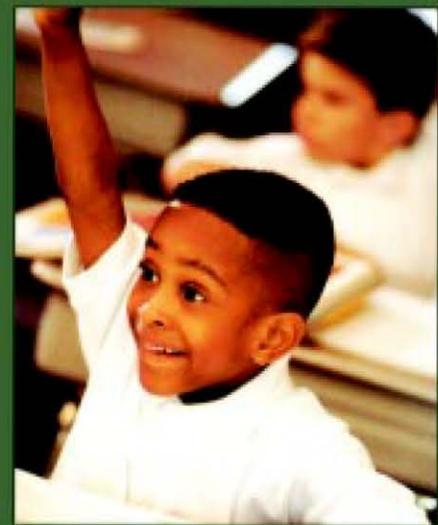




**Torchbearer  
National Security Report  
on Education and Well-being**

# ***Educating Our Military's Children***

***... Are We  
Closing the Gaps?***



**An AUSA Torchbearer Issue  
April 2001**





30 April 2001

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) is committed to ensuring that our soldiers and their families experience the quality of life they so richly deserve. One key ingredient of family well-being is education.

Children of mobile American families face an “uneven playing field”—an educational environment predominantly designed and resourced for stationary populations. Unintended gaps in the mobile child’s education occur despite the best efforts of educators and parents. These mobile children, including children of military families, deserve the same educational opportunities as their more stationary classmates.

In this third installment of AUSA's Torchbearer series on well-being, we examine those unintended gaps and outline what must be done to “level the playing field.” Our recommendations are beneficial not only to military children but also to all mobile American families. We hope you will find this report useful and want to share it with parents, educators and legislators.

AUSA will continue to speak out on critical issues affecting our national security. Join us in this worthwhile endeavor. Let your voice be heard.

GORDON R. SULLIVAN  
General, USA Retired  
President

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AUSA gratefully acknowledges the contributions made by the following organizations in the preparation of this report: National Military Family Association (NMFA); Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC); Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA); National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS); and the Department of Defense (DoD).

## Executive Summary



AUSA's report "Educating Our Military's Children: Are We Closing the Gaps?" provides an analysis of the critical challenge facing the children of mobile American families, and in particular the children of military servicemembers. AUSA is distributing 15,000 copies worldwide to key audiences, including members of Congress and their staffs; key officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD); other military associations; educators; the media; and general officers and command sergeants major throughout the Army.

The Association of the United States Army is committed to fighting for quality education for the children of military families, whether they attend Department of Defense schools or local civilian schools. **No military child should lose academic and/or extracurricular opportunities as a result of the mobility of his or her parent.** Military children deserve support and as much predictability as possible in school transitions. **Appropriate levels of funding for schools serving military children are nonnegotiable.**

### Key Points

#### **Congress** must:

- authorize and fully fund the Federal Impact Aid Program in the U.S. Department of Education budget in a timely, consistent, forward-funded manner; and change the distribution formula so funding is proportionate to the number of federally connected students in the districts, to preclude the children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schools;
- authorize and fully fund the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) budget in a timely manner and authorize DoDEA to apply and compete for Department of Education grants from funds earmarked for new initiatives or education improvements;
- authorize and fully fund repairs and upgrades to existing schools and/or the building of new schools on Army installations or that are owned by the federal government;

#### **The Department of Defense (DoD), the services, states, territories and local education agencies (LEAs)**

must find ways to:

- institutionalize strong partnerships among military communities, local and state education systems to accommodate the lifestyle of military children without impacting on the children of the local district, and encourage national-level partners to work toward national transition standards;
- improve liaison between parents of special-needs children and local school officials to help parents understand their entitlements, assist with transition issues and meet the education needs of those children;
- provide training to teachers on the military lifestyle and social, emotional and educational challenges facing military children, and establish "transitional labs" staffed with transition specialists in schools attended by large numbers of military youth.

#### **DoD, states, territories and LEAs** must find ways to:

- reduce obstacles to high school graduation by providing clear course and calendar information to parents and students and by establishing reciprocal agreements among school districts/states regarding graduation requirements and exit-level testing;
- accept grades, grading scales, ability and achievement test scores of transferring students from previous schools.

#### **DoD and the Army** must:

- expedite Army funding of installations' school liaison officers;
- implement the "no-move" policy for servicemembers who have children starting their senior year or already in their senior year of high school.

#### **Congress, DoD and the services** must:

- work with state governments to obtain authorization for in-state tuition for military family members attending their postsecondary institutions.



## No child will be left behind—not one single child.

President George W. Bush,  
news conference, 23 January 2001

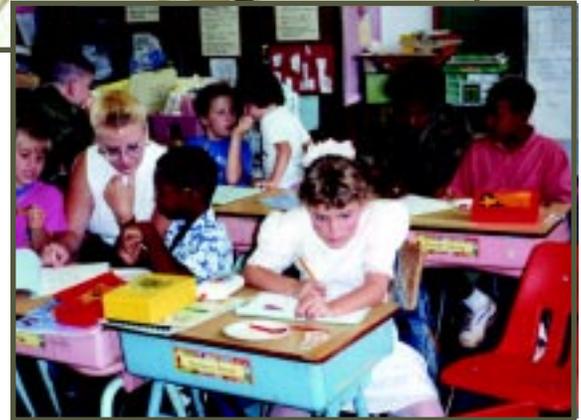
### Introduction

Military children are resilient; they are exposed to different cultures and have opportunities to expand their horizons in a global sense. And educating our military's children should be no more challenging than educating the rest of our nation's children. Yet the children of today's mobile military families often miss out on the continuity and stability of educational opportunities offered to students who remain in one state and one school system.

Mobility is a fact of life for many American families, not just military families. *The Washington Post* recently reported that, of the 300 or so students who enter Carver Elementary School in St. Mary's County, Maryland, each fall, 25 percent (some but not all of them the children of military families) move elsewhere sometime during the school year. About the same number move to Carver from other schools in other jurisdictions—and these figures don't include students who move in or out during the summer. According to *The Post*, some Carver students have moved as many as seven times. Thirty-two percent of fourth-graders nationwide in 1998 had changed schools since second grade, says the National Center for Educational Statistics. And *The Post's* own survey of National Capitol Region Schools found that 20 percent of the student population at a typical school had moved during the 1999–2000 academic year or the summer before.<sup>1</sup>

Such constant change affects not only individuals but also the institutions that serve them. Thus how a school accommodates its mobile population will have much to do with how those students fare. Usually cast in terms of academic performance, this concern also includes students' social and emotional well-being.<sup>2</sup> **America's education system is neither designed nor adequately funded to accommodate the needs of our mobile population, including tens of thousands of military children.**

Military children and their parents face unique challenges in their pursuit of educational excellence. Military children move every two to six years and move through an average of six different school districts between kindergarten and



high school graduation. These children attend Department of Defense (DoD) schools or civilian schools (public, private, charter) or are home-schooled. **One issue of concern to military children and their parents is the “handoff” between school districts or systems as their families move from one assignment to another.**

The military child is first and foremost an individual and, regardless of the fact that the family is federally connected, deserves an equal opportunity to achieve educational excellence. Even though the military child is truly “the nation's child,” he or she must function in state and locally controlled education systems. (Overseas, the Department of Defense provides for the education of military children.) Local school districts set and enforce policy to meet graduation requirements established by state governments. Since military families relocate frequently, military children regularly have to cope with new school districts, each having its own policies

<sup>1</sup> Linda Perlstein, “For Schools, Moving Targets: As Students Come and Go, Learning, Testing and Socialization Suffer,” *The Washington Post*, April 5, 2001, p. B1.

<sup>2</sup> Mary M. Keller and Glynn T. Decoteau, *The Military Child: Mobility and Education*, PDK Fastback 463 (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 2000), p.14.



and other losses of tax revenue, but the program has lacked consistency in funding and suffers from congressional delays in appropriations and federal delays in distribution. President George W. Bush had it right when he stated, “The federal role in education is not to serve the system. It is to serve the children.” **Do LEAs have sufficient resources provided in a timely manner to offset the resource demands placed on them by mobile military children?**

A study of recruits conducted by the Navy and the Air Force discovered that 50 percent of today’s enlistees were former military family members. Increasingly, military leaders are looking to the sons and daughters of today’s noncommissioned and commissioned officers as their next generation of servicemembers. More positive educational experiences in the lives of military children could have a dramatic impact on the Army’s efforts to “grow their own.”

for course curriculum and grading. A mid-year transfer can place some children at risk of missing key course concepts. When this is combined with higher operations tempo and more frequent deployments—and the resulting increase in family separations—it is no wonder the military child can experience gaps in his or her education. Who, then, has responsibility for assuring a smooth handoff of the military child from one school system to the next?

