

Summary of Oregon military-connected members: (data current as of 2019)

Service Member Population:

DOD Active Duty: 3,078

Coast Guard: 1,030

Reserve: 2,036

National Guard: 6,724

Veteran: 593,400 (Medically retired through 64 with school age children = 348,745)<sup>1</sup>

America's military-connected children experience academic and social-emotional challenges as they relocate to new schools due to a parent's change in duty station. These transitions create challenges since schools often have differing cultures, curricula, standards, course offerings, schedules and graduation requirements. As a result, many students struggle to stay on track to be college-, workforce- and life-ready. This has the potential to impact military readiness by degrading retention of service members and indirectly depressing the economic viability of local communities and states that host military installations.

### Evolution of the Purple Star Program

The Purple Star Program came about as a result of two things; the Military Interstate Compact for Children and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act.

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Defense (US DoD) Office of Personnel and Readiness, in cooperation with the Council of State Governments (CSG) and National Center for Interstate Compacts, drafted the *Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children* to address some of the educational challenges transitioning children of military families encountered. In 2007, the advisory group finalized the model statute language which was promoted by the US DoD as one of their key priorities for military families, and through the DSLO advocacy, was adopted by state legislatures within 6 years.

While not exhaustive in its coverage, it does address the key issues encountered by military families: eligibility, enrollment, placement, and graduation. In addition, the Compact provides for a detailed governance structure at both the state and national levels with built-in enforcement and compliance mechanisms. The goal of the Compact is:

- replace the widely varying policies affecting transitioning military students.
- leverages consistency.
- provides a consistent policy in every school district and in every state.
- addresses key educational transition issues encountered by military families including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility, and graduation.
- All 50 states and the District of Columbia have signed the Interstate Compact

Applies to:

- Children of active-duty members of the uniformed services
- National Guard and Reserve on active-duty orders,
- Commissioned officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and,
- United States Public Health Service (USPHS), and,
- Members or veterans who are medically discharged or retired also,
- Covers students of members who perish on active duty for a period of one year following their death.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Measuring Communities, Oregon Snapshot, University of Purdue

<sup>2</sup> 2022 Annual Report, Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3)

The Military Student Identifier was established in 2015 ESSA. It is the tool to collect data to establish support programs like Purple Star Schools

The Military Student Identifier indicates:

- a student with a parent who is a member of the Armed Forces on active duty
  - defined in section 101(a)(1)(4) of title 10, United States Code)
  - National Guard and reserve forces (as defined in section 101(d)(5)
  - \*Schools also identify veterans and retirees for extra support services.
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- How does the MSI help students?
  - Can evaluate programs or initiatives designed to support MCS
  - Can reveal the impacts MCS have on schools or civilian students
  - Can be integrated into existing school data systems
  - Can also help to capture longitudinal effects of military-connectedness
  - Can evaluate education opportunities and outcomes between military-connected students

(branch, duty status, rank, etc.)<sup>3</sup>

The Purple Star School designation is the brainchild of Pete LuPiba, Ohio's Commissioner for [Military Children Interstate Compact Commission](#) (MIC3). In 2016, he gathered community leaders and those most invested in the military-connected students to discuss the best way a school could show their commitment to military families. Born was the Purple Star School designation.

MCEC is the national advocate for Purple Star Schools. As of November 2020, there are 37 states with Purple Star legislation and 6 more with proposed.

A Purple Star School designation lets military parents know, whether they are on active duty, in the National Guard and Reserves, or veterans, that a school is dedicated to helping their child gain the educational skills necessary to be college-, workforce- and life-ready. Additionally, it signals that a school supports the social and emotional wellbeing of military kids adjusting to new schools and the absence of a parent during deployment.

Purple Star School programs are typically established by a state's education authority or by an individual school district. A Purple Star School program establishes an application process inviting state or district-wide K-12 public and/or charter schools to seek designation as a Purple Star School. The state or district sets the requirements individual schools must meet for designation. There is no one-size-fits all for these programs, however, MCEC recommends four study-driven requirements.<sup>4</sup>

These include requiring that schools:

1. Designate a staff point of contact for military students and families. The individual can be a counselor, administrator, teacher, or other staff member.
2. Establish and maintain a dedicated page on its website featuring information and resources for military families.
3. Maintain a student-led transition program.
4. Provide professional development for additional staff on special considerations for military students and families.

