



## AGENDA

### THE ARKANSAS COUNCIL FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

Thursday, April 2, 2026, 10:00 A.M.

Greenwood School District  
420 N. Main Street  
Greenwood, Arkansas 72936

[Join the Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 256 528 891 668 46

Passcode: 3qd3qV7k

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- I. Call to Order and Roll Call (J. Kaminar, A. Cress)
  - II. Recognition of Host School District (J. Kaminar)
  - III. Pledge of Allegiance (W. Arnett)
  - IV. Introduction of Visitors and Guest Presenters (J. Kaminar)
  - V. Approval of Agenda\*\*\* (J. Kaminar)
  - VI. Approval of Minutes (February 12, 2026 and February 27, 2026)\*\*\* (J. Kaminar) (1, 2)
  - VII. Guest Presenters
    - A. BLOOM (B. Garrison)
    - B. DSLO 2026 State Policy Priorities (Col. D. Berry) (3)
  - VIII. Governor's Proclamation on Month of the Military Child (W. Arnett) (4)
  - IX. Public Comments (J. Kaminar)
  - X. Chair's Report (J. Kaminar)
    - A. Purple Star School Status (5)
    - B. Goals Update (6)
    - C. Commissioner's Memo – Safety Guidance for Month of the Military Child (7, 8)

- XI. Vice Chair's Report (A. Wright)**
- XII. Reports by Committees, Task Forces, or Liaisons**
- A. Awards Committee (T. Williams)**
    - 1. JROTC Award (T. Williams) \*\*\* (9)**
  - B. Outreach Committee (J. Bergstrom)**
  - C. Strategic Planning Committee (J. Reynolds)**
  - D. Military Family Education Liaison (B. Olles)**
  - E. Department of Defense Liaison (Col. K. Smith)**
  - F. Special Education Liaison (R. Porter)**
  - G. Gold Star Families Advisor (C. Swindle)**
  - H. Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs Liaison (Col. W. Ruthven)**
- XIII. Student Advisor Reports (A. Pitts)**
- A. Beebe High School (C. Carranco) (10)**
  - B. Cabot High School (A. Berryhill) (11)**
  - C. Malvern High School (C. Teeter) (12)**
  - D. Greenwood High School (W. Arnett) (13)**
- XIV. Old Business (J. Kaminar)**
- XV. New Business (J. Kaminar)**
- A. Graduation Cords for Children of Military Families\*\*\* (J. Kaminar) (14)**
- XVI. Date/Time/Place for Next Meeting – June 4, 2026, 10:00 AM, Pulaski County Special School District - Tentatively (J. Kaminar)**
- XVII. Adjournment\*\*\* (J. Kaminar)**

\*\*\* Indicates a vote is required

Parenthesized numbers in green typeface indicate documents to be presented at the meeting. Documents may be viewed [at this link](#).



## MEETING MINUTES

### ARKANSAS COUNCIL FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

Thursday, April 2, 2026, 10:00 A.M.

#### I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The Arkansas Council for Military Children Council met Thursday, April 2, 2026. Chair Col. John Kaminar called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. He requested that Ms. Abby Cress conduct roll call.

#### **PRESENT:**

Col. John Kaminar, Chair

Ms. Andelyn Wright, Vice Chair

Ms. Jody Bergstrom

Mr. John Ciesla

Sen. Jane English

Ms. Amanda Sanders (proxy for Lt. Col. James Garvey)

Ms. Christina Harper

Ms. Whitney Mallham

Mr. Brian Melton

Ms. LaShawnda Noel

Ms. Crystal Parker

Ms. Allison Pitts

Ms. Jessica Saum

Ms. Emily Taylor

Ms. Terri Williams

Col. Katrina Smith (DOD Liaison)

Mr. Rick Porter (Special Education Advisor)

Ms. Chelsea Swindle (Gold Star Families Advisor)

Mr. Weston Arnett (Student Advisor, Greenwood School District)

Ms. Ava Berryhill (Student Advisor, Cabot School District)

### **ABSENT / EXCUSED:**

Rep. Karilyn Brown – Excused

Ms. Bobbie Olles (Military Family Education Liaison) - Excused

Ms. Jennifer Reynolds – Excused

Dr. Janice Walker (proxy for Dr. Jeremy Owoh) – Excused

Col. Wayne Ruthven (Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs Liaison) - Excused

Ms. Alisha Price (Legal Advisor) – Excused

Mr. Caleb Caronco (Student Advisor, Beebe School District)

Ms. Carly Teeter (Student Advisor, Malvern School District) - Excused

### **II. Recognition of Host School District**

Chair Kaminar recognized the Greenwood School District for hosting the meeting, expressing appreciation for their continued support of military-connected students. He noted that the district serves approximately 258 military-connected students, representing roughly 7% of enrollment — higher than the state average—highlighting the district’s important role in supporting military families.

### **III. Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Student Advisor Weston Arnett.

### **IV. Introduction of Visitors and Guest Presenters**

Chair Kaminar introduced guests Lindsey Dablow and Trevin Stevens, Interim Executive Director and Communications Associate for the Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission. He introduced as presenters Col. (Ret.) Don Berry, speaking on behalf of the Defense State Liaison Office, and Mr. Bentley Dean, Head of TikTok for BLOOM. Chair Kaminar asked for flexibility with the agenda to accommodate Mr. Dean’s class schedule.

### **V. Approval of Agenda**

Vice Chair Wright moved to amend the agenda to include recognition of Student Advisor Weston Arnett as the Arkansas Outstanding Military Scholar for 2026. Mr. Ciesla seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Motion carried.

Chair Kaminar congratulated Mr. Arnett and highlighted his exceptional academic performance, leadership, and service, noting that he stood out among applicants statewide. He pointed out that Mr. Arnett has been a battalion commander in his JROTC unit and had been recognized as the Outstanding Civil Air Patrol Cadet for Arkansas. He also noted that Mr. Arnett had been accepted to the United States Military Academy. He presented Mr. Arnett with a plaque for winning the award, and Ms. Bergstrom presented him with a laptop computer provided by Camp Alliance, Inc.

