. The Compact does not give parents the right to request a copy of the entire cumulative file. In addition, some school districts may charge parents for providing these unofficial records.

The receiving school of a member state agrees to accept the unofficial student records to enroll and place the student, pending receipt of official records. Once a student is enrolled, the new school will request official records. A school district in a member state must send these records within 10 days of receiving a request.

B. Immunizations

A child transferring to a member state who needs additional immunizations is allowed to enroll and begin attending school. He or she is then given 30 days to obtain the needed immunizations. If a series of immunizations is required, it must be started within 30 days of enrollment.

Tuberculosis testing is not covered under the Compact since the TB test is not an immunization but rather a health screening.

C. Kindergarten and 1st Grade Entrance Age

A student who moves to a member state may continue in the same grade in the receiving state regardless of the entrance age requirements in that state if he or she has already **started** kindergarten or 1st grade in a state accredited school in the sending state. For example:

A student born Oct. 20 started kindergarten in California where a student must be 5 by Dec. 2 in order to enroll. The family moves during the year to Hawaii, where the child must be 5 by Aug. 1. Even though the child would not have qualified for kindergarten in Hawaii, that child may continue in kindergarten because he or she was enrolled already in California. If the family did not enroll the child because they were moving soon, then that child would not be able to enroll in the new school.

This provision also allows children to go into the next grade level (1st or 2nd grade) regardless of age requirements if they successfully completed kindergarten or 1st grade in the sending state.

PLACEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

A. Course and Educational Program Placement

A receiving school district in a member state agrees to initially honor placement of a student based on the student's enrollment in the sending state as long as that school has a similar or equivalent program. For example, if a student was in AP Calculus class, a Gifted and Talented Program, or an English as a Second Language Program in their previous school, they will be placed in that course/program in the receiving school.

However, the Compact allows the school to subsequently perform an evaluation to ensure the child is placed appropriately according to the new school's requirements. This provision ensures students will not be put in a "holding" class while they are awaiting assessment, thus missing out on valuable instruction, but does not take away the new school's right to set their own criteria for placement in programs or courses. In addition, the Compact does not require the receiving school district to create a course or program that is not currently offered or where space is not available, but does require that the district demonstrate reasonable accommodation.

B. Special Education Services

Similar to the above, the Compact requires that students covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) receive the same services (although not necessarily identical programs) identified in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) from the sending state. The receiving state may subsequently perform an evaluation to ensure the appropriate placement of the student.

C. Placement Flexibility

The Compact encourages school districts to take extra steps to determine if they can waive course or program prerequisites where similar coursework has been completed in the sending school district. This will allow students to take more advanced courses rather than repeating similar basic courses. For example:

If a student came from a school that sequenced math courses Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and moved to a school district that sequenced them Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and the student was in Geometry, he or she would not have to drop Geometry and take Algebra II before going back and finishing Geometry. The student would be allowed to finish out Geometry and then take Algebra II.

Many principals report that before the Compact existed they wanted to make these kinds of accommodations but did not feel they were allowed to do so. Now they have that local authority. However, the Compact does not require that schools grant waivers of prerequisites or preconditions; that remains a decision to be made by the local school district.

D. Absence Related to Deployment Activities

The Compact allows students to request additional, excused absences to visit with their parent or legal guardian during deployment, which is defined as one month before the service member's departure from their home station through six months after return to their home station. As with other provisions, school districts are given leeway in determining whether or not to grant these additional absences. If a child already has excessive absences, a district may correctly feel additional time out of school would be educationally unsound. In addition, one state amended their Compact legislation to say that students could not take these additional absences during state testing.

It is hoped that this Compact provision will raise awareness and provide the flexibility to allow families time to reintegrate as needed. It is also expected that families will not abuse this provision and understand the importance of consistent school attendance.

ELIGIBILITY

A. Enrollment

During deployments, it is often necessary for students to stay with a non-custodial parent or someone serving *in loco parentis*. If that person resides outside of the student's current school district, the new school district may not charge tuition to the student. If the non-custodial parent or person serving *in loco parentis* lives outside of the student's current school geographic area and is willing to transport the student back to the current school, the child may continue to attend his or her current school. Remaining in the same school will help to provide much needed consistency for the child during deployment.

The Compact also stipulates that the power of attorney for guardianship given during deployment is sufficient for enrollment and all other actions requiring parental participation or consent.

This section of the Compact only applies during deployment (including deployments for training) of the Service member parent.

