

North Carolina End-of-Year Report 2025-2026

First Name: Nick

Last Name: Sojka

I am the Compact Commissioner for: North Carolina

The membership of the state's MIC3 council consists of the following::
 Mr. Mo Green, Superintendent of Public Instruction
 Mr. Nickolas Sojka, Commissioner (Executive Branch Appointment)
 Mr. Donnie Loftis, Chairman (Senate Appointment)
 Rep. Erin Pare (House of Representatives Appointment)
 Dr. Marc Whichard, Superintendent, Wayne County Schools (State Board of Education Appointment)
 Ms. Jamie Livengood, Student & Family Support Coordinator, Wayne County Public Schools
 Mr. Bill Lanier, Member of the Onslow County Board of Education (NC School Boards Association Representative)

Two points of contact for issues related to the Compact in my state are::
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Provide the State Council meeting date(s) and documentation: March 19, 2026
 October 16, 2025

Cases and Inquiries: Pennsylvania High School student attempted to enroll in May 2026 at N.C. High School and receive credit for work partially completed in Pennsylvania. After initial refusal, Commissioner intervened and student was allowed to enroll, with proper grade classification for next year.

Training and Education: * March 27, 2026 Cumberland County/Ft. Bragg Military Child Task Force; training on N.C. SB 118 (allowing enrollment of military-connected students even if residence is temporary). Approximately 20 attendees
 * April 24, 2026 Statewide Purple Star Awards Program, Joint National Guard HQ - Raleigh, NC. Approximately 500 attendees from across the state
 * June 18, 2026 MIC3 basics for all Cumberland County Schools principals and assistant principals. Approximately 230 attendees

Distribution of Compact-related Information: MIC3 flyer prepared by Allie Thomas distributed to all attendees at North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA) March Meeting in Wilmington; approximately 500 school administrators attended from across North Carolina.

State-level Briefs, Communications, and Presentations: Draft "White Paper," re: partial credits to be distributed by State Superintendent to all school districts in August, 2026.

Compact-related Actions : Preparation of state-level guidance for award of partial credits ("white paper") - see above

NC council discusses needs of military-connected students

 [ednc.org/03-23-2026-onslow-county-highlighted-by-nc-military-interstate-childrens-compact-commission](https://www.ednc.org/03-23-2026-onslow-county-highlighted-by-nc-military-interstate-childrens-compact-commission)

NC Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission highlights Onslow County



The North Carolina Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (MIC3) hears remarks from the 2025 Operation Homefront Military Child of the Year for the Marine Corps, Isabella Smith of Onslow County Schools. Chantal Brown/EdNC

[The North Carolina State Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](https://www.ednc.org/03-23-2026-onslow-county-highlighted-by-nc-military-interstate-childrens-compact-commission) met in Onslow County on March 19 to discuss policy priorities and military friendliness in schools.

The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) is the governing body of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. In 2006, the compact was drafted to address educational challenges faced by children of military families. The language was then finalized and adopted by state legislatures over the following six years. All 50 states and the District of Columbia are currently members of the compact.

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An interstate compact is an agreement among states to follow a specific set of administrative rules surrounding a specific issue. This allows states to collaborate with each other to resolve complex policy challenges while still retaining their sovereignty. The governance of the commission is led by member states and administered without federal intervention.

The following issues are [addressed in the MIC3 compact](#): student eligibility, enrollment, placement, and graduation.



[North Carolina](#) became one of the first 11 states to adopt the compact in 2008. The N.C. council is currently led by Nick Sojka, Jr., who also serves as board attorney for Cumberland County School's Board of Education.

"North Carolina is a proud member of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children," the [state website](#) for the commission says. "North Carolina is committed to the education of the children of our military service members while their home is in our state."

Military-connected students in Onslow County Schools

During last week's meeting, Christopher Barnes, superintendent of [Onslow County Schools](#) (OCS), said the district's call to action for the 2025-26 academic year is "Unlocking Student Potential."

"I think the expectations and the guardrails of the compact and work of this state council aligns well with the concept of unlocking student potential. It's a very clear connection," Barnes said. "At Onslow County Schools, that alignment is reflected in how we support our military kids and families across the district and in many of our partnerships."

Barnes said that OCS reached several milestones this year. [Southwest High School](#) opened a Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) unit, he said. Every school in the district has been recognized with the [Purple Star Award](#) for the fourth consecutive year. All of district's schools have also been formally [adopted by a military unit](#).

Additionally, all eligible high schools in OCS are [Chapter 35](#) approved. Chapter 35 refers to an educational assistance program for children and spouses of service members who are deceased, captured, missing, or permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability.

