



## REPORT ON THE MONTANA COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

September 2024

### OVERVIEW

As required by [20-1-231, MCA](#) this report provides a summary of the state's participation in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and the activities and discussions of the Montana Council on Educational for Military Children during the 2023-2024 school year. This report and other information associated with the council are posted on the Office of Public Instruction's [website](#).

### PURPOSE

In 2013, the Montana Legislature approved [Senate Bill 203](#), which enacted into law the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The purpose of the Interstate Compact is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families due to frequent moves and deployments of their parents. The state's participation in the compact is intended to facilitate:

- the timely enrollment of children of military families;
- the student placement process;
- the student's qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs, and extracurricular academic, athletic and social activities; and
- the student's on-time graduation.

### COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

One of the requirements of participation in the Interstate Compact is for each state to create a council on educational opportunity for military children. The members of the Montana Council on Educational Opportunity for Military Children for the 2023-2024 school year include:

- Ray L. Shaw, Ret. Sergeant (USAF), Compact Commissioner
- Col. Ciro E. de la Vega, 341st MSG Commander, Malmstrom AFB, USDOD Representative
- Lisa Sapp, School Liaison, Malmstrom Air Force Base
- Elsie Arntzen, State Superintendent, Montana Office of Public Instruction
- Brian Michelotti, Executive Director, Montana High School Association
- Tom Moore, Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools
  - Superintendent Moore has retired from Great Falls and has been replaced by Superintendent Heather Hoyer.

- Representative Ed Buttrey, Montana House of Representatives
- Brad Livingston, Brigadier General (BG) Ret.

Two Points of contact for issues related to the Compact in Montana are:

1. Ray L. Shaw  
251 Bivens Creek Road  
Sheridan, MT, 59749  
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2. Lisa Sapp  
School Liaison and MIC3 MT Military Family Liaison  
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ph. 406-731-6106, cell 406-217-1173, website: <https://341fss.com/school-liaison/>

## ACTIVITIES OF THE STATE COUNCIL

- The MT State Council met virtually on the following dates to conduct official business over the last year:
  - August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023
  - November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023
  - April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024
- MIC3 Meeting Agendas can be found [here](#).

In 2021, Governor Gianforte appointed Ray Shaw, Ret. Sargeant (USAF) as Compact Commissioner. He is responsible for the administration and management of the state's participation in the compact. The Interstate Compact provides for the uniform treatment of military children transferring between states and school districts. The official website for the National MIC3 Office can be located at [mic3.net](http://mic3.net).

Commissioner Shaw traveled to Richmond, Virginia to participate in the Military Children Interstate Children's Compact Commission Annual Business Meeting (MIC3 ABM) to report on behalf of Montana's state council. School Liaison, Lisa Sapp, was unavailable to attend this year's ABM. Montana's 2023 end of year report can be located [here](#). The Interstate Compact's 2023 annual report will be posted, all previous year's reports can be viewed [here](#). During his visit to the 2023 ABM, Commissioner Shaw shared with other state's commissioners the progress the Montana council has made in advocating and supporting military connected students.

In 2020, the Montana council voted to adopt the Purple Star School designation program. This program recognizes Montana schools that display extraordinary commitment to supporting military-connected students and families. As of this year, there are a total of 12 Purple Star Schools designated across Montana. In 2021, the award was expanded to include Purple Star

Champions, which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated support of military-connected students in schools and within the community. Additional information regarding Purple Star School and Champion designations can be found [here](#).

## **PURPLE STAR CHAMPIONS**

Purple Star Champions receive a certificate of appreciation from the OPI.

- Nick Budeski, High School Counselor at Great Falls High School
- Jamie Williams, Librarian and Instructional Coach at Great Falls High School
- Lisa Sapp, Department of the Air Force School Liaison, Malmstrom AFB

## **PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS**

Purple Star Schools receive a plaque recognizing their achievements from the OPI.

- Valley Christian School, Missoula MT (renewal)
- Loy Elementary School, Great Falls, MT (renewal)
- North Middle School, Great Falls, MT (renewal)
- CMR High School, Great Falls, MT (renewal)
- Washington Middle School, Glendive, MT

## **COST**

There were no costs for Participation in the Interstate Compact or to the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

## **NEXT STEPS FOR THE COUNCIL:**

1. Open application and nomination process for Purple Star School and Champion Awards starting August 26 for the 2024-2025 school year.
2. Offer training and education opportunities for educators to learn about the challenges facing military-connected students and their families with the goal of fostering and eliminating barriers to their academic success.
3. Continue the encouragement and sponsorship of activities across Montana in partnership with Malmstrom, the Montana Air National Guard, and the Montana Army National Guard in celebration of Purple Up! Day, which commemorates military families in our communities.
4. Disseminate resources made available by the Interstate Compact and the Department of Defense in an effort to provide additional outreach to military families statewide.
5. Continue to collaborate with military stakeholders and identify legislative opportunities to aid and assist military families residing in Montana.

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