



*from* the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee  
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**For Immediate Release**

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**New study shows SC students with military parent high achievers on state assessments**

***Federal dollars for military-connected students not coming to SC school districts due to under-collection and under-reporting***

Editor’s Note: The “*Report of Military-Connected Students in SC,*” which includes an Executive Summary, can be found online at [www.eoc.sc.gov](http://www.eoc.sc.gov).

**Columbia** – The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) released a report today that examines the performance of military-connected children, children who have at least one parent or guardian who is connected to the United States military. The report was required

Percent Met or Exemplary on SC PASS 2014 Reading and Research and Math -- Military-Connected Students in SC and All Students in SC (Grades 3-8)

| Mathematics   |   |   | Reading & Research                                    |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| # of Military Connected Students Tested -- Grades 3-8 | % of Military Connected Students Scoring Met or Exemplary | % of ALL SC Students Scoring Met or Exemplary | # of Military Connected Students Tested -- Grades 3-8 | % of Military Connected Students Scoring Met or Exemplary | % of ALL SC Students Scoring Met or Exemplary |
| <b>3,083</b>  | <b>82.3%</b>  | <b>66.7%</b>                                  | <b>3,081</b>  | <b>86.4%</b>  | <b>71.1%</b>                                  |

by Act 289, a law passed during the 2014 legislative session. Although student absentee rates on average are higher, military-connected students achieve higher levels on state assessments than their non-military peers. State assessments examined included the SC Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SC-PASS), given in grades 3-8, and the end-of-course assessment, gateway exams given in four courses. On end-of-course exams, military-connected students typically scored six percentage points higher than the average score for all South Carolina students, regardless of subject area or grade level.

According to the report, military-connected students are under-reported in South Carolina. Data reported by South Carolina districts in 2014 included 7,853 students enrolled in grades 1 through 12, while the Department of Defense reported three times the amount of military-connected students in the state. School districts are eligible for additional federal funding, known as federal impact aid, based on the number of federally-connected students. This federal-connected student group, which included military-connected students, is a broader category which includes children residing on Indian lands, military bases, low-income properties, and children whose parents are employed on eligible federal property. During fiscal year, twelve South Carolina school districts received more than \$2.3 million in federal Impact Aid dollars.

“Some districts may be eligible to receive funds if data were collected and reported,” stated Melanie Barton, Executive Director of the S.C. Education Oversight Committee. “Collecting these data will not

only bring additional funds into districts, it can allow districts to better meet the educational needs of these children and support them more effectively.”

Three specific recommendations are included in the report:

- 1.) Consider unique challenges of military students in an academic setting. With better data, schools and districts should establish flexible attendance policies that take into account student attendance immediately prior to or after a parent/caregiver deployment. Sumter County School District developed a district-wide attendance policy that considers particular attendance needs of military connected students. Similar policies should be considered by districts for implementation.
- 2.) PowerSchool is a web-based, student information system used by all S.C. school districts. Current PowerSchool “Parent Military Status” field should be revised to:
  - a. better reflect all criteria for qualification for federal impact aid as described in Section 8003(b) (2). Districts could potentially receive federal money to meet the educational needs of students with at least one parent who is federally connected. For example, children whose parents work on federal property (such as the Veterans Administration Hospital) may be counted as part of the federal-connected student population at the school or district level.
  - b. provide more information regarding students that may be helpful for school staff. PowerSchool’s Option 07 reads “The student’s Parent or Guardian died while on active duty within the last year” and Option 08 reads “The student’s Parent or Guardian was wounded while on active duty within the last year.” It would be helpful to guidance counselors and social workers to know if a student has a parent or guardian who died or was wounded even if it occurred more than one year ago.
- 3.) Schools and school districts in South Carolina need to enter more information in PowerSchool for military connected students to: (1) better meet their educational needs, (2) better inform provision of support services such as counseling and peer support, and (3) potentially provide additional federal Impact Aid revenue if threshold requirements are met.

*The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina’s education system.*

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