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Explanatory Case Study: Transitions of Highly Mobile Students From Military Families to Public Non-Military Elementary Schools

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Explanatory Case Study: Transitions of Highly Mobile Students From Military Families to

Public Non-Military Elementary Schools

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this explanatory case study is to review the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. When military families are uprooted and move to new locations, the children are forced to form new social ties as well as adapt to a new curriculum and learning objectives. The research questions that were addressed in the research for this study included: (a) How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful? (b) What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students and how are these problems handled? (c) What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children? There were three schools from a school district in the southwestern part of the United States that has military population of almost 50% that were utilized as for the study site. The student achievement data for 3rd through 5th grade students was examined to confirm the overall performance of the study site schools. Data was collected in the form of interviews with school staff members and the parents of military children. The interviews provided data on the current strategies utilized with military students when they transfer into the district. The data revealed that although strategies are being implemented at the study site schools, there is no consistency across the district with the strategies that are utilized and there has been very limited training for staff members in the district for working with military families.

Keywords: military, transition, mobility, students, transience, effects, schools, case study

Dedication

This dissertation would not be complete without God leading and guiding me every step of the way. My work is dedicated to my beautiful daughters Kenley and Klaire.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States education system has the goal of ensuring that all students have access to a free and appropriate public education. In meeting this objective, the United States public school system is faced with a widespread and unheralded problem that is associated with student mobility (Rumberger, 2015). Student mobility, also known as "churn" or "transience," can be defined as a time when a student changes schools for reasons other than grade promotion during a school year (Sparks, 2016). Student mobility has been tied to lower school engagement, poorer grades in reading and math, and a higher risk of dropping out of high school (Sparks, 2016). Mobility can be the result of many life changes to include poverty, job relocation, family disruption, or military relocation to name a few.

Students enter schools with varying levels of knowledge and exposure to academic experiences. In most situations, the student's previous school experience and setting are very different to the new school experience and setting which can sometimes cause a challenge for the student (Rumberger, 2015). Often teachers do not understand the challenges faced by these students so they are not able to assist students during the time of transition (Rumburger, 2015). Schools and districts that educate highly mobile students to include military related students must accept the challenge of meeting the needs of all students by implementing procedures that must be followed upon student enrollment (Sparks, 2016). There is a need for bringing awareness to this population in civilian schools and identifying strategies to assist with a successful transition.

Military mobility is a type of mobility that is of a growing concern because students are affected due to their parents serving in the Armed Forces. Military mobility includes all families that have at least one parent serving in a branch of the United States Armed Forces. Military

mobility can be the result of many factors to include a permanent change of duty station or PCS, deployment, and/or military training (Burnette, 2017). When parents are given these orders, families are forced to relocate and start their lives in a new environment. This change means students are forced to start at a new school, adjust to the learning and make new friends.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

There are more than 500,000 military students attending schools in over 600 civilian public school districts (Smith, 2012). Those military students who do not attend civilian schools attend Department of Defense Education Activity Schools. Department of Defense Activity Schools, also known as DOD or DODEA schools, educate 100% military students and are funded by the military with the purpose of creating a learning environment that caters to the success of the military child (Richmond, 2015). Because these schools are funded by the military, students and families are supported through transitions due to strategies in place by the military that support student success (Smith, 2012). Some of the strategies used by Department of Defense schools to aid in successful transience are listed as follows (Richmond, 2015).

1. Set policies regarding goal setting, accountability, assessments, and professional development for staff.

2. Small school sizes to create a sense of community.

3. High expectations for all students.

4. Sufficient financial resources linked to student performance initiatives.

5. Staff development linked to student performance.

6. Counselors to assist students with transitioning into the school (Richmond, 2015).

Although civilian schools educate military children at high rates, these strategies are often not implemented making it difficult for families to transition into these school settings (Richmond, 2015).

The military lifestyle is often seen as a foreign concept to many civilians (Stites, 2016). Military children are often an unexplored subject, especially in childhood education. Military children are faced with being highly mobile and this mobility causes other issues which include: family separations, broken social ties, inconsistent contact with parents/guardians, and gaps in educational performance (Stites, 2016). It is estimated that approximately 1,100,000 school aged children in the United States alone are the children of military personnel (Stites, 2016). There are military installations located throughout the United States, and some have military or Department of Defense Schools, while others do not and students attend the school district located closest to the base or their housing area. Department of Defense schools have higher success rates for military students compared to civilian school districts that service military students (Stites, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Many school districts with high populations of military students have the following characteristics as a result of high mobility for military families: inconsistent student exposure to the curriculum; lower student achievement; high grade retention; higher school dropout rates; and curriculum planning challenges (Stites, 2016). With the military lifestyle comes stress and uncertainty which can greatly impact a student's school performance (Stites, 2016). Although there is research that establishes that there are stressors due to military mobility that can affect student performance, there is still a need to examine the impact that mobility has in the

elementary setting and what strategies will aid in increasing student performance and success (Stites, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. Military families experience high levels of stress due to the changes and there is a need for them to be supported in all aspects when faced with these challenges. Both educators and military families have a huge impact on how well students transition when moving into a new school setting (Stites, 2016). The research and data collection in this study explored how military mobility and its stressors impact the educational performance of military dependent children.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful?

2. What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students and how are these problems handled?

3. What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children?

This research study is a qualitative explanatory case study. The research will involve data collection from three different schools in a school district in the southwestern part of the United States with a military student population of 43% (School District, 2017). The school district's research review committee has given permission for the study to be conducted. Permission was granted for the following: review student test score data on the State of Texas

Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for reading and math in grades 3rd – 5th and conducting interviews with school staff members and military parents about the current practices to support military students on the campuses.

The student summary achievement data from the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years will be used to conduct a document review to enhance the research of the study. The archival data that will be reviewed includes student demographics, student attendance rates, and student performance ratings in the areas of math and reading. The purpose of reviewing this data is to enhance the research on the overall performance of the schools. All individual student names and information will remain confidential throughout the study and all reporting. Although qualitative research includes detailed, accurate accounts of research, confidentiality of participants is necessary so that they are not easily identifiable (Maxwell, 2013). The school names will also remain confidential throughout the process.

Data collection for the study included interviews of school staff members and parents of military students that attended those schools. An interview protocol was used to ensure accurate data collection. Purposeful sampling was used to choose these participants and this method involves selecting individuals that are knowledgeable about or have experience with a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, 2015). The requirements of the research study and interviews were reviewed with the administration of each school; and the email addresses/phone numbers of staff members and parents that the administration recommended were contacted for participation. All parents and staff members that were recommended were contacted until there were at least five parents and five teachers/staff available to participate in the study from each school. This number of participants was chosen based on saturation, or the amount where additional participants were not needed to provide additional information (Latham, 2013).

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Topics and questions were included in the interviews to get feedback on the current transition procedures of the three schools and to learn more strategies for enhancing the transition process. The interviews that were conducted are an integral part of the study because valuable data was gathered to improve the transition process in the study site school district. This data was a necessary component to get valid research to develop this explanatory case study.

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of Study

The military lifestyle can bring about many stressful changes for military personnel and their families. Military families are highly mobile and students are forced to transition to new schools due to these changes. Although mobility is a factor that cannot be controlled, it can have detrimental effects on student achievement (Hattie, 2012). Often, children of military personnel enter new schools and are faced with adjusting to learning a new curriculum, making new friends, and adapting to a new environment altogether.

Early childhood is a critical time in which educators can make a significant difference in the lives of students as well as assist in increasing student achievement. Collecting data on the needs of educators to successfully support military students will aid in establishing strategies to ease the transition process for military families into civilian schools. The purpose of this explanatory case study was to review the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families.

Definitions of Terms

Civilian. A person that does not belong to the Armed Forces.

Department of Defense Activity Schools. Also known as DOD or DODEA schools, educates 100% military students and are funded by the military with the purpose of creating a learning environment that caters to the success of the military child (Richmond, 2015).

Deployment. The movement of troops and their equipment to a place of military action.

PCS. This is a military acronym that means 'Permanent change of duty station.'

Student mobility. Includes anytime a student changes schools during a school year for reasons other than grade promotion. Other terms for mobility include "churn" or "transience" (Sparks, 2016).

Transience. Moving frequently or remaining in a place for a limited amount of time.

Limitations

Limitations in a study include the elements of a study that are not under the control of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The limitations to this study included sampling and the school performance data reviewed in the study. Sampling is a limitation because purposeful sampling is used for the study. The sample size is small, but it includes five teachers/staff and five parents affiliated with the military from three different school. These interviews provide thorough data to learn the practices of the school district. Although there are many different types of mobility, the only participants that are involved in this case study are those that are affiliated with the military. The data reviewed from the two schools in the study will be relevant data to have an understanding of school performance. There is currently not a military subgroup in test data collection; therefore, tracking the progress of military students is limited.

Delimitations

Delimitations can be described as the population of the study, variables, and the overall focus of the research (Creswell, 2013). There are delimitations in this study and they include the

three elementary schools that are serve as the study school sites. There are 32 elementary

schools in the district for which this study will be conducted, but only three of the schools were

chosen for the study. The three schools that are included in the study were chosen based on the

percentage of military students on each campus and their exact location in proximity to the

military base. The schools in the study are located in different towns throughout the district and

have different percentages of military populations. The differences in the demographics at these

schools assists with determining the effects of military mobility on student achievement based on

the data collected from interviews and reviewing student performance.

Summary

The purpose of this explanatory case study was to explore the supports provided by

public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. Three different

schools were utilized to collect data. These schools are from a highly mobile school district in

the Southwestern section of the United States. Test scores from students in grades 3rd – 5th

were reviewed to determine how mobility affects their performance. Interviews were also

conducted with staff members and parents of military students to determine the effects of

military transition on student achievement. A goal of this study was to explore and identify

strategies that will aid in successful transition and support for military students in childhood

education. The research and findings of this study will be presented in this dissertation in

different chapters.

Five chapters are included in this dissertation. The purpose of Chapter 1 is to provide the

theoretical framework of the explanatory case study. The statement of the problem, the purpose

of the study, and background information about the school district and schools in which the study

took place is included in this chapter. The conceptual framework is described in Chapter 2 and a

review of the literature related to mobility and military families. Theories related to military mobility are presented in this chapter. The chapter also includes recommendations for schools with mobile military students and strategies to ease the transition process.

The research methodology is outlined in Chapter 3. The qualitative methodology is defined and explained in this chapter. The approach to data analysis and the sampling method for this research study are explained. Explored is the data collection process which includes interviewing teachers and parents of military students to understand the current transition practices and strategies used in the schools included in the study. Chapters 4 and 5 contain a summary of the results of the research as it relates to the study and prior research. The data collected from the study will be reviewed in these chapters and a synthesis of the findings will be presented. Recommendations for teachers, parents, schools, and the school district in the study are described. The final section of Chapter 5 includes suggestions for further research on the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Military families are faced with the challenge of constantly moving due to factors such as permanent change of duty stations, deployments, trainings, etc. (Pianin, 2015). Although the soldiers are willing to do what it takes to serve the needs of our country, often their families suffer with this constant transition. High mobility rates of students affiliated with the military can cause achievement gaps (Sparks, 2016). There are schools that have been successful with students that are highly mobile and these schools are completely funded by the military (Sparks, 2016).

Student mobility can be defined as changing from one school to another for reasons other than grade promotion (Sparks, 2016). When military families move to new locations, there are family readiness groups and other military personnel who assist with making the move to the new area a smooth one (Duttweiler, 2014). Although this is the norm, there are many times in which school districts are not equipped with the strategies needed to ensure that these mobile students are prepared for the transition into their new school (Families on the Homefront, 2016). There is a limited number of teachers and administrators in public schools who understand the needs and challenges of children with parents in the armed forces (Families on the Homefront, 2016).

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. Research for the study focuses on students in grades 3rd – 5th with a review of their test scores in an effort to gain information on the schools. Theories associated with student mobility that were researched for the study include the family stress theory, social capital theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and the transition shock theory. These theories give an

understanding to the different stages that are faced by children when changes occur due to transition.

Thorough research on mobility and other studies about mobility indicate that there is an established connection between mobility and student achievement. Many different databases were used to conduct research for this study. Those databases include: Ebscohost Database, Education Database (ProQuest), Eric (ProQuest), PsycARTICLES (ProQuest), and the Teacher Reference Center (Ebscohost). The search terms used in these databases included: military mobility, military mobility and student achievement, Department of Defense schools, mobility and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, social capital theory, James Coleman, transition shock theory, family stress theory, federal impact aid, military life, and qualitative research. These searches yielded results that support the need for strategies to assist students with transitioning due to the military lifestyle.

Conceptual Framework

When studying the effects that mobility has on student achievement, it is important to analyze how mobility contributes to early disengagement in school which can affect students when they become adolescents to include dropping out of school (Sparks, 2016). Mobility can be considered a dynamic change that occurs when individuals face environmental changes (Sparks, 2016). The military lifestyle often places military students at risk for having lower academic achievement and the high mobility rates can create stress for teachers in the classroom who must devote extra time towards curriculum review (Sparks, 2016). The mobile lifestyle can cause military students to experience academic gaps throughout their school age years that must be addressed by teachers in order for students to have a successful educational experience. The lives of all family members are effected, and children's reactions are shown based on

developmental age and whether or not they have preexisting psychological or behavioral problems (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018).

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. The unique challenges faced by military families and teachers during transitions is identified and strategies that can be used to decrease academic gaps and create a positive transition are identified. Longitudinal data from past studies was reviewed to capture the emergence, dynamics, and pathways of change in student development. Interviews were conducted to gather the perspectives of teachers and military families on current practices utilized in the transition of military students into the school setting for one particular school district that services a large population of military students. Student achievement data for students in grades 3rd – 5th was also reviewed to determine the effects of transition on student achievement.

