

Master Capstone Project

The Impact of The Military Life on Children Academically and Socially

Savannah Rollins Crowson

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I give City University Permission to store and use this M.Ed. Project for teaching purposes.

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Savannah Rollins Crowson Date

Approved by _____ Date

Approved by _____ Date

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Abstract

This study explores the children of our military communities in the United States and how aspects of the military affect their lives socially and academically. Several topics are addressed through the literature review such as an introduction to the military-connected child, the influence of the military on children and their families, how these influences impact their education and social lives, and the resiliency that these children can develop over time. This study also discusses some of the programs in place to support military families and children and presents a plan that teachers can use to connect with military students in their classes.

Introduction

The inspiration for this paper came from many different places, including my employment as a substitute teacher at two different school districts in the state of Washington. One of these district's locations surrounded Joint Base Lewis McChord and included several elementary schools on base there. The other district was about an hour away from and not associated with any military base, but still had a noticeable military presence. Working in these two districts helped me to recognize two things: first, was the difference I noticed between the schools located on and off the military base; and second, was that there are military families everywhere, not just at or around military installations.

Another connection I have to the topic of this paper is being a military spouse myself. I have been married to an active-duty armed service member for seven years. Through this experience, I know that I have been blessed while at the same time I have also found myself having to make sacrifices in regard to my education and my career. The Armed Forces is a very specific area of employment that can have a significant influence on not only the life of the service member but on their families as well. It was a combination of my own familiarities along with the experiences of the children that I taught, that led to the curiosity that drove the research of this paper. By seeing the extensive presence of military life on these students, I wanted to know precisely how these things impact them at school and with their friends.

This paper aims to study how having a parent employed in the Armed Forces affects children. This is a relevant issue in education because several teachers are unaware of the toll that military life can take on children and their families, or how to support them as educators. I found myself eager to research and learn more about the children of military families through this study, what school is like for them, and how their experiences differ in relation to civilian

children and families. I was also very interested in learning about the ways that these children are already supported as well as potential ways teachers can strive to make their learning experiences more accepting.

Dilemma or Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this paper will be the effects that military life has on children academically and social-emotionally. School-aged children that belong to families who are a part of any branch of the United States Armed Forces are exposed to several unique circumstances which can be direct factors in their academics and social-emotional lives. Children who are connected to the military have challenges where they are frequently transitioning to new schools and/or experiencing a family member who is deployed (Hunt, 2018). These events can create stress for military families and can cause children to struggle emotionally, socially, and academically.

Although previous studies have shown that life events related to the military have little long-term impact on children, it is still important that teachers are aware of these circumstances and understand how they can offer support (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). There are certain programs already in place such as military family liaison services that help to support and accommodate students of military families. However, sometimes these programs do not fully address the intensity of the obstacles that children from military families face, and are usually only available exclusively on military installations. This makes it difficult for some families to access these programs. Several military-connected children attend civilian or “off-post” schools which offer little to no supportive resources in place to help them navigate the challenges that come with the military lifestyle.

The gap in research on this topic is noted as the lack of studies done on how children are impacted by military life. It is common for schools and teachers to be either entirely uninformed or uneducated on the potential challenges students of military families deal with socially as well as within their education. This paper will study the obstacles that military-connected children face at school and research possible methods of intervention to help accommodate these students (Hunt, 2018). The stakeholders of this study are the students, parents, educators, and administrators that serve our nation's military families, and include schools located both on and off of military installations. All stakeholders will benefit by being further educated on how to improve the support offered to military-connected children which will result in these students receiving a better education and learning experience.

Research Question and Methodology

This will be an issue-focused study. The research question is as follows: How are military-connected children impacted socially and academically? The research will be descriptive and include case studies, all of which will be scholarly and peer-reviewed. The variables will be the students of military-involved families as the dependent variable and civilian children as the independent variable. I will look at several published case studies that compare children connected to the military to civilian children in the areas of social and academic development and then complete a systematic literature review design structure. The research conducted will include relevant data for each group from the previously conducted case studies, compare them, and then address any issues in the findings which will be further discussed. I, as the researcher, would also like to investigate what potential solutions can be presented additionally to support military-connected children. Research on interventions specific to military families will also be included and discussed.

This will be a systematic literature review that will examine previous studies done as relevant information to this topic and then further discuss a possible solution or support. Such solutions may include additional interventions, programs, and training offered to teachers and staff in order to educate them on the challenges faced by students impacted by being in a military family and how to mitigate that.