**Another issue of concern centers on local school districts, also known as local educational agencies (LEAs). School districts are the focal point for funding. While federal installations in their areas can contribute significant economic resources to the state and local funding stream, the local school districts do not always receive their proportionate share.** Military families living on federal property do not contribute to the property tax base, nor does the federal government pay taxes for its property. Since military members and their spouses are often legal residents of states other than the one in which they reside, state governments may also be denied income taxes from these individuals. LEAs are largely funded from sales taxes and, to a lesser extent, real property taxes (both residential and commercial). Military families living both on and off the installation contribute significant revenue to state and local governments through sales tax on locally purchased goods, but in nearly all cases, they create additional financial obligations when they enroll their children in the local schools. The federal government, through a program known as “Impact Aid,” is supposed to compensate LEAs for this loss

### Minor Dependents of Active Duty (All Services)

| Sponsor Pay Grade | Preschool/Kindergarten Ages |                |                |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                   | Ages 0–2                    | Ages 3–5       | Total          |
| E-1 – E-4         | 90,172                      | 53,377         | 143,549        |
| E-5 – E-6         | 94,859                      | 114,058        | 208,917        |
| E-7 – E-9         | 14,730                      | 23,641         | 38,371         |
| W1 – W5           | 2,495                       | 3,369          | 5,864          |
| O1 – O3           | 26,632                      | 19,740         | 46,372         |
| O4+               | 14,824                      | 20,283         | 35,107         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>243,712</b>              | <b>234,468</b> | <b>478,180</b> |

| Sponsor Pay Grade | Elementary/Middle School Ages |                |                |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                   | Ages 6–11                     | Ages 12–14     | Total          |
| E-1 – E-4         | 37,574                        | 5,373          | 42,947         |
| E-5 – E-6         | 212,681                       | 66,560         | 279,241        |
| E-7 – E-9         | 83,927                        | 52,152         | 136,079        |
| W1 – W5           | 8,895                         | 4,482          | 13,377         |
| O1 – O3           | 24,000                        | 7,027          | 31,027         |
| O4+               | 47,822                        | 21,398         | 69,220         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>414,899</b>                | <b>156,992</b> | <b>571,891</b> |

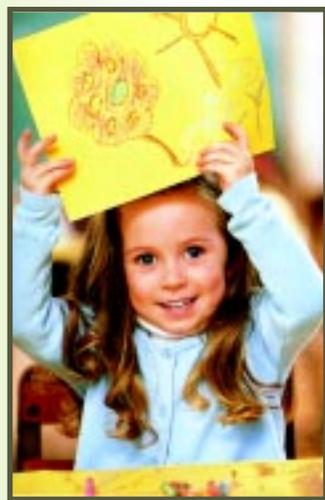
| Sponsor Pay Grade | High School Age and Above |                |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
|                   | Ages 15–18+               | Total          |
| E-1 – E-4         | 3,922                     | 3,922          |
| E-5 – E-6         | 54,661                    | 54,661         |
| E-7 – E-9         | 73,307                    | 73,307         |
| W1 – W5           | 6,465                     | 6,465          |
| O1 – O3           | 6,861                     | 6,861          |
| O4+               | 35,624                    | 35,624         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>180,840</b>            | <b>180,840</b> |

\*Includes disabled and other dependents still eligible for military benefits.

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center



General Thomas A. Schwartz, Commander in Chief, United Nations Command and United States Forces, Korea, summed it up: “There’s nothing more important than education. . . . Soldiers today, because they’re married and because family is so important . . . are making choices. . . . They’re going home to the family unit and they’re talking to their spouse and their kids and saying, ‘Should we stay with this outfit?’ . . . and that spouse is looking at him and she’s thinking about the schools they’re in, and the 29 moves . . . and it *is* important.” **There is a direct correlation between education, and recruiting and retention: recruit an individual—retain a family.**



Military children are our nation’s children. Whether they attend Department of Defense schools or civilian schools, they deserve an equal opportunity to excel in all aspects of the education process. Today’s military force is an educated force and a family force. Military members have high expectations for their children’s education. More are accepting or rejecting assignments, or even deciding

to leave the military, based on perceptions about the education their children will receive at prospective duty stations. **The process of transition and assimilation of the mobile military child in each new school system and appropriate levels of funding for schools heavily impacted by military children are the issues.**

### History

**Education as a priority is nothing new to the U.S. Army.** In the summer of 2000, Army Vice Chief of Staff General John M. Keane introduced his speech to the Army Education Summit, an Army-initiated problem-solving forum, by noting: “In 1866, the U.S. Army established post schools, nearly 52 years ahead of universal education. It was a post requirement. . . . Military children as well as civilian children living nearby attended those schools.”

**Since the days of Army frontier posts, U.S. military installations have established their own schools when no public education was available in the local area.** In the 1940s, the United States military established schools for the children of the occupying forces in Europe and the Pacific as well as some schools on military bases in the United States. First administered by the military branches they served, the

growing number of schools was soon transferred to civilian managers, then organized into two separate but parallel systems: the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) overseas, and the Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) in the United States. In 1994, the two systems were brought together under an umbrella agency, the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).



Local school districts have challenges in accommodating military children into their systems. Prior to 1950, there was no federally coordinated means of providing educational assistance to school districts across the country. The responsibility for the education of America’s youth fell largely to state and local governments,

although special programs were in place at most federal agencies for providing for the education of their employees’ children. As a result, there was considerable duplication of effort, and it became apparent, especially after World War II, that the consolidation of federal administration over these educational activities was needed.

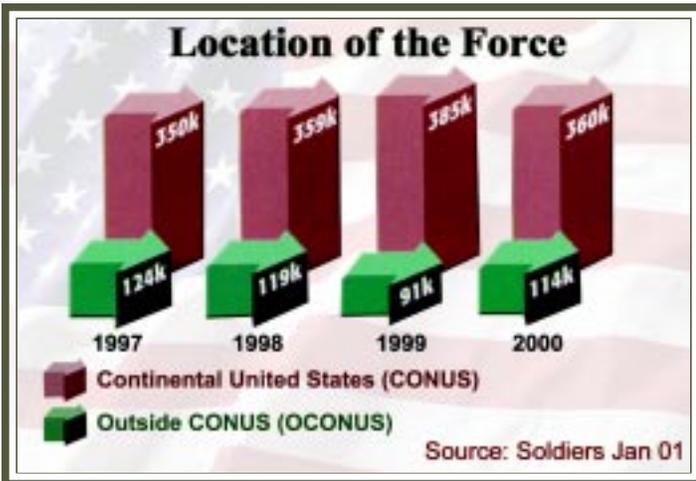
In 1950, Congress recognized that children residing on untaxed federal property continued to present a problem for LEAs. It enacted two bills in the fall of that year, which President Truman signed into public law. Public Law 81-815 authorized payments for the federal share of urgently needed classrooms and classroom equipment and the construction of other school facilities to accommodate (1) sudden increases in enrollments caused by federal activities in the community and (2) lost local revenues resulting from the nontaxable federal property. Public Law 81-874 consolidated all funding for federally affected LEAs and became commonly known as the Impact Aid law. This law placed all federal programs addressing the impact of federal ownership of property on LEAs under one agency, the Office of Education. This department was responsible for program administration and funding. The Impact Aid program was designed to compensate LEAs for (1) loss of property tax revenue due to the nontaxable status of federally acquired property within their jurisdictions and (2) the cost of educating “federally connected” children in local public schools. **The obligation for providing public education to all students, including federally connected students, remained a state and local responsibility.**



## The “Playing Field”

General Henry H. Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a speech to educators in Arlington, Virginia, in October 1998, recounted how an elementary teacher once

who goes to Korea for a tour or to Germany for three years—that they don’t come back thinking they’ve been on Mars. That somehow the coursework they’ve done, the activities they’ve participated in, the socialization they’ve gone through, brings them back in the mainstream.”



asked the class, “Who packed up all their belongings and moved far away on the ship *Mayflower*?” The general’s son responded, “The Sheltons. And the *Mayflower* is not a ship; it’s a moving van.” Shelton and his family had moved 26 times in his 34-year career.

Military children have a unique view of life. As Senator John McCain (R-AZ) said in his best-selling book *Faith of My Fathers* (Random House, September 1999), “[R]epeated farewells to friends rank among the saddest regrets of a childhood constantly disrupted by the demands of a father’s career. I would arrive at a new school, go to considerable lengths to make new friends, and, shortly thereafter, be transplanted to a new town to begin the process all over again. Seldom if ever did I see again the friends I left behind.” **This unique lifestyle requires that we partner with schools serving military children to ensure that they understand the military culture and can provide an environment that seeks to accommodate the frequent transitions.** To do anything less places an additional burden on members of our armed forces and their families.

Army Chief of Staff General Eric K. Shinseki has made education for children of Army families a centerpiece in his overall efforts to promote well-being throughout the Army. He stated to participants at the Army’s Education Summit, “This is about opportunity. That’s what we owe our kids: the opportunity to compete. It’s for the youngster

The Army-wide Spring 1999 Sample Survey of Military Personnel found that, of soldiers with high school-age children who had moved since 1997, 71 percent of officers and 78 percent of enlisted personnel reported that their children had problems due to changing schools as a result of that move. Problems included difficulties making social adjustments in the new school, falling behind in coursework, and the negative effect of the timing of the move on participation in school-sponsored events.

To serve the children of the members of America’s armed forces requires a “level playing field.” As Jim Nelson, Commissioner of Education for the State of Texas, stated at the DoD Regional Roundtable in San Antonio in September 2000, **“Military families don’t want their kids to be singled out. They don’t want them treated differently—they want them treated fairly.”**

### Did you know . . . ?

- ▶ Military servicemembers have more children and become parents at younger ages than civilians. (The average age of military members when they have their first child is under 25, and 80 percent of military members are younger than 35.)
- ▶ The average military family has two children.
- ▶ Approximately 11 percent of servicemembers are in joint-service marriages.
- ▶ The average military family moves nine times over a 20-year career.
- ▶ More than half a million school-age military children of all services are attending schools in one of the 600 civilian public school districts located near military installations in the continental United States.
- ▶ As of September 2000, more than 255,000 soldiers—almost 54 percent of the Army’s active component—are married; almost 36,000 more are single parents.

Source: Military Family Resource Center



So how do we create that “level playing field”? First, it is important to *understand* the playing field. Military children transition or migrate through myriad school systems—each one different in many ways from the others.

### Department of Defense Schools

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) operates schools overseas and also within the United States for military children. As legislation is written today, DoDEA schools cannot receive grants and other resources available to LEAs, including grants from the Department of Education. But all DoDEA schools are fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. DoDEA schools and faculties are tailored around the reality of mobile students and have had success as measured by their students’ performance on national tests.