Brain Research and Mobility

Evidence from cognitive and neuroscience studies has shown that stressful situations that occur during childhood can damage students' long term achievement and health (Sparks, 2012). Disruptions to the normal trajectories of childhood can have negative impacts on development (Sparks, 2012). Children can often become fearful, confused and anxious following a trauma and these traits can affect them in other areas to include educational experiences (Sparks, 2012). Moving to a different location, losing a parent, or being separated from a parent can all be considered traumatic events in which students are faced with the feelings of anxiety causing all areas of their lives to be impacted.

Children thrive in situations where they have stability and familiar routines and settings. Early brain development is impacted when children are faced with stressful situations. Neuroscientists are proving that future capabilities of the brain are shaped by experiences faced by children (Howard & Reeves, 2013). The brain is most flexible in the early years and it is important to provide children with experiences that will foster healthy brain development (Howard & Reeves, 2013). When traumatic stressors to include ending social ties, starting a new school, making new friends and having a parent away, are faced at an early age, it is critical to develop interventions and supports for quality coping by children. Theories that align with this research have been identified and form the theoretical framework for this study.

Family stress theory assists in describing the stressors faced by military families during transition periods. This theory describes the difficulty that children can face during military deployments, transitions and relocations. Another theory that forms the basis of this study on student mobility is the social capital theory developed by James Coleman (Gruman, Harachi, Abbott, Catalano, & Fleming, 2008). The social capital theory mirrors the concept of human and financial capital, but it differs by showing the relationship between parents and children and the network of relationships between parents, community members, and friends that interact and help support different aspects of the family's lifestyle (2008). When these social ties are broken, students' needs for development are not completely met.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is another theory that is associated to student mobility. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs was developed in the mid-1950s with a basis of reflecting on the needs of individuals in order to obtain full satisfaction in relation to their needs (Desautels, 2014). The theory includes five tiers that address the following: physiological needs, safety needs, love/belonging needs, esteem, and self-actualization (Desautels, 2014). All student

needs must be met in order for them to focus and have high achievement in school. When

students have to quickly relocate they can often go through a period of transition shock (Stavem,

2014). Transition shock theory is brought about due to a change from a familiar environment

(Stavem, 2014). Common symptoms of this theory include discouragement, resistance to

change, and withdrawal (2014). These stages can be difficult for students to face and schools

have the power to make this phase easier by meeting the needs of all students during times of

transition (2014). The purpose of reviewing the theories listed above is to develop the theoretical

framework for the study and determine the importance of meeting the needs of military

connected students during times of transition.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

Student Mobility Theories

Family Stress Theory

The military lifestyle can bring about many changes to include duty station changes,

relocations, deployments, and unfortunate casualties. It is estimated that over 2, 600,000 U.S.

troops have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan since the attacks that occurred on September

11, 2001 and more than 700,000 of those have deployed multiple times (Powers, 2016). Military

students are already faced with stressful situations and the worry of parents either having to be

deployed or the worry while they are deployed can raise stress levels for children (Bradshaw,

Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010).

All members of families cope with stress in different ways, but it is important to think

about children who deal with many factors to include puberty, peer relationships, parent/child

relationships, different academic demands, and relocation (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, &

Blum, 2010). The family stress theory suggested that an accumulation of life stressors, military

demands, and possible deployments causes military families to have a harder time coping and it causes them to suffer from maladjustment (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). Family stress theory is also described as a turning point for a family that leads to a major change in the family's structure (Patterson, 2002). Military families are also faced with this stress when a change in their family structure occurs which can include deployment, permanent change in duty station, or a parent is sent away for training. A term known as military family syndrome was developed by clinicians to reference patterns of psychopathology and behavioral maladjustment of military families (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). It is important that educators have an understanding of the family stress theory and the effects that it can have on the military child. This information will aid in developing a successful plan for transition into the new school setting.

Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum (2010) conducted a qualitative study in reference to the family stress theory. The study was based on the following goals: describe transition related stressors faced by mobile military students; describe efforts utilized to help students cope with their stress; and identify strategies that schools can identify to ease the transition process for military children (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). After the coding of the results, common themes were identified. This included strains on the family due to relocation and student anger due to the loss of friends and relationships formed in their former school setting (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). Understanding the results of this study is a necessity for making improvements to current school districts that serve military students.

According to the above study, military students were identified to use several strategies to help them cope with stress (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). There are several

strategies that have been found to be effective when working with military students. It is important for military children to be connected to teachers and other staff members and to be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities in the school setting (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). When strategies are implemented to deal with family stress, this process is known as family resilience (Patterson, 2002). Family resilience occurs when good outcomes follow a family stress situation (Patterson, 2002). Stress in the military can be difficult to cope with, but with support many military families find that stress can be eased and the transition process is easier. These strategies can be implemented to assist students in continuing to have high achievement when transitioning into a new learning environment.

Social Capital Theory

There are teachers in highly mobile schools who struggle with fully investing in students and building rapport due to a fear of the students moving (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). Other research studies have shown that mobile students often tend to be less centrally involved in their peer networks and tend to join networks with lower levels of achievement than non-mobile students (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). High levels of student mobility are linked to increased dropout rates. The findings of these studies show the correlation of the social capital theory with student mobility. Students must have all of their needs met in order to show success in the classroom (Desautel, 2014). Coleman's social capital theory describes the fact that mobility can have such detrimental effects at the early ages because students are in the early years of relationship development with parents, teachers, and peers (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012).

Social Capital theory describes the importance of social networks and trust in promoting a sense of belonging and well-being (Leonard, 2005). When making a connection from the

social capital theory to the lives of children, it is important to understand that social capital in the lives of children is the byproduct of adults/parents' relationships with others and the result includes their own social networks being rendered as invisible (Leonard, 2005). According to James Coleman (2012), families with strong social capital possess three different characteristics to include: financial capital, human capital and social capital (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). Financial capital includes the families' economic stability and how well they are able to purchase resources necessary for the family to survive (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012).

The military takes measures to ensure that funds are available for military connected families to have basic financial needs met. Human capital includes the educational background of the adults in the household and the emphasis made on education for the children (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). Parents with a strong educational background will place an emphasis on student achievement and make it a priority to monitor the transition of their child when military moves occur.

The last component, social capital, involves the relationship between the adults and children in the family (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). Military families often have social capital affected due to parents being uprooted from the household due to trainings, deployments, and injuries related to combat. Out of all three forms of capital, social capital is the most crucial for successful relationships and social ties due to the fact that the input of social capital allows parents to build positive relationships with their children that in turn teach them how to successfully build relationships when they enter new environments (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). Overall, the social capital theory provides the importance of parents building social capital in their children so that they can cope when faced with changes to relationships due to military transition.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The need to constantly create social ties and relationships also is reflected in the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Desautels, 2014). The five tiers presented in the theory appear in the graphic located in Appendix A. When students have to relocate to another school, they have to focus on building trust and finding security in a new setting. All schools must make efforts to ensure that students' needs on every level of the hierarchy are met to ensure that students can focus on being successful academically (Desautels, 2014). The early elements of Maslow's hierarchy are critical before self-concept and self-actualization can occur, which are the two pillars that enable students to think creatively and utilize higher order thinking skills (Stavem, 2014).

Belonging needs are often difficult for military children to acquire because of transition into new environments. Many children can feel a sense of alienation when moving to a new school or learning environment (American Counseling Association, 2016). New schools and parents/guardians of this population of children must take time to consider the changes that will be faced and ensure that children are able to regain confidence, competence, stability, and feelings of safety (American Counseling Association, 2016). Maslow's hierarchy of needs gives a clear explanation as to why many children fail. Children must have all of their deficiency needs met before they can even function in a school setting (Minton, 2008). Social workers, counselors, and psychologists must all have a presence in the school system to assist students that are involved in crisis situations (Minton, 2008). Parents must advocate for their students and request these services for their children when transitions are necessary that are sudden and a direct result of new military orders (Minton, 2008). When children begin failing, it is important to review the different levels of the hierarchy to identify what needs are not being met, and what

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changes need to occur to assist with meeting those needs (American Counseling Association, 2016). It is integral that school staff to include teachers, counselors, administrators, social workers, and others that work directly with students have training on Maslow's hierarchy of needs so that students can be supported.

In order for highly mobile/military students to be successful, there must be a strong support system of teacher relationships, peer networks, and student engagement (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). According to Maehr, Karabenick, and Urdan, (2012), a prior study that researched military mobility included findings that proved moves during the school year were particularly challenging for forming peer relationships and maintaining academic interest. Students also faced difficulty in fulfilling school requirements. They tend to repeat classes, and miss critical subject learning (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012). Students must feel as though they are cared for, welcomed and accepted during transitions (Stavem, 2014). They must also feel safe in their new environment, have the proper nutrition, and feel as if they belong in the new environment (Stavem, 2014). Once these basic needs are met, students can learn and show progress academically (Stavem, 2014).

The problems with transition are formed when the basic needs of Maslow's hierarchy are not met, and schools overlook the individual needs of students because they enter at different times of the year (Stavem, 2014). It is essential that schools are prepared to meet students where they are, fulfill their basic needs, and help them progress academically, socially, and emotionally, (Stavem, 2014). All of these needs have to be nurtured after they are lost due to transition.

Transition Shock Theory

The transition shock theory provides an understanding of the stages that these students experience when faced with a transition out of their current educational setting (Stavem, 2014). During the period of transition shock, students experience the following: anxiety, helplessness, threat, fear, guilt, depression, gradual acceptance, moving forward, disillusionment, hostility, denial, anger, and complacency (Stavem, 2014). This theory was developed based on the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, the developer of the Kubler-Ross theory (Chapman, 2013). The five stages of grief include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Chapman, 2013). These five stages are identified throughout the transition shock theory.

Stavem (2014) identified numerous practices that have yielded exemplary results in relation to student transition. Eight main areas of focus were identified in his study to assist in quality practices for schools when dealing with transitions (Stavem, 2014). These practices included enrollment, academic placement, student placement, classroom connections, family connections, unique needs, school/community connections and exit transitions. Schools can focus on these eight practices when enrolling new students throughout the school year.

Transition shock can be difficult for students to cope with if some of the strategies mentioned above are not utilized. The shock of a sudden change from one environment to another can be stressful when there is limited support and unfamiliar people in the new setting (Harwood, 2011). When transitioning children can be faced with a broad range of changes to include physical, intellectual, emotional, developmental, and sociocultural that can have a huge impact on their achievement (Harwood, 2011). The education system must include training on how to assist students with the shock that is faced so that these changes can be met with adequate support. Understanding transition shock theory reinforces the need for strategies to assist with

successful transition and support for children in the areas of anxiety, insecurity, instability, and inadequacy which are all faced due to transition that can sometimes be all of a sudden (Boychuk, 2008).

Being cognizant of these areas when supporting children and enrolling new students in the school setting can assist with reducing the negative effects of transition shock theory (Chapman, 2013). Many military students attend Department of Defense Activity schools where many of these strategies are used. Civilian public schools must make efforts to implement support strategies that support military students because these students do not all have access to Department of Defense Activity Schools.

Department of Defense Activity Schools

The Department of Defense Education Activity schools or DODEA, educates approximately 78,000 children at 181 schools in twelve different foreign countries and the United States (Richmond, 2016). These schools are comprised of 100% military students and have high success rates for student academics (Richmond, 2016). Approximately 84 % of the students are children of military personnel and 94 % of the parents have a high school diploma or higher (Delisio, 2017). Although most students that attend these schools stay an average of three years in a row at the school, teachers and administrators in DODEA schools produce impressive academic results (Delisio, 2017). On the 2012 writing test, DODs eighth graders placed 2nd in the United States on their performance, and the African American subgroup scored second in the nation when compared to their peers in nonmilitary schools (Delisio, 2017). The achievement gap between minority students and white students has shown to be narrower in DODEA schools than in U.S. public schools. DODEA schools understand the many challenges faced by military families to include children changing schools more than six times over the course of their school

career, high rates of divorces and remarriages, frequent deployments, and difficulty for spouses to find work. The DODEA schools use many different strategies as coping skills for military students (Richmond, 2016).

The staff in all DODEA schools is trained on the same concepts to ensure easy transition of students from school to school (Richmond, 2016). Teachers are receiving the same information at all schools no matter the country to make the classroom experience similar throughout the entire department of schools (Richmond, 2016). This training is available because the funding provided for military students is actually used to support military students. All public schools also have access to funding to help support their staff members to enhance the education of military students.

Federal Impact Aid

According to the U.S. Department of Education, federal impact aid disburses impact aid payments to local educational agencies that are burdened financially by federal activities and provide support services and technical assistance to staff (Families on the Homefront, 2016). The federal impact aid provides help for local school districts that educate students connected to the federal government by association to uniformed service members (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). When a school district educates at least 400 military students or these students make up at least three percent of the total attendance, impact aid funds can be received (Families on the Homefront, 2016). School districts that are located in close proximity to military bases depend heavily on impact aid funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). It is important that these funds are utilized for programs to aid in support and transition services for military children.

Federal impact aid is not funded by the Department of Defense, it is funded by

congressional appropriations by the Department of Education and began in the early 1980s

(Families on the Homefront, 2016). Around 40% of impact aid funds annually impact districts

supporting military students (Families on the Homefront, 2016). A report conducted in a study

by the University of Southern California Department of Social Work recommended creating a

specific cultural group for military dependent students just as there is for students with

disabilities (Families on the Homefront, 2016).

Students with disabilities receive funding to support their learning so doing this would

allow impact aid funds to directly impact the military student subgroup. School districts use

impact aid funds for teacher salaries, classroom furniture/supplies, after school and band

programs, etc. (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Impact aid funds make a huge impact on

the budget for school districts and because of this it is integral to make the learning experience

and transition of military students very effective through the implementation of programs and

strategies.

Monitoring the academic progress of military students is critical to their success because

of the transience of their population. A proposal has been made to require all states and school

districts to create a subgroup for military students and track their academic progress (Richmond,

2015). Amendments are being developed to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or

ESEA, to create a new subgroup of students that requires mandatory reporting just as other

subgroups like race and ethnicity, special education, LEP, etc. are required to do (Richmond,

2015).