While conducting research for the literature review, the following keywords were used to search for articles: "education of children in military families" and "impact of military life on children". Several peer-reviewed articles were found using the search engine on the City University of Seattle library page. To analyze the data collected from these articles, I then narrowed the relevant information down to four common themes that I found in the research, which I then decided to use as sub-topics for my literature review. These subtopics are: Who are military children and what are some challenges they face, the impact of military life academically and socially, and interventions in place to support military families/children. After I established these subtopics to organize the information into, I was able to synthesize the articles that contained similar and/or contradicting ideas in these sub-topics.

Some limitations I ran into were that there hasn't been a substantial amount of research done that specifically addresses how children are affected by having a service member parent. In the studies that have been done, only the short-term effects are explored, meaning that there is no long-term data available. I also feel that it is necessary to disclose that some level of bias was present during the research, due to my previously established connections to the military and my acquired familiarity with working with students from a military background. My hypothesis is that military life events such as parent deployments and frequent relocations will have a statistically measurable impact on children at school as well as at home.

Literature Review

Military families are unique in the fact that not only do they have to navigate normal life events, but they are also exposed to and required to deal with particular stressors specific only to the military lifestyle. These stressors include frequently relocating, handling the deployment of a parent, and then the reintegration process that takes place after a deployment (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). The unique challenges that children of military families are faced with can create an impact on their education as well as their social lives (Ruff & Keim, 2014). After reviewing the available literature related to the education of children with a service member parent, the following themes have been discovered and will be addressed in this order: military-connected children and the challenges they face with military life, how these challenges impact social and educational areas, interventions support offered to military children, and then the resiliency among military families and students.

Who military-connected children are and the challenges they face

Our United States military is made up of nearly 3.5 million personnel who are entirely volunteers. Within that force, 44% of service members are parents (DoD, 2010). For a more current figure, the DoD's most recent active-duty family report showed that 50.6% of service members had either dependents or children (Military OneSource, 2020). A 2008 study revealed that 5% of active-duty military families were dual-military, meaning that both parents serve. This same study by the DoD also found that 6.6% of service members were single parents. (DoD, 2010). Due to age requirements and the standard timeline of a military career, it is common for soldiers to wed and start families during their employment in the armed forces (DoD, 2010). There are 1.7 million estimated military children of active-duty service members who differ from

other children by the special characteristics of the military that are relevant in their lives (Lawson, Bowsher, & Hansen, 2022).

One of the most significant events a military family can experience is a deployment. This situation is specifically related to the parent's career and can cause uncertainty and emotional strain to military children and their families (DoD, 2010). In the armed forces, deployments are made up of three stages, pre-deployment, separation, and re-integration (Meadows, Tanielian, & Karney, 2016). Service members typically spend anywhere from several weeks up to one year away from their families during a deployment (Bowsher & Hansen, 2022). During our nation's most recent conflict Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), deployments had reached their highest in 2010, but have been declining since (Meadows, Tanielian, & Karney, 2016). Although deployments are becoming less likely for service members, they do still happen regularly and remain a front-and-center topic in the minds of all military families. Deployments indirectly affect military children by restructuring family roles and by increasing stress on the parent that stays at home (Hunt, 2018). Issues regarding returning home to families have been reported in 75% of soldiers during the reintegration phase (Aronson & Perkins, 2012). Results from a study done by Meadows, Tanielian, and Karney (2016) were consistent with spouses reporting that the longer a deployment lasted would increase the number of issues experienced by service members, spouses, and their children.

Oftentimes, and especially in combat conditions, the service member may witness one or more traumatic events, which can lead to additional issues during post-deployment (Meadows, Tanielian, & Karney, 2016). This conclusion came from a study that mainly focuses on those soldiers who experienced confirmed trauma from one or more deployments. This research also notes that more studies are needed to investigate other ways deployments can have negative

outcomes on families (Meadows, Tanielian, & Karney, 2016). There is little known about the effects a parent with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) would have on a child (Ohye, Brendel, Fredman, Bui, Rauch, et al., 2015). However, even if a parent is not battling any trauma-linked mental health complications, his or her general experiences from a deployment can still impact relationships with spouses and kids upon return (Meadows, Tanielian, & Karney, 2016). According to the Report on the Impact of Deployment done by the DoD, over 3,700 children have experienced the death of a service member parent during Operation Enduring Freedom. Additionally, during OEF, injury or illness has been reported by the parents of over 41,000 children (DoD, 2010).

