



# Better Serving the Children of Our Servicemen and Women

## How the Common Core Improves Education for Military-Connected Children

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States across the country have always established their own academic standards, curricula, and achievement goals. This inconsistency, however, creates problems for children from military families, who must move and change schools frequently as their parents are reassigned. For these children, moving from state to state not only has significant social and emotional challenges, it also complicates their education. It is critical for states to minimize the strain that moving has on these children; adopting and effectively implementing the Common Core State Standards would ensure that as students change schools, their education is consistent and of high quality.

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### Common Core can help improve education for children from military families

- Families can be confident that their children will receive a high-quality and consistent education when they move across state lines.
- Students will not bear the burden of missing or repeating classes on top of the stress of moving across state lines.
- Consistent expectations will ease the transition from one year to the next as students cross state lines, allowing them to graduate on time.

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### Children from military families face unique challenges that can complicate their education

**There are 1.2 million military-connected children in the United States.**<sup>1</sup> On average, these children move three times more often than their civilian counterparts.<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Defense, military children typically move between six and nine times before they graduate from high school.<sup>3</sup> This translates to a move every 18 to 24 months.

“It can’t be the case that we are so undereducating our children that large numbers of them cannot, maybe 75 percent, are not capable of serving in our military. What are we doing? And what are you going to do about it? I would like to hear the common core endorsed and the governors continuing to work on it.”

– *Former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice*<sup>6</sup>

“Military families have a tremendous amount of responsibilities associated with moving. Removing the concern about our kids’ education would be incredible. Knowing they can pick up where they left off from state to state is ideal. The Common Core will be a huge benefit to families like mine.”

– *Ruth Cady Bell, active-duty Marine Corps spouse, San Diego, California*<sup>7</sup>

**Changing schools often negatively affects student achievement, and the differing standards of state education systems only exacerbate the problem.** Moving's effect on student achievement is consistently and increasingly negative; the more students move, the more pronounced their decrease in achievement. Those students who move three or more times achieve a basic level of performance at half the rate of their peers who have not moved, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP.<sup>4</sup>

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## Military families should not have to worry about inconsistent education

**What students are expected to know and be able to do often differs from state to state.** Completing Algebra I in eighth grade is often considered an indicator of college and career readiness. Which grade students are scheduled to take the course, however, varies from state to state. Children who move frequently may have to take algebra multiple times or may fall behind their peers because they have not taken it at all.

**States with low standards may leave students unprepared for higher standards in other states.** What students learn and the levels of proficiency they are expected to reach differ dramatically from state to state. This patchwork of standards and expectations is problematic for students who change schools frequently as there may be gaps in what these students have learned that leave them unprepared for more challenging education systems in other states. For example, using its own tests, New York determined that 62 percent of its students were proficient in math; however, the nationwide and more rigorous NAEP assessment found that only 32 percent were proficient.<sup>5</sup>

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## Endnotes

1 U.S. Department of Defense, *2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community* (2012), available at [http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2011\\_Demographics\\_Report.pdf](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2011_Demographics_Report.pdf).

2 American Association of School Administrators, "Fact Sheet on the Military Child," available at <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=8998> (last accessed April 2014).

3 U.S. Department of Defense, "Military Family Support," available at [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2012/0212\\_familysupport/](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2012/0212_familysupport/) (last accessed April 2014).

4 Alexandra Beatty, *Student Mobility: Exploring the Impact of Frequent Moves on Achievement* (Washington: National Academies Press, 2010), available at [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=12853&page=10#p2001acd89960010001](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=12853&page=10#p2001acd89960010001).

5 National Center for Education Statistics, *A First Look: 2013 Mathematics and Reading* (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

[subject/publications/main2013/pdf/2014451.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/subject/publications/main2013/pdf/2014451.pdf); U.S. Department of Education, "ED Data Express: New York State Snapshot," available at <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-report.cfm/state/NY/> (last accessed April 2014).

6 PBS, Condoleezza Rice: Education Could Be "Greatest National Security Challenge," March 20, 2012, available at [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education-jan-june12-education\\_03-20/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education-jan-june12-education_03-20/).

7 Personal communication with Ruth Cady Bell, active-duty Marine Corps spouse, San Diego, California, April 17, 2014.

8 Major General Paul D. Eaton, U.S. Army, op/ed to be placed by end of this week

9 Personal communication with Cindy Simerly, Director of Marketing, The Military Child Education Coalition, April 17, 2014.

"As parents, we must be determined to work toward a better education system for the families that serve our country. We need consistent standards. We need to stand strong behind the Common Core."

—Major General Paul D. Eaton, U.S. Army<sup>8</sup>

"The structure of the [Common Core State] standards is vital for all students to be college and career ready, but it is especially critical for the highly mobile military-connected student. The standards provide parents, students, and educators with 21st century Math and English Language Arts guideposts to ensure our children's future success and enhance our nation's ability to compete in the global marketplace."

—The Military Child Education Coalition<sup>9</sup>