

Alabama MIC3 2024-25 End of the Year Report

Submitted by Dr. Douglas L. Ragland, Alabama Commissioner

There have been excellent accomplishments during the 2024-25 year in the State of Alabama in relation to MIC3 and Military Families in general, Personal Achievements of State Council Members, as well as other governmental issues in our state, and they are as follows:

- Congratulations go out to The Adjutant General, Major General of the National Guard, David Pritchett, who was confirmed by the United States Senate in Washington D.C. on July 27, 2024, and a Promotional Ceremony for The Adjutant General, Major General David Pritchett was held by Governor Kay Ivey on August 14, 2024. Major General David Pritchett serves on our Alabama State Council and he is serving in his second year since his inaugural appointment in January 2023.
- As Commissioner for the State of Alabama, it was indeed a blessing to be selected to do a State Spotlight PowerPoint Presentation for Alabama at the 2024 MIC3 Annual Business Meeting where I had the opportunity to present Best Practices in implementing the Military Interstate Children's Compact, as well as highlight our leaders in our state such as our Governor, State Legislature, State Superintendent of Education, State Council including School Liaisons From Maxwell Air Force Base, Redstone Arsenal, Fort Novosel, and Anniston Army Depot, and stakeholders such as Military Child Education Coalition, Alabama High School Athletic Association Higher Education Institutions, Military Family Life Counselors, and the like. We received high praise from Fellow Commissioners, and others attending the conference including School Liaison, Ex-Officio Representatives, and others for what we are doing in the State of Alabama for our Military Families, led by our Governor, Legislature, State Superintendent, and our illustrious and fabulous State Council.
- The State Spotlight PowerPoint Presentation for Alabama can be seen on the MIC3.NET Website by clicking on the 2024 ABM Tab, and then clicking on 2024 ABM Day 1 Presentations. Also in December 2024, I was asked by MIC3 National Office to do a Video and it is currently on the MIC3.net Website as well. To see this video you click on the Resources Tab, click on Webinars and Training, click on Compact Training Videos, and then click on Implementing the Compact. State Spotlight Videos for 2025 are reflected on this page, and of course you will see Alabama with a video that is 26 minutes and 15 seconds in length. Alabama has the distinction of having the longest timed video of all the videos filmed for 2024 and 2025.
- We also had the surprise and honor of seeing one of our own State Council Members, Robert Richert, School Liaison Officer for Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama recognized in one of the slide shows for the School Liaisons: Supporting Families and Building Partnership Panel that was highlighted at the MIC3 Annual Business Meeting. Also, it was great that we had Katherine Ganster, Robert's Fellow

School Liaison Officer, at Maxwell Air Force Base in attendance at the MIC3 Annual Business Meeting.

- Our State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Eric Mackey, is to be commended for his unwavering support and sponsorship of MIC3 and our Alabama Council by serving as a member of the State Council and paying our annual dues from his budget. Kudos go out to him and Chief Financial Officer Arthur Watts for getting our dues payment to MIC 3 which was received on Friday, April 19, 2025, well before the June 30, 2025 Deadline. Our dues have always been on time and we thank Dr. Mackey for his tremendous support.
- On a personal note I am extremely honored that Honorable Governor Kay Ivey appointed me to serve on the Alabama Commission on Higher Education as the Commissioner Representative for the 6th Congressional District Seat effective February 18, 2025, until August 31, 2031, and I was successfully confirmed by the Alabama Senate in March 2025 to serve in this position as well.
- With this report being submitted on April 25, 2025, I am proud to say we have met our requirements of all projects due by June 30, 2025, which include our Code of Conduct/Conflict of Interest Policy, 2025 State Council Meeting, Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy, and FY 2025 Dues Payment. Also as Alabama's Commissioner I have served on the MIC3 Compliance Committee and for the last 2 years, and I have had perfect attendance, and we certainly have made great strides in ensuring compliance of all of our states, and making clear and customer friendly recommendations to be implemented by the MIC3 Staff.
- Honorable Governor Kay Ivey, and the Alabama Legislature Approved the Choose Act (Education Savings Act in the amount of \$7,000.00 per family) with a 100 million Dollar Budget in 2024, and January 3, 2025 applications were taken. Over 75, 000 Families applied including Military Families. For first 2 years this Act will only be available to Learning Disabilities and Active Duty Military Families in low performing School Districts. After 2 Years all students will be eligible.
- Our Honorable Governor Kay Ivey continues to show her support for Military Families by providing a Proclamation for Veterans Appreciation Month on November 7, 2024. I have attached this proclamation to this email.
- The Honorable Governor Kay Ivey approved a Military Proclamation for Month of the Military Child on April 10, 2025. I have attached the Proclamation to this email.
- We have made excellent strides in enhancing awareness of MIC3 in Alabama with our School Liaison Officers participation in Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) 360 Summits in enhancing the knowledge of educators regarding MIC 3 and the roles of our School Liaison Officers in the transitional process of our Military Families in various school systems.
- I am currently a member of the Legislative Appointed Alabama Purple Star Schools Committee. This committee, along with the support of the Alabama State Superintendent