Even when the service member parent is not deployed, other factors specific to the military career can cause difficulties in family dynamics. Military members are often required to work long and nontraditional hours on shift work or be on call and ready to respond in order to support the current mission (DoD, 2010). In addition to these duties, there are several additional elements that have a direct influence on the military lifestyle as well such as relocations due to Permanent Change of Duty Station, or PCS moves. Military children PCS, or relocate frequently, with the average child moving over 4 times in their childhood (Weber, 2005). According to Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro (2012), "Children from military families change schools approximately every 2.9 years or 9 times on average." Both of these statistics are higher when compared to other families, with Ruff & Kiem (2014) reporting that military-connected children experience about 3 times more relocations than non-military children do. There are other reasons a military family may have to relocate, such as when the service member is assigned an unaccompanied tour and the family decides to move closer to relatives or services they may need (Bowsher & Hansen, 2022).

Children of military families may also be dealing with other issues common among their civilian peers such as divorce, financial instability, and/or food insecurity (Fallon & Russo, 2014). In addition to these common stressors, military-connected children are also not spared from having to deal with the implications, risks, and social restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic (Bowsher & Hansen, 2022).

The impact of military life academically and socially

The potential stressors families are subject to with the military lifestyle can also have a strong impact on a child's life at school. In research conducted by Michelle Stites (2016), it was concluded that early childhood teachers can determine a difference between military and civilian children, particularly by how often they move, and have even compared it to the frequent mobility and parental absences that foster children experience. However, this study also found that there is no increase in early childhood military children displaying negative behaviors socially or having poor concentration (Stites, 2016). Yet, in comparison to early childhood learners, it was found that middle school students are more likely to exhibit decreased academic performance, particularly during a deployment (Ohye, Kelly, Chan, Zakarian, Simon, & Bui, 2015). This comparison is interesting because it suggests that the stress of having a parent deployed may become more difficult as the military child gets older. The DoD's Report on the Impact of Deployment of members of the Armed Forces of Dependents and Children explained that children experience different impacts from deployments based on age. This report states that "younger children are likely to experience problems like anger and attention issues, and school-age children experience increased levels of anxiety, fear, sensitivity to media coverage, and reduced school performance" (DoD, 2010). The 2008 Active-Duty Spouse Survey conducted by

the DoD showed the following results about children's behavior as a result of a recent deployment:

- “Approximately two-thirds (64 percent) of all children showed increased levels of fear and anxiety, while older teens (ages 14-18) were less likely to have increased levels of fear and anxiety (50 percent).
- Children demonstrated decreased academic performance: 54 percent of adolescents (ages 14-18); 41 percent of school-aged children (ages 6 to 13).
- Children in all age groups exhibited increased problem behaviors:
 - 57 percent of children had increased problem behaviors at home.
 - 37 percent of children had increased problem behaviors at school.”

In a study done by Meadows, Tanielian, & Karney (2016), spouses noted that during deployment, their children had an increase in social issues and were more likely to receive mental health treatment. Anxiety in children from a parental deployment can lead to students feeling disengaged from their classes and their friends (De Pedro, Astor, Benbenishty, Estrada, Smith, & Esqueda, 2011). Williamson, Stevelink, Da Siva, and Fear (2018) did a systematic review on the well-being of military vs civilian students and found that older military-connected male children have an increased chance of potentially violent behavior such as being involved in physical altercations or obtaining a firearm. This study also found that high school students with military family members, such as a parent or sibling, exhibited increased rates of drinking and using drugs when compared to peers, regardless of gender or family member deployment status (Williamson, Stevelink, Da Silva, & Fear, 2018).

