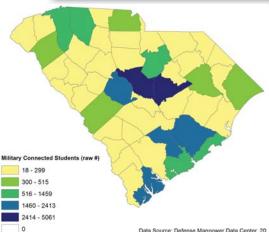# REPORT OF MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS IN SC (PER ACT 289)
Summary, Findings, and Recommendations

Data about military-connected children are insufficient at the national and state level.

Federal-connected students are children "residing on Indian lands, military bases, low-rent housing properties, or other Federal properties and, to a lesser extent, concentrations of children who have parents in the uniformed services or employed on eligible Federal properties who do not live on Federal property." Children who have at least one parent or guardian who is military connected represent a group within the broader category of federal-connected children.

The estimated number of school-age students in South Carolina with a parent in the military varies, with the highest recent count being 23,710 in 2012. However, school districts reported 7,853 in 2014.

Military Connected Students (raw #)
- 18 - 299
- 300 - 515
- 516 - 1459
- 1460 - 2413
- 2414 - 5061
- 0

Data Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, 20

School districts are eligible for additional Federal funding based on the number of Federally connected students (including military connected students) they educate, although the number of military-connected children is under-reported by S.C. school districts. In order to qualify for Federal Impact Aid monies, school districts must have at least 400 Federally-connected children, or such children must represent at least three percent of the district's average daily attendance. By analyzing and reporting the number of military connected students, school districts can better understand their student population and develop services (such as counseling and support groups) that will address unique needs of military connected students. During FY 2012-13, twelve S.C. school districts received more than $2.3 million in Federal Impact Aid dollars.

In 2012-13, 12 SC districts received more than $2.3 million in Impact Aid.

Although absentee rates on average are higher, military connected students achieve **higher** levels on state assessments than their non-military peers. For the SC Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS), given in grades 3-8, military connected students consistently have a higher percentage of students that score *Met* or *Exemplary*, in all grade levels and for all subjects. For Mathematics and Reading & Research the difference is typically near 15 percent, and for Science the difference is typically near 17 percent. On the end-of-course assessments, the average score for military connected students was typically six points **higher** than the average score for all South Carolina students, regardless of subject area or grade level.

*Although absentee rates on average are higher, military connected students achieve **higher** levels on state assessments than their non-military peers.*

Percent Met or Exemplary on SC PASS 2014 Reading and Research and Math -- Military-Connected Students in SC and All Students in SC (Grades 3-8)

Mathematics			Reading & Research		
# of Military Connected Students Tested -- Grades 3-8	% of Military Connected Students Scoring *Met* or *Exemplary*	% of ALL SC Students Scoring *Met* or *Exemplary*	# of Military Connected Students Tested -- Grades 3-8	% of Military Connected Students Scoring *Met* or *Exemplary*	% of ALL SC Students Scoring *Met* or *Exemplary*
3,083	82.3%	66.7%	3,081	86.4%	71.1%

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Summary of Findings

Finding 1:
Data about military connected students are insufficient at both the national and state levels.

Finding 2:
When compared to Department of Defense data, military connected students are underreported in South Carolina. In 2012, the Department of Defense reported there were 23,710 military connected students (ages six through eighteen), in the state. School district data indicates there were 7,853 students enrolled in grades 1 through 12 in 2014 and 6,175 in 2013. This data only reflects military connected students enrolled in public schools. It does not include students enrolled in Department of Defense (DoD) schools, private schools or students who are homeschooled. Data for military connected, homeschooled, and private school students are not collected at the state level.

Finding 3:
In South Carolina, military connected students in middle and high school have higher absence rates than military connected students in elementary school. There do not appear to be differences between the attendance rates of students with deployed parents compared to students whose parents are not deployed, and there do not appear to be any differences by the type of service the parent is affiliated with (Active Duty, Reserve, or National Guard).

Finding 4:
Military connected students achieve higher levels on state assessments than their non-military peers. For the SCPASS assessment, military connected students consistently have a higher percentage of students that score Met or Exemplary, in all grade levels and for all subjects. For Mathematics and Reading & Research the difference is typically near 15 percent, and for Science the difference is typically near 17 percent. On the end-of-course assessments, the mean score for military connected students was typically 6 points higher than the mean score for all South Carolina students, regardless of subject area or grade level.

Finding 5:
The on-time graduation rate reports the percentage of students who earn standard high school diplomas and who graduate in four years or less from high school. The definition identifies a cohort of ninth graders who enroll for the first time in high school and determines what percentage of 9th grade cohort received a diploma four or less years later. Students are removed from the cohort when they transfer to other degree-granting institutions or programs, and students who transfer into a school are added to the cohort. For our military connected students, neither a specific ninth grade cohort for military connected children could be identified nor could the EOC determine transfers into or out of a specific cohort. However, the overall graduation rate for 546 students identified as military connected was 97% for school years 2013 and 2014.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:
Consider unique challenges of military students in an academic setting. With better data, schools and districts should establish flexible attendance policies that take into account student attendance immediately prior to or after a parent/caregiver deployment. Sumter County School District developed a district-wide attendance policy that considers particular attendance needs of military connected students. Similar policies should be considered by districts for implementation.

Recommendation 2:
PowerSchool is a web-based, student information system used by all S.C. school districts. Current PowerSchool "Parent Military Status" field should be revised to:
a. better reflect all criteria for qualification for federal impact aid as described in Section 8003(b) (2). Districts could potentially receive federal money to meet the educational needs of students with at least one parent who is federally connected. For example, children whose parents work on federal property (such as the Veterans Administration Hospital) may be counted as part of the federal-connected student population at the school or district level.
b. provide more information regarding students that may be helpful for school staff. PowerSchool's Option 07 reads "The student's Parent or Guardian died while on active duty within the last year" and Option 08 reads "The student's Parent or Guardian was wounded while on active duty within the last year." It would be helpful to guidance counselors and social workers to know if a student has a parent or guardian who died or was wounded even if it occurred more than one year ago.

Recommendation 3:
Schools and school districts in South Carolina need to enter more information in PowerSchool for military connected students to: (1) better meet their educational needs, (2) better inform provision of support services such as counseling and peer support, and (3) potentially provide additional federal Impact Aid revenue if threshold requirements are met.