

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Patrick O'Donnell, Chair

ACR 53 (Ward) – As Amended March 29, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Purple Star School Program

**SUMMARY:** Requests the California Department of Education (CDE) to establish and manage a program designating schools as Purple Star Schools when schools support military connected students in specified ways, and requests the CDE to use the Military Child Education Coalition for resources and information regarding establishing and managing a Purple Star School Program in California. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requests the CDE to establish and manage a program designating Purple Star Schools in California.
- 2) Requests the CDE to ensure that, before being designated a Purple Star School, a school, at a minimum:
  - a) Designate a staff member as a point of contact for military-connected pupils and families;
  - b) Establish and maintain a dedicated page on its website or a location in the school's administrative office featuring information and resources for military families;
  - c) Maintain a pupil-led transition program that includes a pupil transition team coordinator; and
  - d) Provide professional development for staff members on special issues related to military-connected pupils and families.
- 3) Requests the CDE to use the Military Child Education Coalition for resources and information regarding establishing and managing a Purple Star School Program in California.
- 4) Resolves that the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI).
- 5) States that a Purple Star School is a public school that is committed to supporting the unique educational and social-emotional needs of military-connected pupils.
- 6) States that Purple Star Schools recognize that military-connected pupils must move whenever their active duty parent receives a relocation order and will uproot and change schools far more often than their civilian peers.
- 7) States that military-connected pupil can expect to move six to nine times between kindergarten and their high school graduation.

- 8) States that a Purple Star Schools acknowledge that every military-connected pupil leaves behind friends and support networks and may be dealing with a parent who is away from home on deployment.
- 9) States that several states have begun to recognize Purple Star Schools, including Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.
- 10) States that it is important that California schools share this commitment to military-connected pupils when they relocate to a new school district.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Defines “a pupil who is a child of a military family” as a school-aged child who is living in the household of an active duty service member. This is the same definition used in current law for purposes of Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.
- 2) Requires local educational agencies (LEAs), including charter schools, to exempt a student of a military family who transfers between schools any time after the completion of the student’s second year of high school from all coursework and other requirements that are in excess of state graduation requirements, unless the school district makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the school district’s graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student’s fourth year of high school.
- 3) Requires that, if an LEA determines that a student of a military family is reasonably able to complete graduation requirements within the students’ fifth year of high school, the LEA:
  - a) Inform the student of their option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the school district’s graduation requirements;
  - b) Inform the student about how remaining in school for a fifth year to complete the graduation requirements will affect the student’s ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution;
  - c) Provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; and
  - d) Permit the student to stay in school for a fifth year to complete the graduation requirements.
- 4) Requires that, within 30 calendar days of the date that a student who is a child of a military family may qualify for this exemption, the LEA notify the student and the student’s parent or guardian of the availability of the exemption.
- 5) Requires that, if the LEA fails to provide this notice, the student of a military family remain eligible for the exemption.
- 6) Places other requirements on LEAs intended to ensure that students are not required to graduate before the end of their fourth year of high school, that students are aware of the impact of the waived graduation requirements on postsecondary educational institution

admission, and that the exemption continues to be in effect even if the student no longer meets the definition of a child of a military family.

- 7) Prohibits a student from transferring solely to qualify for the exemption.
- 8) Requires an LEA to accept coursework satisfactorily completed by a student of a military family while attending another public school even if the student did not complete the entire course, and requires that the student be issued full or partial credit for work completed.
- 9) Prohibits a student who is a child of a military family from being required to take a course if the student has satisfactorily completed the entire course in another school.
- 10) Prohibits a student who is a child of a military family from being prevented from retaking or taking a course to meet the eligibility requirements for the California State University or the University of California.
- 11) Requires that a student who is the child of a military family be allowed to remain in his or her school of origin, and to matriculate with his or her peers in accordance with the established feeder patterns of school districts.
- 12) Establishes the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which addresses educational transition issues of children of military families.
- 13) Prohibits a school district of residence from prohibiting the transfer of a student who is a child of an active military duty parent to a school in any school district, if the school district to which the parents of the student applies approves the application for transfer.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** The author states, “Military members make up one of the largest workforces in the United States, with approximately 1.3 million active duty service member and 818,000 individuals serving in the National Guard and Reserves. Roughly 40% of these service members are parents or guardians to two or more minor children and due to the frequent relocations required of military personnel, on average, military-connected children move between six and nine times between kindergarten and high school graduation. As they transition between schools, these students must adapt to varying cultures, curricula, standards, course offerings, schedules, and graduation requirements. As a result, military connected students often face unique academic and social-emotional challenges.