B. Extracurricular Participation

Member states agree to be creative in providing transferring students the opportunity for inclusion in extracurricular activities regardless of the deadlines for application as long as the child is otherwise qualified. Although the receiving school must demonstrate they are making reasonable accommodation for military students, they are not required to hold open or create additional spaces. Also, some state student athletic associations are private organizations, not run by the state, and consequently do not fall under the umbrella of the Compact.

GRADUATION

A. Course Waivers

The Compact allows school districts to waive courses required for graduation if similar coursework has been completed in another school district. For example:

If a student has taken Western Civilization but the receiving state requires European History, the receiving school district should evaluate to determine whether the course content is similar enough to count as meeting the state requirement. Another example might be that a student has completed Kansas state history and would not have to take Maryland state history in the new school; thereby freeing up time to take an additional advanced math or science course.

Such waivers are not mandatory under the Compact but a school district must show reasonable justification for denial of a waiver.

B. Exit Exams

School districts also agree to demonstrate flexibility in accepting sending state exit or end-of-course exams, national achievement tests, or alternative testing in lieu of testing requirements for graduation in the receiving state. Mandatory waiver of the exit exams or acceptance of alternative results is not required under the Compact and each state may determine what they are willing to accept or require.

C. Transfers During Senior Year

If a student moves in his or her senior year and the receiving state cannot waive graduation requirements for similar coursework or make accommodations in testing (A & B above), then the receiving school district agrees to work with the sending school district to obtain a diploma so the student can graduate on time. Of course, the student must have met the graduation requirements in the sending state. For example:

A student moves from a state that requires two years of math to graduate. The new state requires three years of math and the student does not have time to complete that third year to be able to graduate on time. If this is a requirement the receiving school district believes should not be waived, then they would work with the sending school district to get a diploma from the sending state.

How the Compact Works

Each member state of the Compact establishes a State Council and appoints a state military education liaison to assist military families and the state in facilitating the implementation of the Compact. Each state also appoints a state commissioner who is their voting member of the National Interstate Commission.

Because interstate compacts are agreements (contracts) between states, states are held accountable by other states in the Compact and by the Interstate Commission. Parents do not have any personal right of action based on a state's membership in the Compact, which means

parents cannot take member states or the Interstate Commission to court. It is anticipated that compliance issues which cannot be handled school district to school district, or state council to state council, will be handled through the Interstate Commission where “extra-judicial” dispute resolution processes, such as mediation or arbitration, can be initiated.

Many provisions of the Compact are written very broadly. Rule-making will clarify some of the procedures and policies but individual cases will always be unique. Refinement and clarification will be an on-going process.

The Department of Defense is not a state and so cannot be a member of the Compact. However, the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) participates as an ex-officio member of the Interstate Commission and Dr. Shirley Miles, director of DoDEA, has stated that DoDEA will comply with the provisions of the Compact in both the overseas and domestic schools.

The Way Ahead

The Compact process is still in its infancy and there is a long way to go before everything works perfectly:

- First, although 26 states have adopted the Compact in a very short period, that means 24 have not and the Department will continue to work with state leaders to bring the remainder on board so all of our children are covered.
- Second, most of the 26 states which have adopted the Compact have done so only recently and are therefore in the initial stages of setting up their state structures and disseminating information to all of their school districts.
- Third, the second annual meeting of the Interstate Commission will take place in November 2009. During that meeting, the Interstate Commission will clarify many of the provisions of the Compact and the procedures for running the Commission based on input from the Rules and Executive Committees. Minutes of the meetings, listings of state councils, and forums for discussing proposed rules will be posted online at <http://www.csg.org/programs/policyprograms/NCIC.aspx#militarychildren>. Further information may be obtained from John Mountjoy, director, Interstate Compacts for the Council of State Governments, who is overseeing the implementation of the Compact, at jmountjoy@csg.org or 859-244-8256.

See a list of states that have signed the Compact on the Council of State Governments website at http://www.csg.org/programs/policyprograms/NCIC/interstatecompact_militarychildren_edop.aspx. Also, see additional information on the Compact at http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil/portal/page/mhf/USA4/USA4_HOME_1?current_id=22.60.30.0.0.0.0.0&content_id=248693.

Q&A: Meeting the Military Child's Needs

An interview with Professor Robert Blum of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: Does deployment have an impact on kids in the school setting?

