

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## Responding to the Needs of Military Students and Military-connected Schools: Perceptions and Actions of School Administrators

De Pedro, K. T., Atuel, H., Esqueda, M. C., & Malchi, K. (2014). Responding to the needs of military students and military-connected schools: Perceptions and actions of school administrators. *Children and Schools*, 36(1), e18-e25.  
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**SUMMARY:** School administrators from the Building Capacity Consortium schools (140 schools dedicated to developing military friendly school environments) were surveyed to uncover how they understand the needs of military connected students and actions their school takes to address those needs. The focus of the study is on the role of administrators in shaping the climate and improving the responsiveness to military connected students. Eighty-four percent of respondents expressed a desire for ideas and examples of activities that specifically target military connected students.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- The majority of school administrators have no programs in place that exclusively focus on military connected students, rather military connected students are included in programs aimed for all students. However, 77% of administrators believe that military connected students should be identified and treated as a distinct group.
- Sixty-three percent of administrators indicate a strong value for parental engagement but only 9% have a policy in place to increase the participation of military parents.
- Administrators openly admit that a lack of resources, strategies and training hinder their efforts to effectively improve the climate of their school for military connected students.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Include specific training for school district personnel on the needs of military children and families in order for them to help shape school climate and increase responsiveness to military students
- Institute structured programs within schools to facilitate parent engagement, with special emphasis on the participation of military parents
- Offer in-service training for school personnel to increase staff awareness of military students' needs in order for them to succeed

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support school districts' efforts to understand military student needs, educate and train school staff, and increase military parent engagement are encouraged
- Recommend more research regarding military students' achievement as part of academic functioning
- Encourage collaboration among DoD and community-based schools with military children to better meet the needs of this population

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## METHODS

- Quantitative and qualitative survey data was collected through an online survey of closed ended and open ended questions in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011.
- The online survey was provided to all school administrators within the consortium.
- This study included eight civilian public schools located near two military installations in San Diego, CA.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included principals, assistant principals, and other school administrators from the Building Capacity Consortium (BCC) schools.
- The fall Sample included 137 participants from 130 schools and the spring sample included 129 participants from 129 schools.
- No demographic data (e.g., age, gender) were collected from the participants.

## LIMITATIONS

- Participants' association with the Building Capacity Consortium could increase the likelihood of a sampling bias.
- The inclusion of participants' demographic information could aid in interpretation of the results.
- The study provided no information about the percentage of military connected students in each school.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore which resources, strategies, or trainings are most impactful to meet the needs of military connected students
- Examine what military specific factors (e.g., deployment) influence military youth's academic outcomes
- Investigate how the DoD can better support school with currently enrolled military children

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:  
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>