

News Release

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Evers proclaims April “Month of the Military Child”

Draws attention to support needed by Wisconsin’s thousands of kids with parents in military

MADISON — Highlighting challenges faced by children who have parents or family members serving our nation in the military, State Superintendent Tony Evers today proclaimed April 2013 to be the Month of the Military Child.

There are thousands of military kids throughout Wisconsin. Most are children of reservists or National Guard members, rather than regular service members. As a result, they usually live in communities where very few of their peers share the experience of having one or both parents overseas, perhaps in harm’s way, for long periods of time.

“It’s very common that community members don’t even know when a student’s parent is away on military service,” Evers said. “The Month of the Military Child is a time to redouble our efforts to help them feel safe and succeed.”

When schools know that students have a parent in the armed forces, they can connect that student with school counselors, social workers, psychologists, or others who are trained in helping children deal with stress and change. “Families, let your child’s teacher know when stressful times are happening at home, like when a parent is deployed,” Evers said. “Also, schools that haven’t done so already should consider adding a question to their beginning-of-the-year forms, asking whether students have a family member in the military. We want to connect students to the support systems schools have in place to help.”

The month is being observed nationally. A highlight is “Purple Up! For Military Kids” on April 15, when students, educators, and other residents are encouraged to wear purple as a way of thanking and supporting children from military families. Other suggested ideas include writing letters to military families, or donating “hero packs,” which consist of materials that help kids stay in touch with parents far away.

To address the needs of military youth year-round, Wisconsin has participated since 2010 in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, a growing effort that now includes 44 states. The compact’s Wisconsin council includes Evers; the state commissioner, Shelley Weiss; and six additional members representing education, the military, and the Legislature.

(more)

“Fortunately, sound policy decisions made in the past in Wisconsin have saved military children from facing barriers here as they do in other states—like excessive red tape when moving from school to school,” Evers said. “For us, the main task is to ensure we address the emotional needs of children with family members away on military service.”

The compact has been working with other statewide and national groups to provide training for educators on meeting those emotional needs. This May, the “Living in the New Normal Institute,” offered by the national Military Child Education Coalition, will reach the Madison area for the first time, after being offered in other parts of Wisconsin previously. Offered at no charge through federal support, the event guides school counselors, social workers, teachers, and others in helping students build resilience and deal with the change and stress of having a parent leave home for military service. The compact’s webpage, http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_militarychild, provides details.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2013_40.pdf. The DPI’s Educational Opportunities for Military Children webpage, http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_militarychild, includes State Superintendent Tony Evers’ proclamation of the Month of the Military Child and other resources stemming from Wisconsin’s work with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.