**Overseas.** When a command-sponsored military family moves overseas, the children are eligible to attend Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) at no cost to the family. DoDDS is similar to a big, geographically separated school system. It provides education to eligible military family members from preschool through grade 12. In the school year 2000–2001, DoDDS served approximately 78,000 overseas students in 157 schools in 14 foreign countries. It has two deputy directors who oversee eight districts in Europe and three in the Pacific.

**Within the States and Territories.** The Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS), formerly known as Section 6 schools, provide a free public education for military children residing on federal property where no state or local funds can be expended for such children or where no LEA is able to provide an appropriate free public education for such children. DDESS consists of 16 separate school systems, located in seven states, Puerto Rico and Guam and serving approximately 33,800 students. Each DDESS school system is overseen by a school board elected by the parents of students. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits all DDESS schools, except those at West Point and in Puerto Rico and Guam. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the DDESS schools in the West Point School System and the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools accredits DDESS schools in Puerto Rico and Guam. Nine Army installations have DDESS schools, most of which are elementary schools: Forts Benning and Stewart, Georgia; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico; Forts Campbell and Knox, Kentucky; Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Fort Rucker, Alabama; and the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

## DoDEA Today

Today, DoDEA's 9,422 teachers serve 112,208 students in 24 districts and 227 schools located in fourteen foreign countries, seven states, Guam and Puerto Rico.

|           | DoDDS  | DDESS  |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| Districts | 12     | 12     |
| Schools   | 157    | 70     |
| Teachers  | 5,747  | 3,675  |
| Students  | 77,912 | 34,294 |

### Serving the Community

DoDEA serves students from U.S. military communities as well as the children of civilian federal employees throughout the world.

| Sponsor's Service | DoDDS | DDESS |
|-------------------|-------|-------|
| Army              | 35%   | 60%   |
| Navy              | 14%   | 10%   |
| Marine Corps      | 6%    | 16%   |
| Air Force         | 32%   | 7%    |
| National Guard    | 0%    | 1%    |
| Civilian          | 12%   | 5%    |

### Locations of DoDEA Schools School Year 2000-01

| DoDDS           | DDESS          |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Bahrain         | Alabama        |
| Belgium         | Georgia        |
| Cuba            | Kentucky       |
| England         | New York       |
| Germany         | North Carolina |
| Greece          | South Carolina |
| Iceland         | Virginia       |
| Italy           | Guam           |
| Japan           | Puerto Rico    |
| Korea           |                |
| The Netherlands |                |
| Portugal        |                |
| Spain           |                |
| Turkey          |                |

Source: DoDEA

### Public Schools

When we discuss schooling of the military child, we generally refer to public schools. Fortunately, wherever military children reside within the continental United States (CONUS), fully accredited public schools are available to them. However, there are more than 600 autonomous local school districts serving military children.

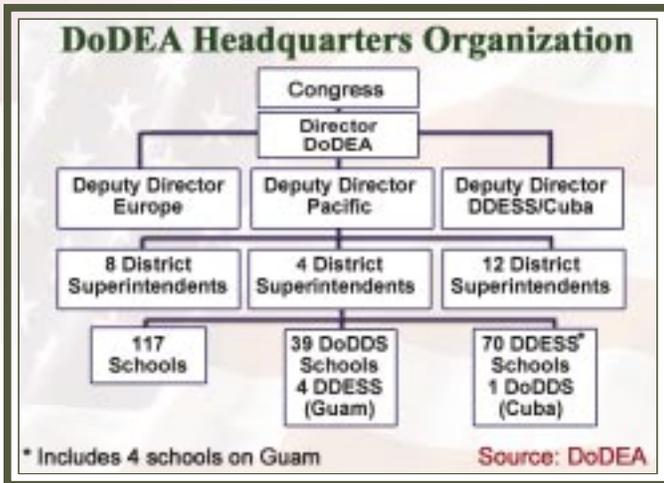
Many people believe that schools located on Army installations are federally operated. In reality, most of the schools on Army installations belong to local school districts. For example, schools on Fort Belvoir, Virginia, belong to the Fairfax County Public School System.



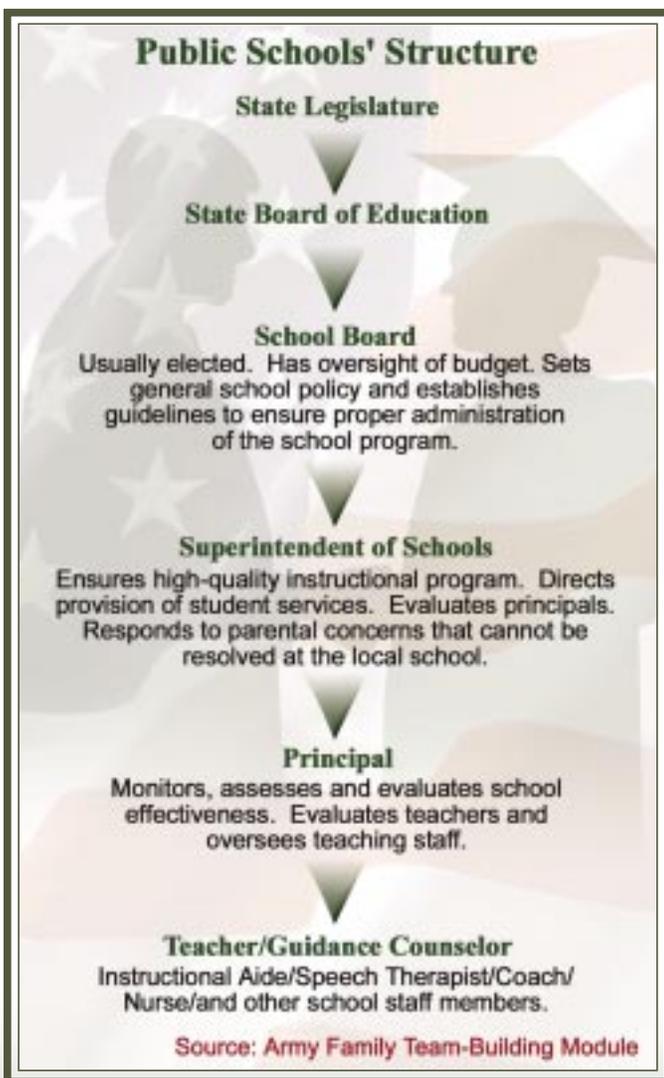
## School Policymaking Structure

Further complicating the “playing field,” DoD-operated and public schools have distinctively different policymaking and administrative apparatus.

The Department of Defense Dependent Schools’ structure is as follows:



Most public schools are structured as follows:



## Conditions

The parents of military children—and the children themselves—must remain ever vigilant to the nuances of each system they encounter. **DoD studies of youth separations during Army deployments reveal the following: 70 percent have been separated from fathers; 16 percent have been separated from mothers; 14 percent have been separated from both mothers and fathers.** It should come as no surprise, therefore, that military families are concerned about how school systems recognize and accommodate military children who face frequent moves and even more frequent family separations.

If the average military family moves every three years and nine times over a 20-year career (not including the deployments mentioned above), here is an example of what they most likely would face:

**A Mobile Military Child**

| Child's Grade | Parent's Duty Location  | School System                       |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| K - 2         | Germany                 | DoDDS (Europe)                      |
| 3 - 5         | Fort Hood, Texas        | Killeen Independent School District |
| 6 - 8         | Fort Benning, Georgia   | DDESS School                        |
| 9             | Northern Virginia       | Fairfax County School District      |
| 10 - 11       | Korea                   | DoDDS (Pacific)                     |
| 12            | Fort Campbell, Kentucky | DDESS School                        |

**During this thirteen-year period, the military child has moved five times, transitioning through two local school districts, two overseas DoD schools, and two CONUS DoD schools.**

Source: AUSA

Admiral Richard Mies, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, commented at the annual Supporting the Military Child conference at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, in June 1999: “I don’t think either of my daughters has ever really forgiven me for [their] having to go, in their senior year, to a brand new school. These sorts of family issues are becoming more important to servicemembers. . . . I can tell you from my personal experience that far more career decisions are being made based on what’s good for the family than what’s good for the servicemember.”

**LEA and DoDEA systems are quality systems, with teachers who care about children and want them to reach their full potential. LEA and DoDEA systems as the focal points for educating military children are not at issue; accommodating military children within those systems is. Why is it a challenge? Are there gaps?**



## Educating Our Military's Children: The Transition/Assimilation Gap

### Challenge: Profoundly Different Cultures

Many fine organizations—the National Military Family Association (NMFA), Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA), National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS), and Special Training of Military Parents (STOMP), to name a few—have studied and repeatedly highlighted challenges facing military children. Their research, together with the efforts of the Association of the United States Army, underscores one key aspect: The mobility of military life will remain constant, and this mobility creates a variety of challenges for military children, especially in education. Special-needs children in the military's Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) face even greater challenges in transition, as do the schools that receive them.

A tenet of the movement for high academic standards for all students is continuity of instruction. Unfortunately but understandably, state standards and the alignment of local curricula and instruction are designed for a relatively static population. For example, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills documents build sequentially, grade upon grade, class upon class, based on a standard Texas curriculum. This sequence accommodates students who attend Texas schools from start to finish, but what about students who move to Texas from other states or from overseas?