Chair Kaminar also presented him with a Capitol Citation and graduation honor cord for his service on the Council.

## **VI. Approval of Minutes (February 12, 2026 and February 27, 2026)**

Ms. Bergstrom moved to approve the February 12 and February 27 minutes as presented. Vice Chair Wright seconded. Without objection, the minutes were approved.

## **VII. Guest Presenters**

### **A. BLOOM**

Mr. Bentley Dean provided a comprehensive overview of BLOOM, a teen-led military initiative supported by the National Military Family Association (NMFA). He described the program as a platform designed to empower military teens and provide them with opportunities for connection, advocacy, and creative expression through blogs, social media, artwork, podcasts, and publications. Key highlights of the presentation included:

- BLOOM's rapid growth since its founding in 2020
- National recognition, including White House engagement and media features
- Participation in the Military Teen Experience Survey, providing critical national data
- Development of resources such as the *Field Guide to the Military Teen*

The Council discussed the importance of elevating student voice and expressed interest in promoting BLOOM opportunities across Arkansas schools. Mr. Dean noted that applications for student participation are expected to open later in the year, approximately August.

### **B. DSLO 2026 State Policy Priorities**

Col. Don Berry provided a comprehensive briefing on the Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) Fiscal Year 2026 policy priorities, with a particular focus on Arkansas' performance relative to other states and its national leadership in supporting military-connected families. Col. Berry highlighted that Arkansas is currently one of the top-performing states in the nation in implementing DSLO priorities, noting that the state is "neck and neck" with Virginia in overall performance. Arkansas has achieved:

- A high number of "green" (fully implemented) indicators across initiatives
- Recognition as a national leader in military family support policies
- Near-complete implementation of multiple key priorities

He credited this success to the collaborative efforts of:

- The Arkansas legislature
- The Governor's office
- The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- Local school districts and the Council

Col. Berry explained that the Department of Defense commissioned a multi-year study (conducted by Penn State University) to evaluate how well states implement and communicate key policies in areas such as:

- Advanced enrollment for incoming students
- Military student identification systems
- Interstate Compact compliance
- Purple Star School program implementation

He stated that Arkansas was recognized as a best practice state in 7 of 8 subcategories evaluated in this study. Additionally, only two states (Arkansas and Ohio) fully met all criteria across the major policy areas. Arkansas' systems were identified as models for other states to follow.

Col. Berry emphasized that Arkansas' success is strongly tied to the Purple Star School Program, which formalizes support structures for military families at the district level and effective implementation of the Military Interstate Children's Compact, which ensures smoother transitions for military students. He noted that Arkansas has not only implemented these programs effectively but has also excelled in communicating them to families, which is a key component of DSLO evaluation.

Col. Berry concluded by expressing strong appreciation for the collective effort across Arkansas, noting that the state's success is the result of coordinated work among:

- State leadership
- School districts
- Military partners
- The Arkansas Council for Military Children

He emphasized that many states struggle to reach this level of alignment, and Arkansas' progress demonstrates a highly effective, collaborative model.

Col. Berry's report underscored that Arkansas has established itself as a national leader in supporting military-connected students and families, with policies and practices that are being recognized as models across the country.

## **VIII. Governor's Proclamation on Month of the Military Child**

Chair Kaminar stated that the official proclamation had not yet been issued at the time of the meeting but is expected to be released in the near future. Upon issuance, the proclamation will be formally published and be made available through the Council's communication channels.

## **IX. Public Comments**

No public comments.

## **X. Chair's Report**

## **A. Purple Star School Status**

Chair Kaminar reported continued and significant progress in the implementation of the Purple Star School Program, which serves as a cornerstone initiative designed to ensure school districts are equipped to meet the unique needs of military-connected students. Since the last meeting five additional schools have been awarded Purple Star designation, the statewide total has reached 243 Purple Star Schools, and an additional seven schools are actively in progress toward completion.

Chair Kaminar emphasized that these accomplishments reflect sustained engagement and commitment from school districts across Arkansas. Importantly, he noted that a large number of schools have voluntarily pursued designation, beyond those required by law and of the schools mandated to achieve designation, only a small number remain non-compliant, and many of those have already begun the process.

Chair Kamina further explained that outreach efforts have been conducted to ensure that remaining schools are aware of requirements and receive guidance toward completion. Chair Kaminar congratulated the newly designated schools and noted that Ms. Terri Williams would assist in presenting Purple Star banners.

## **B. Council Goals Update**

Chair Kaminar provided an update on the Council's progress toward achieving its strategic goals for the year, noting that a majority of identified goals have now been completed.

The Council has successfully completed its annual survey of military families, the preliminary (raw) results have been distributed to members, and a more detailed analysis is currently in development. He explained that the survey is an essential tool for gathering direct feedback from military families, identifying barriers and gaps in services and informing future policy decisions and program improvements. He noted that findings from the survey will be incorporated into the Council's annual report to the Governor and state legislature.

Chair Kaminar reported that the Awards Committee has completed development of a new JROTC Cadet Award Program, designed to formally recognize outstanding cadets across the state. He emphasized that this initiative represents collaboration between the Council and JROTC leaders across multiple service branches, enhances recognition opportunities for student leadership and service, and strengthens connections between schools and military programs.

Chair Kaminar acknowledged the JROTC instructors who contributed expertise and support in shaping the program:

- Colonel Robert Parson, Arkadelphia School District (Army)
- Commander Alan Hale, Mountain Home School District (Navy)
- Master Sergeant Jeremy masters, Wynne School District (Marine Corps)
- Major Lewis Clark, Greenwood School District (Air Force)

Chair Kaminar reported that the Council is nearing completion of a Digital Guide for Military Families, a comprehensive resource intended to support families as they transition into Arkansas schools and communities. Current status:

- Content development completed
- Undergoing legal review to ensure compliance and accuracy
- Final steps will include formatting, graphic design, and publication

Chair Kaminar noted that this guide will serve as a centralized, accessible resource providing educational information, state-specific policies and support, and contacts and services for military families. He also acknowledged individuals from both the Council and the Department of Education who contributed to the development and review process.

