



# NGAKS Talking Paper on Assigning a Special Identifier to Guard Children in Kansas Public Schools

The Veterans Subcommittee of the Governor’s Behavioral Health Services Planning Council is urging the Kansas Department of Education to ask at enrollment whether public school students in Kansas belong to a military family. Educators and students will both benefit—students can connect with other military related students, and educators can better understand issues military related children face.

In December 2015, the Congress passed the bipartisan *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*<sup>i</sup>, and with the President’s signature on Dec 10th, ESSA became law. ESSA includes a military student data element for military leaders, educators, and elected officials to understand how military-connected children are performing in school. However, the military student identifier in ESSA **applies only to students with a parent who is a member of the Active Duty Armed Forces, not students with parents serving in the National Guard, Reserves, or those recently separated from service.**

More than half of Kansas National Guard and Reserve members have school-aged students in all Kansas counties<sup>ii</sup>; yet these students are almost hidden from public recognition as military children. Their parents deploy globally in response to our nation’s call, just as the active duty service members have and continue to do. It is important to note that “gone is gone” for a child of the respective service member and regardless of the reason for parental absence. These children have lived with more than 14 years of war with frequent and repeated parent deployments, and live with continual stressors and transition adjustments that their civilian classmates do not experience.

Teachers and school administrators are often unaware of military-connected children being within their schools and classrooms and therefore not attentive to not only the academic needs, but also the social and emotional well-being of these children. More accurate considerations of the amplified needs of these children would be possible via the military student data identifier. Studies also indicate the most stressful time for a military family is during the first five years upon separating and transitioning into civilian life. Kansas schools are not currently required to ask if students are from a military-related family. Current statute allows school districts to count active duty military children to report to the Federal Government. However, even in that count, traditional Guard and Reserve members (not activated) are not counted, so schools do not ask children if they are military family related.

**NUMBER OF SELECTED RESERVISTS WITH DEPENDENTS:** All Selected Reservists including Kansas National Guard<sup>iii</sup> total 11,262 (7,500 of these are National Guardsmen). There are 54.1% who have dependents (6,093 X 1.2 dependents = 7,311 Kansas school children statewide)<sup>iv</sup>

This policy in Kansas would give a voice to the children of those who serve us all—active duty, national guard and reservists. It also would help bridge the gap between military and civilian transition and enable those services to be targeted where most need exists. Without the military student identifier; teachers, other students, and communities have no way of knowing whether these students are faring well, keeping pace, or falling behind. The identifier will inform educators and policymakers to adjust programs, resources and adopt strategies to support military related children and their military families.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.militarychild.org/news-and-events/press-releases/mceec-applauds-inclusion-of-military-student-identifier-in-essa#sthash.o5g9zTzr.dpuf>, Military Child Education Coalition, 2015 Press Releases.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2014-Demographics-Report.pdf>, 2014 Military Demographics Report.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2014-Demographics-Report.pdf> 2014 Demographics: PROFILE OF THE MILITARY COMMUNITY, Department of Defense Report

<sup>iv</sup> Kansas Adjutant General’s Annual Report 2014 [http://www.kansastag.gov/AdvHTML\\_Upload/files/Annual%20Report%202014%2001-21-2015.pdf](http://www.kansastag.gov/AdvHTML_Upload/files/Annual%20Report%202014%2001-21-2015.pdf)