Other challenges associated with high mobility include:

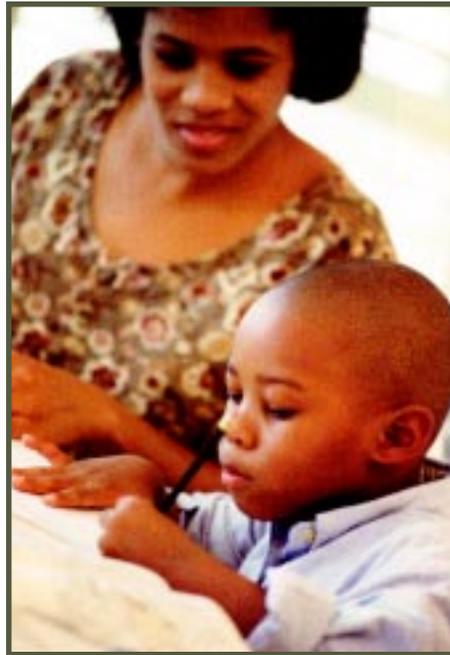
- **curriculum differences**, which can result in students having to repeat classes if the previous school's credits are not accepted by the intake school.
- **grading system differences and differences related to class rank**, which can mean that the student may have to give up hard-earned academic standing on moving to a new school with a different grading system. For example, honors courses in one state may not receive similar academic grade points in another state.
- **credit variances**, which can mean that students may be awarded a different number of credits than at a previous school because of combined classes, block schedules or other factors.
- **graduation requirements differences**, which can impede school completion because the number of credits needed for graduation and the specific classes required are not standard from school to school.<sup>3</sup> For example, a military child may enroll in one state's history and government courses and then relocate to another state. These two courses are not always accepted by the next state as validating the requirement for state courses, forcing the child to enroll in the new state's history and government courses upon arriving. There is little reciprocity. The cumulative effect over several moves is the potential inability to enroll in such key courses as the mathematics, science and English also required for graduation.



<sup>3</sup> Keller and Decoteau, *The Military Child*, pp. 14, 17, 18.



Military children who need special program services often have more challenges than the general population of transitioning military students. This is true in all special programs, including but not limited to special education, talented and gifted, dyslexic services, and English for speakers of other languages. For example, a student may meet the standards for a talented and gifted program in one state and not in the next state. Within special education, there are many obstacles: varying resources available to school districts; translation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) from state to state; different approaches to educating these children (mainstreaming versus self-contained, centers versus community schools); problems of identifying, properly placing and evaluating services that students receive before moving again; and potential difficulties in the handoff of special-needs students from one school to another.



**Ancillary challenges include school records and their interpretation, school schedules, parent communication and emotional issues.** Children living on Fort Belvoir, Virginia, attend the Fort Belvoir Elementary School, operated by Fairfax County. In school year 1998–1999, the school’s highest enrollment was 1,320 students. During the year, the school experienced a turnover rate of more than 50 percent. Not counting the summer rotations, 706 students came in and out of that school. Think of the records that had to be prepared, the evaluations and testing

for special programs that occurred, the children unable to concentrate because another best friend had moved away, the anxiety faced when the newcomers didn’t know anyone who would eat lunch with them. In some instances, military children (and other incoming students) may not be permitted to play on a sports team or the cheer-leading squad during their first year at the new school, a situation which, in some cases, is further compounded by another move within that same school year!<sup>4</sup> **Taken separately, these challenges could be surmountable. However, when taken collectively, they impose a huge impediment to a successful school experience and set up the student for failure.**

These challenges are made more acute by a growing educational trend: the mandatory state standardized test. Most states require student assessments at various points during the K–12 experience and, increasingly, an exit exam is required for high school graduation. **In some states, students cannot advance to the next grade or graduate without a successful score on these assessments—and there is no reciprocity among states at this time.** This can result in an insurmountable barrier for military children who move during the school year—and enormous frustration for educators, who understandably dislike being held accountable for things they cannot control. For example, the official standardized test scores of students entering a

District of Columbia school after a certain date cannot be counted toward the school’s scores for that year. But in nearby Virginia and Maryland, the test scores of students who transfer between schools within the state—even if they arrive the day before the test—are counted in the total for that school. And low scores for the school can result in loss of accreditation or even takeover by the state.<sup>5</sup> **In the absence of deliberate and reliable methods that link, equate, or even translate the many different state assessments, military families—and school administrators and educators—are on their own.**



<sup>4</sup> National Military Family Association testimony before the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and related agencies of the Appropriations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, 11 April 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Perlstein, “For Schools, Moving Targets,” p. B4.



The U.S. Army, under the direction of former Chief of Staff General Dennis J. Reimer, partnered with the Military Child Education Coalition to better understand the challenges facing high school-age military children. This research was designed to accurately capture the personal and contextual experiences of both secondary students and the high schools they attended. The result was an Army-sponsored research project—the Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS)—coordinated by MCEC. Over 30,000 13–18-year-olds—more than one third of the Army’s high school-age teens—lived in these military communities, which participated in the study:

- Fort Hood and Killeen Independent School District, Texas;
- Fort Benning and Muscogee County Public Schools, Georgia;
- Fort Lewis and Clover Park School District No. 400, Washington;
- Fort Bragg and Cumberland County Public Schools, North Carolina;
- Fort Bliss and El Paso Independent School District, Texas;
- the DoDEA School System
  - Fort Campbell and Fort Campbell Schools, Kentucky;
  - Baumholder, Germany;
  - Taegu and Seoul, South Korea.

SETS has yielded the largest body of research ever conducted on mobile military children. Issues addressed included transfer and interpretation of records; extracurricular participation and senior moves; partnerships and resources; calendars and schedules; graduation requirements and life after high school; and social and emotional issues. Follow-on work has resulted in a valuable partnership among district superintendents, school boards and SETS installations.

Education challenges for mobile military children and their parents do not end with completion of high school. As military children attempt to continue their education at postsecondary institutions in the United States, they often encounter state residency requirements for receiving the in-state tuition rate. Because the military servicemember is stationed in one state but may be a legal resident in another, his or her children do not meet the requirement for in-state tuition. This places a financial burden on the family and limits educational opportunities for the children.

## Educating Our Military’s Children: The Funding Gap



Impact Aid is designed to directly reimburse public school districts for the loss of traditional revenue sources due to a federal presence or federal activity. The program is intended to give greater certainty to the amount of compensation public school districts receive from the federal government. Since its inception, the program has been amended many times. Traditionally, real estate,

personal property and sales taxes, plus some income taxes, account for a large portion of the average school district’s annual budget. But federally connected students can adversely affect a school district’s financial base because their parents or guardians may:

- pay no income taxes or vehicle license fees in their state of residence;
- live on nontaxable federal property;
- shop at stores that do not generate taxes;
- work on nontaxable federal land.



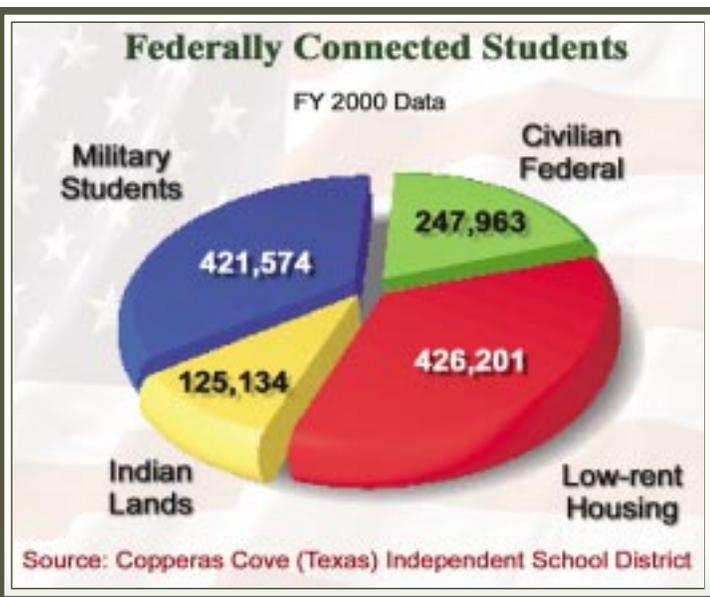
Impact Aid provides payments to school districts in lieu of those lost taxes to assist with the basic educational needs of their students. It is one of the few federal education programs in which the funds are sent directly to the school district. It is, however, subject to the same state regulations as any other school funding.



A nonfederally-impacted school has three main sources of revenue for each student: state aid, local taxes on homes, and local taxes on businesses. When businesses are located on federally connected land, they are exempt from local taxes. In the case of the military, the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Relief Act exempts military personnel from paying certain local personal property taxes and state income taxes. Businesses located on military posts may also be exempt from paying commercial property tax and charging sales tax on purchases. The same is true for homes located on federal property. These homes are exempt from local real estate taxes, and again the school district loses the revenue normally generated from the collection of these taxes. In 1994 and 2000, Congress reauthorized Impact Aid and modified sections of the program. However, the principle remains the same: Basic support payments of Impact Aid dollars go directly into a school district’s general fund accounts and are used for general operating expenses such as staff salaries, books and supplies. Although most school districts use it for current expenditures, they can use Impact Aid for capital expenditures. Private schools are not eligible for Impact Aid.

Nationwide, there are 1,221,000 federally connected students, divided into four main categories:

- military children;
- children residing on Indian lands;
- children residing in federal low-rent housing projects; and
- children whose civilian parents work on federal property but do not live on federal property (only if such children number 1,000 or more or represent 10 percent or more of the school district’s average daily attendance, or ADA).