### **C. Commissioner's Memo - Safety Guidance for Month of the Military Child**

Chair Kaminar highlighted a recently issued Commissioner's Memo (26-046), along with guidance provided by the Little Rock Air Force Base Security Forces, related to safety during Month of the Military Child activities. He emphasized the importance of maintaining vigilance, noting events honoring military families often involve public gatherings and awareness of safety protocols is essential given the broader national security environment. Chair Kaminar encouraged all districts and partners to: follow recommended safety practices, coordinate with local authorities and military partners as needed and ensure that celebrations remain both meaningful and secure.

Chair Kaminar noted that the Council has made substantial progress across nearly all strategic areas, with no major initiatives currently identified as falling behind schedule. He emphasized that:

- The Council's work reflects strong collaboration among state agencies, school districts, and military partners
- Arkansas continues to demonstrate leadership in supporting military-connected students
- Remaining efforts will focus on completing final deliverables and sustaining program momentum

Chair Kaminar expressed appreciation to members and partners for their continued engagement and contributions, reinforcing the Council's collective commitment to improving outcomes for military families across the state.

## **XI. Vice Chair's Report**

Vice Chair Wright provided a comprehensive briefing on the ongoing and rapidly evolving developments at the Ebbing Air National Guard Base, with a focus on the expanding international training mission and its projected impact on Arkansas communities, schools, and military-connected families. Vice Chair Wright explained that Ebbing is undergoing a significant transformation into a multinational training hub, supporting the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) mission. This initiative brings together allied nations to train on F-16 aircraft systems, significantly increasing the international military presence in the region. The mission represents a long-term strategic investment, positioning Arkansas as a key location for global military training partnerships.

Vice Chair Wright provided a detailed projected timeline for the arrival and integration of participating countries currently (2026): Poland and Finland personnel and families already in place. Expected within 2026: Germany and Singapore. And future Expansion (2027 and beyond): Switzerland and additional countries, with an estimated total of eight participating nations over the next six years. She clarified that these deployments vary in duration:

- Some nations will have short-term training rotations
- Others (notably Germany and Singapore) will have long-term, continuous presence

Vice Chair Wright emphasized that the expansion will result in a substantial increase in military-connected families relocating to the region, particularly in the Fort Smith and surrounding areas. One key example Vice Chair Wright highlighted was Singapore alone may bring approximately 400 families, representing a significant population increase for local schools and communities. She noted that this growth will occur rapidly and will require coordinated planning to ensure communities are prepared to meet the needs of incoming families.

Vice Chair Wright outlined three primary focus areas for planning and resource development:

### 1. Education Systems

- Schools will experience increased enrollment, including:
  - Military-connected students from U.S. families
  - International students from partner nations
- Unique considerations include:
  - Transcript evaluation for international students
  - Cultural and language differences
  - Differences in educational systems and expectations

Supporting comments from education partners emphasized the need for:

- Advanced training for school staff
- Awareness of international student needs
- Proactive coordination with experienced districts

### 2. Childcare and Early Childhood Services

Vice Chair Wright emphasized a growing demand for childcare, particularly:

- Preschool and early childhood programs
- Non-traditional childcare options to accommodate military schedules

Community partners are actively exploring:

- Expansion of local childcare capacity
- Collaboration with community organizations
- Innovative approaches to meeting demand

### 3. Housing and Community Infrastructure

The influx of families will place additional pressure on:

- Local housing availability
- Community services
- Transportation and infrastructure

Vice Chair Wright noted that community stakeholders are already engaged in planning efforts, including:

- Local organizations (e.g., United Way, Camp Alliance)
- Military leadership
- School and education partners

Vice Chair Wright highlighted that coordination efforts are underway to ensure a “whole community” approach, emphasizing that: “What’s good for the FMS mission is good for the Wing, and what’s good for the Wing is good for the mission.”

Support personnel provided updates on initiatives designed to assist both U.S. and international military families, including:

- Development of a “Thrive Guide” to help families navigate:
  - Schools
  - Housing
  - Local services and resources
- Designation of roles to support families:
  - U.S. military family support coordinators
  - International Military Student Officers to assist foreign families

These supports aim to ease the transition process for incoming families and ensure access to necessary services.

Discussion also highlighted important cultural and systemic differences that schools will need to address, such as:

- Variations in educational records and transcripts
- Differences in school structures and expectations
- Unique family needs during relocation

Examples were provided illustrating that:

- Some international systems do not use traditional transcripts
- Families may have different expectations regarding transportation and schooling

The Council emphasized the importance of:

- Training school staff
- Sharing best practices from experienced districts
- Proactive outreach to families

Vice Chair Wright encouraged all Council members and stakeholders to utilize available resources and partnerships. She invited members to reach out directly for guidance as the mission continues to grow. The Council acknowledged that the success of this expansion will depend heavily on coordinated efforts across education systems, community organizations, and military leadership.

## **XII. Reports by Committees, Task Forces, or Liaisons**

## **A. Awards Committee**

Ms. Terri Williams, reporting on behalf of the Awards Committee, provided an update on recent committee activities and ongoing initiatives focused on recognizing excellence among military-connected students. She reported that the committee held multiple meetings, including a special session on February 23, 2026 to review applications and select the Outstanding Military Scholar Award recipient, as well as a regular meeting on March 19, 2026 to address additional award-related initiatives. The committee carefully reviewed candidate submissions using established criteria, including academic achievement, leadership, extracurricular involvement, and community service.

### **1. JROTC Award (T. Williams)**

A primary focus of the committee's recent work has been the development of a new JROTC Cadet Award Program. This initiative is designed to expand recognition opportunities for students participating in JROTC programs across Arkansas and to highlight leadership and service aligned with military values.

The proposed program includes a tiered structure:

- Recognition at the local unit level
- Advancement to branch-level honors (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps)
- Selection of a statewide top cadet

The award will include medals, ribbon bars, and recognition items such as unit streamers and flags. The committee noted that while the framework for the program has been fully developed, the next step is securing funding and cost estimates to support implementation.