ACR 53 would request the CDE to establish and manage a Purple Stars School Award to acknowledge public schools that meet certain requirements aimed at the academic success and wellbeing of school-aged children of military families. The designation of schools as Purple Star Schools will let military parents know, whether they are on active duty or in the National Guard and Reserves, that a school is dedicated to helping their child gain the educational skills necessary to be college-, workforce- and life-ready. It signals that a school also supports the social and emotional wellbeing of military children adjusting to new schools and the absence of a parent during deployment.”

***Purple Star Schools.*** This resolution requests the CDE to establish and manage a program designating schools as Purple Star Schools when schools support military connected students in specified ways. A review of Purple Star schools conducted by the Center for Public Research and Leadership at Columbia University found that while most Purple Star schools and districts already had programming for military-families in place before seeking designation, staff and faculty report that they have benefitted from the Purple Star application process and the encouragement to refine and expand programming related to the program designation requirements. The study also found that of the core designation requirements, selecting a point-of-contact, training more staff and faculty, and establishing new student transition programs are commonly cited as the highest-impact activities.

***California School Recognition Program.*** This resolution requests the CDE to establish and manage a program designating schools as Purple Star Schools when schools support military connected students in specified ways. If the CDE were to do so this recognition would become one of a number of recognition programs known collectively as the California School Recognition Program (CSRP). Begun in 1986, it now recognizes numerous types of schools, including:

- California Exemplary Arts Education
- California Exemplary Physical Activity and Nutrition Education
- California Exemplary Career Technical Education
- California Exemplary Districts
- California Green Ribbon Schools
- California Teachers of the Year
- Civic Learning Award
- Classified School Employees of the Year
- Model Continuation High School Recognition Program
- National Blue Ribbon Schools
- National Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Distinguished Schools

According to the CDE, the award programs recognize sustained student achievement, excellence in environmental program design, or superior job performance, and community involvement. CSRP Awardees are recognized at a CSRP Awards Ceremony held during the spring. These programs have been developed voluntarily by the SPI over time, not in statute, and are supported by private funds. Nothing in current law precludes the current SPI from developing a recognition program such as the one proposed by this resolution.

***Students of military families in California.*** According to the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), California is home to the largest number of active duty military in the country, with 155,000 active duty personnel, representing 13.5% of the national force. According to the author, as of August 2017, there were 56,127 children attending K-12 schools in California, who were affiliated with 30 different military commands throughout the state, with the largest concentration in San Diego County. The DOD has policies in place to assist with minimizing the effects of school moves. Military families usually move at predictable times of the year typically in the summer months when school is out, with a smaller number moving during the winter holiday break.

***Effect of high mobility on academic success.*** According to the DOD, children from military families move an average of six to nine times during a school career, and 33% of these children are in transition annually. A 2012 report by the Military Child Education Coalition for the U.S. Army found that “graduation requirements, tiered diplomas, prerequisite courses, grading variations, and state high stakes testing are all challenges to the student in transition.”

Numerous studies indicate that student mobility is associated with poor educational outcomes. One meta-analysis (Mehana, 2004) on the effects of school mobility on reading and math achievement in the elementary grades found the equivalent of a 3–4 month performance disadvantage in achievement. Another (Reynolds, 2009) found that frequent mobility was associated with significantly lower reading and math achievement by up to a third of a standard deviation, and that students who moved three or more times had rates of school dropout that was nearly one-third of a standard deviation higher than those who were school stable. One longitudinal study (Temple, 1999) found that half of the one year difference between mobile and non-mobile students could be attributed to mobility, and that it is “frequent, rather than occasional, mobility that significantly increases the risk of underachievement.” And another longitudinal study (Herbers, 2014) found that students who experience more school changes between kindergarten and twelfth grade are less likely to complete high school on time, complete fewer years of school, and attain lower levels of occupational prestige, even when controlling for poverty. Results of this study indicated more negative outcomes associated with moves later in the grade school career, particularly between fourth and eighth grade.

***Knowledge gap on academic outcomes for students of military families.*** There is very little published data regarding the academic performance of students from military families. One area of inquiry has been the effect of long parental deployments on students’ academic performance, and one study (Richardson, 2011) found that students whose parents have been deployed 19 months or longer have modestly lower scores across all subjects and irrespective of the rank, component, seniority, or gender of the parent. Another study (Engel, 2010) of students in DOD schools found that long deployments and deployments during the month of testing had the most adverse effects, and that evidence suggests that these effects may persist for several years. A 2011 policy brief from the University of Southern California School of Social Work notes that “Living with fear that a parent – or another relative – serving in the military is in danger can traumatize a child to the point where it significantly affects their ability to function in the school environment.”

Other research has focused on risk factors which are associated with poor academic outcomes. One study (Sullivan, 2015), using data from the 2013 administration of the California Healthy Kids Survey, found that students from military families had greater odds of experience with substance use, physical violence, nonphysical harassment than their peers. Another study (Gilreath, 2016) using the same data set found that California military-connected youth are at a higher risk for suicidal ideation, plans, attempts, and attempts requiring medical care because of suicidal behaviors.