Components of the Purple Star Designation strive to reduce the burdens of the most common military-lifestyle demands on students including frequent relocation. Research MCEC conducted with the Center for Public Research and Leadership at Columbia University in 2021 reveals that parents and teachers alike see the academic and social-emotional benefits of Purple Star designation. More than 70% of surveyed parents indicated that Purple Star Designation status

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<sup>3</sup> Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), December 10, 2015

<sup>4</sup> The four requirements originate from MCEC's 2001 Secondary Education Transition Study (commissioned by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center).

was important or very important to the school selection process for their child(ren). Purple Star Designation programs are a critical opportunity for schools and their state governing bodies to demonstrate their commitment and capacity to serve military-connected students.

A Purple Star School program offers states the following benefits:

- All states have obligations under the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, a statewide Purple Star School program shares the Compact's goals.
- It helps protect state revenue. The U.S. military is now including the quality of K-12 schools near military facilities as part of its calculus in deciding future basing and personnel decisions. Communities with Purple Star Schools can help retain bases and attract military families who bring economic benefits to local communities.
- Purple Star Schools foster diverse, inclusive and supportive school environments through their initiatives and trainings, which serves all students, regardless of military connection.

Finally, I'd like to conclude with stories from the field, those military parents and kids who are affected the most when it comes to the military lifestyle.

Parent

"As an active duty military family, we have moved with our children 6 times. We have a 7<sup>th</sup> grader and a 5<sup>th</sup> grader currently, so they have both been in multiple schools already as we have moved every 1-2 years. When we got our most recent set of orders to Fort Sill, I began with looking at the schools in Oklahoma to determine where we would choose to live. Through my research, I found that one of the elementary schools for the area was a Purple Star schools. When I looked at what that meant, I felt that they really were committed to addressing the transition challenges of a military child and that it would be a school where my child was understood and that she would be taken care of. The teachers are educated on military-connected children challenges, the students are focused on the inclusion of new students and helping them acclimate, and the parents are included and celebrated regularly. Our transition into the school was the smoothest we have every had because they had a designated military liaison who gave us all the information we needed. It made the choice of where she would attend school an easy decision, and we have felt that it was absolutely the right choice."

Student (s)

When asked why attending a Purple Star School was important to them, students shared comments like:

"Because attending a purple star school means that you could get more academic help and support."

"I love the help I get at this school and know I'll get it at any purple star campus."

"The staff here is more understanding and helpful than I could ever have asked for. They are patient and provide the stability needed for me to succeed."

"The staff is very helpful in providing stability and assistance when emotions run high. They seem to understand my needs as a military child."

"I want to continue having the same amazing resources and support that was provided by [my previous school]"

"I am working on a passion project for my school called the Genius Project. My goal for this project is to obtain the purple ribbon for my school. As a military child, this is important and impactful for me and my siblings. I was looking through the requirements and I noticed that you need to have professional training for staff members. I had a couple questions about this professional development that I was hoping you would be able to answer.

What staff members need to attend this to make us competitive for the purple ribbon?

What session do those select staff members need to attend in order complete that requirement?

Thank you so much I appreciate what you are doing with your organization" This from a high school student!

School Professional

“I am a district/school military liaison and my job is to identify and support our military connected students, I have a new student who came to me talk about her recent move to \_\_\_\_\_. She has been telling me about this wonderful program that helped her old school earn a Purple Star Award. Our state just created this PSS program but we don’t have the leadership part, do you know what she is talking about? How does it work with PSS? Can I let you talk to her and then we can figure what I need to next to get our designation for this school year?” From a middle school student!

Thank you for your inquiry about Purple Star Designation programming. We are inspired by your commitment to supporting military-connected students and families. As you have additional questions, please reach out to Anna Startzell, our Director of Government Relations. She’d be happy to set up additional meetings or provide resources.

**Anna Startzell** | Director of Government Relations

Military Child Education Coalition

[p] 254.953.1923 | ext. 1140

Thank you for having me, do you have any questions?