Ms. Bergstrom moved to create the Outstanding JROTC cadet Award program and to implement the program once funding can be secured and the award items obtained. Vice Chair Wright seconded. There was no discussion. Motion carried.

## **B. Outreach Committee (J. Bergstrom)**

Ms. Bergstrom provided a comprehensive update on the wide range of activities coordinated by the Outreach Committee, particularly in support of Month of the Military Child (April). She reported that the committee has been actively engaged in coordinating statewide awareness efforts, supporting local events and school-based activities and promoting recognition of military-connected students across Arkansas.

She reported a major kickoff event was held on March 31st at Camp Robinson, featuring state leadership and highlighting the Council's work. A large-scale event is planned in Northwest Arkansas, expected to engage hundreds of military families.

Ms. Bergstrom emphasized the importance of expanding outreach beyond central Arkansas to ensure that all regions of the state are represented and supported. The committee continues to

strengthen its communication strategy by: expanding use of social media platforms, sharing event highlights and success stories, and encouraging districts and partners to submit content. The committee also noted ongoing work to support dissemination of the Digital Military Family Guide, once finalized.

She reported the following upcoming important dates:

**April 10, 2026** - Official Arkansas Purple Star Day

**April 11, 2026** - Ebbing/Spartan Adventure Park event for military children

**April 23, 2026** - “Lunch and Learn” event focused on deployment readiness

**April 29, 2026** - Deployment family dinner event

### **C. Strategic Planning Committee**

No Report

### **D. Military Family Education Liaison**

No report

### **E. Department of Defense Liaison**

No report

### **F. Special Education Liaison**

Mr. Rick Porter provided an update regarding resources available to support military-connected students receiving special education services. He highlighted the availability of a Family Guide to Special Education, which has been developed in clear, parent-friendly language to assist families in navigating what can often be a complex system. The guide is designed to: simplify understanding of special education processes, explain terminology and requirements and support families during transitions between school systems. Mr. Porter emphasized the importance of ensuring that military families—who often experience frequent relocations—have access to consistent and understandable information to support their children. He encouraged members to share the guide widely to improve accessibility and awareness.

### **G. Gold Star Family Advisor**

Ms. Chelsea Swindle provided a brief update and indicated that there were no major new developments to report at this time. However, she noted that there is ongoing interest in further discussions regarding recognition and support for Gold Star families and specific considerations, including distinctions in recognition practices (such as graduation cords), may be addressed in future meetings.

## **H. Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs Liaison**

No report.

## **XI. Student Advisor Reports**

### **1. Cabot School District**

Ms. Berryhill provided an update on initiatives underway at Cabot High School and across the district to support and recognize military-connected students, particularly in preparation for Month of the Military Child. She reported that the district has been actively working to expand its mentorship program, which connects military-connected students with peer and community support systems. This program has shown positive engagement at both the high school and elementary levels, providing students with opportunities to build relationships, ease transitions, and increase their sense of belonging within the school community.

Ms. Berryhill noted that participation in the program continues to grow, and feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive. The mentorship initiative is viewed as a critical support structure, particularly for students experiencing frequent moves or new school environments.

In addition to mentorship efforts, Cabot schools are actively planning and implementing recognition events for Month of the Military Child, including:

- School-based celebrations and awareness activities
- Recognition breakfasts honoring military-connected students
- Special programs designed to highlight the contributions and experiences of military families

She also shared that the district has organized an activity day specifically for military-connected students, which is being coordinated with support from volunteers and student organizations. This event is designed to:

- Foster connection among military students across the district
- Provide a supportive and inclusive environment
- Reinforce appreciation for military families within the broader student body

Overall, Ms. Berryhill emphasized Cabot's continued commitment to expanding student-led initiatives and strengthening support systems for military-connected students at all grade levels.

### **2. Greenwood School District**

Mr. Arnett provided an update on activities and initiatives taking place at Greenwood High School, with a focus on student engagement and recognition during Month of the Military Child.

He reported that the school is currently preparing for its annual Military Appreciation Breakfast, which serves as a key event to recognize and honor military-connected students and their families. The event is organized in collaboration with school counselors and staff, and provides an opportunity for:

- Students and families to connect
- School leadership to express appreciation
- Increased awareness of military student experiences

Mr. Arnett highlighted the strong role of school counselors, particularly in coordinating this event and supporting military-connected students throughout the year.

In addition to the breakfast event, Mr. Arnett discussed efforts to expand student-led service projects. He shared that students have been exploring the implementation of a teddy bear drive, intended to provide comfort and support to military-connected children or others in need.

While the initiative was not able to be fully implemented within the JROTC program due to scheduling constraints and competing commitments, Mr. Arnett noted that:

- The idea has received strong support from the student council
- Plans are underway to either implement the drive later in the year or fully develop it for the next school year

This reflects a broader effort to increase student ownership of service initiatives and to expand opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Mr. Arnett also emphasized the ongoing role of school staff and counselors in:

- Supporting military-connected students
- Coordinating recognition activities
- Facilitating student involvement in programs and events

Overall, his report highlighted Greenwood's continued dedication to honoring military families and encouraging student leadership in both recognition and service efforts.

## **XII. Old Business**

No additional old business was reported.

## **XIII. New Business**

### **A. Military Graduation Cords**

Ms. Williams presented a proposal to encourage school districts to allow children of military families to wear a purple honor cord at graduation. The proposal does not require districts to allow the cords. The proposal states that procurement of the cords is up to the districts if they do choose to allow the cords.

Ms. Bergstrom moved to approve the proposal. Ms. Williams seconded. There was no discussion. Motion carried.

#### **XIV. Date, Time, and Place for Next Meeting**

The next Council meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2026, at 10:00 A.M. at the Pulaski County Special School District. A virtual meeting link will be provided.

#### **XV. Adjournment**

Vice Chair Wright moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Bergstrom. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 AM.