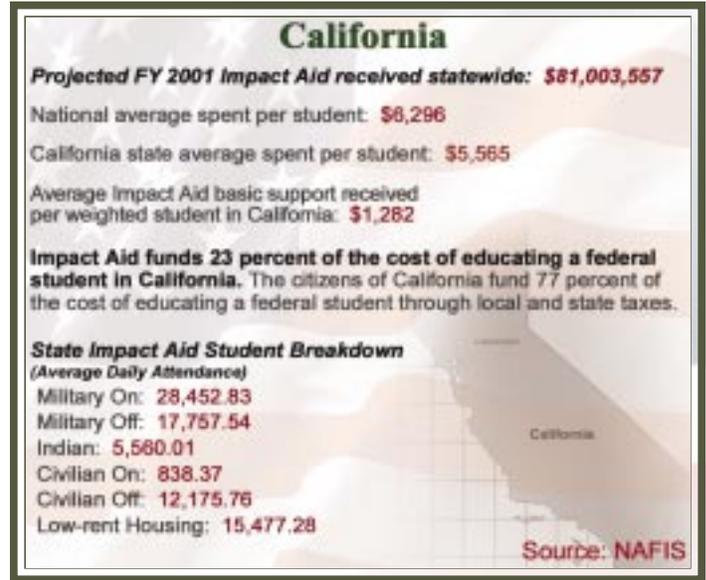
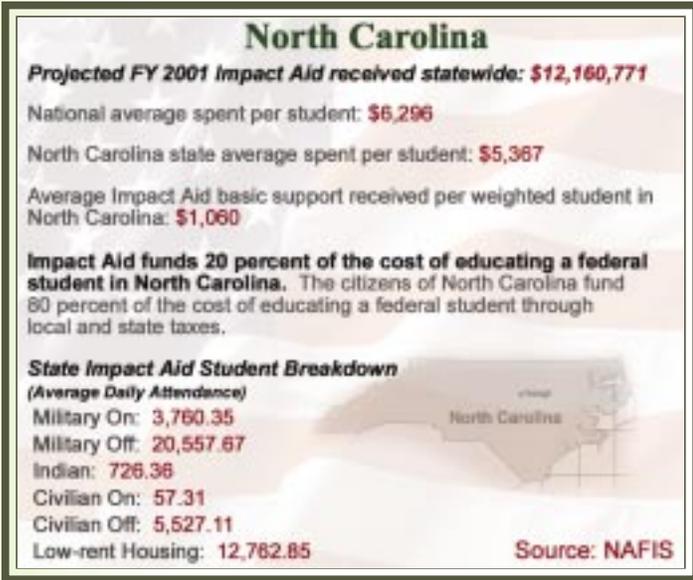
A school district may have only one type of federally connected student, or it may have all four types. In total, there are about 1,466 school districts educating the 1.2 million federal children. These schools educate about 13.7 million children (federal and nonfederal).

Of primary concern for schools highly impacted by military children are the sections of the law referring to 8003(a)(B) and 8003(a)(D) students, or (B) and (D) students, respectively. A (B) student is one whose parent is in the military service and both works and lives on federal property; a (D) student is the dependent of a military servicemember who works on federal property but lives in the community as a renter or homeowner of privately owned property.

**For a (B) student, the intent of Impact Aid is to totally match the local tax effort.** The most difficult Impact Aid payment to understand is the payment for (D) students whose parents work on federally owned property but do not live on federal property. In this case, the school district still receives the tax on the home where the parent and student live. The taxes on personal property—such as automobiles, boats and mobile homes—are paid in their home state, as allowed under the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Relief Act. The school district cannot tax the military base where the parent works. Neither can the school district tax property belonging to private industry which is located on the base if the military has exercised the right of exclusive jurisdiction. **For (D) students, therefore, the Impact Aid payment is intended to match the taxes lost as a result of the federal ownership of property, exclusive jurisdiction and the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Relief Act.** For a (D) student, the intent of Impact Aid is to provide 50 percent of the local tax effort.

Economic studies authorized by Congress have always verified that **the full rate for the (B) student and the half rate for the (D) student are fully justified.** Current law values the (D) student at 20 percent of the (B) weight. (The value of the (D) student was set at 10 percent in the 1994 amendments to reflect the average funding level of a (B) student during the 1990s. The increase to 20 percent occurred in 2000 and recognizes, at least in part, the fact that their weight was undervalued in the 1994 amendments.)

(Note: Acknowledging that the program was underfunded, Congress did in 1994 attempt to target dollars to those local educational agencies having a high dependence on Impact Aid dollars. Although dependence may be subject to various definitions, Congress determined it to mean those local educational agencies enrolling high percentages of federal



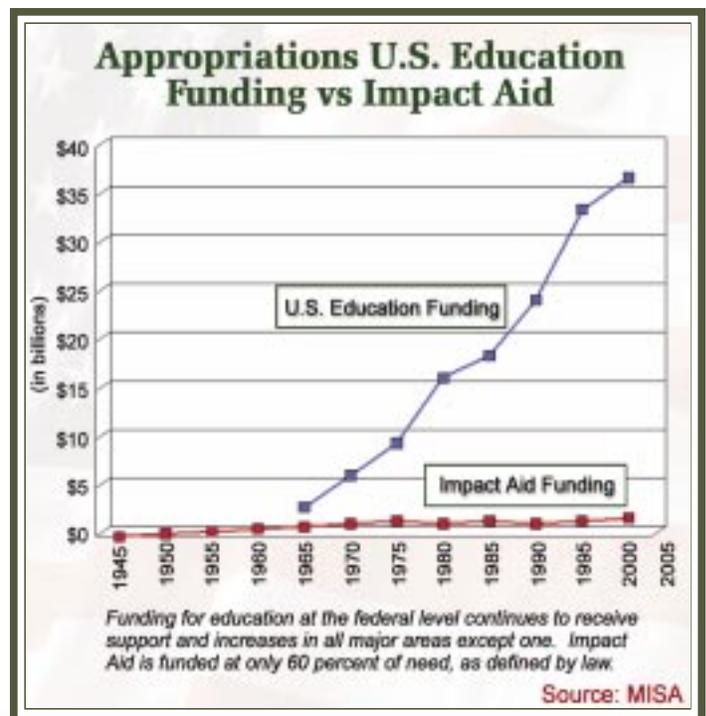
students coupled with general operating budgets that are highly dependent on Impact Aid funding as represented by the percentage of Impact Aid that makes up the total operating budget of the school system. Under this second tier formula, called the Learning Opportunity Threshold, or LOT, the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools projects that 26 local educational agencies serving military children will in FY 2001 receive 100 percent of their Impact Aid payment. For a majority of local educational agencies, however, the shortfall in funding will continue, and local school districts and communities must make up the difference.)<sup>6</sup>

### Challenge: Department of Education Funding of Impact Aid

Until 1970, Impact Aid was fully funded. Since that time, the program has faced many uncertainties. For 21 years—until 1997—while the number of students served in the program increased, funding for the program actually decreased. In recent years, the program has seen a much-needed increase. According to Dr. John Deegan, MISA’s chief executive officer, “The federal government has an obligation to fully fund the Impact Aid program. Impact Aid is just the federal government paying its taxes to the local school districts.”<sup>7</sup> However, Impact Aid is still underfunded by 40 percent, as defined by law. Each year local school districts and communities must make up the difference the Impact Aid program doesn’t cover. To compound the problem, Impact Aid is the sole education program that does not receive its appropriation prior to the academic year—it is not forward-funded. School districts must hire staff and set their budgets by August—many times not knowing until

January or February of the following year what their funding will be for the current school year. One unhappy example of the importance of Impact Aid to school operations was reported recently by *The Washington Post*. The principal of a suburban high school, under duress from county officials to return overdue completed Impact Aid survey forms, asked students to forge their parents’ signatures on the forms to ensure that appropriate federal revenue would find its way to the local school district.<sup>8</sup>

(Note: In order for a school district to qualify for Impact Aid, at least 400 students or at least 3 percent of the school district’s total enrollment must be federally connected.)



<sup>6</sup> National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) discussions and literature, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. John Deegan, Military Impacted Schools Association, at the Military Child Conference, San Diego CA, July 2000.

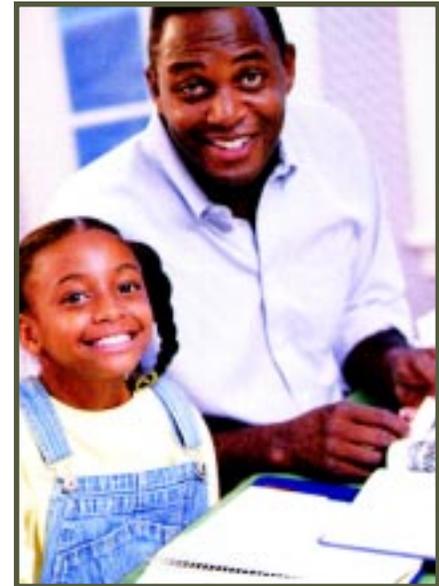
<sup>8</sup> Liz Seymour, “Young Reporters Put School on Spot: Fairfax Students Told to Sign Forms for Parents,” *The Washington Post*, April 5, 2001, p. B1.



### Impact Aid

| Fiscal Year | Total Impact Aid | Fiscal Year | Total Impact Aid |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1980        | \$822,000,000    | 1991        | \$767,057,000    |
| 1981        | 725,950,000      | 1992        | 771,698,000      |
| 1982        | 456,800,000      | 1993        | 750,200,000      |
| 1983        | 510,000,000      | 1994        | 798,100,000      |
| 1984        | 585,000,000      | 1995        | 728,000,000      |
| 1985        | 695,000,000      | 1996        | 693,000,000      |
| 1986        | 682,722,000      | 1997        | 730,000,000      |
| 1987        | 707,500,000      | 1998        | 808,000,000      |
| 1988        | 708,476,000      | 1999        | 864,000,000      |
| 1989        | 733,096,000      | 2000        | 906,500,000      |
| 1990        | 732,352,000      | 2001        | 993,302,000      |

Source: MISA



### Challenge: DoD Supplemental Impact Aid Funding

DoD Supplemental Impact Aid Funding for heavily impacted school districts began in FY 1991. The funding was established to help school districts with significant concentrations of military students that have faced lack of adequate funding for more than a decade, challenges associated with base closures and realignments, deteriorating facilities, and reduced support for Impact Aid. (Only 40 percent of the Impact Aid program funds go to school districts supporting military children.)

The DoD Supplemental Impact Aid Funding is intended to address quality-of-life and readiness issues in an all-volunteer service. School districts heavily impacted by military

children provide the military child a continuum of quality education as the child transitions through the DoDEA and LEA systems.

