

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Military Deployments and Children's Academic Achievement: Evidence From Department of Defense Education Activity Schools

Engel, R. C., Gallagher, L. B., & Lyle, D. S. (2010). Military deployments and children's academic achievement: Evidence from Department of Defense education activity schools. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(1), 73-82.
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SUMMARY: Parental deployment can impact child functioning and academic success. Standardized tests were used to examine the effects of deployment on the academic achievement of Army children enrolled at Department of Defense schools. Results indicate that academic performance was negatively influenced by parental deployment.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Children with a parent deployed during the school year had slightly lower overall academic scores (0.42%), compared to children who did not have a parent deployed.
- The longer parents were deployed, the greater the impact on academic achievement (0.11% per month of deployment).
- After the deployed parent returned, academic performance slowly increased; four years after parents return, children no longer had scores significantly different from those not experiencing parental deployments.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide additional academic tutoring during the school year for military children with deployed parents to help buffer against decreases in academic performance
- Offer workshops to military parents that provide strategies for addressing the negative effects of deployment on children's academic achievement
- Disseminate information regarding available resources and services for military families and children when a Service member is deployed

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support academic programs that provide services to military children when a parent is deployed
- Recommend training for school personnel working with military children regarding the impact of deployment on children's academic achievement
- Encourage collaboration between DoD and community-based programs that work with military children in schools to provide additional tutoring to students who fall below a minimum threshold on academic achievement

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METHODS

- The study sample included school-aged children enrolled in DoD schools between 2002 and 2005.
- This article focuses on Army children in Department of Defense schools.
- Parents deployment status was inferred using administrative data regarding hostile fire pay.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 56,116 children in third to 11th grade.
- The majority of children were White (37%) and female (51%).
- About 26% of children in the sample had a parent deploy during the current school year.

LIMITATIONS

- The researchers did not examine academic achievement prior to parent deployment; it is possible that the groups may have pre-existing differences that were not measured.
- Only children attending a Department of Defense school with a parent who was an enlisted Service member in the Army (Active component) were included in the sample; therefore, results may not be generalizable to military children attending other schools or children with parents in other branches of the military.
- Possible differences in other aspects of academic achievement may be missing because only one measure of academic achievement was used in the study.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Include additional time-series data to track changes in academic success over time among children who experience multiple parental deployments
- Replicate the current study with a different sample to determine if similar results are found across samples
- Conduct a meta-analysis to determine the average effect size for the relationship between deployment and academic achievement

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