# **FY2026 Defense State Liaison Office Policy Priorities**

<https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/#priorities-report>

For ACMC – 2 April 2026

# Arkansas Status FY2026 DSLO Priorities

<https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/state/AR>

-  Occupational Licensure Compacts (12/19)
  -  Military Spouse Employment Preferences
  -  Military Clause in State Family Leave Laws
  -  **Solutions for Military Homeschoolers**
  -  State Exemption for Military Certified Family Child Care Homes
  -  **State Support for Military Families with Special Education Needs**
  -  State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence
  -  **Education Policy Implementation and Information Enhancements**
  -  **Open Enrollment Flexibility**
  -  Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction
  -  Military Community Representation on State Defense Councils
-  Meets Priority Criteria
- Education Related**

# 2026 DSLO Education Related Priorities



## Solutions for Military Homeschoolers (new 2026)

- Only state in region giving full access to extracurricular activities
- To Do: Add military status to Notice of Intent
- To Do: Add promotion of JROTC and AMSSP to homeschooler info



## State Support of Military Families with Special Education Needs

- To Do – Address ‘Reduce burdens during proceedings’



## Education Policy Implementation and Information Enhancements (new 2026)



## Open Enrollment Flexibility



Meets Priority Criteria

# Education Policy Implementation and Information Enhancements

Priority tracks state assessments by Penn State University.

- DSLO assessed each sub-priority for Policy Implementation and Information Access.
- **Arkansas cited for a Best Practice in 7 of the 8 subpriorities.**

Links to Best Practices for each sub-priority

[Advance Enrollment](#)

[Military Student Identifier](#)

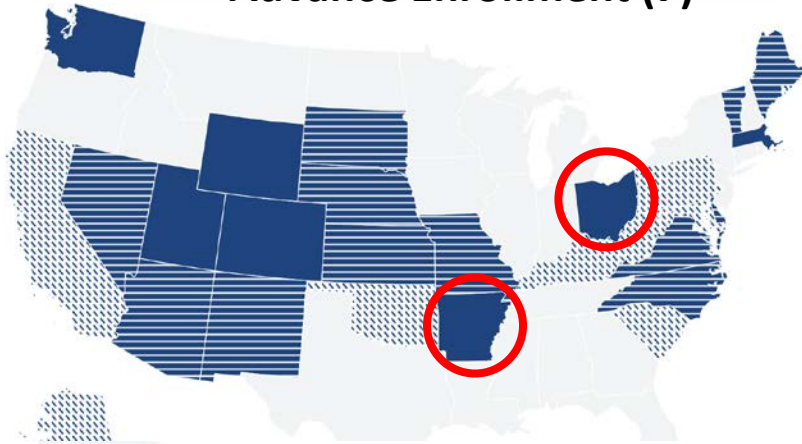
[Military Interstate Compact Provisions](#)

[Purple Star School Program](#)

# Education Policy Implementation and Information Enhancements

(only Arkansas and Ohio achieve all subpriorities)

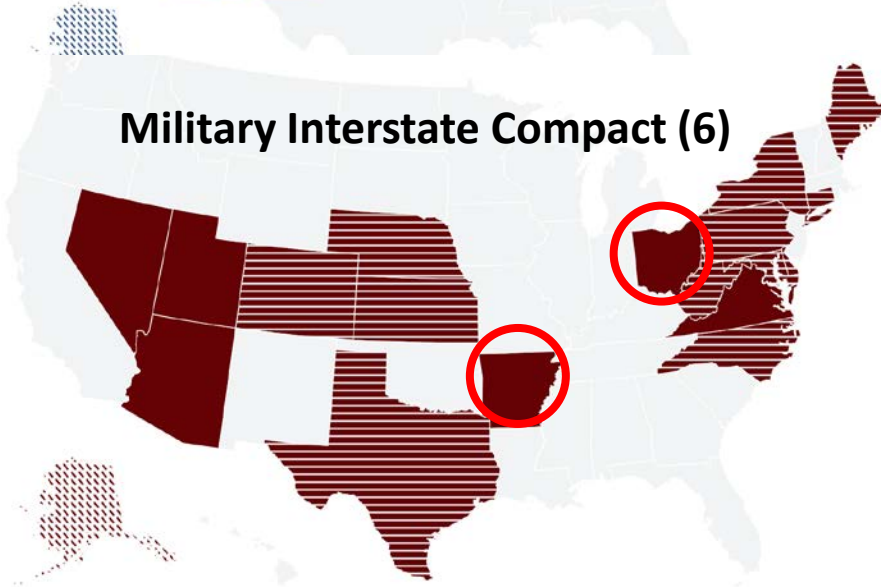
Advance Enrollment (7)



Military Student Identifier (16)



Military Interstate Compact (6)



Purple Star School Program (22)



# FY2026 Defense State Liaison Office Policy Priorities

- Arkansas is a national leader meeting Department of War – Defense State Liaison Office military family readiness priorities
  - Virginia and Arkansas are the top two states
  - Actions in 2026 likely will put Arkansas in the lead
- Arkansas support to meeting the education needs of uniform services and their families is credited to Governor Sanders, our legislature, DESE, and our Arkansas school districts.

**ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS REQUIRED TO BECOME PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS**