“This is an ongoing commitment, and it requires partnership, consistency, and intentional care,” Barnes said, regarding how the compact serves military-connected students.



Isabella Smith, an Onslow County Schools student who was recognized as the Operation Homefront Military Child of the Year for the Marine Corps. Chantal Brown/EdNC

In Onslow County Schools, 45% of students are considered military connected, [according to data from the 2024-25 academic year](#). Last spring, two of their students were selected as semifinalists for the [Operation Homefront Military Child of the Year Award](#), and [Isabella Smith](#) of Swansboro High School received the top award — representing the Marine Corps.

“Military children grow up learning to adapt before they even know what that means,” Smith told the council at last week’s meeting. “And we learn how to walk into unfamiliar environments and make the belonging that we want to have. We learn resilience, not because we choose to, but because we have to. And when resilience is met with support — like I’ve seen and like I’m a testimony for Onslow County, it turns into leadership.”

Impact of Purple Star Schools

Howard Lattimore, state military liaison consultant for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), also presented data on the [Purple Star Awards](#) initiative. Schools are awarded for demonstrating military-friendly practices and a commitment to military students and families.

“North Carolina is home to a large population of active duty, guard, reserve, and veteran armed services members, and the state's public schools reflect that,” DPI's [website says](#). “In 2019, The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction launched the Purple Star Award Designation initiative to recognize the state's strong military presence and its support for military families.”

Examples of practices that make schools eligible for the Purple Star award include having a military resource page on their website and a transition program for inbound and outbound families. Awarding-winning schools must have a staff member liaison for military families, and districts must also have a central office employee who serves as a point person for those liaisons. Finally, there must also be annual professional development addressing special considerations for military students and families.

On April 24, 598 schools are expected to become Purple Star Award recipients, according to the presentation, which is 143 more schools than last year and about 46% more schools than from the inception of the awards in 2019.

Lattimore attributed the growth to the work of school liaisons across the state. He also said that the growth was a sign of educators understanding the interstate compact more.

“That’s 143 more schools that are aware of the interstate compact,” Lattimore said. “I get more calls now about how to apply it, not what it is.”

Lattimore also reported that in 2025, Purple Star schools performed slightly better in 11 out of 18 state tested areas. The council requested further discussion about their lower performing areas at its next meeting.

Read more





Legislative updates

The council received an update from legislators [Rep. Erin Paré, R-Wake](#), and [Rep. Donnie Loftis, R-Gaston](#). The legislators said that a priority of theirs would be addressing the shortfall of funding for the [Scholarships for Children of Wartime Veterans](#) program, which is referenced in the [Military Veteran Support Act](#), also referred to as Senate Bill 118.

[According to its website](#), the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) has prorated current scholarships for the spring 2026 semester, covering only 75% of the statutory amount. Applications will not reopen unless additional funding is approved by the General Assembly.

DMVA has worked with the [North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority](#) (NCSEAA) to ensure the universities and colleges where these students are enrolled cover the shortfall so that the students do not feel the impact. DMVA has not awarded any new scholarships while it awaits increased recurring appropriations to cover demand. Funding for the program was highlighted in Gov. Josh Stein's [critical needs budget proposal](#).

"The scholarship issue is something that's really been hard to understand — that we don't have money to support those individuals whose parents have lost their life in service to our country," Loftis said. "I can guarantee you that we're going to fix that, so it never runs out of money again."

The council also heard from the Director of Legislative Affairs of Marine Corps East, José Vasquez. Vasquez shared insights from a meeting the state's installation commanders held with DPI.

A common theme among military installation commanders was concern about school funding, Vasquez said. This comes following the release of the Education Law Center's ["Making the Grade"](#) report released in December.

"We can do better than this, and we should be doing better than this. So what they expressed to (DPI's) Dr. (Maria) Pitre-Martin is 'We're with you. How do we get there? How do we do the things that we need to end up doing?' We can only do that with our bill writers and our legislation to ensure that we can continue to go further," Vasquez said.

Class size flexibility, course credits, and school safety

Megan Fahy, school liaison for Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, shared the installation's perspective regarding education policy concerns.

Fahy started by mentioning the benefits of the enrollment flexibility the Military Veteran Support Act provides. Under the new law, military-connected students are able to enroll in North Carolina schools and have up to a year before they have to provide proof of residency. Fahy said this helps students whose parents have a [Permanent Change of Station \(PCS\)](#) in the middle of the school year.

"This flexibility has removed stress from families PCSing. Instead of delaying enrollment while navigating temporary lodging or housing, families can get their children settled into school immediately," Fahy said. "Which has made a meaningful difference in both student stability and, of course, family-readiness. We truly appreciate the leadership of North Carolina policymakers and education partners who recognize the challenges military families face and work collaboratively to create solutions like this."