Almost 2,000,000 students have at least one parent who is active duty or reserve military

with majority of these students attending the nation's public schools (Adams, 2016). Although

additional funding is received for these students, there are no requirements as to how these funds are spent or if military students even benefit from the funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). A 2011 report from the Government Accountability Office stated that there is no public data on military dependent students' academic progress, attendance, or long term outcomes (Richmond, 2015). Since this discovery, concerns have grown from the Department of Defense in reference to schools across the nation not being equipped to meet the social and emotional needs of students (Adams, 2016). A new federal education law was passed to begin during the 2017-2018 school year, and under this law school aged military children will be assigned an identification number that will allow schools to track test scores, graduation rates and metric (Adams, 2016). Tracking these students will provide more accountability and observations of student achievement and help to ensure that all students succeed (Adams, 2016).

Student Achievement

Achievement for students that attend schools on military bases is higher than achievement for students educated in public schools (Smith, 2012). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, (2011), students that attend the Department of Defense Education Activity schools are performing at or above the national average in the areas of reading and math when compared to students that attend this nation's public schools. DODEA schools have higher student achievement due to a different school culture.

Accountability operates very differently in DODEA schools and funding originates with the Department of Defense so schools are not subject to the Every Student Succeeds Act and all of the requirements therein (Adams, 2016). The Every Student Succeeds Act is implementing tracking requirements for military students that are not enrolled in DODEA schools so that all

schools are prepared to meet the needs of military students and they have high levels of success just as DODEA schools (Adams, 2016).

DODEA schools are highly organized, and follow a chain of command similar to actual military personnel and this includes clear communication between administration and teachers (Smith, 2012). These schools place a large emphasis on teacher development and school initiatives that support student achievement (Smith, 2012). The accountability system does not focus on the teacher, but more on evaluation students and providing clear achievement goals (Smith, 2012). As a part of accountability, DODEA schools also conduct a biannual survey covering parents, students and teachers. The survey is used to gather data as to what improvements are needed in the system which is part of an evidence based approach to education (Smith, 2012).

A common practice across the military is to use surveys and questionnaires to collect data that is valuable for improving performance and addressing concerns from all stakeholders (Smith, 2012). Recent surveys have deemed class size as a huge concern for students, staff and parents (Smith, 2012). Utilizing these strategies for success have aided in the success witnessed in schools that are a part of the DODEA system.

Civilian schools and districts, in order to promote the same success for military students can utilize these strategies, noted in the research. Evaluating DODEA schools and identifying what is working would provide valuable information for school districts to aid in improving the educational experience for military students no matter the school setting (Smith, 2012). The success of the DODEA schools drives the purpose of this research in which the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families were examined.

Student Mobility and Effects on Student Achievement

Student mobility and its effects on student achievement is a growing concern in the field of education. Military personnel are often forced to be mobile and uproot their families due to job placement. More than 800,000 parents of military students have been deployed in the last decade (Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, & Richardson, 2010). These deployments have created high rates of anxiety among our youth and issues such as behavioral problems, decreases in academic performance, and emotional challenges (Chandra, et al., 2010).

Students with military parents at home still experience chronic states of stress and anxiety due to moving, parent trainings, and anticipation of possible deployment (Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, & Richardson, 2010). One of the highly recommended practices for overcoming the challenges includes strong communication between the sending and receiving school (Popp, Stronge, and Hindman, 2003). Recommendations have been used in all age groups, although the original study by Popp was conducted at a high school (Popp, Stronge, and Hindman, 2003).

Military students, who are enrolled in Department of Defense schools, are shown to be stronger academically and emotionally than students in civilian public schools (Popp, Stronge, and Hindman, 2003). Students showed strengths due to the support that the military offers the families. It is the goal of the military for all personnel to focus on the job at hand, so efforts are made to ensure that students are provided with all resources needed to be successful in school (2003). Military personnel are expected to attend all parent meetings and academic events to stay abreast on all school information. A study by Popp, Stronge, and Hindman 2003, suggested that the perceptions of military students are more positive than those of non-military students that are highly mobile; therefore, often making an easier transition for military students (2003).

A study was conducted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to determine the effects of the military lifestyle on families. The study tracked military families in which one spouse was deployed to a danger zone and the behaviors on the at home spouses and children were noted (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018). The spouses staying behind which was commonly the mother in this study were shown to have increased family responsibilities to include financial issues, isolation, anxiety due to fearing for the safety of their spouse, sadness and a feeling of being overwhelmed (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018). School-aged children that were left behind experienced a decline in academic performance, had mood changes and physical complaints (U.S. Department of veterans Affairs, 2018). The deployed parents that were tracked in this study reported that due to their PTSD, it appeared that their children were afraid of them and lacked warmth towards them (U.S. Department of veterans Affairs, 2018). Overall, the study showed a need for implementing support for all family members when deployments occur. All family members suffer when there are changes in the household.

Another study was conducted to determine the effects that a permanent change of duty station can have on military families. Most military families have to move an average of every two to three years (Huisman, 2017). Every move for military families involves a change of address, schools, teachers, friends, worship, weather, scenery, schedules, routines, neighborhoods, activities and housing (Huisman, 2017). The study found that with every geographic move, the children that moved had increased odds of mental health problems when compared to kids who did not move (Huisman, 2017). The study also found that these children have increased mental health issues to include attention deficit, conduct disorders, self-injury and suicidal behaviors (Huisman, 2017). Overall the study showed that moving can have a twofold impact on children both academically and socially. It is important that schools are equipped with

support for their new students because they play a critical role in student success after transition (Huisman, 2017).

One study tracked the psychiatric effects that deployment can have on military children. Many children have experiences the absence of one or both parents due to military deployments (James & Countryman, 2012). Problems reported by military parents to childcare providers included children having problems with sleeping, higher stress levels and anxiety, declining grades, increase in maladaptive child behaviors and increased rates of child maltreatment (James & Countryman, 2012). The study showed that mental and behavioral health visits increased by 11% while a parent was deployed (James & Countryman, 2012). There was also 19% increase of behavioral disorders and stress disorders increased by 18% (James & Countryman, 2012). The overall study findings concluded that the most significant predictor of child psychosocial functioning during deployment is parental stress (James & Countryman, 2012).

Suggested Strategies for Addressing Mobility

Transition can be difficult for children, and military students are faced with transition more often than the average person moves in their lifetime. It is important to have someone from the school personnel to talk about the transition with the student. Talking about things can often help with making situations easier to face (Rossen & Carter, 2012). Maintaining constant communication between the school and the parents/caregivers will allow social ties to be built in which the student and family can feel as though they belong to the school community.

Another method of helping students adjust to the new school is to accommodate attendance (2012). Often military families are faced with trainings, deployments, and other things out of their control. It is integral that teachers reach out to students during this time and insure that they are caught up in the lesson. Rossen and Carter, 2012, stressed the importance of

a school counselor or psychologist being available to assist highly mobile military students in making new friends and completing assignments.

Due to the nature of moving often, sometimes military students come with gaps in learning; so it is important to place students in learning environments that will nurture them and help bring them up to grade level. Fulfilling the needs of highly mobile students falls heavily in the hands of classroom teachers; therefore, teachers must be aware of the latest strategies for reaching these learners (Rossen & Carter, 2012).

Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, and Blum (2010) conducted a study that included strategies to ease the transition process for military students to another environment. Military students, school staff, and parents asked questions about the transition process. These questions yielded some common themes to assist with a smooth transition process (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). These themes included increasing communication between the old and new schools; fostering connections among students to assist with adjustment; provide professional development for staff; and alter school policies and procedures to support military students (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). There are also many theories available to help one understand the best methods for helping students transition with the military. These theories include family stress theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, James Coleman's Social capital theory, and transition shock theory.

Mobility and Targeted Support for Students

Anita Chandra, an advocate for military students, has conducted research studies in relation to mobility and the military connected child. Chandra went before Congress in 2010 to discuss the effects of the military lifestyle on the military child (Chandra, Tenilelian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008). She focused on two main questions which include: How are military children

fairing in school and their social lives? What challenges related to deployment are faced by youth (Chandra, Tenilelian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008)? The findings showed different effects on children based on age, length of deployment, etc. Overall, children in this study had more emotional difficulties compared with national samples (Chandra, Tenilelian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008). The length of parental deployments and poorer nondeployed caregiver mental health were significantly associated with challenges for students in school (Chandra, Tenilelian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008). Due to these findings, it was recommended that targeted support was provided to assist the children and caregivers to deal with stressors that occur over time (Chandra, Tenilelian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008).

A qualitative research study was conducted by Heubner and Mancini, 2005. Military adolescents were examined in this study and common themes were identified and showed that they were able to cope with the absent parent due to personal coping skills, family and community support (Heubner & Mancini, 2005). Another study was conducted on adolescent students between the ages of 10 and 18 that have parents actively serving in the military. Sixty percent of the families that responded to the study noted that their children attend a public school that is not operated by the military (Strobino & Salvaterra, 2000). The findings of this study were very different than many studies that have formed the basis for this research. The common perception of military students being disadvantaged academically due to constant transition absent parents, etc. was not the finding in this study. The results for this sample supported the strengths perspective that transitions alone are not predictive academic failure. The study found that transitions can either weaken or strengthen academic achievement depending on the support system available (Strobino & Salvaterra, 2000). The data in this study proved that adolescent children of military service members maintain average or above average grades despite many

changes in their personal lives (Strobino & Salvaterra, 2000). This study displays the importance of having strategies in place to support military students during times of transition and change.

A study was conducted in which military children at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho were followed and data was collected on how they coped with their parents' deployment. Many of the children were highly affected in all aspects of their life due to a fear of their parents not returning home from deployment (Arana-Barradas, 2004). The separation and worry of the children in this study is an often-overlooked reality for many military children (Arana-Barradas, 2004). The results of the study concluded that deployment can affect children mentally and emotionally; therefore, it is integral to implement strategies to assist children with appropriately coping with the deployment. It is important that children are taught coping skills to deal with difficult changes that they are faced with throughout their lives (Arana-Barradas, 2004).

It is evident in these prior research studies on military mobility that students must be supported with the constant change that is attached to the lifestyle. Often children are transitioned into new environments and have to make adjustments to new living situations, school settings, and a change in family dynamics (Sparks, 2016). These changes can affect children in many ways and it is important to implement programs and strategies to help them adjust to these changes. The research above shows there is a need to discover methods in making this process more suitable for children especially during the critical stages (Sparks, 2016).

Review of Methodological Issues

This research study on the effects of military mobility on student achievement is an explanatory case study. Qualitative research includes narrative research, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, and case studies (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research

is used to uncover trends in thought and opinions while diving deep into a problem (Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative approaches to data collection are needed when research questions require exploration of prior studies and existing data (Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative approaches to research are used for many different reasons. Some of the common reasons include the following: there is a research goal to explore a topic or idea; there is a need to understand the research findings from a quantitative study; there is a need to get input from key informants or others outside the target audience; and to gain insight inside a targeted audience's lifestyle, culture, motivations, behaviors and preferences (ORAU, 2016).

Other types of research that can be conducted include the quantitative method and mixed method approaches to research. Quantitative methods involve an emphasis on objective measurements, statistical and mathematical analysis of data (Creswell, 2014). Data collection in quantitative research methods includes taking polls, administering questionnaires and/or surveys, or manipulating pre-existing statistical data (Creswell, 2014). The mixed method approach to data collection involves the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The mixed method includes data integration of quantitative and qualitative methods combined in a data set (Hughes, 2016). When reviewing the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches to research, it is evident that qualitative research includes the characteristics that align with the purpose of the research study on military mobility.

Qualitative research involves multiple standards of quality to include validity, trustworthiness, credibility and rigor (Maxwell, 2013). The validity of qualitative research emerges from the researcher becoming aware of personal predispositions and assumptions and setting them aside to avoid them unduly influencing the research (Maxwell, 2013). This study is an explanatory case study, which involves explaining how or why a condition came to be (Yin,

2014). The data collection process involves unstructured interviews with the purpose of gaining

new insights on a topic (Maxwell, 2013). The topic of military mobility is a topic that will be

examined to determine the nature of the problem and strategies that are effective with reducing

the problem, but not necessarily solving the problem as a whole.

Qualitative research allows one to further investigate a topic/problem and gather

information in an effort to make detailed contributions to research. Researchers conducting

qualitative research investigate the meanings that are attributed to people's behaviors, actions

and interactions with each other (Crossman, 2017). Qualitative research creates an in depth

understanding of the attitudes, behaviors, interactions, events, and social processes of everyday

life (Crossman, 2017). In depth interviews are a form of data collection used in qualitative

research and this involves the researcher using a predetermined list of questions for discussion

about the research topic (Crossman, 2017). Qualitative research in the form of an in depth

interview will be used in the study about the effects of military transition on student achievement

because this is a problem facing children that needs to be examined. A complex, detailed

understanding of this issue is needed so that strategies can be established to assist military

families with transition.

Heubner and Mancini conducted a qualitative research study (Heubner & Mancini, 2015).

Military adolescents were examined in this study and it was proven that they were able to cope

with the absent parent due to personal coping skills, family and community support (Heubner &

Mancini, 2015). This study gives evidence that teaching students coping skills and providing

support in the school setting can have a positive impact on children when faced with adversity.

Another study was conducted on adolescent students between the ages of 10 and 18 that have

parents actively serving in the military. Sixty percent of the families that responded to the study

noted that their children attend a public school that is not operated by the military (Strobino & Salvaterra, 2000). The findings of this study were very different than many studies that have formed the basis for this research. The common perception of military students being disadvantaged academically due to constant transition absent parents, etc. was not the finding in this study. The results for this sample supported the strengths perspective that transitions alone are not predictive of academic failure. The study found that transitions can either weaken or strengthen academic achievement depending on the support system available (Strobino & Salvaterra, 2000).