Blum: It can have a tremendous impact and it can depend on the type of school setting. A child who has a parent in the Reserves, for example, may be in a school where there are no other children whose parents are deployed. That child may feel extremely isolated. We often don't ask if children have parents who are deployed, so at times schools don't even know about it until a problem arises.

Other kids are in Military Impacted Schools, where there are large numbers of children who have parents who are deployed. Those children also face challenges associated with deployment.

Q: What can schools do to support kids who have parents who are deployed?

Blum: The kinds of things schools can do include:

- Ask kids if they have parents who are deployed, particularly deployed in combat zones in Afghanistan or Iraq.
- Be very sensitive to timing issues, such as when a parent may be home on furlough, or when a child may be particularly distressed under other circumstances.
- Reach out to the residual parent [the parent who is not deployed] and see what he or she sees as needed for their child in the school.
- Be sensitive to how current events are taught. Most of us discuss current events, such as the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, as relative abstractions. But children talk and think about it in terms of their father or their mother. It is at a very different personal level. This isn't to say we don't discuss it, but it is to say we need to be sensitive to those kinds of issues.

Q: What are some challenges military kids face when transferring to a new school?

Blum: There are a range of issues.

- Military families and military children are amongst the most transient of populations. It is not uncommon to see kids who have grown up in military families who have been in 5, 7 or 9 different schools by the end of their high school career. There is very high mobility. With high mobility come issues of engagement, disengagement and reengagement. These are stressful for kids.

- Transfer of records from one school to another has historically been very complicated. Delays in transfer of records, which often can take weeks or months, can be problematic and can result in students being placed in inappropriate classes, for example.
- Coming into a school at a time of the year when most people don't come into schools – at the middle of a term, for example – is also very challenging for kids.
- State graduation requirements, such as "you can't graduate unless you take fill-in-the-blank course," can preclude a student who enters the school in the middle of their senior year from graduating.
- Joining extracurricular and sports programs can be another challenge. In a previous school, a student may have been a gifted athlete, but in the new school he or she may not have those opportunities.

So I would suggest that schools need to be attentive to all of these complications that military children face.

Robert W. Blum MD, MPH, Ph.D., is the William H. Gates, Sr., Professor and Chair of the Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Videos

1. Discussion featuring an assistant superintendent, a principal, a counselor and a parent liaison from Fort Belvoir Elementary School in Fairfax County, Va.
 - o Short version (4:39):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dyua5DIQNn4>
 - o Long version (14:58):
<http://aasaonline.mediasite.com/mediasite/Viewer/?peid=8eee7b827241416180eefd07c22119f9>
2. Statement of Support from Gen. Craig R. McKinley (1:08), Chief of the National Guard Bureau . See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akpgwc9XsSU>.
3. AASA Executive Director Dan Domenech talked about the toolkit in his November 2009 video message to members. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXXQj5qUu_w.

All U.S. Military Children Get Online Tutoring for Free

(updated Jan. 27, 2010)

To support U.S. military children with their schoolwork, online tutoring from Tutor.com is now available to them for free. This is a beneficial resource that allows military children to get help with homework, studying and other coursework from a professional tutor anytime they need it, as the service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Children of Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force active-duty servicemembers, National Guard and reserve personnel on active duty in a deployed status, and Defense Department civilians in a deployed status are eligible to participate. If you have any of these students in your school, they can access Tutor.com at www.tutor.com/military.

How Online Tutoring Works

Unlike face-to-face tutoring, which puts heavy scheduling and transportation burdens on students and their parents, online tutoring services allow students to meet with their tutor anytime, from any computer, without ever making an appointment.

Students typically work with their tutor for 20-30 minutes and use that time to focus on a specific problem or issue on which the student has been working. The spontaneous nature of online tutoring means that students are able to get help the moment they need it, before frustration sets in that causes many students to abandon the problem.

Online tutoring sessions are conducted in an “online classroom” where students and tutors work through problems using an instant messenger-like text chat and a shared whiteboard. The most advanced online classrooms offer features like multiple whiteboards, graphing tools and the ability to share files and web pages back and forth. A few online tutoring services even record the entire session so students, parents and teachers can review the session at any time.

Online Tutoring Improves Homework Completion

The most frequent application of online tutoring is to support daily homework completion. Millions of students get stuck on a key concept while working on homework and don't have reliable access to high quality help.

Repeated failure to complete homework assignments can quickly cause students to fall behind—leading them down a path to a bad test score or course grade. Online tutoring offers

Online tutoring at no charge for all Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force families.