**March 31, 2026**

<b>School Name</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Children of Military Families</b>	<b>Purple Star School?</b>
Alma High School	ALMA SCHOOL DISTRICT	42	Yes
Alma Intermediate School	ALMA SCHOOL DISTRICT	33	Yes
Alma Middle School	ALMA SCHOOL DISTRICT	35	Yes
Alma Primary School	ALMA SCHOOL DISTRICT	29	Yes
Arkansas Connections Academy High	ARKANSAS CONNECTIONS ACADEMY	44	Yes
Beebe Early Childhood	BEEBE SCHOOL DISTRICT	23	Yes
Beebe Elementary School	BEEBE SCHOOL DISTRICT	44	Yes
Beebe High School	BEEBE SCHOOL DISTRICT	50	Yes
Beebe Junior High School	BEEBE SCHOOL DISTRICT	23	Yes
Beebe Middle School	BEEBE SCHOOL DISTRICT	20	Yes
Benton High School	BENTON SCHOOL DISTRICT	35	Yes
Benton Junior High School	BENTON SCHOOL DISTRICT	31	No
Benton Middle School	BENTON SCHOOL DISTRICT	28	No
Bentonville West High School	BENTONVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT	22	Yes
Bobby G Lester Elementary School	JACKSONVILLE NORTH PULASKI SCHOOL DISTRICT	155	Yes
Bryant Elementary School	BRYANT SCHOOL DISTRICT	24	Yes
Bryant High School	BRYANT SCHOOL DISTRICT	47	Yes
Bryant Junior High School	BRYANT SCHOOL DISTRICT	26	Yes
Cabot Freshman Academy	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	71	Yes
Cabot High School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	219	Yes
Cabot Junior High North	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	126	Yes
Cabot Junior High South	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	48	Yes
Cabot Middle School North	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	115	Yes
Cabot Middle School South	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	91	Yes
Central Elementary School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	28	Yes
Central High School	LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT	24	No
Conway High School	CONWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT	47	No
Conway Junior High School	CONWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT	36	No
Crestwood Elementary School	NORTH LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT	26	No
Crystal Hill Elementary	PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	22	Yes
East Hills Middle School	GREENWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT	50	Yes
East Pointe Elementary School	GREENWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT	54	Yes
Eastside Elementary School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	86	Yes
Elmer H. Cook Elementary School	FORT SMITH SCHOOL DISTRICT	25	Yes
Fayetteville High School	FAYETTEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT	21	No
Frank Mitchell Intermediate School	VILONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT	34	Yes
Greenbrier High School	GREENBRIER SCHOOL DISTRICT	26	No
Greenwood High School	GREENWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT	79	Yes
Greenwood Junior High School	GREENWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT	33	Yes
Jacksonville High School	JACKSONVILLE NORTH PULASKI SCHOOL DISTRICT	66	Yes
Jacksonville Lighthouse Flightline Academy	ARKANSAS LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER SCHOOLS	27	Yes
Jacksonville Middle School	JACKSONVILLE NORTH PULASKI SCHOOL DISTRICT	45	Yes

**ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS REQUIRED TO BECOME PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS**

**March 31, 2026**

Joe T. Robinson High School	PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	27	No
John P. Woods Elementary School	FORT SMITH SCHOOL DISTRICT	25	Yes
L. A. Chaffin Middle School	FORT SMITH SCHOOL DISTRICT	22	Yes
Lisa Academy North Elementary School	LISA ACADEMY	23	Yes
Little Rock Southwest High School	LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT	22	No
Magness Creek Elementary	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	44	Yes
Maumelle High School	PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	24	Yes
Mountain Home Career Academies	MOUNTAIN HOME SCHOOL DISTRICT	26	No
Mountain Springs Elem School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	83	Yes
North Little Rock High School	NORTH LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT	30	No
Northridge Middle School	VAN BUREN SCHOOL DISTRICT	21	Yes
Northside Elementary School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	31	Yes
Northside High School	FORT SMITH SCHOOL DISTRICT	21	Yes
Parkview Magnet High School	LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT	21	No
Rogers High School	ROGERS SCHOOL DISTRICT	21	No
Searcy High School	SEARCY SCHOOL DISTRICT	32	Yes
Southside Elementary School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	109	Yes
Southside High School	FORT SMITH SCHOOL DISTRICT	37	Yes
Springhill Elementary School	BRYANT SCHOOL DISTRICT	31	Yes
Stagecoach Elementary School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	62	Yes
Sylvan Hills Elementary School	PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	43	Yes
Sylvan Hills High School	PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	33	Yes
Sylvan Hills Junior High School	PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	27	Yes
Sylvan Hills Middle School	PULASKI COUNTY SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	24	Yes
Van Buren High School	VAN BUREN SCHOOL DISTRICT	21	Yes
Vilonia Elementary School	VILONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT	28	Yes
Vilonia High School	VILONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT	46	Yes
Vilonia Junior High School	VILONIA SCHOOL DISTRICT	25	Yes
Ward Central Elementary	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	37	Yes
Westside Elementary School	CABOT SCHOOL DISTRICT	40	Yes
Westwood Elementary School	GREENWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT	40	Yes

PLANNED COMPLETION DATE	PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS (Red = Not Started) (Yellow = In Progress) (Green = Complete)	NOTES
September 2025	DMEC Initial Training	In cooperation with DESE, develop and conduct initial training for newly appointed District Military Family Education Coordinators and School Military Family Education Facilitators.		Initial training is planned for August 2025 with monthly session thereafter through May 2026. <a href="#">Agenda</a> for the first session is being developed.
August 2025 - May 2026	DMEC Monthly Training	Conduct continuing monthly training sessions to provide current information to DMECs and MEFs. Target for completion:		<a href="#">Schedule</a> is currently being developed and guest presenters secured.
August 2025	Purple Star School Toolkit	Develop a toolkit of resources to assist schools in achieving Purple Star School status.		<a href="#">Toolkit</a> has been created and submitted for posting online. Resources are still being collected.
August 2025	Purple Star Campus Program	The Council will be prepared to assist the Division of Higher Education in developing the Purple Star Campus program, pursuant to ACA § 6-61-144, if such assistance is requested.		Program is complete. ADHE is reviewing new applications.
September 2025	Veterans Day Toolkit	Develop a toolkit of resources for use by schools for observance of Veterans Day.		<a href="#">Toolkit</a> is complete and has been linked to the Council web page. More resources will be added as they become available.
October 2025	Student Club Quick Guide	Develop a quick guide for schools in establishing military student organizations.		Quick guide is complete and added to Purple Star School Toolkit. Will be available online once the Toolkit is posted.
October 2025	School District Annual Report Input	Establish a medium for school districts to report significant achievements for inclusion in the annual report.		<a href="#">Input form</a> is complete. Will be shared with DMECs during initial training session and follow up sessions.
November 2025	Outstanding Military Scholar Award Information Sessions	Conduct a series of online sessions to provide information to parents and educators about the Outstanding Military Scholar Award.		Four online orientation sessions were held (November 12, 13, 17, 18)