Results from the analysis of data in this study indicate that adolescent children of military service members maintain average or above average grades despite many changes in their personal lives (Strobino & Salvatera, 2000). The adolescent stage is an age in which children are faced with many challenges. Strong support systems in the school setting will provide students with coping mechanisms to successfully deal with the changes in their growth and that are faced due to military mobility. This study displays the importance of having strategies in place to support military students during times of transition and change.

One qualitative study followed military children at Mountain Home Airforce Base in Idaho. Many of the children were highly affected in all aspects of their life due to a fear of their parents not returning home from deployment (Arana-Barradas, 2004). The separation and worry of the children in this study is an often overlooked reality for many military children (Arana-Barradas, 2004). It is important that children are taught coping skills to deal with difficult changes that they are faced with throughout their lives (Arana-Barradas, 2004). Although some programs have been developed to help military students cope with the stress of their family

lifestyle, it is important that strategies are implemented to assist students in being successful in their everyday lives despite constant transition or parent deployments.

It is evident in these prior research studies on military mobility that students must be supported with the constant change that is attached to the lifestyle. Often children are transitioned into new environments and have to make adjustments to new living situations, school settings, and a change in family dynamics. These changes can affect children in many ways and it is important to implement programs and strategies to help them adjust to these changes. The research above shows there is a need to discover methods in making this process more suitable for children especially during the critical stages.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Studies exploring the military child's ability to cope with constant change in their lives due to the military lifestyle have shown the importance of providing support for these students. Military students are affected by the military lifestyle in many different ways. Mountain Home Airforce Base in Idaho offers support groups for parents that are deploying to be able to cope with the transition (Arana-Barrados, 2004). The support groups give parents strategies for talking with their students about deployment and activities to better help them understand the situation. It is important that all schools are prepared to provide students with support when they are faced with the many obstacles that they can face with being military dependents.

Supporting parents is the number one method of supporting students (Carter & Rossen, 2011). It is integral to make all families aware of the school services available for military families (Carter & Rossen, 2011). The mental health of the at home parent can be a key factor that affects the child's distress level (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018). Recommendations for schools to follow were developed by Carter & Rossen, 2011, and these are

beneficial for a supportive student transition. The first recommendation indicated was to talk

about the stressors because it is important that administrators encourage all staff members to

discuss students' feelings with them to include details about their parents' deployments and the

roles that their parents serve with the military (Carter & Rossen, 2011). The next

recommendation is to maintain frequent communication with the caregiver (Carter & Rossen,

2011).

  Another recommendation includes accommodating attendance because the students have

to miss some school to attend functions associated with the military and this should not count

negatively against them (Carter & Rossen, 2011). It is also very important to provide

appropriate classroom placement because due to constant moves, students affiliated with the

military may have gaps in their learning (Carter & Rossen, 2011). Military students have unique

experiences and backgrounds due to living in different places and countries so it is recommended

for teachers to use those experiences to help the student with his or her transition and this will

give them a sense of value (Carter & Rossen, 2011). It is also very important to train the school

staff and offer professional development opportunities for staff to raise awareness and

competence in supporting military students (Carter & Rossen, 2011).

  Students from military families can be faced with many stressful factors that can affect

them in many ways and cause a decline in their performance at school. It is integral that schools

implement strategies for successfully meeting the needs of these students and helping with their

transition. Schools that support these military students can make a difference in the future

progress of military affiliated students (Carter & Rossen, 2011).

Critique of Previous Research

Many studies have been conducted over the years in relation to the effects of mobility on the military child (Heubner & Mancini, 2015). Although many of the studies do show negative effects can occur if children are not supported, there is limited research on the most effective supports to aid in student success. Some studies have provided recommendations for successful student transition, but it is important that schools have the information on how to implement these recommendations consistently and effectively. Many of the prior studies also noted student achievement being affected in school (Heubner & Mancini, 2005). According to Carter & Rossen, (2011), academic performance as seen in student test scores tends to be lower when students have parents that are deployed due to the military. Students of deployed military parents experience behavior problems that are significantly higher than those of their peers (Carter & Rossen, 2011). Children of military families are also more likely to have anxiety than those students from nonmilitary families (Carter & Rossen, 2011). This evidence shows the need for strategies and techniques to support these students. There is also a need to make sure that all schools with students affiliated with the military are developing effective programs to implement these strategies with fidelity.

Military families experience increased school mobility which can pose a threat to achievement and increase the dropout rates of these students (Carter & Rossen, 2011). Military dependents living apart from their parents or that are constantly faced with mobility may feel isolated and require more intensive transition supports (Carter & Rossen, 2011). It is important that strategies are used and programs developed so that these students feel supported during these difficult times.

Summary

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. School characteristics play a major role in the transition of students into the learning environment. It is critical that teachers and schools are prepared to welcome students especially in those districts that are highly mobile with military families. The goal of this study is to identify factors that affect student achievement of highly mobile students in the military community.

This study is an explanatory study in which existing data will be used to identify trends and themes. Staff members and parents that are affiliated with military children were interviewed to determine what current practices are used in a current school district. The responses from these interviews was used to determine what strategies are beneficial for students to have a successful transition after dealing with moving due to deployment, change of duty station or other parental responsibilities that are faced due to military affiliation.

There are many theories discussed that apply to the research for this study including transition shock theory, family stress theory, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. These theories can be applied to further identify coping mechanisms with stressful situations including those associated with transition and mobility. Strategies identified in this research study will be used to enhance research for military mobility and the effects that the mobility has on student achievement. Covered in this chapter was the purpose and background of the study, as well as the conceptual framework and current research on the topic. This chapter also included a review of the research method and strategies that were used to conduct the current study on military mobility. In the next chapter, the methodology will be reviewed in more depth and complexity

and the details of the study to include, surveying, coding, and the interpretation of data will be

reviewed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

More than half of active duty service members are married and about 44% of them have children, which is a total of 1,100,000 children who are affected by military relocation and deployment (Department of Defense, 2012). As a result, over a million of military children attend our nation's public schools (Astor & Benbenishty, 2014). This high percentage indicates the importance of ensuring that all teachers are properly trained to assist students with the unique stressors that accompany the military lifestyle. School staff members in public schools require professional development training in order to be able to properly assist students in developing resiliency and adaptive coping skills that help them to face all challenges (Fallon & Russo, 2015).

Military students and their families are faced with experiencing multiple deployments, family separation, transitions and relocations, and many other stressful changes that their peers who are nonmilitary are not faced with on a regular basis (Astor & Benbenishty, 2014). The military lifestyle has many unique characteristics that stakeholders in the school setting need to be aware of in order to assist students so they are successful (Fallon & Russo, 2015).

District personnel in many cases are not even aware that students from military families are attending their schools (Astor & Benbenishty, 2014). Oftentimes, the personnel that are aware that military children are attending the school are not able to handle the specific needs of military children because they have not been trained to respond to the unique needs of military children (Astor & Benbenishty, 2014). As a result, there is a need to enhance the transition process of military students into different school settings.

Military students who attend Department of Defense Education Activity schools outperform their peers in public schools (Adams, 2016). Department of Defense Education

Activity schools are also known as DOD or DODEA schools, and they are schools located on military bases that are solely funded by the military. The strategies used in DOD schools were compared to those used in the public schools who serve military families, to further enhance the research in the study.

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. Military families can be faced with many challenges due to the many changes that accompany the military lifestyle. This study is designed as an explanatory case study and it examines how mobility impacts school aged military students and what strategies/supports can be used to help these students transition to civilian schools successfully.

Conceptual Framework

The study is designed as a qualitative, explanatory case study. Qualitative research includes narrative research, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, and case studies (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations (Wyse, 2011). Qualitative research dives deeper into problems in research and aids in developing ideas for potential quantitative research (Wyse, 2011). There are many different types of data collection methods that can be used in qualitative research and they include group discussions, individual interviews, and participation/observations (Wyse, 2011). The qualitative research method directly aligns with this study on military mobility due to the following characteristics of qualitative studies: the sample sizes can be as small as one participant; data collection involves interviews, observations, and/or archival data; and interpretation is based on both researcher perspective and data collected combined (Maxwell, 2013).

There can be different qualitative research designs based on the study being conducted. The chosen research design for the study on military mobility is explanatory case study. Explanatory case studies have the purpose of explaining how or why a certain condition came to be (Yin, 2014).

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. Explanatory case studies have three conditions that must be met and they include the following: seek to explain how or why a phenomenon is occurring; the examination of a contemporary phenomenon; and the researcher cannot have any control over the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The data collection process in explanatory case studies can include documents, archival records, direct observations, interviews, and focus groups (Yin, 2014). This study on military mobility is an explanatory case study wiht the purpose of examining a contemporary phenomenon.

Research Questions

Many questions arise pertaining to student mobility and student achievement of military students. In an effort to identify the successful strategies that school districts use to assist children with an efficient transition, these are the questions that the study intends to answer:

1. How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful?

2. What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students and how are these problems handled?

3. What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children?

Purpose and Design of the Study

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. High mobility rates of students affiliated with the military can affect student achievement. When military families move to new locations, there are family readiness groups and other military personnel that assist with making the move to the new area a smooth one (Sparks, 2016). Although this is the case, there are many times in which school districts are not equipped with the strategies needed to ensure that these mobile students are prepared for the transition into their new school (Sparks, 2016). All of the research conducted was used to determine strategies that can be utilized for successful transition between schools/districts.

Results from the study are beneficial for administrators in districts who work with military families. Through the research, strategies that lead to successful transition for students were identified as well as strategies that can aid in the success of these students in the classroom. Participants in the study had direct affiliation with the military or working with military families.

Research Population and Sampling Method

The participants in the study were chosen using the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling in qualitative research involves selecting participants according to the needs of the study (Charles, Gentles, Ploeg, McKibbon, 2015). Purposeful sampling was appropriate because at least five parents and staff members were available at each of the three schools to give 30 participants in the study. This form of sampling allows the researcher to reflect more on whom to sample because all of the individuals are convenient to the study (Creswell, 2013).

The ideal sample size for this study is 30 interviewed participants. Qualitative research focuses less on the number of participants in the study and more on collecting extensive detail

about the sites and individuals studied (Charles, Gentles, Ploeg, McKibbon, 2015). The 30

participants of staff members and parents gives a wide variety of information about the current

practices for transition of military students into the schools. The affiliations of these individuals

enabled me to obtain valid results from the chosen sample.

Participants who volunteered for the study included five parent participants and five

school staff members from three different elementary schools within the school district identified

for this research study. The parents included in the study were actual members of the Armed

Forces or their spouses. The staff members had experience with the military in many capacities

to include: working with military children, being prior service, or being a military spouse.

Inclusion Criteria for Participants

All participants had some affiliation with the military. There were not any parents

included in the study who did not have military affiliation meaning that they were not active duty

or the spouse of an active duty service member. Every school in this school district serves a

percentage of military students due to a 43% military child population in the district (School

District, 2017). All staff members chosen for the study had some experience working closely

with a military child. One of the schools included in the study has a 100% military population

for students (School District, 2017).

<center>**School Study Sites**</center>

The research site selected is a public school district located in the Southwestern part of

the United States. The procedures for the study were designed so they did not interfere with the

normal educational practices of the public schools involved and did not involve coercion or

discomfort of any kind.   Three different schools in the district were used for the study. Parents

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and staff members from the three different schools were recruited. Volunteers were asked to participate in interviews about current transition procedures utilized by the schools.

The school district for the study is home to about 44,000 students and includes 32 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, four high schools and two alternative schools (School District, 2016). The three schools that were included in the study are elementary schools that service students from Pre-K -5th grade.

The first elementary school, School 1 is located in the neighboring town to the military base and in the same school district. The school has a mobility rate of 17.5% (School District, 2017). The military population of the campus is 22% being the lowest out of the three schools due to its location (School District, 2017). The overall accountability rating for the school was 'met standard' (School District, 2017). All three schools serve military students and have mobility rates that are higher than the state averages.

The second study site, School 2, is an elementary school located in the town that is connected to the military base. The school has a 60% military population. During the 2015-16 school year, the school had a mobility rate of 20.8% (Education Agency, 2017). The overall accountability rating for the school was a rating of 'met standard' (School District, 2017).

The third school utilized for the study, School 3, has an overall accountability rating of 'met standard' (School District, 2017). Districts, campuses and charters in this state can receive three different ratings to include met standard, met alternative standard, and improvement needed (Education Agency, 2017). These ratings are determined based on how well school districts perform across four areas to include: student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps between low achieving demographics, and post-secondary readiness (Education Agency, 2017).

<center>**Instrumentation**</center>

Interviews

Data in this study includes student achievement test data and interviews of staff and parents in the three schools. Interviewing staff members on their current transition practices for mobile military students provided insight on the current practices utilized by the school district. Many staff members are parents of military students, spouses of military personnel, or have taught in the district for a long period of time and have experience working with military students. Parental interviews that were conducted provide an understanding of parents' perceptions of transition procedures being implemented in the school district. Trends from three different campuses in the school district were noted and cross referenced with prior studies to determine the most needed strategies for successful transition into new schools due to high military mobility. The information aided in gathering feedback on strategies that will help military families in this particular school district transition more successfully.

The participants in the study were asked to participate in a one on one interview with me the researcher. The interview could either be conducted in a face to face setting or via skype. There were two different sets of questions that were asked depending on if the person being interviewed was a parent or staff member. The interview for staff members included the following questions:

1. What experience do you have with the military or working with military children?
2. What transition strategies are currently used in your school when new military students transition during the school year?
3. What educational supports are provided to the school by the military?
4. How well do children transition when enrolling in this school?

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5. Are there any programs specifically for military students on campus?

6. What strategies have you used that were successful for helping military students transition?

7. What programs should be added to the school to help students cope with military life?

8. What types of training have you received that assist military children when they enroll at your school?

The interview for parents included the following questions:

1. What strategies were in place to assist your child with transitioning into this elementary school?

2. How responsive is the administration to the concerns of military parents?

3. What are some areas of improvement that the school needs to assist with successful transition of military students?

4. What strategies have been utilized at other schools that you think would enhance the transition process at this school?