- Students connect to expert tutors online for one-to-one sessions.
- Unlimited sessions in all math, science, English and social studies subjects.
- No cost to schools; no afterwork required.
- Eligible students can access the program at www.tutor.com/military

students access to help at the exact moment when they get stuck, and a way to break the cycle of missed concepts and homework assignments.

Online Tutoring Supports Differentiated Instruction

Online tutoring is a one-to-one learning experience that allows for truly differentiated instruction. In anonymous online tutoring sessions, students are not shy about telling their tutors exactly how they need information to be presented. Comments like: "I need to see an example of graphing a quadratic; and I want to put this in chart form" are commonly seen in session transcripts.

Online Tutoring Supports College Readiness

Students who have regular access to online tutoring and homework help programs report higher levels of confidence that may lead to students enrolling in more challenging coursework. Many states see improving student enrollment in higher-level mathematics and science courses as a critical component of their overall college readiness plans.

Online tutoring and homework help programs offer schools a remarkably effective way to provide key academic support to their students. Online tutoring gives students access to help at the critical moment it is needed, so they can go to school the next day, ready to learn.

Tutor.com is an AASA School Solutions partner, which means that AASA has evaluated Tutor.com, highly recommends its service, and has negotiated a special discount for AASA members. To learn more about Tutor.com, contact Bart Epstein, Senior Vice President, at bepstein@tutor.com or by phone at (703) 486-0284.

SOAR Offers Free Tutorials for Military Families

SOAR (Student Online Achievement Resources) is an online program for military families and classmates of military dependents in schools serving military installations.

Students take an assessment aligned to state standards, and SOAR directs them to individualized tutorials to improve skills where needed. Parents can monitor their children's progress from anywhere, and are provided with resource materials.

Learn more and register for an account at www.soarathome.com.

SOAR Launches *Making Sense* Resources

SOAR has expanded its list of resources available to military families with the release of *Making Sense*. Developed by the University of Northern Iowa, *Making Sense* consists of engaging videos and resources targeting math and literacy skills. *Thinking Aloud! Making Sense of Literacy* and *Problem Solved: Making Sense of Mathematics* are available to registered users on the SOAR website under the Educational Resources link; click on SOAR Learning Videos.

Thinking Aloud! Making Sense of Literacy helps students and parents make sense of challenging literacy concepts. Through engaging videos, the inquisitive Knowledge Seekers demonstrate how to examine the thinking that goes on inside their heads as they process or create text. By using *Thinking Aloud!* videos and supplementary resources, students develop the literacy strategies necessary to construct understanding and flexibly apply them to new situations.

Topics Include:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening
- Viewing

Problem Solved: Making Sense of Mathematics helps students and parents make sense of challenging math concepts and procedures. The videos in the series build the viewer's conceptual understanding of mathematics by working through interesting real-life situations. Supplementary resources give students the opportunity to check and extend their reasoning by solving problems similar to those in the videos.

Topics Include:

- Numbers and Operations
- Data Analysis and Probability

- Algebra
- Geometry
- Measurement

For information on SOAR's *Making Sense* video resources, contact:
info@makingsenseonline.org

Flu Season and SOAR

Is your child not feeling well and home from school? Are you worried he or she may fall behind? Don't forget that SOAR can provide your children with engaging online activities to supplement the work sent home from school. Students can search the Skill Resources from their home page to find activities on a specific math or reading topic they might be working on at school.

Parent Tutorials

There are both video and printable tutorials available to parents to assist as they navigate through SOAR. Login and click Educational Resources, Parent Tutorials.

Organizations Supporting the Military Child

The following list provides a sample – by no means a comprehensive list – of organizations working to support the military child.

Department of Defense Education Activity

DoDEA's schools serve the children of military service members and Department of Defense civilian employees throughout the world.

<http://www.dodea.edu/home/>

Military Child Education Coalition

A nonprofit organization focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military children affected by mobility, family separation and transition.

<http://www.militarychild.org/>

Military Impacted School Association

A national organization of school superintendents whose mission is to serve school districts with a high concentration of military children.

<http://www.militaryimpactedschoolsassociation.org/>

Military OneSource

A free support service provided by the Department of Defense offering assistance and resources to service members and their families on many different issues.

<http://www.militaryonesource.com/>

National Military Family Association

NMFA's mission it to fight for benefits and programs that strengthen and protect uniformed services families and reflect the nation's respect for their service.