of Education have increased the number of Purple Star Schools to 322 as it stands for 2025. This committee met with Jennifer Holiday, Alabama Family Military Liaison/American Heroes Welcome Initiative, on March 17, 2025, to discuss and select the 2025 Alabama Purple Star School Designees based on the scoring of the Alabama Department of Education via the Alabama Purple Star Scoring Rubric. Part of this process included the Purple Star School Committee having access to the following documents: (1) 2025 New Purple Star School List, 2025 Renewed Purple Star School List, and the 2025 New Purple Star School Application Verification List. A Resolution for the Creation of the Purple Star Committee created by the Alabama Legislature, and the 2025 Purple Star Schools created by the Alabama State Board of Education are included in attachments to this report.

- A total of 124 new schools were designated Purple Star School Status for 2025 and a resolution from the Alabama State Board of Education was created honoring the 15 School Districts and 124 Schools, including Recognition of the Month of the Military Child on April 10, 2025.
- A total of 76 schools were designated as Purple School Status in 2024.
- A total of 122 schools were designated Purple Star School Status in 2023.
- Major General Sheryl Gordon, Adjutant General for the Alabama National Guard, and Member of the Alabama Council Retired Effective January 1, 2024.
- Brigadier General David Pritchett was hired on January 1, 2024, as the next Adjutant General for the Alabama National Guard, and has accepted the role of serving on the Alabama Council.
- We have successfully resolved all cases pertaining to our Military Families in Alabama for 2024-25 by our School Liaison Officers, and Military Education Family Liaison. Only one case actually came to the level where I had to get involved, and it was resolved successfully.

The following report from Maxwell Air Force for Robert Richert and Katherine Ganster, highlights excellent overall leadership and accomplishments pertaining to MIC Issues, Non-MIC3 Issues, Legislative Actions, Purple Star Schools and Community Events/ Partnerships:

SY 2024-2025 MIC3 State Commissioner's Report – Maxwell AFB

MIC3 Issues

- **Eligibility (SEC. 3.101.a. Eligibility for Transfer and Enrollment):** Assisted a parent with transferring credits from an unaccredited Louisiana private school to Spanish Fort High School in Mobile, Alabama. The student will need to take validation tests for core subjects. We contacted the private school for more information and sought guidance from the public high school regarding non-accredited courses. We are attempting to contact the public school counselor to ensure all options for this military family have been explored. This case does not fall under a specific MIC3 article number.