5. How prepared do you think the staff is to meet the needs of military students?

6. How well do you feel your child is supported to aid in academic and social success?

7. In what ways does the school provide support for parents to assist children both academically and socially with transition?

These questions were very important to the study because they gave valuable data as to what strategies are in place to help students transition to different schools and what strategies have been used that were successful for helping students transition effectively. This data was a necessary component to get valid research for my research question.

Student Achievement Data

Student achievement data was reviewed to identify trends in achievement based on the mobility rate of the school. The data that was reviewed from students in grades 3rd – 5th at three different schools in a highly mobile military school district. The data from the State Assessment of Academic Readiness was reviewed in the areas of reading and math. The scores from the assessment were obtained from the State Academic Performance Report, or TAPR report. Reviewing the student data and conducting interviews was critical to completing this qualitative study on how well military students transition into military public schools.

Data Collection and Procedures

Data for this study was collected from in depth interviews. The data was collected from three different schools in the same school district. The interviews were conducted after regular school business hours. Participants were contacted via email and phone to ask for them to volunteer for the study. District approval was granted for the study from the district's research review committee. A critical part of this study was the interviews with school personnel and parents of students affiliated with the military. The email addresses and phone numbers were requested to contact the potential participants about the importance of the study and to seek their consent to participate. If they did agree to participate, the consent form was emailed to them for review and I met the participants to obtain the signed copies.

A total of 30 participants were needed for the study to include five parents and five staff members from three different schools in the participating school district. These are the same schools in which the student data was reviewed. The interviews focused on topics and questions to get feedback on the current transition procedures of the schools and to get information about enhancing the transition process.

Interviews

The interviews were audiorecorded to ensure the fidelity of information. The recordings are protected and kept in a password protected and encrypted computer. The recordings were transcribed, and while transcribing any personally identifiable information that was thought to identify any participants by name or other personal identifying characteristics was removed from the transcript. The recordings were deleted as soon as possible after transcription and member checking was completed. The other study documents will be kept for three years after the study ends, and then deleted.

At the beginning of the interview, deductive disclosure was explained to each interview participant. I informed the participants that I would omit, change, or mask specific or rare details or situations that could lead to identification through deductive disclosure. This was stated at the onset of the interviews so that participants would know and understand that they should not give stories or accounts that could be identifying and I used a pseudo name in place of specific names when appropriate.

If any information could lead to disclosure, it was not included in the study findings. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a one-on-one setting in a private area of the schools. Times were chosen that were convenient for the participants and the researcher. All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the study. The interviews were conducted at three different schools in the district with one of the schools being located on the actual military base. Parents that participated in the study were given the option of conducting the research at the school or the place of their choice.

Interviews in qualitative research involve asking questions and getting answers from participants in a study to elicit information (Creswell, 2013). A one-on-one interview was

conducted between the researcher and each participant. Interviews were all conducted face-to-face. The interview questions were an integral part of the study because valuable data was gathered as to what strategies are currently in place for student transition to different schools and strategies that have been used either in these school settings or other settings that are deemed successful for helping students transition effectively. This data was a necessary component because it provided valid research for the research questions in this qualitative research study.

Student Test Data

Student achievement data was reviewed to enhance the research of the study. This information enhanced the study because school/student performance aided in understanding the quality of the school and/or district. Student performance on The State Assessment of Academic Readiness or STAAR test data for 3rd-5th grade students from the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years was reviewed for this data collection. This information was retrieved from the State Education Agency's TAPR report. TAPR is an acronym for Academic Performance Report. This report gives the performance ratings for all schools in the state and the overall performance scores for the schools as well as subgroup performance (Education Agency, 2017). This report does not include a subgroup for military, but the data was used to describe the general performance of the three schools based on their mobility rate.

<center>**Identification of Attributes**</center>

This study includes the review of elementary students up to the fifth grade. The attributes of the elementary students include: military affiliation, civilian school attendance, and high mobility. Military affiliation can be defined as one having a close connection with the United States military in one way or another. Civilian schools are public schools that are not solely funded by the United States Military. Schools completely funded and run by the United

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States Military are known as Department of Defense Education Activity or DODEA schools (Adams, 2016). High mobility involves students that move frequently during the middle of a school year and during times outside of normal transition (Sparks, 2016).

Data Analysis Procedures

Interviews

Data from the interviews was analyzed and student test data was reviewed. The method for analyzing data was the deductive approach. The deductive approach includes using a structure or predetermined framework when analyzing data (Burnard, Chadwick, Gill, Stewart, & Treasure, 2008). The deductive approach included analyzing the interviews to determine what trends were noted with military transition. The interview transcripts and notes provided a descriptive account of the study. Nvivo 12 is an online software program that was utilized to electronically identify themes in the data. The data was categorized into nodes, which were groups of common data. These nodes were used as the themes in the data collection. The transcripts were transcribed both electronically and by hand coding. A thematic content analysis occurred in which themes were identified and broken down into categories. The themes were verified, confirmed and qualified by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify more themes and categories.

The next step in the data analysis process was open coding in which the interview transcribes were reviewed and notes taken to summarize all words and sections from the transcript. Concepts and categories were identified for trends and highlighted so trends could be identified. The categories were examined and the meaning of the data was identified through asking questions, making comparisons, and sorting the similarities and differences (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Overall this process aided in reducing the data to a small set of themes that described the content under investigation (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, &

Redwood, 2013). Constant comparison methods were used comparing the data with other

research and studies to ensure the validity of the study.

Student Test Data

Data was reviewed to observe student performance from the three schools identified in

the study. All three schools have different military populations, so the scores were reviewed to

identify if the overall performance for each of the schools varied. The data was not analyzed,

it was just explored for the purposes of enhancing the study.

<div align="center">

Limitations of the Research Design

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There were some limitations to the study which included analysis and sampling. For

example, the subgroup for military students is not identified in the posted summary standardized

test scores which did not allow for comparisions to be made in reference to achievement between

the military family student population and the non military family student population. Another

limitation includes the sampling method used because only a certain population was used for the

study. Although there are other families that may be highly mobile, the only participants used in

the study were those affiliated with the military due to the study having a focus on military

mobility.

Delimitations to the study included the three elementary school settings that were

included in the study. The civilian district that was chosen for the study currently has 32

elementary schools; however, three were chosen for the study. These schools in particular were

chosen based on their military student percentage and their location in proximity to the military

base. Each of the schools has a different number of military students and are located in different

towns throughout the district. These differences between the school demographics aided in

identifying the effects that military mobility has on students based on differences in responses from interviews and student data.

These limitations and delimitations do affect the credibility of the study; therefore, strategies were implemented to establish credibility and trustworthiness in the study. Interviews were used to collect data and the researcher was given the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information recorded during the interviews. There are many different approaches that can be utilized to establish credibility and dependability in qualitative case studies (DeVault, 2016).

Validity

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a critical component in all case studies. In qualitative research, data trustworthiness can be emphasized more than reliability and validity (DeVault, 2016). Qualitative research is seen as subjective and contextual because of the use of interviews and observations to collect data (Pitney, 2004). It is integral that strategies are used in qualitative studies to ensure trustworthiness. Trustworthiness includes four different components which are as follows: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (DeVault, 2016). Qualitative researchers do not use instruments with developed metrics about reliability and validity, so it is integral to establish the study's findings are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Statistics Solutions, 2017). Credibility involves the confidence that the qualitative researcher has in the truth of the research study's findings (Statistics Solutions, 2017). Transferability in qualitative research can be defined as the demonstration that the research study's findings can be applied in other contexts (Statistics Solutions, 2017). Dependability involves the extent to which the study could be repeated and by other researchers with consistent findings (Statistics Solutions, 2017). Confirmability involves ensuring that researcher bias does

not does not skew the data and that the findings are based on the participants' responses alone (Statistics Solutions, 2017).

The most common methods used to establish credibility include triangulation, member checks, and peer review (Pitney, 2004). Triangulation consists of asking the same research questions to different study participants and using data from many different sources (DeVault, 2016). The concept of triangulation was first applied to research in 1966 because researchers argued that more than one instrument should be used to measure variables in research (Pitney, 2004). Triangulation was first used in quantitative research studies, but later relevance to qualitative research studies was noted (Pitney, 2004).

Triangulation

The main purpose of triangulation in research studies is to increase the credibility and validity of study results. Triangulation includes many different benefits and one is the ability to cross check information to ensure that there is a full and accurate understanding of the phenomenon being obtained (Pitney, 2004). Cross checking data from multiple sources allows the researcher to search for regularities in the research data (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). Another benefit is that triangulation increases one's confidence in research data, and helps to create innovative ways of understanding the research by revealing unique study findings (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). There also can be disadvantages to triangulation because of the lack of a uniform methodology for applying triangulation (DeVault, 2016). Often when triangulation is used, researchers fail to explain techniques adequately and use varying methods for reviewing and combing results (Pitney, 2004). Another disadvantage to triangulation is that it can be time consuming because it involves collecting more data that requires greater planning and organization (Pitney, 2004). Triangulation is a method used in research studies to establish

credibility, and another method used in studies to determine credibility and trustworthiness is member checks.

Member Checks

Member checks involve study participants having the opportunity to review data collected by the researcher and the interpretation of the data collected (DeVault, 2016). A very important component of the member checking process is trust. The study's participants are all provided with the data or the results of the data interpretations so that accuracy can be verified based on experiences (Pitney, 2004). Member checking can also be known as participant verification and involves researchers restating or summarizing information in an interview, giving the participant the chance to determine accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012). When participants are able to verify accuracy of the study information, the study can be said to have credibility. Another type of member checking can occur at the end of a research study after the results have been analyzed (Harper & Cole, 2012).

This process involves giving the participants reports to review for authenticity and they review the report for a true authentic representation of the information that was shared during the interview (Harper & Cole, 2012). Although member checking can occur simultaneously during the interview or toward the end of the study, they serve the overall purpose to decrease the use of incorrect data or the incorrect interpretation of data (Creswell, 2007). One of the greatest benefits of member checking is that it allows researchers to verify that the findings in the study are accurate and complete and this in turn improves the validity of the study (Creswell, 2007).

Although member checking has many advantages, there are some disadvantages to the method. One noted problem with member checking is that it relies on assumptions that their accountability of a reality can be confirmed by a respondent, which may not necessarily be true

(Harper & Cole, 2012). Also, when member checking is conducted at the end of the study, participants read the results of the study which includes statements from all participants and reading statements made by other participants could result in negative emotions and feelings based on what is read (Harper & Cole, 2012). Due to these advantages, it is important to thoroughly explain the purpose of the qualitative study to the participants as a study needed to gain further insight into a phenomenon that the participants have knowledge or affiliation (Harper & Cole, 2012). Triangulation and member checking are thorough methods of establishing credibility in a research study, and conducting peer reviews is another method of establishing credibility and trustworthiness.

Peer Reviews

Peer reviews involve utilizing an external qualified researcher to examine the entire research process and data interpretations for accuracy and appropriateness (Pitney, 2004). An advantage of peer reviews is the fact that these reviews are conducted by individuals with a history of work in the area of interest for the study (Hale, 2011). The primary purpose of peer reviews in research is to establish credibility and ensure that the research is valid and unbiased (Hale, 2011).

Some disadvantages to the peer review process include the following: the fact that some reviewers find it difficult to remain purely objective due to their own education and experiences; time constraints; some reviewers are highly critical of studies that contradict their own beliefs (Hale, 2011). Overall, the peer review process assists in identifying research as publicly verifiable and credible (Hale, 2011). The peer review process is an acceptable method of establishing credibility and trustworthiness in a research study.

Establishing Credibility in this Case Study

Credibility was established in this research study to determine whether or not the findings from the research captured what was really occurring and to ensure that the investigator learned what was intended to be learned. The method of establishing credibility in this study was member checking. Member checking involves providing the participants with the data and the interpretations of the data so they can verify the accuracy of the information (Pitney, 2004). This process took place at the end of the interview to verify that the information recorded was the exact information intended to be shared by the participant. Verifying this information was successful in an effort to provide a study that was trustworthy and credible based on the accuracy of the information.

Expected Findings

As an educator in a highly populated military civilian school district, the motivation to conduct this study was based on issues that were observed regarding mobility. The highest mobility rate in this district is seen from military students due to changes in duty stations, deployments, trainings, etc. John Hattie, a researcher that has conducted studies to identify what actually works to improve student learning, conducted a ranking system of 138 factors that actually work to improve student learning (Hattie, 2012). The lower the number, the greater impact the strategy has on improving student performance. According to Hattie, unmanaged mobility ranks at 138 having the most detrimental effect on student achievement (Hattie, 2012). This research correlates with the expected findings of this study which includes the fact that students who change schools frequently throughout their educational career perform lower in literacy and numeracy than their peers. It is integral that transition plans are implemented and school staff members are trained to implement strategies to help students successfully transition

into new schools no matter how frequently they have to move. The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families.

Ethical Issues

Institutional Review Board

An Institutional Review Board was used for the protection of all participants in the study. Ethical issues were reviewed and all details of the study were submitted to the IRB. All information pertaining to the study and any risks the study posed were submitted for approval to the IRB committee. Permission was obtained from the school district in which the study was conducted from the district's research review committee. Permission was also obtained from the IRB committee.

Conflicts of Interest

The schools included in the study were not schools in which the research had a direct affiliation. All participants had no ties in any form to the researcher to avoid any conflicts of interest. All participants were randomly selected based on information provided from school leaders.

