



September 1, 2022

To: Governor Greg Gianforte  
Senate President Mark Blasdel  
Speaker of the House Wylie Galt  
Senator Edie McClafferty, Chair, Education Interim Committee  
Representative Fred Anderson, Vice-Chair, Education Interim Committee

From: Superintendent of Public Instruction Elsie Arntzen

Subject: Report on the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

As required by 20-1-231, MCA, this report provides a summary of the state's participation in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and the activities and discussions of the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children during 2022. This report and other information associated with the Council are posted on the Office of Public Instruction's website at <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Management-Operations/Office-of-the-Superintendent/MIC3>.

### **Purpose**

In 2013, the Montana legislature approved Senate Bill 203, which enacted into law the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The purpose of the Interstate Compact is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents. The state's participation in the compact is intended to facilitate

- the timely enrollment of children of military families;
- the student placement process;
- the student's qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs, and extracurricular academic, athletic and social activities; and
- the student's on-time graduation.

### **Council membership**

One of the requirements of participation in the Interstate Compact is for the state to create a state council on educational opportunity for military children. The members of the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children include:

- Ray Shaw, Ret. Sergeant (USAF) – Compact Commissioner





- Elsie Arntzen – State Superintendent, Montana Office of Public Instruction - Chairperson
- Colonel Christopher Karns, U.S Air Force AFGSC 341 MSG/CC, Malmstrom AFB
- Representative Edward Buttrey – Montana House of Representatives
- Lisa Sapp – School Liaison Specialist, Malmstrom Air Force Base
- Tom Moore – Superintendent Great Falls Public Schools
- Brad Livingston, BG (R) – Montana Chair, Employer Support of Guard and Reserve (ESGR)
- LTC John Bleile – Military/DOD Representative, MTARNG, Montana National Guard
- Hal Stearns, BG (R) – Former Compact Commissioner

The Council has appointed two members to the Council in addition to those appointed by the Governor. In April, Superintendent Tom Moore nominated Brad Livingston, BG (R) from Great Falls to serve on the Council. BG (R) Livingston has served as a military and community leader and works directly with military-connected students and families. The Council unanimously approved the nomination. In August, the Council voted unanimously to appoint Brian Michelotti, Executive Director of the Montana High School Association to the Council. Mark Beckman, former Executive Director of the Montana High School Association and council appointee has retired and stepped down from his position on the Council. Mr. Michelotti is familiar with the issues that military-connected students face in becoming eligible to participate in extracurricular athletics when they transfer into a school district.

In 2021, Governor Gianforte appointed Ray Shaw, Ret. Sergeant (USAF) as Compact Commissioner. He is responsible for the administration and management of the state's participation in the compact. Per the Council bylaws and by Council appointment, former compact commissioner, Hal Stearns, BG (R) continues to serve on the council as an ex-officio member.

By statute, the Compact Commissioner and the Military Family Education Liaison, Ms. Lisa Sapp, are non-voting members. At the meetings, Colonel Christopher Karns, DoD's Montana State Representative, and Lisa Sapp have abstained from voting because of their federally-funded positions.

The Office of Public Instruction invited representatives from the Office of the Governor, Montana's U.S. Senate and Congressional offices, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana Department of Military Affairs, and others to attend the Council meetings. These individuals were invited to sit at the table with the Council and engage in the meeting discussions. Those that have attended expressed an interest in attending future meetings of the Council and were encouraged to do so by Council members.





### **Activities of the State Council**

The Council met four times in 2021 and has met twice so far in 2022. The 2021 meetings were held via zoom on April 6th, July 21st, September 27th, and December 7<sup>th</sup>. In 2022, the Council met in person in Great Falls at Malmstrom Air Force Base on April 12<sup>th</sup> and August 24<sup>th</sup> via zoom. At least one additional meeting will be held by the Council this fall.

During the visit to Great Falls in April the Council was invited to participate in the first ever Pre-K – 12 Education Summit hosted by Malmstrom Air Force Base and the installation's School Liaison Office. The Summit's purpose was to introduce and host the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) April meeting and provide a venue to share insight into the military mission with the community and regional partners. During the Summit, the local area's Purple Star Schools and Champions were acknowledged and awarded. A focused conversation regarding the U.S. Department of Defense Support of Military Families report's findings for the Great Falls area was central to the discussion and an opportunity to share additional military student specific information to stakeholders through presenting ideas for further collaboration was provided. This is the first time Malmstrom Air Force base has hosted an education summit and has volunteered to do so again in 2023. Malmstrom has also hosted in 2022 two sessions for educators to gain familiarity with the base's mission and build increased partnership.

Thursday, November 4, 2021 and Friday, November 5, 2021 Commissioner Shaw virtually attended and reported on behalf of the Council at the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission's (MIC3) 2021 Annual Business Meeting (ABM). Montana's 2021-2022 end of year report can be found [here](#). The Interstate Compact's 2022 annual report will be made public mid-September. The 2021 Interstate Compact Annual Report can be viewed [here](#). Commissioner Shaw, Superintendent Arntzen and other Council members/staff plan to attend MIC3's 2022 ABM in person this October. All 50 states are now members of the compact.