Are we making progress? **To fully fund Impact Aid requires around \$1.6 billion; approximately 40 percent of that amount is required to compensate LEAs for the DoD presence.**<sup>9</sup>

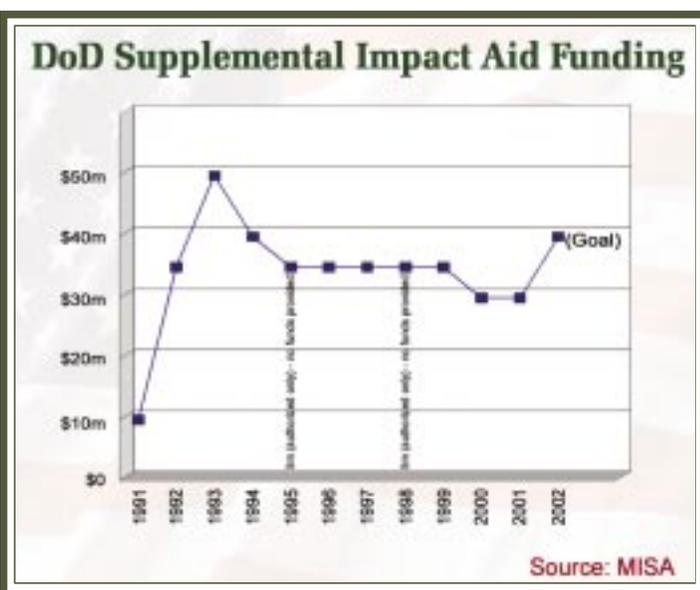
In FY 2001, Impact Aid received \$993.3 million, divided as follows:

### FY 2001 Impact Aid Appropriations

|                                     | FY01            | Pres. FY01 Prop. | House/Senate FY01 Conf. | Final FY01 Approp. |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Section 8003(b) —basic support      | \$737.2m        | \$720m           | \$818m                  | \$882.000m         |
| Section 8003(d) —special education  | 50.0m           | 40.0m            | 50.0m                   | 50.000m            |
| Section 8003(f) —heavily impacted   | 72.2m           | 0m               | 82.0m                   | in basic           |
| Section 8002 —federal property      | 32.0m           | 0m               | 40.0m                   | 40.500m            |
| Section 8007 —repair/renovation     | 10.1m           | 5.0m             | 30.0m                   | 12.802*            |
| Section 8008 (bldgs. owned by DoEd) | 5.0m            | 5.0m             | 8.0m                    | 8.000m             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        | <b>\$908.5m</b> | <b>\$770m</b>    | <b>\$1.028b</b>         | <b>\$993.302m</b>  |

Source: MISA/NAFIS

**In summary, an inconsistently funded and managed Impact Aid program places the military child's education potential at risk.** How do we overcome these challenges and accommodate the lifestyle of a military family without impacting on the local school district's children?



<sup>9</sup> Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA) discussions and literature, 2000.



## What Is Needed

Much work has already been done to overcome these challenges. The Army is consolidating and reviewing education transition issues centrally in its Community and Family Support Center. Several organizations—the Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA), the National Military Family Association (NMFA) and the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS)—have testified before Congress on the challenges of and potential solutions for accommodating not only a mobile military population but also mobile populations in general. In fact, the Army SETS coordinated by MCEC is about mobile children, not only Army children; therefore, the results and ideas gleaned have the potential to help all mobile students, regardless of the occupation or service affiliation of their parents. Yet much work remains. What is needed is continued focused efforts along these lines:

- partnerships, both local and institutional;
- flexibility and reciprocity agreements;
- increased emphasis from the Department of Defense;
- effective and efficient funding and management of educational needs; and
- effective advocacy by parents of military children.

### Partnerships

Most military children are amazingly resilient. However, no military child should lose academic opportunities as a result of the mobility of his or her parent. As military parents serve our nation, their children should have the same opportunities as their civilian counterparts. **Military children deserve support and as much predictability as possible in school transitions.**

Education is largely a state and local issue. The varieties of local educational programs, curricula, testing and graduation requirements have often created difficulties for military children. Transition and assimilation are critical functions that must be performed effectively. The key to this effectiveness lies in the development of partnerships—between DoDEA and its



civilian counterparts, and between installations and their local schools, whether DoD or civilian.

Partnerships among parents, educators and military personnel can help parents, as well as military children, feel more confident as they face multiple transitions. Each community that serves military children is unique. Partnerships between school districts and military installations must be localized to the conditions and concerns present there.<sup>10</sup>

The larger view of partnerships must occur at the institutional level. Strong partnerships between the military installation and the schools system(s) can make a profound difference in the ability of both organizations to respond to the needs of military children. **Commanders and school superintendents can work together to establish both an accepting climate that understands the challenges**



<sup>10</sup> Keller and Decoteau, *The Military Child*, pp. 29-31.



# Checklist for Student Transfers

## *Phase I 2000-2001*

### Sending School Checklist

- Course Description Book
- School Profile
- Attendance and Tardy Records
- Report Card
- Current Schedule
- Withdrawal Grades
- Transcript/Course History (with grading system)
- Class Rank
- Cumulative Folder
- Health Records including Shot Records
- Testing Information - Standardized Test Scores, End of Course Test Scores, Competency Test Scores
- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Number
- Activities Record such as co/extracurricular
- IEP/504/Gifted Records
- JROTC Records
- Guardianship/Custody Papers
- Fees Owed
- Alternative Schools Records
- Letters of Recommendations (especially for senior students)
- If available, Writing Samples
- If available, At-Risk or Action Plans for classroom modifications
- If available, Portfolios
- If available, Accelerated Reader Points
- If available, Service Learning Hours

### Receiving School Checklist

- Course Description Book
- School Profile
- Attendance and Tardy Records
- Report Card
- Current Schedule
- Withdrawal Grades
- Transcript/Course History (with grading system)
- Class Rank
- Cumulative Folder
- Health Records including Shot Records
- Testing Information - Standardized Test Scores, End of Course Test Scores, Competency Test Scores
- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Number
- Activities Record such as co/extracurricular
- IEP/504/Gifted Records
- JROTC Records
- Guardianship/Custody Papers
- Fees Owed
- Alternative Schools Records
- Letters of Recommendations (especially for senior students)
- If available, Writing Samples
- If available, At-Risk or Action Plans for classroom modifications
- If available, Portfolios
- If available, Accelerated Reader Points
- If available, Service Learning Hours
- Proof of Residency/Military Orders

Source: Killeen (Texas) Independent School District



**facing military families and the systems and conditions necessary to address most of those challenges.** Often the key persons are the school principals and chief guidance counselors. Some of the “best practices” that have proven effective include:

- having a military representative on the local Board of Education;
- designating a school official to be the liaison with the military installation;
- providing teachers and staff an orientation to military life, to include a tour of the installation;
- supporting partnership (“adopt-a-school”) programs between military in-stallations and schools;
- creating a parent resource team to bring skills/knowledge/special expertise into the community;
- linking school-based websites to installation websites;
- providing for a smooth transition for “families on the move”;<sup>11</sup>
- maintaining focus on the 15 education concerns derived from the July 2000 Army Education Summit, SETS and Army Family Team-Building (the newly formed Army Youth Education Activity Working Group—a partnership among the Army, DoD and several military advocacy organizations—has assumed this responsibility).

One new program the U.S. Army has recently initiated is the school liaison officer (S-L-O). This person provides the garrison/base commander the support and assistance necessary to coordinate and advise Army parents of school-age children on educational issues and needs, and to

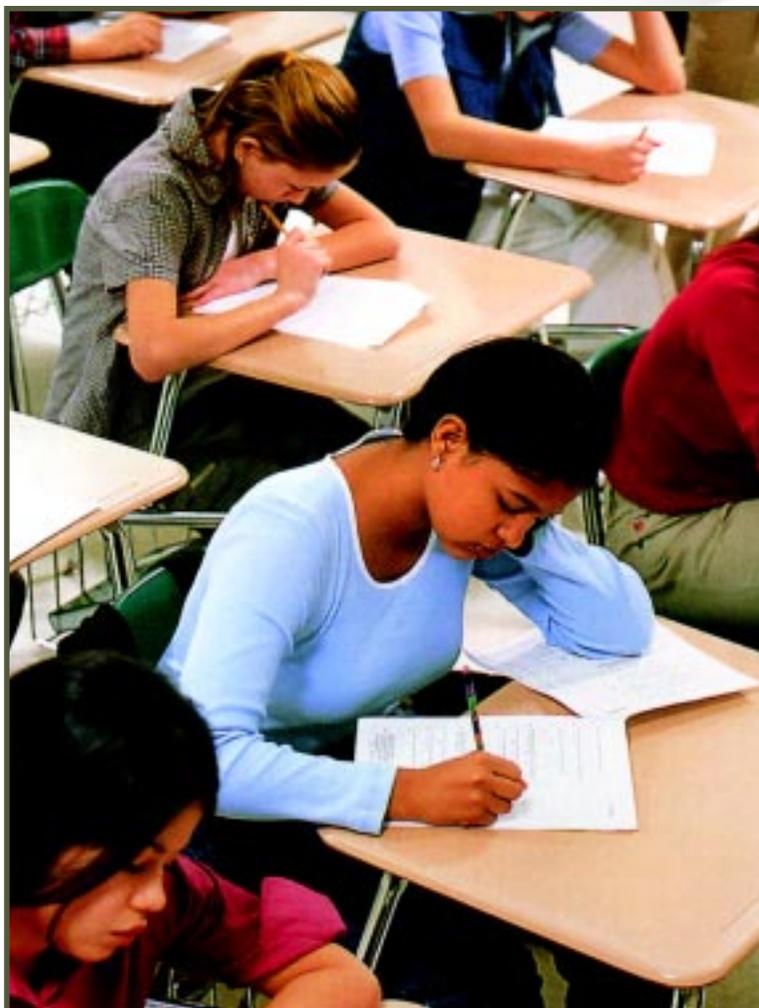
facilitate resolution of those issues and needs. The school liaison officer develops and coordinates partnerships with schools; however, the S-L-O is but one person. As Lieutenant General Leon LaPorte, Commanding General, III Corps and Fort Hood, stated, **“It is a shared responsibility: parents, school administrators, installation commanders, legislators. There are areas we all need to work on to ensure that students are not being disadvantaged.”**

Senator Charles Hagel (R-NE) was prophetic when he said, at a conference at Offutt Air Force Base, “In a world that is interconnected in every way, the responsibility America has to devote resources, time and attention to help educate the children of people who are effectively the foundation and base of our national security is the highest priority. *The integration and the partnership* [emphasis added] of that, with all school districts, and all children, and all communities of interest becomes all the more important.”

