



Arkansas Department of Education

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

Jacob Oliva, Secretary

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Arkansas Department of Education Celebrates Purple Up Day and Month of the Military Child

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The Arkansas Department of Education is joining Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders in observing April as the Month of the Military Child. Governor Sanders signed a [proclamation](#) designating the month of April 2026 as the Month of the Military Child in Arkansas.

More than 14,000 Arkansans serve in the military, and more than 6,500 military children attend private or public schools in Arkansas. According to the United States Department of War (DoW), military families move approximately every two to three years, with military children changing schools an average of six to nine times during K-12 years.

Military children face unique challenges, from frequently having to make new friends, transitioning to new education standards with every move, and facing daily uncertainty that comes with having a parent in uniform. However, Arkansas is committed to ensure smooth transitions and unwavering support for military children and their families. Governor Sanders signed [Act 501](#) into law last year, further proving that thorough commitment. Thanks to Act 501:

- The Military Child School Transitions Act has been expanded to eliminate the one year one year eligibility limitation on children of Gold Star Families and medically-separated or retired families to be covered by the act.
- Each open enrollment charter and public school district are required to designate a military family education coordinator to serve as a point of contact for each military family, connecting them with other service families and resources.
- School districts may enroll an inbound transitioning military child in virtual learning to ensure a smooth transition between from the student's previous coursework to what's being taught in Arkansas classrooms.
- Each public school with 20 or more military children enrolled are required to adopt the Purple Star School program, ensuring that schools with significant military populations are prepared to meet their needs.

Credited to Act 501, Arkansas was identified among the strongest states in America when it comes to support for military-connected students. Earlier this year, the DoW's Defense-State Liaison Office

released the [Military OneSource State Policy Status Tracker](#), identifying Arkansas' full implementation of four key priorities:

1. Advance Enrollment
2. Military Student Identifier
3. Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children
4. Purple Star Schools Programs

On March 31, the Arkansas Department of Education celebrated Arkansas' increased strength in supporting military children within our hallways, recognizing newly established Purple Star Schools, and the Cabot School District, the state's first ever Purple Star School District, for their continued diligence in raising awareness for the Month of the Military Child. Arkansas currently has more than 240 Purple Star Schools and 25 Purple Star School Districts, in which every school within the district has earned the Purple Star designation.

"Act 501 is a major step forward, and it reflects Arkansas' unwavering commitment to the families who serve our nation," **said Secretary of Education Jacob Oliva**. "We want every military child who walks into an Arkansas school to feel welcomed, supported, and understood. We want their families empowered by knowing that Arkansas is a place where their children can thrive, and we want our state to continue leading the nation in honoring the service and sacrifice of our military families."

"I'm proud of Arkansas for leading the way to make life easier for military children who follow their military parents' assignments," **said Brig. Gen. Chad Bridges, the Adjutant General of Arkansas**. "Along with our amazing partners at the Arkansas Department of Education, we want to ensure we are doing everything we can for our military children so they don't just overcome their unique challenges, they excel in their education."

During the Arkansas Council for Military Children's April meeting, Greenwood High School Senior Weston M. Arnett was presented with the Arkansas Outstanding Military Scholar Award. Arnett, whose family includes several military veterans, was nominated for the award by Greenwood Public Schools Superintendent John Ciesla.

Arnett has been active in the Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) at Greenwood High School, where he has attained the rank of Cadet Lieutenant Colonel. He is also a member of the Fort Smith Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, where he was recognized as Arkansas's Outstanding Civil Air Patrol Cadet. Following graduation, Arnett will attend the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

The Outstanding Military Scholar Award is presented annually to one graduating Arkansas senior who is the child of a current or former military service member. The recipient is selected based on academic achievement, extracurricular involvement, leadership, and service to the community. Students enrolled in public, charter, or private schools are eligible for nomination.

April 10 was designated as Purple Up! For Military Kids Day in Arkansas. School districts throughout the state wore purple to honor military children while filling hallways with support and gratitude for the children that sacrifice normalcy because their parents fight for the freedom of all Americans.

April 15 marks National Purple Up Day, encouraging communities across the nation to honor military children's resilience the same way Arkansas schools have.

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Pictured (l to r): Dr. Ken Warden, Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education; Jessica Saum, Cabot Public Schools Collaboration and Inclusion Coordinator; Dr. Janice Walker, Jacksonville North Pulaski School District Assistant Superintendent; Brig. Gen. Chad Bridges, the Adjutant General of Arkansas; Arkansas Secretary of Education Jacob Oliva; Colonel (Ret) Robert A. Ator II, Secretary for the Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs

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