The council went on to discuss class size flexibility for grades kindergarten through third. Julie Fulton, who represents the Camp Lejeune School Liaison Office, described state law about class size — laid out in [North Carolina General Statute 115C-301](#) — as something with "good intentions, unintended consequences."

The statute says that the average class size must not exceed the funded allotment ratio. Fulton explained how in military-connected districts, enrollment fluctuations may occur due to mission-related transitions such as PCS or deployment. This results in schools splitting classes or reassigning students to comply with state law.

Fulton said that one of the [stated purposes of the compact](#) is to "facilitate the student placement process" so that children of military families are not disadvantaged by changes in attendance requirements, scheduling, sequencing, grading, course content, or assessments. The additional transition caused by class changes may undermine the stability military-connected students need to get back on track.

"We all know that we have seasons of PCS and cycles where people tend to come and go and are looking for more flexibility with the districts," Fulton said. "The districts are definitely not looking for a wide open... scenario. They're looking for just a little bit of flexibility, whether that's averages among the district or some waivers. There are several waivers in the statute. Unfortunately, there is not a waiver for our highly mobile communities."

The council is also working on a draft proposal letter to address giving half-course credits to military-connected students who are transitioning into the North Carolina public school system.

“In many states, schools have the flexibility to award partial credit or half credit for coursework that has already been completed. In North Carolina, however, credits are typically awarded as full credits only, which can make it difficult to recognize partial completion when students transfer midyear,” Fahy said.

Jamie Livengood, who sits on the council and is leading a working group regarding the issue, said transcripts should “tell the story of the student.” The council plans to revisit the topic during its November meeting.

Another issue the council plans to advocate for is more [school safety grants](#) for military-connected schools. Council members talked about prioritizing schools near military installations that may become targets and partnering with local law enforcement to plan how to handle any threats.

Sojka, the commissioner of the council, said this is an area that can be looked at for all districts “in terms of a long-term, predictable stable funding stream, built into continuation budgets — not so heavily dependent upon these year-to-year grants to fund our SROs (school resource officers) and other school safety and security.”

The council is set to meet again on Nov. 19, 2026 in Raleigh.





MILITARY INTERSTATE CHILDREN'S COMPACT COMMISSION

The Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) addresses the educational challenges military-connected students experience in Kindergarten through 12th Grade due to their families' frequent moves and deployments. MIC3 oversees state implementation of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, also known as the Compact. The Compact focuses on eligibility, enrollment, placement, and graduation, and affects military-connected students attending North Carolina public schools.

The Compact applies to the children of:

- Active-duty uniform service members
- National Guard and Reserve on Title 10 orders
- Commissioned officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Public Health Service (USPHS)
- Members or veterans who are medically discharged or retired for one year
- Members who perish on active duty for a period of one year following their death

Scan the QR code to visit the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction webpage for more resources and information on how [North Carolina Supports Military Children](#), or contact Compact Commissioner Nick Sojka for additional assistance.



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Visit mic3.net to learn
more about the
Compact!

White Paper Outline

Transfer Credits for Inbound Students in North Carolina Public Schools Committee Members:

- *Mr. Nickolas Sojka*, Commissioner, MIC3
- *Mr. Howard Lattimore*, NC-DPI State Military Consultant
- *Ms. Jamie Livengood*, Student & Family Support Coordinator, Wayne County Public Schools
- *Ms. Jodi Scoggins*, Craven County Schools, Military Liaison Counselor
- *Ms. Heather Winstead*, Wayne County, Military Liaison Counselor
- *Mr. Isaac Rancor*, Cumberland County Schools, Military Liaison Counselor

1. Executive Summary

- A military student's transition experience may vary greatly when it comes to their high school transcript, depending on the LEA, school counselor or principal's own knowledge of the MIC3 rules or other policies.
- North Carolina's policy and practice regarding the **awarding of academic credits (to include ½ credits) to inbound transfer students**. Awarding partial credit supports academic continuity, prevents unnecessary course repetition, and protects on-time graduation for transferring students, especially military-connected families experiencing frequent relocations.
- This goal aligns with the NC Superintendent of Public Instruction's goal of positioning North Carolina's public schools as the best in the United States by 2030.