### **Flexibility and Reciprocity**

The SETS report will be released in 2001. As a result of SETS, senior leaders from nine military communities have reached consensus on a comprehensive memorandum of agreement that will address the study’s top ten issues. The

memorandum, created by the strong partnership of superintendents, school board members and military commanders, could (when approved by the respective local school boards) serve as a model for other states and communities. These initiatives have the potential to lead to reciprocal agreements among school districts, meaning that courses, tests and other schoolwork, including graduation requirements completed at one school, will be acceptable at another. Through flexibility and reciprocity, every mobile



<sup>11</sup> MISA discussions and literature, 2000.



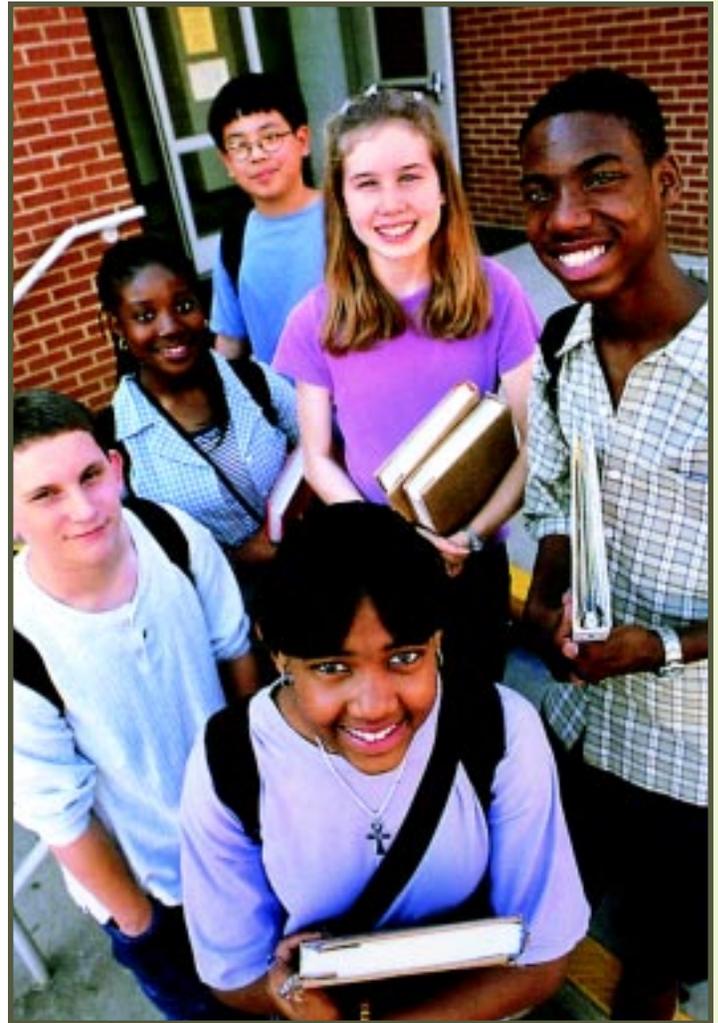
student could have an increased opportunity to reach his or her potential—not only academically but also athletically and socially.

### **Increased Emphasis from the Department of Defense**

DoD recently created the Educational Opportunities Directorate in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. This directorate serves as a focal point to create and implement a strategy at the national level for collaboration in improving educational opportunities for all military-related students, and to address issues and challenges facing students in military families.

The Educational Opportunities Directorate is concentrating on enlarging DoD's role in advocating for a continuum of quality education for all military children. Through this office, DoD will increase connections between military and civilian community schools and address educational issues and concerns affecting the quality of educational opportunities for all military students from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. DoD is implementing two strategies:

- **Community/School Partnerships.** The Educational Opportunities Directorate is working with DoDEA to develop a school partnership program with the military community (similar to the sister-city concept) in which DoDEA schools are partnered with local school districts that serve military students. The program will promote shared experiences and lesson plans, collaboration on a number of school activities, and shared video and computer lessons. This partnership is planned to begin in the school year 2001–2002. DoDEA expects to explore other opportunities for increasing understanding and involvement such as teacher and/or student exchange programs.



- **Connect with America on Education.** This cooperative effort between DoD and MCEC is a comprehensive, three-part initiative comprised of regional roundtable discussions about youth and educational issues, a meeting of senior leaders to identify obstacles, and a national planning session to establish collaboration for better educational opportunities for all military children. The first component of the plan involves regional roundtable discussions with state and local educational leaders, military community leaders, parents, students, and DoD and Department of Education leaders. These regional discussions, hosted by DoD, focus on education issues relating to academics, extracurricular/enrichment opportunities, elementary/middle school issues, special needs, and opportunities for collaboration.



### **Effective and Efficient Funding**

Impact Aid is an important program for military families because it has a direct effect on their children. Yet the FY 2001 budget (submitted in 2000), in the same vein as earlier budgets, reduced dollars for Impact Aid by \$136.5 million. At the same time, the same budget proposed a \$4.5 billion



increase in other education programs—the largest single increase ever for education—some of which was used for special-needs children. The implicit statement in this decision was that federally connected children are a lower priority than are others in the United States. The fear is that this problem could become even more severe.

As the military proceeds with the privatization of military housing, and if that housing is not considered “federal property,” students would then be classified as (D) students, and only two-tenths of the amount paid for an “on-base” student would be provided to LEAs. This could create tensions between the residents of heavily affected communities and military facilities in those communities. Area civilians could reasonably question why their children’s education must suffer. (During the FY 2000 Reauthorization of Impact Aid, MISA identified and secured legislation protecting the on-base Impact Aid payment when federal land is leased as a result of the privatization of military housing.)



As funding for school districts serving military children has been reduced, one of the first areas that has been affected is construction and upkeep of the school buildings. Continual cutting of this program has had a tremendous impact on the local schools. Some schools have experienced substantial increases in numbers of students and are having a difficult time accommodating the growth. Many of the school facilities used by military children were built in the 1950s, and today are in need of repair, asbestos removal, etc. The aging facilities and the shortage of upkeep and maintenance funding have put many of the schools in dire need of attention. Some of the challenges include difficulty in floating bonds, problems with increased enrollment caused by base realignments and closures (BRAC) or

privatization, and the need to make buildings accessible for special-needs students.<sup>12</sup>

**What is needed is full funding of Impact Aid through the Department of Education. What is also needed is an automatic funding mechanism in place to avoid**

**having to revisit each year the issue of how to appropriate Impact Aid.** There must be an annual applied formula that becomes an automatic portion of every affected appropriations budget. This will also preclude the need for the DoD Supplemental to Impact Aid, which barely brings heavily impacted military districts to the level of the baseline. MISA’s Dr. John Deegan said, during the Support the Military Child conference at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, in June 1999, “Our military men and women give so much to defend this nation—the least we can do is provide a quality educational program for their children.” At the same conference, Senator



<sup>12</sup> NMFA testimony, 11 April 2000.



Hagel commented, “I am constantly torn between amusement and bemusement as to why we continue every year to be presented with a budget on education that decreases Impact Aid. The same people . . . who are quite distraught that we can’t recruit for the military and that the quality of life is deteriorating in the military . . . short-circuit the funding process to educate the military children. It makes no sense to me.” Hopefully, this will change. As new Education Secretary Roderick Paige stated in January 2001 during his confirmation process, “I understand that education is primarily a local and state responsibility. . . . The federal government can be a great help in improving our schools. **We can provide resources** [emphasis added]. We can reward success. And we can sanction failure.” President Bush has proposed increasing funds for construction in the Impact Aid program to improve the quality of public school buildings and eliminate the backlog of repairs and construction for schools on or near military facilities.



- authorizing \$1.4 billion for DoD Dependent Schools.

### Effective Advocacy

Each military parent must effectively advocate for his or her child. Teachers say the single most important thing public schools must have to help students learn is involved parents. Since the military parent may not understand the more static nature of the tenure-based local school system, it is imperative that the parent be an informed advocate.<sup>13</sup> Army policy requires that a soldier with accompanying children conduct “in and out” processing through his or her child’s local school. This eliminates many problems with the local schools and helps schools project their budgets, hire teachers, etc., when they can anticipate enrollment figures more accurately. Army policy also states that the soldier has a responsibility to

Congress did make a number of changes to existing law (identified and secured by MISA) that reflect the changing nature of military bases, including:

- doubling the “weight” of military children residing off base in calculations that determine Impact Aid funding levels;
- accounting for Impact Aid funds lost by districts that have experienced large numbers of military families moving off base as a result of military housing privatization and renovation;
- speeding the distribution of Impact Aid funds to heavily impacted districts;
- authorizing \$35 million to DoD for supplemental Impact Aid funding;
- authorizing the Secretary of Defense to make grants to repair and renovate the schools with the most urgent needs in FY 2001;
- authorizing the Secretary of Defense to provide assistance to LEAs that educate a disproportionate number of special-needs military children; and

attend parent-teacher conferences. It is important for the parent to meet the child’s teachers and discuss concerns about the child’s progress. Other effective methods for parents to stay involved include:

- visiting the child’s classroom and assisting or volunteering in the school;
- establishing regular communications with the teachers;
- becoming informed about the curriculum;
- selecting rigorous courses for the child;
- participating in school activities, e.g., Parent-Teacher Associations.