PCS Challenges and curriculum differences

Traditionally, it is believed that students who move around repeatedly display behavior issues because of inconsistency (Weber, 2005). Due to the various curriculums, teaching styles, and social-emotional learning components of schools across states, military-connected students that frequently move may present increased needs academically (GAO, 2011). Often there may be poor communication between transferring schools in regards to records, transcripts, or

important background on special education services (Ruff & Keim, 2014). There is no test in place to determine the strengths or needs of military children when they transfer schools (Stites, 2016). It is common for military families to move at random times during the year instead of over the summer, which can place additional stress on transitions for children (Ruff & Keim, 2014). Military children also frequently experience gaps in learning as well as placement issues among their peers due to curriculum and standard differences across states, which can have lasting effects on their academic careers (Fugate, 2014). 41 percent of schools surveyed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) considered the academic needs of military-connected students to be very challenging. These schools also stated that the cause for the increased academic needs comes from inconsistent curriculum and state standards (GOA, 2011). Hunt noted that most curriculum issues in her study were specifically on state history. Some participants of her study enjoyed learning about other states, while others felt disconnected due to not living in each state for very long, or not being able to learn about their native state's history (Hunt, 2018).

The high mobility that military children are faced with also presents disadvantages socially by causing them to have to establish new friendships as well as adjust to staff members and cultural norms of their new school (Hunt, 2018). Military children also commonly experience missing their old friends and have expressed that they feel less motivated to make friends at their schools due to knowing that they will have to eventually leave them behind once they move again. (Ruff & Keim, 2014).

DoDEA vs. off-post schools

A stimulating finding by Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro (2012) shows that students who attend a school that is operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity, or DoDEA,

actually attained higher than average scores on standardized tests. The DoDEA operates 194 schools in the U.S. and 12 globally (GAO, 2011). These schools are located directly on military bases and are exclusively for the children of military-connected or Department of Defense contractor families to attend. DoDEA schools give military students the chance to be among peers who they associate closely with and who can better relate to the military lifestyle (Hunt, 2018). DoDEA schools' main source of funding is federal, while public schools rely more on state and local funds (GAO, 2013). The same curriculum is implemented among all DoDEA schools, which makes transitioning among these establishments smoother (Hobson-Fryer, 2016). DoDEA schools are only located on military bases, however, not all schools on military bases are operated by the DoDEA, several are actually run by local public school districts.

In contrast to DoDEA schools, public schools, both on and off military bases, provide education for over 90% of military-connected children, yet the majority of students who attend public school are civilians (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012). Public schools in the United States are not as tailored to students who relocate frequently, which can make it difficult for military students to adapt in these settings (Hobson-Fryer, 2016). Often military children who attend public schools have little to no support in place for them regarding their unique military lifestyle. Teachers and other school staff should consider the specific challenges military children face and work together to develop more effective means to support them (Stites, 2016). As a result of the awareness and focus on military children and the military lifestyle that DoDEA schools demonstrate, it can be argued that these facilities are better equipped to handle the unique challenges presented by military children (Russo & Fallon, 2015). Although when surveyed, some parents expressed a preference to other schools above DoDEA schools, stating

that in some cases they have more opportunities and better prepare students for college (Hobson-Fryer, 2016).

The Department of Education and the Department of Defense are both aware of public schools' lack of adherence to the needs of military children and have offered public schools over \$100 million dollars in grants to support military children (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012). There is funding that is available from multiple federal agencies for research on how public schools can better accommodate military children, however, very few educational researchers are invested in or even aware of this (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012). It has been determined that from 2001-2011, there had been little research done by the American Educational Research Association pertaining to the educational issues military children are faced with (De Pedro, Astor, Benbenishty, Estrada, Smith, & Esqueda, 2011).

Interventions in place to support military children and families

To help navigate the challenges presented as a part of the military lifestyle, the DoD facilitates several programs for military families. However, gaps persist in these supports since they may only be available either on or near military installations, which can make them inaccessible to some families depending on their location (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). Family Advocacy Program or FAP is one example of an organization that is implemented on all 300 military bases and organizes classes and seminars that support and educate military families (DoD, 2010). Additionally, the Office of the Secretary of Defense sponsors many partnerships with organizations that make counseling available to children during a deployment (DoD, 2010). Other groups outside of the DoD that offer support to military families include the Red Cross, the United Services Organization (USO), and the Military Child Education Coalition (Hunt, 2018). Military Family Life Liaisons are another resource available at several schools across the

country with high military populations (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). According to Fallon & Russo (2015), “Over the past decade, the military has seen increased resources within the military and defense system and has turned more to community resources to assist in supporting the many needs of military families.”

While there are many organizations to assist and advocate for military families, not all of them utilize these programs due to not being aware of them, their preference not to, or being too far away to access them. (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). In the past two decades, several websites have been developed for military families to provide resources and support, such as military one source (Fallon & Russo, 2015). However, it has been noted from several sources that more programs need to be implemented to help military students transition to and from public school systems. These programs that offer support to military families are essential to helping them achieve resiliency (Russo & Fallon, 2015).