Summary

This research involved three schools in a district with a high percentage of military families. Student achievement data was reviewed from three different school years, the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-17 school years. The school district's research review committee granted permission for the data to be reviewed and the study to be conducted. Archival student data from students in grades 3rd – 5th was used for this study. The data that was retrieved included student demographics, student attendance rates, and student performance on math and

reading assessments for the STAAR assessment or State Assessment of Academic Readiness. Reviewing this data assisted in forming the basis of understanding for the effects that mobility can have on military students. Analyzing the data according to the characteristics of a quantitative study did not take place. The research methodology was covered in this chapter and this information included the data analysis and data collection process for the study. Covered in the next chapter will be the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. Discussed are findings from the data collected from three different schools in a school district in the southwestern part of the United States where 43% of the district's population is comprised of military students. The findings for the following research questions are discussed:

1. How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful?

2. What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students and how are these problems handled?

3. What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children?

The following information is presented in this chapter: description of the sample, summary of the findings; and the data and results. Interviews with stakeholders from the schools were the main source of data collected.

Description of the Sample

All participants involved in the interview process for the study had affiliation with the military. A total of 30 participants served as interviewees for the study which serves the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. There were 15 military spouses who participated in the study and were interviewed. The participants were interviewed using the parent questionnaire about military transition. The questions that were asked in the parent questionnaire were as follows: (a) What

strategies were in place to assist your child with transitioning to this elementary school? (b) How responsive is the administration to the concerns of military parents? (c) What are some areas of improvement that the school needs to assist with successful transition of military students? (d) What strategies have been utilized at other schools that you think would enhance the transition process at this school? (e) How prepared do you think the staff is to meet the needs of military students? (f) How well do you think your child is supported to aid in academic and social success? (g) In what ways does the school provide support for parents to assist children both academically and socially with transition? The parents used their personal experiences with the military lifestyle to give responses to these questions. It was evident during the interview that some of the parents had more transition experiences than others and that is due to the number of years that they have had military affiliation. One spouse from the on-post school, shared that her family moved a total of seven times within a five-year period.

The other participants in the study included school personnel. There was a total of 15 school personnel members who participated in the study. Experiences working in the school setting with military children varied for these participants. The questions that were asked during the interviews with the school personnel were as follows: (a) What experience do you have working with the military or with military children? (b) What transition strategies are currently used in your school when new military students transition during the school year? (c) What educational supports are provided to the school by the military? (d) How well do children transition when enrolling in this school? (e) Are there any programs specifically for military students on campus? (f) What strategies have you used that were successful for helping military students transition? (g) What programs should be added to the school to help students cope with military life? (h) What types of training have you received that assists military children when

they enroll at your school? The responses to these questions were used to provide data for the research questions presented in this study.

A table with a summary of the participant demographics is located in Appendix C. Some participants had other military affiliation and this affiliation was noted in the table. If the participants did not have other affiliations, N/A will be shown in the table. Overall, all participants had military connections in which they were able to use their background and experiences to answer interview questions. An equal number of participants were involved from each school allowing ten interviews to be conducted at each of the three schools. The data presented in this chapter will include the themes that developed from the coding of the interview transcripts.

Research Methodology and Analysis

This study was designed as an explanatory case study. This case study and all explanatory case studies have the purpose of explaining how or why a condition came to be (Yin, 2014). Qualitative research has a purpose of thoroughly researching problems and this research that was conducted is often utilized in quantitative studies (Maxwell, 2013). The characteristics of this study that correlate to the characteristics of qualitative studies includes: a small sample size of 30; in depth interviews were conducted during the data collection process; archival student assessment data was reviewed; and data interpretations were conducted (Maxwell, 2013). The overall performance of the schools in the grade levels of 3rd – 5th was analyzed using descriptive statistics to look for trends in the data. Interview data was coded using a coding software program called Nvivo 12.

Coding of Interview Data

The interviews were analyzed using the deductive approach, or a predetermined framework for analyzing the data (Charles, Gentles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015). The predetermined framework utilized in this study was open coding. The coding of the data occurred using an online software program called NVivo 12. This program aided in identifying themes from all of the interview transcripts and determining categories.

The NVivo 12 program allowed me to thoroughly organize the data presented in the transcripts. All 30 transcripts were downloaded into the program and organized alphabetically according to the participants. The transcripts were divided into two different categories, school personnel and parents. When analyzing the themes, I reviewed both the NVivo loaded document and a hard copy of the transcript. The software allowed me to code categories into 'nodes.' After identifying all of the associated quotes and statements that correlated to each node, I reviewed the nodes in the software and narrowed the information down even further reducing the number of nodes. These nodes emerged into the themes of the study and there were different themes used based on whether the transcript used was a parent or staff member transcript. On the hard copy, I color coded the information according to the node that it connected with according to the study. Sticky notes were used to write out the themes that were noted on each particular transcript. An example of how the data was organized in NVivo is described in Figure 2.

Nodes

Name	Files	References
Barriers	5	6
Current Transition Strategies	11	27
Effects of Transition on Students	4	9
Military Supports for Military Children	9	25
Parent identified needs	6	11
Parent view of staff	6	15
personal strategies	3	4
Rating of well students transition	9	13
Strategies or Programs Needed	7	10
Strategies Utilized by Staff members	9	26
Suggested Strategies	3	5
Training received by staff in relation to	9	17
What aided in smooth transition	3	4

Figure 2. This is a screenshot from the NVivo 12 program that shows the nodes that developed

from data in the transcripts from the interviews. Each node shows how many different files it

appeared in and also how many different references to each node were made during the coding.

While utilizing NVivo 12 to determine the themes, hand coding was also conducted which

involved reviewing transcripts and highlighting data to categorize the quotes of participants.

Hand coding allowed me as the researcher to see a visual of the correlating information from each

theme. The nodes identified above directly correlate with the research questions in this study.

These findings form the basis of the research used to answer the research questions. The research

questions and the corresponding nodes/themes included: 1. How are issues of military mobility

addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful? Current

transition strategies; Effects of transition on students; Personal strategies; Strategies used by staff

members; Military supports for military children; Parent identified needs 2. What problems are

noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students? How are these problems

handled by staff? Barriers; Ratings of how well students transition; Strategies or programs

needed; 3. What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff

successfully support the transition of military dependent children? Parent views on staff;

Training received by staff in relation to military mobility.

These research questions and the correlating themes form the basis of this study and the

specific findings from the coding process will be presented in the next section.

Summary of the Findings

School Achievement

School performance was reviewed to determine trends for the schools over time. The

school years reviewed included 2014-2015; 2015-2016; and 2016-2017. During each of those

academic school years, the schools received a status of 'Met Standard.' The achievement data

for the subpopulation of military students was not identified. Overall school performance ratings

for each school year varied at each of the three schools. Each of the three schools showed a

decline in scores overall from the previous year. Assessment data and interview transcripts form

the basis of the data collected in this study.

Interview Data

Word frequency data was collected when identifying the themes in the data. The top 10

words identified in all 30 of the interview scripts are as follows: military, school, students,

transition, children, parents, strategies, assist, programs, and staff.   Figure 2 shows the frequency

of the words in the interview. The most frequently used word, "military," was used in the

interviews a total of 158 times.

Frequency of Word Use During Interviews
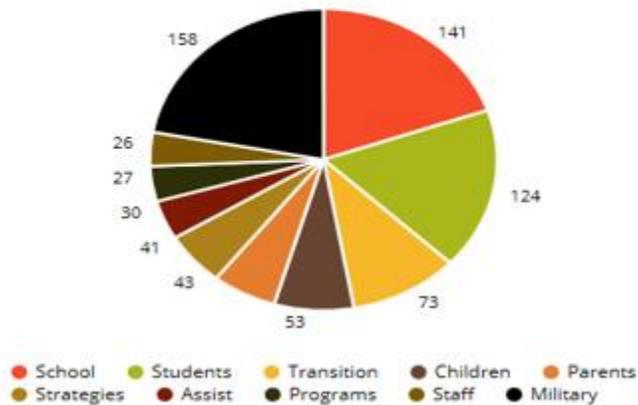
Figure 3. The words that were used most frequently during the interview and the number of times the words were used is shown.

Themes from Interviews With Parents

The following themes emerged from interviews with parents: Concerns Associated with Military Transition, Supports Needed Identified by Parents, Identified Factors that Aided in Smooth Transition, and Parent Ratings of Staff.

Concerns Associated with Military Transition

According to the transcripts, military transition impacts students in many ways and some concerns of parents and staff members were identified. The concerns varied and are related to many different aspects of transition. The data collected in this theme directly aligns with the research question 2: What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students? How are these problems handled by staff? Some of the statements identified are as follows. "Transition creates high levels of anxiety." "It can cause students to have a difficult time in the classroom." "The students have more difficulty transitioning when parents are deploying or going in the field." "The effects vary by the age of the child." "The effects also vary based

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on the support the students have at school and the supports that are available at home."
"Transition causes a lot of behavioral problems for students." "Academically, transition can be very difficult because of students coming from many different places." "Social effects do not seem as bad as the academic effects when transitioning." One parent that has been affiliated with the military for over 20 years identified many different concerns. She stated,

> There is a huge problem with consistency for military children. We have been to different duty stations across the world and at each arrival, we are expected to learn about different school systems and the different academic requirements. My kids seem to get further and further behind with each move and it is not their fault. I know that I am not the only parent with this concern. Since we are required to move so many different places, school should be required to have specific strategies in place to help our kids not matter the levels. They should also be prepared to meet with the parents to ease our minds and assure us that our students will be okay or tell us how we can help. I have seen some really great schools and there are others that were not prepared for us.

Another parent in this district from School 2 expressed concern for the lack of support available for military children.

> When I was enrolling my children, I asked the school if there were military deployment groups available because my husband is deployed and the kids are taking the entire situation really hard. I was told that there are not any groups available. This was very disappointing because these schools serve the families from the largest military installation in the states, and support is not provided for them. I am going to talk to the Superintendent so that I can be an advocate for getting more support for our children. They make up a large population of students in this area.

A parent from School 3 stated,

> This school is on post and has a lot of strategies in place, but we had to move on post just to receive these services. I feel that since the entire district services military students, they should make military counselors and behavioral specialists readily available at all locations. It is very unfortunate for students.

This information provided by parents showed the stressors faced by these parents when thinking about the needs of their children and specifically their families as a whole. Parents of students with special needs have even more stressors due to the worry that the appropriate special programs will available for their children. One family recently moved to this district from an area with DODEA schools. The family struggled with the school not having an open door policy for them to ensure that their child was in his least restrictive environment. She stated,

> I am disappointed with the lack of openness in the schools in this district. Parents are not allowed to shadow students to ensure that the IEPs are being implemented and to see if the class is just his class in our previous school. I am not trying to spend the day to monitor the teachers, I just know the services that my child needs and I feel that he is not getting those services in this district. Having a child with a life changing condition is hard enough and feeling as though the school is not being transparent has been difficult.
>
> I would like to see change on the transition process with Special Education students.

It is important to utilize this feedback to focus on improving strategies that are in place for military students when they transition into schools. Parent input from this theme gives data to answer the research question: How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful? Understanding the concerns from parents will aid in making improvements to the current practices at the study site schools. After

stating many of these concerns the interviewees provided different supports that they have seen

utilized in other schools or that they would consider to be an effective strategy to use with

military children. The next theme is as follows:

Supports Needed Identified by Parents

The parents that were interviewed have experienced several moves and their children

have attended different schools in which they have identified different strategies that have been

successful for students. This theme includes data that supports the research needed for research

question 1: How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are

academically and socially successful? Understanding supports that would aid in the academic

and social success for students is beneficial information for identifying strategies to aid in

supporting military students. The data in this theme includes accounts from parents on different

supports that are needed to assist schools with being more prepared to help military children.

One parent stated, "Maybe allowing military students to have like a group or club to where they

could talk to each other about the difficulties of the lifestyle."

Another suggestion was to boost parental involvement by having a meet and greet for

parents and students that have transitioned into the school. The parent stated,

> Some of our schools have a meet and greet in which the new kids coming in along with
>
> their parents can ask all kinds of questions to admin. This occurs twice a year for new
>
> students. This would be a great program to have at all schools in the district. Parents and
>
> students would have the opportunity to get to know other families in the school which
>
> will aid in having support with the move.

One parent stated the following, "The curriculum is very different each place that we go. It

would be helpful if schools were required to give parents a copy of the curriculum so that we can

help our children at home." Another stated, "I wish I could form a group on campus for military children in which they could talk about their feelings and I seek mentors in the community to help them cope while their parents are serving the country." Although suggestions for parental involvement were made, some parents had concerns for teacher training on how to meet the needs of military students. One parent stated,

> I would say that because not all the administrators and teachers are not affiliated with the military, training to assist them and give them educational awareness for the teachers on military families and things that happen with military students is needed. This would give them an understanding and a basis for developing strategies to help students when they enter the school.

Each school in this district has an Adopt a School Unit in which the unit is supposed to be actively involved with all school activities. Soldiers are given excuses from work to tutor students, participate in school activities, and to show an active presence on the campus. One of the parents interviewed has observed a lack of participation form the unit.

> More support is needed from the Adopt a Unit from our school. They never show up for events and they could be a huge help for those children whose parents are deployed. This could be a very great program if it were used appropriately. I think close communication between the school administration and the unit chain of command is important with making this a great program for the schools and the students.

Another parent stated the following in regards to support,

> Every year, the district asks me to complete a survey about my military household. When I inquired, I was told that this is a survey so that our school can continue to get the funds for military students from the government. I requested information on how these

70

funds are used at the campus and was told that this information as unavailable. I believe

these funds could be used to fund military counselors and different programs to help

military students and their parents. Parents should receive more trainings on working

with their children at home if they are behind due to moving because of the military.

The supports identified above by parents can aid in identifying what supports are missing for

military students when they transition and to also identify what supports would be helpful to add

to the district for making improvements. This study also yielded results from parents about what

does the district already have in place that aided in a smooth transition for their children.