<sup>13</sup> Keller and Decoteau, *The Military Child*, p. 24.



## What Must Be Done

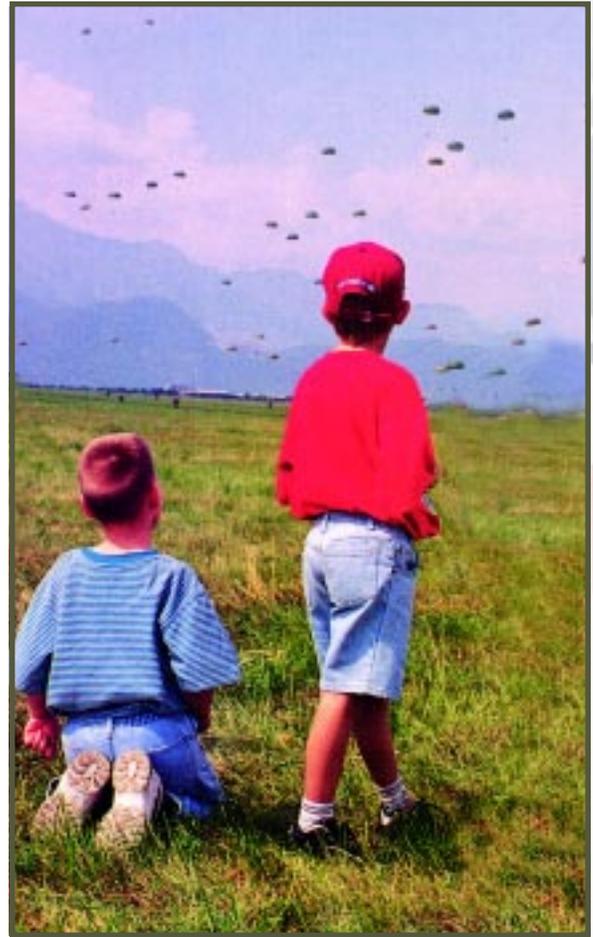
The Association of the United States Army is committed to fighting for quality education for the children of military families, whether they attend Department of Defense schools or local civilian schools. **No military child should lose academic and/or extracurricular opportunities as a result of the mobility of his or her parent.** Military children deserve support and as much predictability as possible in school transitions. **Appropriate levels of funding for schools serving military children are nonnegotiable.**

**Congress must:**

- authorize and fully fund the Federal Impact Aid Program in the U.S. Department of Education budget in a timely, consistent, forward-funded manner; and change the distribution formula so funding is proportionate to the number of federally connected students in the districts, to preclude the children of military families from being disadvantaged in public schools;
- authorize and fully fund the DoDEA budget in a timely manner and authorize DoDEA to apply and compete for Department of Education grants from funds earmarked for new initiatives or education improvements;
- authorize and fully fund repairs and upgrades to existing schools and/or the building of new schools on Army installations or that are owned by the federal government.

**DoD, the services, states, territories and LEAs** must find ways to:

- institutionalize strong partnerships among military communities, local and state education systems to accommodate the lifestyle of military children without impacting on the children of the local district, and encourage national-level partners to work toward national transition standards;
- improve liaison between parents of special-needs children and local school officials to help parents understand their entitlements, assist with transition issues and meet the education needs of those children;
- provide training to teachers on the military lifestyle and social, emotional and educational challenges facing military children, and establish “transitional labs” staffed with transition specialists in schools attended by large numbers of military youth.



**DoD, states, territories and LEAs** must find ways to:

- reduce obstacles to high school graduation by providing clear course and calendar information to parents and students and by establishing reciprocal agreements among school districts/states regarding graduation requirements and exit-level testing;
- accept grades, grading scales, ability and achievement test scores of transferring students from previous schools.

**DoD and the Army** must:

- expedite Army funding of installations’ school liaison officers;
- implement the “no-move” policy for servicemembers who have children starting their senior year or already in their senior year of high school.

**Congress, DoD and the services** must:

- work with state governments to obtain authorization for in-state tuition for military family members attending their postsecondary institutions.



## TORCHBEARER MESSAGE

It may be the high-tech equipment and weapons that capture the public's attention, but the heart of the Army has always been the men and women who serve in uniform. America's soldiers are dedicated, loyal and hardworking. They routinely work long hours, are frequently deployed away from family and friends, and perform their missions selflessly and efficiently.

Today's military force is an educated force and a family force. Military members have high expectations for their children's education. More are accepting or rejecting assignments, or even deciding to leave the military, based on perceptions about the education their children will receive at prospective duty stations.

**There must be a national acceptance that our mobile society demands a new way of cooperation and accommodation regarding state and local education practices.**

Opportunities for flexibility and reciprocity must be worked out among the various state systems and (in the case of military children) DoD schools. Military installation commanders must work with their state and local officials on behalf of the military families they represent and advocate that their children receive an equal opportunity to excel in all aspects of the education process. Support for these efforts must be evident at local, state and federal levels, to include the Departments of Defense and Education. **Congress must fully fund the Department of Education budget, especially Impact Aid, and put in place an automatic funding mechanism.**

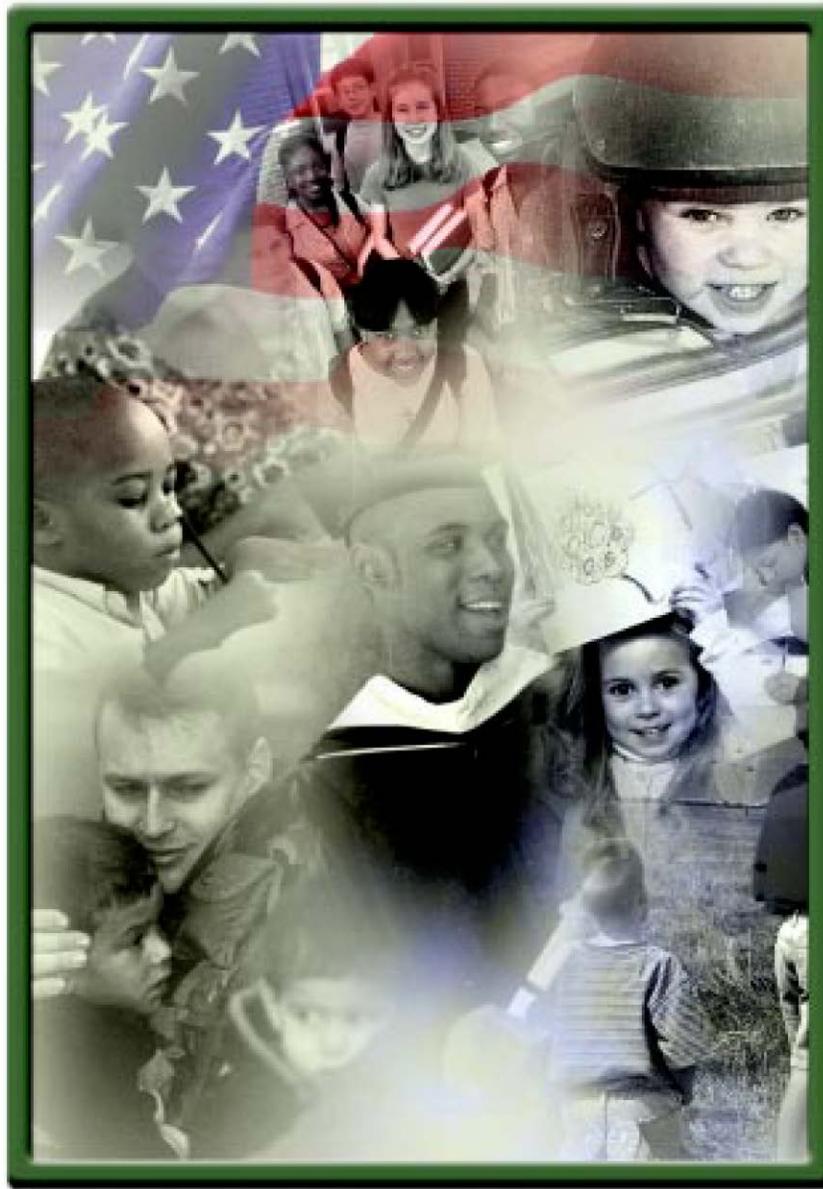
Upon taking office in January 2001, President George W. Bush made education his first priority. During a news conference on 23 January 2001, he stated, "We've got one thing in mind: an education system that's responsive to the children, an education system that educates every child, an education system that I'm confident can exist—one that's based upon sound fundamental curriculum, one that starts teaching children to read early in life, one that focuses on systems that do work, one that heralds our teachers and makes sure they've got the necessary tools to teach, but one that says every child can learn. And in this great land called America, no child will be left behind."

The military child is at risk of being left behind or of having gaps in his or her education until the school systems adequately recognize and properly accommodate the transition and assimilation requirements of this mobile population. Congress must appropriately resource schools, especially those heavily impacted by military children, if we are to close the gaps. **Military families don't want their children to be singled out. They don't want them treated differently—they want them treated *fairly*.**

**To serve the children of the members  
of America's armed forces  
requires a "level playing field."**

**The Association of the United States Army  
is fighting to ensure that every military child  
has access to a complete and comprehensive education  
so that no child is left behind.**

**Military families don't want their children to be singled out.  
They don't want them treated differently—  
they want them treated *fairly*.**



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