PLANNED COMPLETION DATE	PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS (Red = Not Started) (Yellow = In Progress) (Green = Complete)	NOTES
November 2025	Peer to Peer Ambassador Program	In cooperation with DESE, provide technical advice and assistance on creation of student to student peer ambassador program, pursuant to ACA § 6-28-301(c)(4)(A).		Materials and providers have been made available. Various schools have begun establishing programs. Purple Star Schools prior to the 2025-26 school year have until May 31, 2026 to establish their programs.
December 2025	Model Practices Web Page	Develop a “best practices” web page for supporting children of military families.		The collection form and list of model practices is now available on the <a href="#">DMEC Webpage</a> .
January 2026	Purple Star School Service Projects	Encourage Purple Star Schools to perform a service project or fundraising activity to support children of military families during Month of the Military Child.		Strategic Planning Committee has held work sessions to develop the concept. Suggestions for service projects are being collected from school districts. Concept should be ready to publish by February 2026.
February 2026	Survey of Military Families	Conduct a needs survey of military families.		Survey is complete. Data are being analyzed.
February 2026	Month of the Military Child Toolkit	Develop a toolkit of resources for use by schools for observance of Month of the Military Child..		<a href="#">Toolkit</a> is complete, posted on website. More resources will be added as they become available.
March 2026	Military Family Forum	Conduct at least one Military Family Forum, pursuant to ACA 6-28-204(f).		The first forum was held October 2, 2025, 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM, Pottsville School District and Online. The second forum was held online on January 22, 2026, 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM.
March 2026	Military Child Transition Training	Develop and provide online training for school employees in managing school transitions of children of military families.		Two sessions were conducted by Ms. Saum. Well received by audience.
March 2026	Military Family Resources Training	Conduct a series of online sessions to educate military family members about resources available to them.		Presentation materials are complete; first training session will be held during military family forum on October 2, 2025. Additional sessions will be held during the <a href="#">monthly DMEC updates</a> on January 13 and 14, 2026. Information was also presented during the military family forum on January 22, 2026.

PLANNED COMPLETION DATE	PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS (Red = Not Started) (Yellow = In Progress) (Green = Complete)	NOTES
March 2026	Memorial Day Toolkit	Develop a toolkit of resources for use by schools for observance of Memorial Day.		<a href="#">Toolkit</a> is complete.
December 2026	JROTC Award	Explore creating an award for JROTC cadets		Program concept is complete and ready for a vote by the Ciouncil.
May 2027	Purple Star School Increase	Increase the number of Purple Star Schools from 204 to 300.		Applications are open and are already being received.
May 2027	Military Student Leadership Workshop	Explore holding an annual leadership workshop for children of military families.		Strategic Planning Committee has appointed a working group to develop a concept and identify issues that must be addressed.
May 2027	Military Ready School Recognition	In cooperation with DESE, the Division of Career and Technical Education, and the Arkansas Department of the Military, develop possible standards and recognition for high schools that prepare students well for joining the military.		Currently researching standards for the "ideal recruit" from various branches of service.
May 2027	Digital Guidebook for Military Families	In cooperations with DESE, develop a digital guidebook for military families regarding the rights of children of military families in Arkansas and programs for the support of children of military families, pursuant to ACA § 6-28-205(b)(1)(A).		Draft is complete other than graphics. Currently bing reviewed by DESE Legal Services Unit.
<b>RED = 0%</b>	<b>AMBER = 32%</b>	<b>GREEN = 68%</b>		

Commissioner's Memo  
3/30/2026

## Safety Guidance for Month of the Military Child

### Memo Information

Memo Number **COM-26-046**

Memo Date 3/30/2026

Memo Type Informational

Unit School Choice and Parent Empowerment

Regulatory Authority NA

Response Required NO

Attention Assistant Principal; Assistant Superintendent; Communications Manager / Director; District Coordinators (ALE; Homeless; ESOL; SDFS & Foster); Equity Coordinators (Disability/Race/Gender/National Origin); Federal Programs; Gifted & Talented Coordinators; Library Media Specialist; Parent Involvement Coordinators/Facilitators; Principals; School Counselors; Superintendents; Teachers

### Primary Contact Information

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OR

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### Memo Text

Since 1986, federal and state leaders have recognized April as the Month of the Military Child. Schools across Arkansas have a strong tradition of honoring and supporting students from military families through a variety of meaningful activities.

Given current global conditions, we are asking schools and districts to use additional care when planning, publicizing, and conducting Month of the Military Child events. To support you in that planning, the attached memorandum from the Little Rock Air Force Base Security Forces Squadron Commander includes practical recommendations to strengthen safety and security during these activities.

The memorandum asks that photos and videos of events not be published until after the fact. We recommend the following measures to further enhance security of military service members and their families:

- Avoid naming service members or family members in published materials.

- Consider asking military service members not to wear their uniforms to events
- If service members do wear uniforms, avoid taking photos or videos that show nametags.
- If name tags are visible, consider covering them digitally.

We encourage educational leaders statewide to review and follow these recommendations as you finalize your plans, and to coordinate locally as needed to ensure events remain both supportive for military-connected students and appropriate for the current environment.

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## Attachments

- [Letter\\_to\\_School\\_Administrators\\_Signed\\_125150.pdf](#)



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS 19TH AIRLIFT WING (AMC)  
LITTLE ROCK AIR FORCE BASE, ARKANSAS**

19 Mar 26

Administrators,

Given the current global environment, we are reaching out to our school partners who share in the development of our DOW dependents. Especially as the Month of the Military Child approaches, we encourage you to consider a few items with heightened awareness when planning events expected to attract or highlight DOW members and their dependents:

1. Please be more aware of social media comments regarding DOW members and current global environment. Report any concerning or threatening comments to local police departments or LRAFB SFS/OSI at (501) 987-3221.
2. When planning events consider distribution of the information to your internal networks. If able, consider not advertising on school marquees, social media, or through local news outlets.
3. We ask that you wait to post photos and videos until after the event, as pre-publishing information increases risks. Additionally, we ask that you highlight military members and school staff in posts, but not our specific family members in external communications.
4. Have security/local law enforcement present as a deterrent to those who might have ulterior motives.
5. Consider indoor events, and if not feasible, limit points of entry to your events to only what is necessary.