2. Background

- Students transferring into a North Carolina public high school often arrive:
 - Mid-semester
 - Mid-year
 - From out-of-state systems using different credit structures, grading calendars, scheduling formats, credit-awarding practices, and even graduation requirements.
- In these circumstances, failure to recognize transfer coursework appropriately may:
 - Cause retention or delay promotion
 - Delay graduation
 - Require unnecessary seat time duplication

3. Legal & Policy Framework

- Out-of-NC-Public-School Transfers Students in NC Public Schools ([Transcripts](#))
- North Carolina is a member of the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission ([MIC3](#)) ([MIC3 Rules Book](#))
- [Policy GRAD-009](#) (7.4) *Credits for half a course completed*

4. State-Level Guidance Needed

- **The above policies and statutes provide LEAs with discretion in awarding transfer credits, including partial credit when documentation supports completed instructional time and mastery. State level guidance/communication is needed to ensure that LEAs utilize the discretion provided to them in order to serve military-connected HS Students.**
- Academic Continuity
 - o Awarding partial academic credit and/or granting academic waivers to inbound transfer students are essential practices that support academic continuity, protect students from unnecessary course repetition, and promote on-time promotion and graduation.
- Equity
 - o Mobile student populations, including military-connected students, experience more frequent school transitions.
 - o Recognizing completed coursework ensures students are not academically disadvantaged because of circumstances outside of their control, particularly military-related relocations.
- Graduation Protection
 - o Students entering their senior year mid-year are particularly vulnerable. Without appropriate transfer credit recognition, they may be unable to meet state graduation requirements on time.

5. Conclusion

- Awarding of academic credits (to include ½ credits) to inbound transfer students aligns with:
 - o North Carolina statutory authority
 - o MIC3 obligations
 - o Graduation rate protection goals

6. The following scenarios are examples that military students have experienced in North Carolina schools. Additional scenarios may be provided with updated information.

Case Scenarios

[Proposed Letter from State Superintendent]

Re: Enrollment issues experienced by military-connected high school students

Dear Superintendents and district leaders:

North Carolina has a rich tradition of supporting our nation's armed forces and we are proud to be a military friendly state. Almost 95,000 active duty service members live in North Carolina and almost 40,000 children of those active duty service members attend our schools. As your State Superintendent, I am honored to serve on the North Carolina State Council for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children (Interstate Compact). North Carolina joined the Interstate Compact in 2008 and codified it in our General Statutes as G.S. 115C-407.5. The Interstate Compact's primary intent is to ease transitions for children of active duty military families as they move between states due to their parents' military service. The frequent moves and deployments that are hallmarks of military family life create many unique challenges for our military-connected students.

One of the most important ways that we as school leaders can provide support for our military-connected high school students is to ensure that they receive proper credit for course work which they have already successfully completed in the sending state when they enroll in our high schools. The Interstate Compact requires that we do so, whether or not the sending state employs a semester-long block schedule as is common in North Carolina, whether it officially recognizes one half or partial credits for work completed mid-term, or whether or not the student arrives in North Carolina prior to the beginning of a school year or semester, or enrolls in the middle of a semester.

The Placement and Attendance provisions of the Interstate Compact and G.S. 115C-407.5 require that when a military-connected high school student moves to North Carolina and is enrolled in one of our high schools, "*Continuing the student's academic program from the previous school and promoting placement in academically and career challenging courses should be paramount when considering placement.*" (emphasis added). Given the intent and text of the Interstate Compact, as well as the authority and duty of our principals to properly grade and classify students (G.S. 115C-288), no military-connected student should be denied appropriate credit for any course work successfully completed in the sending state, nor should they be required to repeat work or subject matter which they have already completed or mastered.

Important things to consider when auditing a military student's transcript:

- Advising is a key component of helping to transition a military-connected student.
- The student's transcript should tell their HS academic story.
- Military students will transition to NC from schools around the world, which may have varying schedules, graduation requirements, and awarding of credits. It presents

principals and counselors with the decision of how to reconcile the student's HS experience, transcript, and the plan forward for graduation/academics.

- There is more than one way to transition a student, especially throughout the school year. It should be an individualized approach involving the school, the student and the parent.
- Student's postsecondary goals and discussion of overall academic plan/course mapping should be considered.
- Maximize opportunities to remain/be with peers to assist with integrating the student into their new community.
- Student's academic strengths/weaknesses should be a part of the discussion of course load and placement.
- Course options should include in-person, which is 4x4 schedule at many NC schools, OR year-long on NCVPS, OR combination in order to maximize courses completed for the academic year.
- Grade and Classify will be used by the principal so that credit is awarded when the sending school does not award 0.5 credit for 1st semester coursework on transcript. If not, it would appear that the student did not attend school in the first semester and the student would not be recognized for their successful coursework. (§ 115C-288. Powers and duties of principal. (a) To Grade and Classify Pupils. - The principal shall have authority to grade and classify pupils...)
- Military students in good academic standing should not be withheld from remaining with their cohort due to variances in credit promotion.
- Keep in mind what opportunities are available to peers.