

PTAs of HCPSS,

Thank you for the opportunity to work together to help HCPSS earn a Purple Star School (PSS) designation. There are many reasons to work toward this designation, but one of the most important is to improve academic achievement and engagement. The Military Student Identifier (MSI) established by The Federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 was established to support vulnerable sub-populations. Military children are included because of their frequent moves, averaging every 2-3 years or more. I have provided a short list of guidelines and benefits, in addition to a more detailed explanation and examples (some of which are already in place). PSS legislation was passed March 2022, guidelines were released a year later and applications will open this December. I am confident that implementing recommended guidelines now will not only benefit our school communities but prepare us for the first PSS designation in Maryland. Thank you. Lisa Terry, Manager, Howard County Office of Veterans and Military Families

Guidelines:

- **Designating a staff point of contact (POC) for military students and families.** POCs serve as the primary link between the school and military-connected families, helping students navigate the transition into and out of the school and connecting them to resources and information on an ongoing basis. The best POCs: are trained in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, have passion for and knowledge about the military lifestyle, have time to commit to the position, and are accessible to families 12-months of the year. *I recommend one of HCPSS Community Schools Coordinators.*
- **Establishing and maintaining a dedicated webpage with resources for military families.** Dedicated webpages signal military friendliness to incoming families, centralize critical information about enrollment and school life, and provide families with links to relevant resources and supports. *I have a comprehensive directory of local resources and a dedicated page for military parents/educators on the HC Office of Veterans and Military Families web page.*
- **Enacting a student led transition program.** New student transition programs help incoming students acclimate to their new campus and community, spurring ongoing connections in the school. *I think a New Student Buddy Program would benefit all new out of county students and families. HCPSS Students Partner with Veterans Club would be a great collaborator in this initiative as would PTAs.*
- **Providing professional development for staff.** Professional development for all staff helps familiarize administrators and faculty with the Compact, cultivates awareness of and empathy for military-connected students, and equips staff to support families and students. *Military Child Education Coalition and Ft. Meade's School Liaison have professional development/continuing education resources.*
- **Hosting military recognition events.** Events honor and increase awareness of military-connected students, families, and staff and help families integrate into their new communities.

States can support the hosting of military recognition events by: providing a list of common activities, suggesting points of outreach, and identifying common dates for holding such activities. We have some things in place already to build upon: *Veterans Day presentations (10+ HCPSS schools had local veterans support presentations last year), Veterans Day Parade (JROTCs cadets, marching bands and other student organizations participate in the parade and ceremony) and Month of the Military Child (check out this https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGB_ceVk5IA from 2020 with HCPSS military kids).*

**Optional as part of the legislation but a guideline in other PSS around the US and overseas*

Benefits:

- **Centralizes and makes knowledge accessible to all stakeholders.** Purple Star programming helps schools and districts aggregate and centralize knowledge so that critical information is easily accessible to students, families, as well as school and district faculty and staff. *There are many behavioral health resources free and low cost to military families that may alleviate the strain on the school system.*
- **Develops stakeholder networks.** The program has enormous potential to create robust networks of local, state, and national stakeholders. In just a few years, the program in other states has already spurred the development of local and regional networks. *Local veteran service organizations already support military/veteran students with scholarships and I only see these partnerships expanding.*
- **Helps schools cultivate and demonstrate cultural competency.** Purple Star program helps schools (a) build the cultural competency needed to serve military students effectively and (b) communicate that fluency and effectiveness with incoming families. *Educators and staff have a better understanding of military culture and improved access to resources to benefit all students. Expands career choices for all students to include HS JROTC programs, college ROTC, Reserve and National Guard opportunities, as well as military service following high school. Educates the entire school community about military sacrifices and service and connects it to school curriculum.*
- **Increases Federal Aid and private funding.** Federal Impact Aid was designed to assist local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax- exempt Federal property, or that have experienced increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children. *By engaging and identifying more military students, families are more likely to complete the Federal Impact Aid Parent-Pupil Survey, which means more money for schools. Defense contractors and businesses that support Ft. Meade/NSA and other military missions are more aware of opportunities to contribute to school initiatives.*
- **Attracts the best and brightest military and veteran workforce to our community.** Fort Meade/NSA is the epicenter of national security, employing first-class service members who seek out duty stations with the best schools and resources supportive of their unique challenges. *Healthy and happy children and families with a network of resources and services, is critical to military readiness.*

Title 13A STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Subtitle 06 SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

Chapter 10 Purple Star Schools Program

.01 Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to implement Education Article, §7-129, Annotated Code of Maryland, which establishes a Purple Star Schools Program to recognize public schools that provide strong services and support for military-connected students and their families when, as a result of military service, a military-connected student transfers schools.

.02 Definitions.

A. In this chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

B. Terms Defined.

(1) "Department" means the Maryland State Department of Education.

(2) "Military-connected student" means a student who is a dependent of:

(a) A current member of:

(i) The United States military serving in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard on active duty;

(ii) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps;

(iii) The Public Health Service Commissioned Corps;

(iv) The Maryland National Guard; or

(v) A reserve force of the United States military; or

(b) A member of a military or reserve force described in §B(2)(a) of this regulation who was killed in the line of duty.

.03 Criteria.

A. To be eligible for designation as a Purple Star School, a public school shall:

(1) Designate a staff member as a military liaison, whose duties include:

(a) Identifying military-connected students who are newly enrolled or soon to be enrolled at the school;

(b) Serving as the point of contact between the school and the newly enrolled or soon to be enrolled military-connected students and their families;

(c) Determining appropriate school services available to newly enrolled or soon to be enrolled military-connected students;

(d) Assisting in coordinating school programs for newly enrolled or soon to be enrolled military-connected students;

(e) Providing information, resources, and professional development to school staff on the needs of military-connected students and their families; and

(f) Generally aiding with a military-connected student's transition to a new school;

(2) Establish on the school's website an easily accessible webpage that includes resources for military-connected students and their families, including information regarding:

(a) Relocation to, enrollment at, registration at, and transferring records to the school;

(b) Preparation for a move from a student's current school to the school at which the student is newly enrolled or is soon to be enrolled;

(c) Academic planning, course sequences, advanced classes, and graduation requirements;

(d) Special education and related services; and

(e) Counseling and other support services available for military-connected students transitioning into the school;

(3) Maintain a transition program led by students at the school, whenever appropriate, and overseen by the designated military liaison that assists military-connected students enrolled at the school by:

(a) Facilitating guided tours of the campus;

(b) Organizing an orientation to familiarize the new student with school information; and

(c) If requested, accompanying the student throughout the campus during the first week of school during school hours;

and

(4) Offer professional development to school staff on issues related to military-connected students transferring to new schools.

B. A public school may partner with a county board to fulfill the criteria described in §A of this regulation to qualify as a Purple Star School.

.04 Application and Renewal.

A. To be considered for designation as a Purple Star School, a public school's military liaison shall complete an application available on the Department's website.

B. The Department will release the Purple Star School application on December 1 of each year, beginning with the 2023—2024 school year.

C. A public school that receives the Purple Star School designation shall hold the designation for a period of 2 school years and be eligible to reapply for the designation in the final year of the 2-year period.

D. A public school that fails to receive the Purple Star School designation is eligible to reapply for the designation the following year.

.05 Selection Process.

A. The Department shall identify a panel of stakeholders to review Purple Star School applications based on the criteria described in Regulation .03 of this chapter.

B. The Department shall issue its decision on a Purple Star School application no later than the end of the school year in the local school system where the applicant school is located.

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State Superintendent of Schools