Resiliency among military families and students

Some families are able to create strategies that help them cope with frequent relocations and parental absences. This is called resiliency. As families become accustomed to the frequent changes, they are able to better adjust and prepare for them. (Russo & Fallon, 2015). Military families often thrive with the help of involvement in the military-specific support programs that are in place as well as having the same relationships among extended relatives, friends, social connections, and associates that civilians do (Mancini, Walker, & Lucier-Greer, 2020). Some consider military families to have a certain advantage over others because they are a part of a huge network that unites them with other military families through traditions and culture (Mancini, Walker, & Lucier-Greer, 2020).

When a military child has a positive attitude and solid support systems in place, a relocation may actually be beneficial. Some military children have achieved higher grades and maintained participation in after-school activities even after 5 or more moves (Ruff & Keim, 2014). In a 2005 study, Weber noted that “Parental perceptions of relocations improved with the number of relocations experienced ($p < 0.05$). As more relocations were experienced, children’s behavior improved, when controlling for age.” This study concluded that when considering family relocations in regards to behavior, the number of relocations did not have a significant effect on behavior declining. It was mentioned in this research, however, that more studies are needed to determine the effect that frequency, or how often a military family relocates in a specific period of time, has on the behavior of military children. (Weber, 2005). Children experiencing the deployment of a parent or sibling had a higher chance of developing depression, but only if it was their first time experiencing a family member deployment (Williamson, Stevelink, Da Silva, & Fear, 2018). This suggests that children of military families might eventually get used to the stress of deployments and/or PCS moves and be able to cope with these situations more effectively.

Discussion

In the literature review which analyzed information regarding the education of children of service members, the following themes were found and presented: military-connected children and the challenges they face, how these challenges impact social and educational areas, and interventions and support offered to military children. As reviewed in the literature, each one of the estimated 1.7 million military-connected children is subject to the unique circumstances of military life (Lawson, Bowsher, & Hansen, 2022). One of these circumstances is parental deployment, which can commonly cause separation anxiety and depression. An interesting

finding was that according to Meadows, Tanielian, & Karney (2016), is that deployments that are longer in length can lead to an increased number of issues during the post-deployment stage, all of which the school-aged children of the family are exposed to and expected to handle. Aside from deployments, other duties can cause the service member parent to be absent for extended periods of time such as having to work long hours, participating in training exercises, and other support missions. In addition, it is considered normal for military-connected children to move around nine times during their childhoods, or about every three years (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012). These frequent transitions disrupt their daily lives by causing a major change in routine, a switch to a different school, and the pressure to make new friends each time, in addition to all of the expected stress of moving. Although it is possible for non-military children to be exposed to these obstacles as well, it is significantly more common for military-connected children. Regardless, these situations cause stress that educators should be able to show empathy for.

These aspects of the military lifestyle such as parental deployment and PCS moves that take place during a child's school year can have an influence on their behaviors socially and their academic performance. In a study done by Stites in 2016, it was found that negative behaviors and attention issues did not increase in early childhood or younger children when their parent was deployed. However, a report published by the DoD in 2010 on the impact of deployment on children did state that it is common for younger children to have trouble focusing and anger issues during a deployment. Ohye, Kelly, Chan, Zakarian, Simon, & Bui (2015) revealed that military-connected middle school students are more likely to perform poorer in school, particularly during deployment. These studies all support the statement that was made in the DoD's 2010 report that it is common for children to be affected by parental deployments in

different ways based on age. This report also showed that a significant number of children of all age groups were reported to have more behavior issues either at home, at school, or both during deployments (DoD, 2010). These findings signify the importance for teachers to understand all of the possible and likely ways students can be affected when their parent deploys, as well as how these effects can be different for children based on their age.

PCS moves can cause academic setbacks and gaps in learning due to the lack of transparency in curriculum and standards across states and countries (Fugate, 2014). DoDEA schools strive to follow the same standards and curriculum in all of their locations, however, they only serve a small percentage of the military community. The majority of military-connected children attend public schools, which are typically not equipped to adequately meet the specific needs of students who frequently move. It would be helpful if educators and administrators at public schools developed a system that would constitute an easier transfer for military students. One component of this could be an easily assessable network or database for the records of military students. It is also essential to provide training to teachers at public schools on the specific needs of military children. This training would be needed for *all* public schools, not just the ones that are near military installations. At all of the off-post schools that I have either subbed or taught at that have been further away from military bases, there has always still been at least one military family or more. It is important to also consider these families who often live further away from a military base due to either preference or in a case where they are assigned a nontraditional duty such as recruiting.