The compact provides for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between school districts and states. It was developed by the Council of State Governments' National Center for Interstate Compacts, the Department of Defense, national associations, federal and state officials, departments of education, school administrators and military families. Commissioner Shaw shared with the other states' commissioners the progress Montana has made through MIC3 and the state legislature to better serve our military-connected students. The website for the national compact commission is [www.mic3.net](http://www.mic3.net).

In compliance with a request from the interstate compact, the Montana Council provided guidance regarding the interstate compact's efforts to extend compact coverage to all National Guard and Reserve members. The Council agreed unanimously that to best serve military-





connected students no military family should be excluded from compact coverage. The interstate compact is still considering consequences to state councils if expanding compact coverage is permitted. It was shared with the interstate compact that as of July 31, 2021, Montana has 5,482 National Guard and Reserve service members residing in Montana. There are also 6,982 National Guard and Reserve dependents between ages 0-18. Additionally, 2,623 military spouses currently reside in Montana. It was concluded that the Council does not anticipate a large increase in Montana dues if the compact expansion is approved. The Council is committed to serving all military families regardless of compact coverage.

During the 2021 Montana Legislative Session, State Superintendent Arntzen provided supportive testimony for House Bill 68, introduced by Representative Marta Bertoglio (USAF). The bill will revise laws related to school admission and ensure children of military families relocating to Montana under military orders are allowed to preliminarily enroll in school prior to establishing residency. Under HB 68 school trustees are allowed some flexibility to assign and admit children to public schools under exceptional circumstances and within the provisions outlined in the bill.

The Office of Public Instruction successfully stewarded changes to Chapter 57 educator licensing rules to define military dependent to include in licensure reciprocity for military spouses and dependents. The Board of Public Education unanimously adopted State Superintendent Elsie Arntzen's recommended changes to ARM 10.57.221 and 10.57.102.

In 2020, the Council introduced the Purple Star Schools designation program. The program recognizes Montana schools that display extraordinary commitment to supporting military-connected students and families. Five schools were awarded as a Purple Star designee in 2020, 6 additional schools were awarded in 2021. 2021 was also the first year for the Purple Star Champions award, recognizing three Montanans that were nominated for the exceptional service they have provided to military-connected students. These schools are required to identify a liaison that receives training from the interstate compact providing resources to advance their service to our military families.

The Council has partnered with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) to develop a Purple Star Campus Award for post-secondary institutions that are going above and beyond to serve military families. The Council and OCHE recognize the incredible services available to our veterans and service-members and is working to develop an award that will recognize and encourage similar services extended where appropriate to military-connected students (dependents and spouses). Interested colleges and universities that are serving military-connected students can apply to be considered for a Purple Star Campus award.





State Superintendent Arntzen continues to work closely with Governor Gianforte to spotlight military-connected students during the month of the military child every April. In 2021 and 2022, Governor Gianforte proclaimed April as Month of the Military Child in partnership with the Office of Public Instruction work to recognize the sacrifice and service of Montana’s military-connected students.

In the year ahead, the Council will be working on implementing the Purple Star programs, including training and educating school administrators on the unique issues facing military-connected students. Montana’s Office of Public Instruction is the first state in the interstate compact to provide training opportunities to educators during the continuing education summit. Similar presentations will be offered during the 2022 Montana School Counselor Association annual conference. The more an administrator understands the unique challenges facing a military-connected student, the easier it is to address eligibility issues. It is also important for administrators to better understand the mental health support that may be necessary for a student whose parent is deploying.

Great Falls Public Schools, Superintendent Moore, and Malmstrom AFB launched a pilot transitional Kindergarten program for Malmstrom military families. This initiative was 10 months in the making and represents base and community partnership working issues critical to Malmstrom military readiness. The program helps support not only education but also brings added relief to 18 military families in need of childcare. This is an area the Department of Defense and U.S. Air Force look upon as factors in retaining military members and sustaining the military mission.

### **Costs for Participation in the Interstate Compact**

As of August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the State of Montana, Department of Military Affairs has allocated \$2,000.00 annually for dues associated with the Interstate Compact and the state Council paid to the Council of State Governments. The Department of Military Affairs has not received any travel expenses for 2021 or 2022 related to meetings or participation in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

### **Costs Expended by State Superintendent Elsie Arntzen’s Personal Budget**

As of August 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, the Office of Public Instruction has spent for administrative travel and Purple Star School awards \$1046.62. This amount does not include administrative salaries, travel for the State Superintendent or cost to develop and disperse outgoing communications such as press releases, social media and other outreach regarding her Council involvement and program advocacy.





### **Next Steps for the Council**

- 1) Open application and nomination process September 15th for the 2022-23 round of Purple Star School and Champion awards.
- 2) Continue development of the Purple Star Campus award to be announced in spring 2023.
- 3) Offer training to educate school administrators, counselors and athletic directors on the challenges of facing military-connected students and their families with the goal of fostering academic success for all students of military families and facilitating the participation of students in extracurricular athletics and activities.
- 4) Continue the encouragement and sponsorship of activities across Montana with the Montana National Guard and Reserve in celebration of Purple Up! Day, which commemorates military families in our communities.
- 5) Disseminate resources made available by the Interstate Compact, the U.S. Department of Defense, Montana Army National Guard, and other military family friendly agencies in effort to better serve military families.
- 6) Continue identifying legislative and state standard opportunities that need updating or development to aid serving Montana military families.