MFHS is proud to be a founding member of the newly created Coalition for Military-Connected Student Success. We helped launch this group in February to provide policymakers with insights about the unique educational needs of the 1.2 million military-connected children and offer concrete recommendations on how to meet those needs.

The Coalition is comprised of The Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA); Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC); Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA); National Association for Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS); National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI); National Military Family Association (NMFA); and of course, Military Families for High Standards.

All our groups work tirelessly as advocates for military-connected children. We believe that our combined efforts to provide advice and counsel to leaders at the U.S. Department of Education, uniformed and civilian senior leaders of the services, members of Congress, state-level education officials and service families will strengthen our efforts to reform education positively for our students. The Coalition was highlighted in a recent Military Times article.

MFHS Spring 2019 UpDate

We are pleased to provide this Spring UpDate and highlight our recent progress and accomplishments. The tireless energy of our supporters has created an impressive resume of influential opinions, insightful suggestions, valuable tools and critical data that is shaping the educational conversations that influence the quality of education for our military children.

MFHS has worked at the grassroots level to advocate and defend high-quality education for military-connected students. For example, Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, is exploring options for strengthening local educational programs. Maxwell’s military leadership has expressed concerns about finding service members to fill their base positions due the lack of high-quality educational options in the surrounding community. This then impacts those who are willing to bring their families forward for assignment there and school placement. We are appreciative of the chance to be involved in such important platforms that hold the prospect for serious reform.

Another issue we are engaged in is a local effort regarding school re-districting and its impact on military families. We are working with families at Fort Myer and the Arlington, Virginia public schools to address the challenges that might come with a re-districting decision. We are asking for consideration of the many life-challenges these decisions can make on students who already move more often than their peers. “Grandfathering” to allow children to remain in place until they normally advance from a school or PCS is among our requests, as are consideration of before- and after-school services the families use and long-standing agreements that service members believed would remain in place upon assignment here. We are in regular discussion with the district and these families, hoping to work out resolutions that can make all involved feel to have survived the process successfully. Small gains have been made in what is a complicated process. We feel elated that this group of families turned to us for some expertise and trusted us to assist them in assembling a campaign to voice their concerns effectively.
MFHS has also continued our efforts to bring awareness around the Military Student Identifier (MSI). On April 3rd, MFHS, in collaboration with Collaborative for Student Success and Doug Mesecar of the Lexington Institute, will participate in a roundtable discussion to showcase the exceptional programs and best practices that Virginia Beach City public schools have implemented to support military-connected students.

We were on a panel with district leaders, military commanders and former Congressman John Kline, one of the co-authors of the Every Student Succeeds Act, to draw attention to the many examples of support offered to military-connected children in transition in that school community. Each of these serves as a wonderful example of what systems can do to embrace these students and set them up for academic, social and future success.

Congressman Sanford Bishop (D-GA) and Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) have invited MFHS to participate in the Congressional Military Family Caucus for the second year in a row. The 2019 caucus will be held at Fort Benning in Georgia in August. Additionally, we have been asked to help shape that agenda, determine the caucus focus and draw in those voices that need to be heard. The Caucus provides lawmakers with a sense of what matters to military families and provides solutions for them to consider and act upon to improve the quality of life for military families.

Perhaps you have read some of the op-eds that MFHS “team” members have had published in a variety of outlets across the country. Kiera Tyler, an active duty Army spouse, teacher at Fort Bragg, also leader of our Facebook group “Speaking of Military-Connect Kids,” authored the commentary “Helping Military Families Make the Transition to Texas,” which was featured in two Texas outlets: The El Paso Times and the Times Record News in Wichita Falls.

In her piece, she brought attention to two important resources military families can use to help navigate relocating and help their children transition to new schools: 1. The Lexington Institute Report: “Getting School Districts Ready for the Military Student Identifier” and 2. The Promise to Practice report from the Collaborative for Student Success, which assesses how states are addressing their lowest-performing schools.

MFHS was also featured in RealClear Education, where our Chairwoman Christi Ham authored a piece on how school districts can use the MSI to address the unique academic needs of military-connected students. Additionally, MFHS was featured in Griffon Magazine, offering nine tips to improve the school transition of military families and their children.

MFHS is appreciative and proud to be in the mix of important educational issues related to these military-connected students. Each of these updates shows that there is a place for the compassion of service spouses to invest themselves for the educational betterment of these precious children.

Share this information with others. If you want to join Military Families for High Standards, we’d love to have you. Please contact us through our Chairwoman, Christi Ham at militaryfamilies@forstudentsuccess.org.

Learn more: militaryfamiliesforhighstandards.org