- **Eligibility (SEC. 6.102.b. Eligibility for Extracurricular Participation):** Connected a parent, recently transitioned from North Carolina, with the School Liaison Program Manager (SLPM) for assistance with sports tryouts. The school and parent reached an agreement allowing the student to try out.
- **Eligibility (SEC. 5.101.a. Course Placement):** A military member requested assistance regarding his son's 11th-grade school transfer. The son transferred to an out-of-state boarding school in January 2024. The boarding school stated the son needed to repeat 10th grade because the Alabama sending school did not award credit for courses completed in the first semester of SY2023-2024. While the student took similar courses in the second semester and passed all but English (which the parent agreed needed repeating), the sending school could not award credit due to LEA policy. The SLPM contacted the Holloman AFB School Liaison in New Mexico (receiving school's state) for assistance. Both SLPM offices and the Alabama MIC3 Commissioner agree that MIC3 SEC. 5.101 applies; however, the transfer was personal, not PCS-related, rendering the compact provision unenforceable. Holloman AFB SLPM contacted the school, requesting they accept the first-semester grades in the spirit of the compact. Update (08/27/2024): Reviewing the Alabama Administrative Code revealed the sending school could award the 0.5 credit needed. The sending school updated the student's record and provided a copy to the receiving school. The student received credit and transitioned to 11th grade.
- **Eligibility (SEC. 5.102.a. Educational Program Placement):** The Montgomery Public Schools (MPS) District Military Liaison contacted us regarding a family requesting placement in a magnet program based on their participation in a similar program in Nevada, citing state law. This refers to district policy, not state law. We consulted the National MIC3, the State Commissioner, and the Nellis AFB SLPM. We provided the family with information from MIC3, offered assistance with other school options, and provided SY2025-2026 magnet program information.
- **Eligibility (SEC. 3.101.a. Eligibility for Transfer and Enrollment):** A parent requested assistance regarding a recent interstate relocation. The local school was not accepting previously earned high school credit for career preparedness and sign language. The student's school-issued computer did not support the virtual platform for the current world language course. Despite the student's attempts to resolve the issue with the school counselor, the problem persisted. Reviewing the student's transcript and course descriptions suggested a potential MIC3 issue. The SLPM advised the parent on resolution options, including the chain of command. The parent requested our engagement with the school/district. We emailed the district military liaison and school principal, requesting assistance and informing them of the parent's concerns. Both responded and advised the parent to contact the principal, who confirmed they would contact the counselor. We encouraged the parent to contact the principal and will monitor progress.

Non-MIC3 Issues

- Magnet School Application Deadlines: Military families receiving PCS orders in spring/summer miss magnet school application deadlines (January 2025).
- Pre-K Enrollment Application Deadlines: Military families receiving PCS orders in spring/summer miss Pre-K enrollment deadlines (March 2025).
- Absenteeism for International Families: Three international families received warning notices regarding their children's unexcused absences, which are nearing the district's limit. These families, residing in the area while the sponsoring military member attends Air University at Maxwell AFB, have cited vacation and other reasons for the absences. This pattern seems unique to our area and these families.

Legislation (We Are Following)

- **HB61:** Home school/Career and Technical Education access (50% - Passed House)
- **HB234:** School safety/Emergency response systems (50% - Passed House)
- **HB96:** National Signing Day excused absences (25% - Passed House)
- **HB166:** FOCUS Act/Wireless device restrictions (50% - Passed House)
- **SB166:** Ten Commandments display (25% - Read in Senate)
- **SB59:** Military medical records/Immunization (100% - Passed House/Senate)
- **HJR22:** Purple Star Schools Program expansion (0% - Received in House)
- **HB65/81:** Student cell phone use policies (25% - Pending House Education Policy)

Purple Star Schools.

In April 2025, 20 new schools and 106 renewals were designated as Purple Star Schools by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), bringing the state total to 253.

Community Events/Partnerships

- Presented on Purple Star School designation at the ALSDE MEGA Conference (July 2024).
- Partnered with Operation Homefront for back-to-school event (July 2024).
- Conducted multiple MIC3 briefings at MCEC 360 Summits (April 24 – Mar 25).
- Coordinated resiliency events for military-connected students (September 2024, November 2024, March 2025).
- SLPM attended MIC3 Annual Business Meeting (November 2024).
- Coordinated Teen Dating Violence Awareness presentations (February 2025).
- Coordinated VEX High School Robotics Competition and Career Expo (February 2025).

- Hosted multiple base tours for local and state high schools, including schools from Georgia (Jan – Apr 25)
- Hosted virtual chats with inbound military personnel (May 24 - January 2025).
- Coordinated Purple UP! activities for Month of the Military Child (April 2025).
- Celebrated graduating military-connected seniors (April 2025).