We thank you for your continued support and investment in our children and families. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the LRAFB Antiterrorism Program Manager, Mr. James Wells, at [james.wells.37@us.af.mil](mailto:james.wells.37@us.af.mil) or by phone at 501-987-6294.

Respectfully,

ROBERT C. IPPOLITO, Maj, USAF  
Commander, 19th Security Forces Squadron

**BLACK KNIGHTS...*OUT FRONT!***



## **The Arkansas Outstanding JROTC Cadet Award**

### **What is the Arkansas Outstanding JROTC Cadet Award?**

The Arkansas Outstanding JROTC Cadet Award (AOJCA) is presented by the Arkansas Council for Military Children each year to JROTC cadets across Arkansas who live by the values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment both in and out of uniform and have distinguished themselves through their scholarship, leadership, citizenship, and community service. One award is allocated annually for each JROTC detachment in Arkansas.

### **What does the AOJCA consist of?**

The award consists of a medal, ribbon bar, and certificate.

The medal is presented in three levels (bronze, silver, and gold). One bronze medal is allocated for each JROTC program in Arkansas. One cadet from each branch of service (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) will be chosen as the outstanding cadet for his or her service and will receive the silver medal. One cadet from all programs in Arkansas will be chosen as the outstanding cadet in the state and will receive the gold medal. The ribbon bar is identical for all three levels of the award.

The program whose cadet receives the gold medal will receive a distinctive streamer which may be attached permanently to the program colors. The program will also be entrusted to carry the Outstanding Cadet flag for the next academic year. The Outstanding Cadet flag will be passed to the next winning program each spring.

### **What are the eligibility criteria for the AOJCA?**

The basic eligibility criteria are:

1. Successful completion of at least two full years of JROTC
2. Cumulative grade point average of 3.00 or higher
3. High school attendance rate of 90% or higher
4. No expulsions or out-of-school suspensions during high school
5. Endorsement by the nominee's JROTC instructor staff

For purposes of this award, high school is defined as Grades 9 through 12.

### **How and when are nominations made?**

Nominations are made online by the senior JROTC instructor for each program. The nomination form includes information on the cadet's academic performance, attendance, disciplinary record, extracurricular participation, and community service learning. The nominator may also write a statement explaining why the nominee deserves the award.

Each JROTC detachment is limited to a single nomination each academic year.

The timeline for nominations and presentations is:

<b>January 1 - January 31:</b>	Nominations are submitted online.
<b>February 1 - February 14:</b>	The Council's Awards Committee screens all nomination packets for eligibility and completeness. Nominations that are incomplete or that do not meet all eligibility criteria will be eliminated. The Awards Committee will forward all complete and eligible nominations to the Review Board, which will consist of a representative from each of the Council's standing committees and will be presided over by the Council Vice Chair.

<b>February 15 - February 28:</b>	The Review Board will evaluate the nomination packets and select one recommended winner for each branch of service and one recommended statewide winner. The Review Board will forward the recommendations to the Council Chair.
<b>March 1 - March 31:</b>	The Council will meet to approve or reject the Review Board's recommendations. If the Council rejects any recommendation, the Council may then select a winner for that award, or may choose not to make the particular award.

### **When is the award presented?**

Awards will normally be presented during the Month of the Military Child (April) each year. Bronze and silver awards will normally be sent to the JROTC program staff for presentation. The gold award, streamer, and flag will normally be presented by a member of the Council.

# ACMC Student Advisor Meeting Input Form

This form is intended for use by Student Advisors to the Arkansas Council for Military Children to provide input to regular meetings of the Council.

One report is required for each of the following meetings:

October

December

February

April

Student Advisors will present the June report orally.

No report is required for the June meeting.

Please be sure to submit your report one week before each Council meeting.

Student Advisor's Last Name

Berryhill

Which month are your reporting for?

October

December

February

April

Please describe what your school has done during the last two months to support children of military families. Please be sure to describe your personal involvement in these activities.

We have continued to expand our Hearts A Part mentorship program and have organized an activity day for 2nd-4th grade military students that is staffed by high schoolers involved in the Military Kids Club.

Please describe plans to support children of military families during the next two months.

We will continue our mentorship program, and have plans for parades and breakfasts to honor military students for the month of the military child.

What other information concerning children of military families would you like to share with the Council?

n/a

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Google Forms

# ACMC Student Advisor Meeting Input Form

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October

December

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April

Student Advisors will present the June report orally.

No report is required for the June meeting.

Please be sure to submit your report one week before each Council meeting.

Student Advisor's Last Name

Arnett

Which month are your reporting for?

October

December

February

April

Please describe what your school has done during the last two months to support children of military families. Please be sure to describe your personal involvement in these activities.

Student Council brought up the idea of hosting a teddy bear drive for families. I was the one who brought it up at our meeting. Other than that, just continuing to support the students who need it via counselors.

Please describe plans to support children of military families during the next two months.

We will be giving back to the students during the month of April with some appreciation tokens for their families' service.

What other information concerning children of military families would you like to share with the Council?

None at this time

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms



## **MILITARY STUDENT HONOR CORD**

Students from military families often experience unique challenges and make meaningful sacrifices in support of their parents' service to our nation.

The Arkansas Council for Military Children encourages school districts across Arkansas to permit graduating seniors with a military parent to wear a purple honor cord during graduation ceremonies. Eligible students include those whose parent, stepparent, or legal guardian is currently serving in the armed forces, including the National Guard or Reserve. Eligibility also extends to students whose parent, stepparent, or legal guardian retired from military service, was medically discharged or retired due to a service-related injury or disability, or who lost their life in the line of duty.

The decision to allow the purple honor cord rests with each individual school district. Districts that choose to adopt this recognition may either provide the cords to students or require students to obtain their own.