Although there are several support programs already in place for military families, these are typically concentrated toward military bases and are difficult for families in other locations to access. Public schools as well as other civilian community organizations such as The Y should

be able to contact and collaborate with the military support programs in order to extend these valued services to military families and children in all areas. Several schools on military bases employ a position called Military Family Life Counsellor (MFLC), which works directly with military children and their parents to provide resources and support. Although this is a more fundamental need at an on-post school, these services could still be offered off-post as well, at least in a more condensed form. A counselor at a public school could attend training or professional development on how to support military children. This would make a huge difference for these students by having someone who is aware of their situation and willing to advocate for them.

Limitations

Although the literature has implied that military life indeed impacts children of all ages, there are no studies available on the long-term implications or how military-connected children are affected developmentally. This would include how military life affects the rate at that children grow or mature physically and mentally. This factor, along with the lack of long-term data makes it difficult to determine any long-term complications that could be caused by the military lifestyle. At this time, there is only information on the short-term effects. One study was found that looked at the implications of military life through the Covid-19 pandemic. Since this is still a relevant and global issue, more studies would be beneficial that explore the additional possible needs that military-connected children and families may have dealing with these two factors simultaneously.

Proposed Design

In addition to the suggested ways that public schools as a whole entity can better support military students, I believe that teachers who work directly with these students can have a

meaningful impact as well. A classroom teacher plays an important role in a student's education and experience at school. Teachers spend around six hours minimum with students and should be prepared to provide direct support to their students and any challenges those students may face. General education teachers are required and encouraged to provide academic and socioemotional support to students, and I feel that the implications of military life would fall into the emotional and social category. If the specific environmental challenges these students face by having a service member parent are not understood by the teacher, the child could experience academic regression. A possible option for a classroom teacher to support military-connected students would be the following: an implementation of a survey to military students when they arrive at a new school, and then periodic check-ins with the student to assess his or her adjustment to the new environment.

Purpose

The plan of this proposed investigation is to survey military students upon transfer with the intended goals of: 1. To establish a positive initial student-to-teacher connection; 2. To recognize the military student's specific academic and emotional needs; and 3. To assist with a smoother transition for the student into their new learning environment. This survey could also be easily adjusted and used to accommodate other students who relocate for reasons other than the military, such as foster children.

Implementation structure

As soon as the teacher is made aware of a new student from a military family, he or she should prepare by gathering all the supplies and learning materials the student will need, designating a desk for him or her, and ensuring that the student's desk and materials fit properly and naturally in the classroom and does not stand out from peers. When the student arrives, the

teacher should take time to introduce themselves personally and to give them a tour of the school and classroom, if possible. The teacher should then find an appropriate time to administer the survey found in Appendix B. Prior to the survey, the teacher should verbally address the child in a way that helps them to feel valued and welcomed. An example would follow the script found in Appendix A. The use of military-specific terms are used in the survey such as “duty station” and “PCS.” The reason for this is because I have discovered that when you use language that the student is familiar with, it can make them feel more comfortable, welcomed, and open to communicating. Once the student has completed the survey, the teacher should thank them and then discretely review it later either with the student or without.

After the teacher has thoroughly read the survey, he or she should evaluate any significant findings and how to assess them. For example, if the student disclosed that they did not like math at their previous school, the teacher should further investigate by looking at records and/or data from the previous school, if possible. The teacher should also have a one-on-one verbal discussion with the student about why they disliked math to determine whether the issue is related to academic performance or not. If it is, then it would be proactive to review previous data in the student’s struggling area or conduct an assessment for new data to see what the next steps would be moving forward. Without the initial survey, it could take days to weeks for the teacher to notice and address trends such as these.