Erica Lewis, School Liaison Officer for Redstone Arsenal, has displayed excellent leadership as a School Liaison Officer at her base, respective schools, and in the community for 2024-25, which is as follows:

- Redstone Arsenal welcomed COL Erin Eike as its new Garrison Commander on August 1, 2024. Over the past year, I have continued to build relationships with our military families by providing workshops, resources, education, and advocacy. I have also continued to strengthen partnerships with community stakeholders and education leaders through continued partnerships and collaboration by participating in school and community events, such as Impact Aid and Status of the State of the Schools, and Purple Star Schools.
- I've consulted with MIC3 on a couple of issues regarding transfer of credits and enrollment, but they were able to be resolved at the local level.
- SLO, along with the Redstone Arsenal Garrison Commander, COL Erin Eike participated in the Impact Aid kickoff with our 3 local school districts (Huntsville City Schools, Madison City Schools, and Madison County Schools) on October 17, 2024. Throughout the campaign, information on Impact Aid was shared with RSA workforce and residents. SLO also worked with local school districts to assist with any address verifications and questions regarding Impact Aid. SLO was able to implement another successful year (24-25) of programming for our Homeschool Students, where the Homeschoolers were able to participate in fun and engaging activities to include archery, STEM activities, art, activities at our MWR library, and sports. In order to provide more learning opportunities to our Homeschool Students, partnerships were established with local community stakeholders as well as tenant organizations on the installation to enhance the students' learning through field trips and workshops provided at no cost to our Homeschool Families. These experiences included a visit from NASA aerospace engineer, a field trip to Burrit on the Mountain to explore the local history of Huntsville, and a presentation from a local archaeologist! SLO coordinated with local schools to have over 32 people from RSA tenant organizations participate in Read Across America. Volunteer readers went to 12 different schools across 3 school districts to read to students on Dr. Seuss's birthday. They shared stories and the importance of reading. SLO will hold the annual Kindergarten Boot Camp for children in the Strong Beginnings program on May 8th. Students will experience a simulation of a day in the life of a kindergarten student. Ms. Nicole Thompson, Assistant Principal at Williams Elementary, will kick off the boot

camp with an encouraging talk about school safety, expectations, and how school is a fun place to learn, grow, and make friends!

Kimberly Kozel, Department of Defense Military Representative, and School Liaison Officer, Soldiers Services Center, Fort Novosel US Army has shown quality leadership at her base, respective schools, and the community as follows:

- Developed a partnership Memorandum of Agreement with Enterprise City Schools for afternoon bus transportation services from six Enterprise Elementary Schools to our CYS School Age after school program each day. This agreement saved the Garrison over \$80k in service costs and has been an amazing program offering for our Fort Novosel Army Families.
- Applied and received approval for an Exception to Policy with DoDEA Parker Elementary School to continue to provide before and after school transportation from the school each day to our Child and Youth Services School Age Program for SY 2024-2025.
- Participated in the Month of the Military Child Proclamation signings by city Mayors of Dothan, Ozark and Enterprise in April 2025.
- Provided Special Considerations for Military Families Professional Development for Ozark City Schools employees in September 2024 as they reapplied for their Purple Star School distinction.
- Coordinated efforts to provide Enterprise City Schools with two Military Family Life Counselors to provide support to nine schools in the district. The support has been well received by school personnel and most of all offering awesome support to Military Families in the district. Nothing but positive feedback has been received and support will continue for the 24/25 school year.

Nyoka Johnson, CYS Coordinator Anniston Army Depot Department of Defense has demonstrated quality leadership at her base, and community which is stated by Nyoka as follows:

- Anniston Child Development Center and School Age received reaccreditation in 2024.
- We are doing several activities within the month of April to celebrate Month of the Military Child.
- We are currently going through repair of our fire suppression and roof replacement.
- We had a successful Army Higher Headquarters Inspection in Feb 2025.
- With the increase in attendance, we are hiring staff to meet the need of classroom ratio.

In closing, as the Alabama Commissioner for MIC3, I am very proud of my Military Education Family Liaison, Department of Defense Military Representative, Child Youth Service Coordinator, and School Liaison Officers for their excellent work and leadership in resolving all cases related to the Compact, assisting those individuals with concerns out of the jurisdiction of the Compact, serving their respective communities with a Spirit of Excellence in creating partnerships benefiting military families via schools, government, and community organizations, and helping to bring awareness to the Compact, and other Military Interests.