



Florida—Supporting Military Students On the Go!

Challenges of Military Children and Families

Today's military children and families experience unique hardships. They move frequently and must adjust to new living environments, schools and peer groups much more than their civilian counterparts. They live through repeated cycles of separation and reunion. In addition, they must cope with the possibility that a parent will die in combat or come home with serious health problems or disabilities.

Given the extraordinary sacrifices that military personnel make, the children of military families deserve support systems that are specifically designed to fit their unique needs.

When providing educational support systems for the children of military families always remember:

- ◇ Military children are generally resilient. Despite the challenges and hardships, military life offers a strong sense of belonging to a supportive community with a shared mission and values.
- ◇ Military children are often unidentified by school personnel. Military children and families don't always live on or near military installations. With the broad mobilization of Guard and Reserve personnel during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, children in almost every military community in the country have seen a parent deployed to war. Schools and communities often do not know who among the children they serve are military connected.
- ◇ Military children can help us understand all children. Military children are children first. The struggles and achievements of military children and families, and the successes and failures of our support systems, hold important lessons for all students.

Compact Awareness

A recent survey by the Association of the United States Army Family Programs asked military families if they feel local school officials know about or understand how to implement the Interstate Compact. Over 74 percent of the respondents feel that school personnel are not familiar enough with the compact to fully implement it.

To better inform Florida school personnel, Florida's Military Compact Council is planning regional public awareness trainings to help school personnel understand the purpose and impact of the compact. Council members and state school liaison officers will assess local needs and target specific areas and populations in the state. Please send your suggestions and questions to Curtis Jenkins at Curtis.Jenkins@fldoe.org.



Okaloosa County Schools...

Making a Difference—Student Highlights

Graduation Day

One area high school received a 12th grade student of a military family the last week before high school graduation. The student met all requirements for graduation in his sending state. The school district matched those requirements with Florida's requirements, used his state's exit exam and gave him the option of getting a diploma from his previous school or receiving a diploma from a Florida school. He chose to receive the diploma from his previous school. Okaloosa County Schools contacted the sending school and arranged for a diploma to be sent to the high school. This student participated in the high school graduation ceremony along with the other 600 students. He received the diploma on stage even though it was from another school. His parents were very appreciative. The student was happy the situation worked out and was glad that he was not required to take more tests or courses to graduate.

Troubles with Transcripts

A middle school student moving to Florida enrolled with one "F" and two "D" grades on her semester transcript. There was no numerical value attached to her transcript. She was transferred from a Department of Defense Dependents school. The school decided to assign a value of 59 to her "F" and provided support and monitored her closely for the next three weeks with additional tutoring to prevent her from failing the coursework for the year.

Zoning Woes

Parents of three elementary-age students attempted to enroll their children in a school in the north end of the county. The parents were staying in temporary living facilities on the base, which is zoned for another school. The parents stated that they were hoping to purchase a house in this school's zone. To avoid having to transfer their children twice in a matter of months, the district waived the residency requirement for that school (which is at capacity, so zoning waivers are not allowed). The parents agreed to move their children if they did not move into that school zone.

Advanced Scheduling

District teams started talking in June 2013, to a family transitioning from overseas to our school district. The high school student was advanced and would be enrolling in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, but would not move to the area until three weeks after school started. The parents were concerned that the current school didn't even start until a month after Okaloosa County Schools' year began. So, the student would still be on summer break overseas, and school would already be in session. The parents and student were concerned that the student would miss too much of the AP instruction. The district team worked with the high school to provide the AP books and syllabus to the student, and the student was able to work on her assignments while in transit. The teacher established a rapport with the student via email so the student could ask questions and get assistance during the transition. The student enrolled three weeks into the school year and was not behind in her classroom assignments. The family was very appreciative.

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RESOURCES

[Florida Military Families](#)

The Florida Department of Education has a number of timely resources for military families transitioning in and out of Florida public schools.

[Strengthening Our Military Families](#)

This study captures the unprecedented steps taken by the federal government to improve care and support to our military families. This enduring effort looks to address immediate needs and then to develop long-term, sustainable programs.

[SAMHSA-Military Families](#)

This resource provides help for military families and veterans dealing with behavioral health issues associated with military service. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers support through technical assistance for state, territory and tribal behavioral health systems serving service members, veterans and their families.

[The Education Directory for Children with Special Needs](#)

The Education Directory for Children with Special Needs provides military families with children with special needs the information they need to make informed assignment decisions and easier transitions.

[MIC3](#)

This resource is the official site for the Interstate Military Children's Compact Commission.

Celebrating the Month of the Military Child

Florida's Interstate Compact Council joins the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and the military community in celebrating April as the Month of the Military Child. Throughout the month, DoDEA will encourage schools to plan events that recognize and show appreciation for our military children. We know that military children face many challenges that are unique to their situation, such as having a parent deployed for extended periods of time and moving frequently. Deployments and family separations can be stressful times for children.

DoDEA schools are part of the wide community support network available to families. Teachers, counselors and psychologists guide honest and open discussions with students to help with easier transitions and adjustments connected with military children. The most important contribution is to remain focused on the educational mission and provide a stable environment for the children in our schools especially during these times of stress.

This year, we're inviting everyone to "Purple Up!" which is an annual campaign created four years ago by Operation Military Kids (OMK). OMK is an organization dedicated to military children. During the month of April they encourage community awareness and support of military children. OMK also asks the nation to join together for an event they call "Purple Up! For Military Kids" and wear purple on a designated day in April.

The DoDEA is encouraging everyone to wear purple on April 30th as a visible way to show support and thank military children for their strength and sacrifices. OMK chose purple because it is the color that symbolizes all branches of the military, as it is the combination of Army green, Coast Guard blue, Air Force blue, Marine red and Navy blue.

JOIN ALL OF DoDEA AND **PURPLE UP!** BY WEARING PURPLE ON **APRIL 30th** AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR MILITARY CHILDREN.

Adapted from DoDEA promotion.

Did you know

According to the Compact

According to SEC. 5.105 "Absence as related to deployment activities," a student whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined by the compact, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from or immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted additional excused absences at the discretion of the Local Education Agency (LEA) superintendent or head of the school to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian relative to such leave or deployment of the parent or guardian.

Notwithstanding the above, the LEA superintendent or head of school may provide a maximum number of additional excused absences. Remember that an excused or unexcused absence represents a loss of instructional time for students and requires additional support to the student.



Military Families... Are Our Neighbors

Ever wonder where military personnel are stationed in Florida? You may think they are assigned to one of the major installations or bases, but that is not always true. National Guard and reserve military personnel frequently live far from a military installation and the support services they need. These citizen soldiers and their families encounter many unique challenges and need our understanding and support. To help you get to know your neighbors, we have provided a link to a map of military bases in Florida, a map of National Guard units in Florida and a map of Military Reserve units in Florida at http://sss.usf.edu/resources/format/pdf/Military_Bases.pdf.