Identified Factors That Aided in Smooth Transition

The information presented in this theme directly correlates to the following research

question: How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are

academically and socially successful? These strategies described in this section are strategies

identified by parents that are in place at the study site schools. These strategies aided in their

children successfully transitioning after being uprooted due to a lifestyle change brought about

by the military. A parent at School 1 discussed her transition "The administration really helped

us to decide the best fit for both of my children. I described their personalities and they helped

me to decide which teacher would be a great fit." Having the campus administrators involved in

student enrollment really aided in the family feeling comfortable in the new setting. Another

parent from School 1 stated, "We moved here in April 2015. We came here from the East Coast.

The staff was welcoming. They made sure that my son felt wanted here. Administration

introduced themselves to him. The teachers took their time to work with him." Another parent

stated, "This was the smoothest transition we have had. My kids have attended 3 different

elementary schools. I think was the smoothest due to the teachers being very welcoming and made my children feel supported right away." Another factor included,

>The front office staff was very prepared for registration. We hand carried our records and my children were enrolled and receiving all of their services the same day. Having the option to hand carry our records and have them accepted so fast aided in the transition process going well.

A parent from School 2 stated,

>I think particularly in this district, they are a lot more prepared than other areas due to it being a military town. I also think there can be more education for teachers to know what field training is like, deployment and other aspects of military life. Having an understanding of the frequency that soldiers are not at home and that they are in a revolving door single parent environment so stability in the school is a necessity. Students need to feel as though school is their safe place.

Other comments included: "I really talked to my kids about the transition before we moved. Explaining the reason for us moving and teaching them how to make new friends was helpful for them when they transitioned. Her teacher supported her making friends and adjusting in the classroom. The campus tour that we were given was helpful for my daughter's transition." One parent gave an account of how the school has a successful counseling program in place. She stated,

>My husband left as soon as we arrived here. My daughter was having a rough time coping, and I was nervous about enrolling her in school. The counselors introduced themselves immediately and allowed me to sign paperwork so that she could join a

deployment group. I was at ease knowing that programs are in place to help my

daughter.

A parent from School 3 stated, "I think the staff is very prepared since they are inside of a

military base. They have always been very helpful and very understanding." Another account

from a parent of School 3 was as follows:

Honestly, we have had a much better transition here than we have had at other schools.

There is more of a sensitivity here for students coming in during the school year.

Utilizing more tools than just one test to determine grade level placement. There also

needs to be more options to help determine their readiness for different grade levels.

"I noticed Adopt a Unit signs upon enrolling. I am at ease knowing that the military is active in

the schools. This presence will help my kids cope with their dad being gone on deployment."

"Seeing my child on the new student board made me feel great. My son explained that staff

members approach him often and ask him how he likes the school. This board is helpful for

students to feel welcomed." The strategies presented in this section aid in understanding

strategies that are already in place at the school study sites and which strategies successfully

assisted students with transitioning. The next theme identifies how parents rate the staff in the

study site schools.

Parent Ratings of Staff

This theme on how parents rate the staff members provides research needed for the

following research question: What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites

to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children? Parent stated

their views of the staff members and how well they feel the staff have been trained to work with

their children. School 1 was described by a parent in the following manner.

I think the phone lines are always open, the teacher communication is always great. The open line of communication between the administration, teachers and the parents is critical and always available. Potentially some support group or buddy system could be used as a benefit to students when they transition in especially during the middle of the school year. I do not recall my students going through that when they enrolled.

Another parent account from School 1 was as follows: "It means a lot when I hear the staff and administration calling me by name. This school is more personable than any of the other schools my children have attended." "I received phone calls from the teachers on the day that we enrolled. This showed me that they cared about my kids and wanted to tell me how to help them with learning the new curriculum." "My daughter did not like the school when we first moved. She did not build relationships with the staff well, and I do not think they understood how to meet her needs due to her many emotions."

The staff at this school is amazing. My son's teachers treated him like he was their own son. I received messages throughout the day during the first week to put my mind at ease. The Assistant Principal called me and introduced herself. She told me I could call her at any time with questions or concerns. This really touched my heart because it is hard not knowing anyone.

A parent from School 2 stated,

Any time we have noticed any behavior issues that may be occurring, administration has been very sensitive to that whether it is transitioning from field training, deployment, etc. They were available to help them understand what was occurring at home to assist with their behavior in the classroom.

Other parents stated the following: "My child has a strong support staff at this school, the staff is very knowledgeable and trained on how to help military children cope. My child has never had any issues at this school." "Most staff members have been in the military or are military spouses so they are sensitive to the lifestyle. My students were blessed to be surrounded by such a strong group of educators when we moved here."

The staff here did not appear as knowledgeable as those that we had at our last school. It may be because that school was a military school and not a public school. Some of the staff members did not seem to be sensitive to the military lifestyle and set unrealistic expectations for my child which caused him to fail our first semester here. I think more concern for his struggle with transitioning should have been shown.

School 3 parents described the specific instruction received by their children. "From talking to the teacher, I feel like she does have an amazing lesson plan. She knows exactly what she is teaching them. It is very interactive for her." "The teachers here challenge my child. I know that they are going to be prepared for the next grade due to how hard the teachers push her."

Since this school is on post, the staff could do a better job of learning the military ranks and the different parts of the lifestyle. I told the teacher that my husband was in the field, and the teacher assumed that he was deployed. Since this terminology will be used by the majority of the parents, the teachers should become knowledgeable in this area. This is a major part of their job and making connections with us the parents, and our children.

Understanding the perceptions that parents have about staff members is integral in making improvements to the training initiatives provided by the district for staff. Military parents are a great resource in understanding what is important for staff members to know about the dynamics of their family life. This section concludes the themes identified by parents only.

The next sections explains the themes that were developed by based on interviews with staff

members and utilizing the staff questionnaire.

<div align="center">**Themes from Interviews With Staff**</div>

The following themes emerged from interviews with staff members: Supports for

Children provided by the Military, Support Needed Identified by Staff Members, Current

Strategies used by Staff Members, Staff Prior Training on Working with Military Children, and

Personal Connections by Staff. These themes all have a direct correlation to the research

questions presented in this study and form the basis of the research necessary to answer those

research questions.

Supports for Children Provided by the Military

The first theme identified from staff member transcripts in the data collected was

different supports that are available for military children and provided by the actual military.

This particular theme correlates to research question 1: How are issues of military mobility

addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful? Some

of the programs identified included Child and Youth Services (CYS), or Military Family and

Life Counselors (MFLAC), Adopt a Units, The Military Child Coalition, and many other

volunteer programs. These are all services that allow students to talk about their feelings and

how moving impacts them on a personal level.

Staff members stated the following about supports provided to students by the military.

"An Adopt a School Unit is available in all district schools in which the unit members volunteer

in the school and serve as mentors for the students." "Students are paired with an MFLAC

counselor and participate in groups such as deployment, anger management, and developing

social ties." "The Military Child Education Coalition volunteers once a month and conducts

literacy circles. This hands on instruction gives another face to the military children in need of more support." A staff member from an on post school described the following military supports:

> The on post schools have a behavioral specialist that can only work with military students. The specialist has been very helpful to aid in teaching staff how to support students with different behavioral difficulties. The specialist can diagnose behaviors and also prescribing the appropriate mitigating measures.

> Another staff member described the programs available at the on post school. "Coffee with the counselor is a program funded by the military once a month to provide military life coping strategies to parents." "The YMCA is military affiliated and available for the military personnel and their families." "Federal impact aid funds are provided based on the number of military students enrolled in a school district." "Family support groups are available for military families to learn strategies for transitioning and developing new social ties." School 1 which is not on post had a staff member to describe support provided to on post students but not to off post students.

> School psychologists are available on post and funded by the military healthcare insurance to aid in identifying behaviors. This allows for children to not be pulled out from school and miss learning content. There are many military children that attend schools that are off post, so the district needs to allocate more funding to have this service available at all schools. All schools in the district have a percentage of military students so the need for this psychologist is there. The military healthcare could pay for these services off post as well.

There is another parent that described the family readiness groups that are available. Family readiness groups are available to all military families to provide the family away from family with other families in the same unit. I have seen situations in the past where the FRG groups were in close communication with the schools in the community to host events and to assist parents with understanding the curriculum and demands of school. Since these FRG groups are available for families, we as the school need to take advantage of this great way to communicate with parents and to assist them.

Most of the staff members identified the same resources that are provided by the military. These resources aid in understanding what current transition strategies are currently available to assist students both academically and socially. Although these services are provided by the military, staff members also identified more supports that are needed in the schools.

Support Needed Identified by Staff Members

The transcripts described many current practices which aided in student transition. Staff members also identified many different supports that could aid in improving current transition strategies. These supports aid in answering the following research question: What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students? How are these problems handled by staff? The lack of having these identified supports can cause problems when students transition. The staff members gave many suggestions on the supports needed to aid in them successfully helping children. One staff member stated the following,

> I would like to see an MFLAC counselor at the school that holds a club or lunch bunch
> that meets with the different grade levels giving them an opportunity to meet with peers
> and see what they have in common. It is a level of anxiety and excitement altogether that
> all students do not understand so they can discuss this. Relocations, deployments, etc.

can be discussed with the MFLAC counselor. I have personally contacted other bases

where students are moving to ease the transition for students. This helped the parents to

make connections.

Another staff member stated, "Understanding is key, all educators must have an understanding of

the mission and purpose of the military." Some staff members also gave suggestions as to

different programs that could be helpful to military students on campus.

I know that there are some campuses that have Communities in Schools for military

students. When you live on base, you have students that live around you that understand

what you go through. When don't live on base, there are more kids that do not understand

what you are going through, having programs in which students can talk to other kids their

age about things that they are going through. There are some students on our campus that

do not even know where the military base is.

One staff member reflected on a program from a previous campus that she worked at.

I was on a campus before that had a counselor that was specifically for students affiliated

with the military that helped them with social skills, emotional skills and helped the

families with all aspects to include financial needs, emotional, etc. They met every week,

once a week during their lunch time. This was a very comfortable setting for them. This

allowed the kids to know that there were other kids in school just like them.

All of the strategies and supports identified by staff members in this section aid in gaining an

understanding of what can be added to the instructional programs to eliminate problems with

student transition. It is the goal of every school to ensure that all students are supported and to

identify how they can improve their practices as needed. The data collected in this section will

aid in understanding this need. Although staff members identified supports that are needed, there

are also many supports and strategies being used at the study school sites that are aiding in successful transition for students.

Current Strategies Used by Staff Members

While interviewing staff members, there were many strategies identified by staff members that they currently use to aid in a smoother transition for military students. These identified strategies in this theme provide data to answer research question 1 which is as follows: How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful? There are many different transitional strategies in place that staff members have researched and developed on their own to use with students. Most of the strategies presented in this section are not schoolwide strategies. One staff member stated,

> I was in the military myself for around five years. Most of my experience comes from
> serving as a military spouse because my husband served 30 years in the military. We
> have four children that experienced the life of being a military brat. My children attended
> about 7 or 8 different schools. For the most part my children did okay, but my daughter
> took it very hard. It was very difficult for her during the moves and her grades were
> affected. She had trouble making friends. She also had to deal with two different
> deployments that I helped her cope with. As far as working with military children, this is
> my 13th year teaching at a school that services 100% military students.

After stating her own personal experiences, she described some of the strategies that she utilizes with students. She stated,

> Personally, I make sure that they have someone. I have a personal understanding of how
> hard it is for them to adjust from watching my daughter go through it. The students just
> want to be heard and I think our teachers do a great job of providing them with that.

With kids, it is important to build relationships. I make the connection with students to

my family and how I remember when we had to move and how my kids reacted. I make

an effort to reach out to the parents within a week of the students enrolling.

Another staff member also described similar strategies used to aid in student transition.

Strategies that I have used in the classroom include things from my own personal

experiences. Having conversations with the students about my experience as a military

student. In the classroom, I have had students that have parents deployed or stationed

somewhere else, so I give them the time to email parents, and write letters to them.

A school administrator stated the following about transition:

We offer a lot of support ensuring that they can transition into this community. I also

make other staff members aware so that they know how to support the students

throughout the building. I inform the parents of this so that they know their child is in a

safe place at all times.

Classroom buddy systems are in place in some classrooms. A teacher stated, "I partner all new

students with a buddy so that students automatically have a friend. It is hard for me as an adult

to meet new people so I try to ease the tension for my students." Another teacher described

classroom procedures that she has in place for students.

In my classroom we have a family mentality. All new students have an understanding

that they are now part of a family. From day 1, the students have friends, and learn the

routines and procedures of the classroom. I contact the parents from the very beginning

and give them an update on their child's first day and make every effort to build a

positive relationship with the child and the parents. It is all about understanding their

fears and making sure that they do not have to feel alone or scared.

Overall, the interviews provided data to show that there are transitional strategies in use at the study site schools. These strategies have been formed based on staff experiences, needs assessments and school expectations. Even though there are some strategies in place, it is important to assess what type of training staff members have had on working with military transition and identify other trainings that will aid in successfully helping these students.

Staff Prior Training on Working With Military Children

The third research question addressed in this study is as follows: What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children? This theme includes quotes from staff members that assist in answering this research question.

One staff member that serves in the role of teacher stated, "I have not received any training in this district to help with that assistance. I would like to see some trainings." One teacher relies heavily on personal experiences to guide strategies used with military students. "There was no training that I recall on how to work with military children. Most of the trainings are tailored toward all children. My personal experiences allow me to make connections to the students and families." Other quotes from the transcripts in reference to staff training included:

I have been to the Military Children Education Coalition training. It is available if your campus enrolls in that program. A couple of years ago, the district picked certain campuses to participate and now it is open to all campuses. I have done the rest of my training in reference to the military on my own through deployment material, books, and experiences.

Another staff member stated, "I have not received any training that helps us with military training. I just rely on my own personal experiences of being a child affiliated with the military."

A very similar response was, "I have not received any specific training on how to assist military children when they enroll at my school, and I just do what is best for students." One teacher gave suggestions for training.

