

School Personnel Calendar Planning for Military-Connected Students

When military-connected children transition into a new school, it may be helpful to have a discussion with their parent or guardian about upcoming school events. Schools each have their own unique practices and traditions for special events. It can be difficult for new students to anticipate the emotional responses that these events may elicit. The events listed below might carry particular emotional weight for military-connected children who have a Service member parent who is deployed, absent for training, or classified as missing or deceased.

Birthdays: Service member, parent, and student birthdays could serve as a trigger for military-connected children missing a Service member parent. Although you may not have all of these birthdays on record, encourage families to let the school or specific teachers know as these events occur.

Father's and Mother's Day: Let military parents know if there will be specific activities related to Father's or Mother's Day. These holidays may be difficult for a student if their parent is not present to celebrate. In addition, it may be helpful to think about how students can celebrate with an absent parent via internet or sending a letter or care package.

Holidays: National and religious holidays are often associated with special family traditions for students. However, students may experience these holidays differently with a missing Service member. Let military families know how these holidays will be addressed in your school and where students can find extra support if need be.

Memorial Day and Veterans Day: These military-specific holidays may bring up difficult emotions for children who are missing a parent. If your school celebrates these events in a special way, let the military families in your school know.

Milestones: Students who experience a milestone, such as a graduation, college acceptances and decision, or prom, without a parent may experience difficult emotions. Let military families know where they can find extra support if necessary. Remember that even smaller milestones like a preschool graduation or an eighth grade awards ceremony can be emotional triggers.

September 11th: This anniversary may be difficult for military-connected children. Inform military families how this event will be remembered in your school. Be flexible with student participation and provide extra support if necessary.

Special Events Including Parents: If your school has specific events that include parents coming to the school or classroom such as a Father-Daughter Dance, a parent career day, or a Mommy & Me class, make sure to notify military parents so they can prepare by substituting another family member or talking through the event with their children.

Sporting Events/Plays/Recitals: Students who participate in extracurricular activities may have a difficult time during showcases such as games, plays, or recitals if their Service member parent cannot attend. Make sure military families feel supported through these special events. It may also be helpful to consider whether any events could be recorded and mailed or emailed to an absent parent.