***First state achievement data for military students as a subgroup.*** The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015, requires states to identify military students with a unique military identifier, in order to allow military student data to be analyzed as a separate subgroup. The identifier is intended to help assess military student performance, as well as to shed light on the relationship between military life and dependent child development.

Starting in the 2018-19 school year, state summative assessment data in English language arts and mathematics is disaggregated for students from military families as a separate group. These data show that, for the 2018-19 school year, 60% of military students met or exceeded standards in English language arts, compared to a statewide average of 51%. In mathematics, 48% of military students met or exceeded standard, compared to a statewide average of 40%.

***Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.*** The DOD, in collaboration with the National Center for Interstate Compacts and the Council of State Governments, developed the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Compact) to address educational transition issues of children of military families.

The goal of the Compact is to ensure that the children of military families are afforded the same opportunities for educational success as other children, and are not penalized or delayed in achieving their educational goals. States participating in the Compact work to coordinate graduation requirements, transfer of records, course placement, and other administrative policies. According to the DOD, all 50 States and the District of Columbia participate in the interstate compact. California adopted the Compact in the state's Education Code in 2009. The Compact addresses a number of topics, including:

- Timely enrollment
- Transfer of school records
- School placement
- Eligibility for enrollment and participation in school programs, athletics, and extracurricular activities
- On-time graduation

A 2014 CDE review of the implementation of the Compact in California found variations in implementation across districts. The report suggested that California undertake a more comprehensive effort to ensure that school district personnel and military families are maximally familiar with the provisions of the Compact so that its provisions are applied consistently. The report also found that California's membership in the Compact has substantially aided both school districts and military families by alleviating many of the educational difficulties military children encounter in their frequent moves from a school in one state to a school in another state.

***Arguments in support.*** The U.S. Department of Defense writes, "The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children (the Compact), which was enacted in California in 2010, provides a consistent, cross-state framework and enforcement mechanism to assist military children in transition. The Purple Star Schools designation program compliments the Compact by encouraging schools to put common-sense strategies into action at the local level. Purple Star Schools are military-friendly schools that have demonstrated a major commitment to students and families connected to our nation's military. Designated schools meet specific state-designed requirements to support the unique situations facing military students and their families."

***Related and prior legislation.*** AB 2949 (Gloria), Chapter 327, Statutes of 2018, requires that a student who is the child of a military family be allowed to remain in his or her school of origin, and to matriculate with his or her peers in accordance with the established feeder patterns of school districts.

AB 365 (Muratsuchi), Chapter 739, Statutes of 2017, extends to students from military families certain rights regarding exemptions from local graduation requirements and acceptance of partial credit which are currently afforded to other groups of highly mobile students.

SB 455 (Newman), Chapter 239, Statutes of 2017, establishes that a student whose parent is transferred or is pending transfer to a military installation within state while on active military duty pursuant to an official military order has complied with the residency requirements for school attendance in any school district.

AB 2306 (Frazier), Chapter 464, Statutes of 2016, requires school districts to exempt former juvenile court school students who transfer into school districts after their second year in high school from local graduation requirements that exceed those of the state, and requires a county office of education to issue a diploma of graduation to a pupil who completes statewide coursework requirements for graduation while attending a juvenile court school.

AB 306 (Hadley), Chapter 771, Statutes of 2016, prohibits a school district of residence from prohibiting the transfer of a pupil who is a child of an active military duty parent to a school in any school district, if the school district to which the parents of the pupil applies approves the application for transfer.

AB 2341 (Quirk-Silva) of the 2013-14 Session would have added an indicator to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) to identify pupils of military families, and would have required LEAs to report enrollment of pupils of military families, as specified. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2202 (Block), Chapter 402, Statutes of 2012, extends the sunset from January 1, 2013 to January 1, 2014, for provisions related to the SPI reconvening a task force to review the impact of the Compact on school districts and students, and issue a final report to the Legislature by December 1, 2013.

AB 343 (Saldana) Chapter 237, Statutes of 2009, enacts the Compact, which addresses issues experienced by children of military families who frequently transfer between schools.

AB 2049 (Saldana) Chapter 589, Statutes of 2008, requires the SPI to convene and support a task force to review and make recommendations regarding the Compact.

AB 1809 (Saldana) of the 2007-08 Session would have established the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunities for Military Families and ratified the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families due to frequent moves and deployment of their parents. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 2102 (Saldana), Chapter 608, Statutes of 2006, establishes procedures, including requiring the CDE to establish a formal liaison with the United States Department of Defense and school districts that enroll military dependents, to facilitate and smooth the transfer of school-age military dependents and their school records.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Military Child Education Coalition  
San Diego Military Advisory Council  
U.S. Department of Defense

**Opposition**

None on file

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