The teacher should then intend to “check in” with the student frequently for the first couple of weeks. 1-2 times per day or more if determined necessary from the survey, at least to say hi and to ask how things are going. It is important for the teacher to build a trusting relationship with the student and for him or her to feel heard. The teacher could also use the survey to determine the student’s interests, and potentially pair them up with other peers in the

class based on that. This will encourage the new student to make friends and will hopefully help alleviate the initial shyness of the first day at a new school. The teacher should also be vigilant by observing the student to determine if there are any apparent needs or issues that were not disclosed in the survey and address those appropriately and in a timely manner.

Assessment

After about 4 weeks, the student will be given a follow-up survey, which can be found in Appendix C, in order to assess their transition. The responses will address the level of school work, fitting in socially, and overall feelings the student has about their new school. The teacher should use the results to see if any changes need to be made to better support the student. Typically, in my experience, if the teacher was successful in establishing trust with the student, then the information gathered from him or her will likely be more in-depth, authentic, and honest.

Differentiation

The surveys included in the appendixes are geared towards students who are in 3rd grade or older. The survey could be given to younger students orally or could be modified to meet their levels. I would recommend that the surveys be given by the classroom or homeroom teacher, but they can be administered by a school counselor or administrator as well. Regardless of who gives the survey, it is important that the results are kept confidential and should only be shared with whoever is involved in a plan for the student's success. The survey can easily be modified and given to non-military students who have also recently relocated.

Desired Outcome

It is my hope that these surveys would help the classroom teacher learn more about new students in a dignified way so that they are able to meet their needs and help them succeed.

Children of military families who move frequently can often feel disassociated or out of place when they arrive at a new school. If the teacher is educated on and aware of the unique factors that military-connected children are exposed to, they will be in a better position to support them.

Conclusion

To conclude, children of military families are subject to unique circumstances due to having a parent in the armed forces, all of which are likely to have an effect on their education and social lives. Through this research, it has been indicated that aspects of military life such as deployments and PCS moves can impact a child academically and socially and that children are affected differently depending on their age. However, it has also been noted that these children are resilient and likely become stronger with each obstacle they face.

Although there are many programs already in place to support military children, these programs do not directly reach the classroom level, especially in public schools across the US. I would encourage every educator to take the time to understand and be able to empathize with military-connected children and the challenges they face. There are several ways teachers can support these students, such as making sure their emotional needs are met during a parental deployment, and utilizing tools or resources to help make transitions smoother when they relocate. One of these tools could be a variation of the survey included in the appendixes of this paper. It is customary for teachers to support students with all types of situations that affect education, such as learning accommodations, behavior plans, medical diagnoses, and other social conditions. Implications such as moving to a new school or having an absent parent can also greatly affect a number of students who are not connected to the military, so it is important for educators to consider this as well. If educators, administrators, and parents are willing to work

together to support the specific needs of all children, it will make a huge difference in their academic careers and social lives.

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Appendix A

An example of a script that can be said to the student prior to completing the survey:

“I am so glad that you are here! Your classmates and I are so excited to get to know you. Would you be willing to fill out a quick list of questions? It’s not for a grade, and you do not have to put anything you do not want to include. This will help me learn more about you and what I can do as your teacher to make your time here at _____ school awesome. I appreciate you taking the time to do this.”

Appendix B

Name _____

Date _____

1. Where was your last duty station?

2. What things did you like about living there?

3. What things did you not like about your previous duty station?

4. How many times have you moved and where has been your favorite place to live?

5. What things did you like about your previous school, classroom or teacher? What seemed to work well there? Circle all that apply, or add your own.

Nice area

I enjoyed my school

I had good friends

We had family near by

There were fun things to do close to us

Other: _____

6. Was there anything that you think did not work well about your previous school, classroom, or teacher?

7. What is your favorite subject and activity to do at school and at home?

8. Is there anything that you think I should know as your teacher to help you be successful?

Appendix C

Military Student Survey Part 2

Name _____

Date _____

Please answer the following questions.

1. I feel like my schoolwork is at the right level, not too hard, and not too easy.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. When it comes to schoolwork, I feel like I was able to pick up where I left off from my previous school.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I feel comfortable asking a classmate or teacher when I have a question about something.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I feel comfortable participating in class discussions and answering questions.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. There is a teacher or adult at school that I trust and feel like I can talk to.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I am making friends here who I enjoy being around.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. The other student are positive and friendly towards me.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

8. I feel accepted and welcome by my new teacher, school, and classmates.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

9. It feels like the homework assigned to me is on the right level and I have enough time and support to complete it.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

10. Please list any concerns or messages you would like your teacher to know.