<http://www.nmfa.org/>

Operation Military Kids

Through a network of community partners, this collaborative effort of the U.S. Army provides program opportunities for youth and connects them to support resources where they live.

<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org/public/home.aspx>

Our Military Kids

Provides tangible support to children of deployed National Guard and Reserve personnel as well as to children of severely injured service members through grants for enrichment activities and tutoring.

<http://www.ourmilitarykids.org/>



SOFAR (Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists)

A pro bono, mental health project that provides free psychological support, psychotherapy, psychoeducation and prevention services to extended family of reserve and national guard deployed during the Global War on Terrorism.

<http://www.sofarusa.org/>

Washington State Office of Public Instruction

A host of resources for educators and parents.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/OperationMilitaryKids/Resources.aspx>

Resources for Supporting the Military Child

The following list provides a sample – by no means a comprehensive list – of resources for supporting the military child.

10 Things Military Teens Want You to Know (PDF)

The National Military Family Association created this toolkit to give the people in military teens' lives a way to help them manage the best and hardest parts of military life.

<http://www.militaryfamily.org/assets/pdf/What-Military-Teens-Want-You-to-Know-Toolkit.pdf>



Best Practices: Building Blocks for Enhancing School Environment

This monograph from the Military Child Initiative identifies four important components to creating a positive, supportive school environment.

http://www.jhsph.edu/mci/resources/Best_Practices

Building Resilient Kids

This online course from the Military Child Initiative is for school administrators, support staff and teachers to help all students meet life's challenges with resilience, focusing primarily on students from military families.

http://www.jhsph.edu/mci/training_course/

Education Resource Center

This page on the Military Child Education Coalition website provides information about state school requirements and resources for 50 states, DoDEA and Washington, D.C. Topics include assessment, curriculum and state standards, graduation/promotion requirements, planning for college, and special education.

<http://www.militarychild.org/military-parent/education-resource-center/>

Educators Guide to the Military During Deployment (PDF)

This booklet, sponsored by the Educational Opportunities Directorate of the Department of Defense, is intended to help educators build coping skills in students during and after a military deployment.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/homefront/homefront.pdf>

How To Prepare Our Children and Stay Involved in Their Education During Deployment (PDF)

Tips for parents and educators from the Military Child Education Coalition.

<http://www.militarychild.org/files/pdfs/DeploymentBooklet.pdf>

Military Students on the Move: A Toolkit for School Leaders (PDF)

The School Leader's Toolkit is prepared by the Department of Defense to assist installation commanders, educators, and families involved in large-scale military relocations.

http://www.militaryimpactedschoolsassociation.org/misa/documents/SchoolLeadersToolkit_0306.pdf

Military Youth on the Move

This website for kids covers topics for military youth, like dealing with deployment and moving to a new location, and everyday youth topics, like dealing with divorce.

<http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=MYOM:HOME:1348575634374662>

SOAR (Student Online Achievement Resources)

A program for military families and the school districts that serve them. It aims to address the unique challenges facing military children in our nation's public schools, while benefiting the overall student population.

<http://www.soarathome.org/>

Tackling Tough Topics: An Educator's Guide to Working with Military Kids

A publication designed to help educators better understand and respond to the unique issues facing military kids whose parents or loved ones have been or are currently deployed, from the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/OperationMilitaryKids/Resources.aspx>

Talk, Listen, Connect: Deployments, Homecomings, Changes (Sesame Workshop)

A bilingual (English and Spanish) multimedia outreach program designed to support military families with children between the ages of two and five who are experiencing deployment, multiple deployments, or a parent's return home changed due to a combat-related injury.

<http://archive.sesameworkshop.org/tlc/>

Tips for Helping Students Recovering From Traumatic Events (PDF)

A U.S. Department of Education guide for parents and students who are coping with the aftermath of a natural disaster, as well as teachers, coaches, school administrators and others who are helping those affected. Although the focus is on natural disasters, these tips may apply to other traumas students may experience.

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/recovering/recovering.pdf>

Working with Military Children: A Primer for School Personnel (PDF)

The primer from the Virginia Military Family Services Board looks at the four major aspects of military lifestyle: separations or deployments, homecomings, relocation, and crises. It includes an activities section designed to help children cope with the adjustments that a military lifestyle can demand.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/OperationMilitaryKids/pubdocs/WorkingWithMilitaryChildren.pdf>