> Since I started my career in this district many I have not been officially trained on the military lifestyle. I do remember being introduced to the ranks of military personnel at a staff in-service. I am very disappointed that there have not been any strategies on how to best meet the needs of highly mobile students. In my previous district, each year we took a Military 101 class which gave an in depth look at the military lifestyle and what stress factors the families face. We were also provided strategies to help these students succeed. Collaboration sessions were available throughout the year to discuss the latest military issues. If I would not have had exposure to these courses, I would not have the tools in my toolbox needed to successfully meet the needs of all my students especially those that are in military families.

There were staff members from only one out of the three schools that have received training on working with military students. This data gives sufficient information to show a deficit in staff training in the study site district according to the responses needed for RQ 3. Although there is a deficit in the area of training, many staff members compensate due to their personal connections to the military and understanding of the military lifestyle.

Personal Connections by Staff

This theme provides quotes from staff members that aids in answering research question 3: What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children? Many of the staff members working in the schools used in this study have other affiliation with the military outside of being an educator of

military students. These connections include being prior military, military spouses and the children of military personnel. One staff member shared her personal connections to the military as follows:

My dad was in the army for 25 years. We moved around a lot. I am an army brat. As a teacher in the classroom, I know they have a difficult time in the classroom. They also have difficulty when parents are deployed, TDY, or in the field. I think a lot of their performance depends on their age, the support from school and the support from home.

Another staff member stated, "My personal experience with the military is that I have been a military spouse for 19 years. My children are military children and I have worked for DoDEA schools for 8 years." Many staff members rely on their personal experiences for assisting with developing strategies for working with military students. Another staff member stated,

I have been working with this district for 7 years. Often, I get students that are affiliated with the military. I was a military child myself so I am familiar how to deal with students that are dealing with deployment, parents at training, etc. I use my connections and experiences from being a military child when reflecting and developing strategies to use with my students in the classroom.

One staff member chose to teach specifically in a district that serves military students.

My children experienced many educators over the years that did not understand our lifestyle. They did not give them the chance to transition and gain an understanding of their new environment. They did not reach out to me to ensure that I knew how to help my children. When my husband deployed and my child's grades began to fail, they did not give them a chance to make up the work and had little sympathy for the situation. All of these experiences were very hurtful to me and motivated me to become a teacher and

make the experience a more positive one for my students and their parents. I have been

an advocate at my school for this population of students due to what we experienced in

many different places as a military family.

This theme portrayed the connections that staff members have to students based on their prior

experiences with their own personal military affiliations. Having these experiences have really

assisted many staff members with developing quality strategies to assist students.

Themes That Emerged From Both Staff and Parent Interviews

Barriers

This theme connects to the following research question in this study. What problems are

noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students? How are these problems

handled by staff? In one interview of a staff member, the following was stated, "A huge barrier

is when students come in from different school districts and the curriculum, grading systems, etc.

are different." A staff member also stated, "The students show up way behind when

transitioning due to constant moves that are out of their control. Being uprooted all the time

makes it hard to make friends and learn the curriculum in detail at different schools."

One parent stated, "District funding is limited and there are not many aides per class to

assist new students with learning the content and also to help with managing student behaviors."

Another parent stated. "All of the activities that train parents on how to help our children are

during the school day and I am not really able to attend. I would like to see more trainings

offered to cater to the schedules of all parents, especially those operating as single parent

households while one parent is serving the country." Another parent stated, "Due to being in

basically a single parent household while my husband is gone, I am not able to attend school

conferences and events in which I could learn ways to help my daughter at school." One parent that was interviewed gave the following information:

There is a lack of parental support on the campus to aid in me assisting my child. The information being taught can be taught in multiple ways and I want to make sure that I am helping my child in the right manner. When I reach out to the school staff, I am not met with a willingness to help. I feel as though I am a burden and there are many other parents that have stated this. I almost wish this was an expectation. Maybe the schools can have training nights once a month in which teachers are available to answer questions and show parents specific strategies for helping at home.

Another parent identified a lack of training as a barrier.

The teachers and staff do not understand how to assist the students because they do not understand the stress that is faced by our children. It would be nice to have teachers trained on identifying the signs of stress in students and also teach them strategies on how to help these students cope and still achieve academically.

Even though some barriers were identified in this study, the study also yielded results of current strategies already being implemented to help students transition successfully.

Current Transition Strategies

This theme directly correlates to research question 1: How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful? The quotes identified for this theme on current transition strategies are presented in this section and grouped based on responses from each school. This grouping was used to show the differences in the strategies currently being used at each school and to show the need for consistency throughout the district.

School 1 Parent and Staff Member Response

  Staff member responses. Responses for current transition strategies at School 1 from staff members included the following: "Teachers make students feel welcomed." "Students are assigned a buddy. The buddy works with them for about a month. They sit with them at lunch and make sure that they always have a friend." "Students are taught how to respect one another." "Teachers keep packets available with all material needed to introduce students into the classroom." "We reach out to the parents within a week of students enrolling." "When new students come in, students give the new students a tour and greet the families in the office." "A bulletin board is utilized in which we keep all new students pictures up for a month so that they can be recognized and assisted throughout the school." "Our counselors reach out to the students to make sure they are adjusting well." "Parent teacher conferences are held within a week of enrollment so that both the parents and teachers have the opportunity to ask questions and develop an educational plan to meet the needs of the students." "Students are paired with another military student so that they can see there are others going through what they are going through." "Teachers give assessments during the first week to determine the academic levels of the students and place them in the appropriate groups based on accurate levels."

  Parent responses. Parents gave very specific accounts of current transition strategies at School 1. A parent stated the following: "Children transition very well when coming to this school. They feel a welcoming sense when they come to this school and there is a loving and caring environment in which they feel safe." "When we came to this school, we were allowed to enroll with hand carried records. I have struggled with getting my students services immediately in the past, but this school understood our situation and began Special Education services for my child right away."

I was very disappointed with the transition due to being told that my child is below grade

level based on the results of a placement test. It is very difficult to move around often due

to PCSing, and then learning that this school has different expectations than the DODs

school my child attended in Germany is disappointing. I think my child is going to

struggle even more due to the change, and being behind academically compared to his

friends.

Other parent responses from School 1 included: "The school office staff gave us tours of the

building and gave us resources available in the community for military families." "Our children

were fortunate enough to get teachers here that are also part of military families. They bonded

with my children and helped them just as they would help their own and it really eased the

transition for them."

School 2 Parent and Staff Member Responses

    Staff member responses. The statements from school personnel and parents at School 2

differed from those given at School 1. Some of those responses from staff were as follows: "My

school does not have any transition strategies available." "We were never told to develop

transition strategies for kids that come in during the school year." "We do what is best for kids

and do not have specific strategies." "I am not aware of any strategies, but that would be a really

good idea to add them because of our high mobility rate." "I think I am going to ask my boss if

we can go and observe another campus that has transition strategies in place." "The office staff

handles all transitions and assists the families when they come in."

    Parent Responses. Parents from School 2 stated the following, "There were no strategies

available when we transitioned in." "The secretaries go around and introduce everyone to the

new students and their families." "I think since this is a public school, they did not have many

strategies like those that I have seen at Department of Defense schools." "This school did not

have many resources to help with the transition. I asked if my son could see a military

counselor, and they said that they did not have those services available." Both parents and staff

members stated that they could not recall any specific transition strategies being available in this

school for military transition.

School 3 Parent and Staff Member Responses

 Staff member responses. The staff members in School 3 stated the following:

 I don't know that the school per say has a strategy, but there is a buddy system in place.

 The students are assigned a buddy to bring them around to show them the school. They

 also are assigned buddies in their classrooms. The buddy teaches them about the school.

"We are on post so our school is very transient, so we are really prepared for transitions."

 The teachers keep packets that are prepared with all materials needed to introduce them

 to the classroom. The packet helps to make the transition a little smoother for both

 parents and the children. It helps us as staff members to get to know the students.

  "Our teachers do a great job of making students feel welcomed. The staff is used to

them coming in and out. There is an understanding of how the students feel so the students are

taught how to respect one another." "We offer a lot of support to ensure that they can

successfully transition into the classroom." These transition strategies reflect a lot of

involvement from the school counselor at school 3.

 Parent Responses. Current transition strategies available at School 3 identified by

parents included the following: "The staff members give campus tours to all new students and us

as parents." "Counselors make an effort to assist the students as needed. The counselors

personally talked to my children and helped them to feel welcomed." "My students were

partnered with other students in the school to help them with the transition." "The teachers set up a conference with me immediately so that they could find out what works best for my children. This meant a lot because they showed that they cared."

> I felt a personal connection upon my students enrolling this school. The teachers bonded with both me and my children. They built a since of family in the classroom, and all of the students were there for one another from day 1. I hope we do not PCS anytime soon so that my children can stay at this school.

Overall there are strategies in place to assist in students being able to achieve both academically and socially even when sudden transitions take place. This theme gave research important to answering RQ 1. The next section will provide more information on how the data collected aids in answering the research questions.

Presentation of the Data and Results

Interviews were conducted in this study to collect data in reference to current transition practices for military students in a district the southwestern part of the United States. The quotes from the parent and staff member participants in this study were grouped into these themes. Each of the themes provide research to answer one of the research questions in the study. The research questions that form the basis of this study are as follows:

1. How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful?

2. What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students and how are these problems handled?

3. What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children?

Table 1

Results for the Themes That Form the Basis for Each Research Question in This Study

	Staff Member Themes	Parent Themes	Both
RQ 1	Supports for children provided by the military	Supports needed identified by parents	Current transition strategies
	Current strategies used by staff members	Identified factors that aided in smooth transition	
RQ 2	Supports needed identified by staff members	Concerns associated with military transition	Barriers
RQ 3	Staff prior training on working with military students	Parent ratings of staff	
	Personal connections by staff		

Research Question 1 How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful?

Interviews with the staff and parents were used to address this research question. The themes that directly relate to this question include: Current transition strategies, supports for children provided by the military, identified factors that aided in a smooth transition and current strategies used by staff members. According to staff members and parents, military mobility is currently addressed at the study school sites so that students are set up for success. According to staff members, there are many strategies already in place at the study school sites.

School 1:

A staff member reported the following information.

> As far as transitioning strategies for military students, we have transitioning practices for all students to include: touring the school; benchmarks assessments to determine their current performance levels and what interventions need to be put in place for them to be successful.

Another description of School 1 strategies included a staff member not being able to identify specific strategies being implemented at the school. She stated, "To my knowledge my school does not have any transition strategies in place. I do know that in the district we do have access to MFLAC counselors and there is also a school Liaison that we can access if needed."

School 2:

Specific strategies could not be named that are implemented at this campus. Some staff member quotes from school 2 are as follows.

> I am not really aware of any at my school. I do know that in my classroom, if there is a student that transitions from another military school, I offer support and parental support. If there is a student with a parent deploying, I prepare the student in the classroom to make the transition smooth for them.

Another staff member from school 2 stated:

> I am currently not aware of any strategies that we have in place. I know that our counselor talks to them and there is a program of people that talk to them. As a teacher, I talk to them about their background and get information so that I can successfully support them in the classroom.

School 3

Staff members stated the following in reference to this school.

The on post schools have a behavioral specialist that can only work with military

students. The specialist has been very helpful to aid in teaching staff how to support

students with different behavioral difficulties. The specialist can diagnose behaviors and

also prescribing the appropriate mitigating measures.

The school district also receives federal funds to aid in supporting military students. "Federal

impact aid funds are provided based on the number of military students enrolled in a school

district." Transition strategies can vary from school to school in the district that was studied.

The administrator from school 3 gave a detailed description of the strategies utilized in that

school.

We offer a lot of support ensuring that they can transition into this community. I also

make other staff members aware so that they know how to support the students

throughout the building. I inform the parents of this so that they know their child is in a

safe place at all times.

There were many transition strategies described by both parents and staff members to include:

Tours of the buildings, assigning buddies to students, giving assessments to determine the

students' instructional levels, and allowing students to meet with the counselor. Many of the

staff members have personal connections to the military so the strategies utilized in their

classroom include strategies that helped their own family members transition during moves.

Supports Provided by the Military

The study site schools also have supports available for students and their families that are

provided by the military. A large support comes in the form of funding. Federal Impact Aid are

funds issued to school district as a result of the Federal Impact Aid law (U.S. Department of

Education, 2017). The Impact Aid law provides assistance to school districts with high

concentrations of military students, children residing on Indian lands, or low income housing (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). School districts are allowed to use the funds in whatever manner they choose, they just have to follow the laws of their local and state requirements for use of the funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). A school staff member described the impact aid funds as follows:

> The military is very supportive of our school. We receive Federal Impact Aid funds to purchase supplies and support programs to support the mental health of students. Housing is available in the vicinity of the school. When new families transition in, they are able to get priority housing because there is currently not a waiting list. The military also has programs like family support groups. In the past I was an FRG leader and we assisted families with tutoring, school supplies and other necessities. On campus we have an MFLAC counselor that works with our students on topics such as deployment, moving, etc. A school psychologist is also available that works only with military students on behavior development.

Other supports provided by the military were described. "The MFLAC counselors are available. The school liaison is available. The YMCA is military affiliated and available. There is also CYS and they do partnerships with local school districts as well." Outside of these resources that are made available by the military, hey actually provide support through active volunteering with the Adopt a Units. "The military has Adopt a Unit programs in which they adopt a school and participate in all of the school's events. The soldiers are allowed to miss work for school activities and functions in which they are volunteering. Although staff members ensure that strategies are in place for smooth transition of students into the school, the themes from the interviews showed a need for more staff training to increase the supports available. Staff

members also noted problems that have been identified when working with students that are mobile due to military transition.

Identified Factors that Aided in a Smooth Transition

The study school sites already have systems in place to aid in students having successful transitions into the schools. Parents and staff members that were interviewed named different strategies that were very helpful for families when transitioning into the schools. A staff member stated the following:

> Open communication and having an understanding of the timeline of deployments, family dynamics, leave time, etc. really aid in smooth transitions. It all relies on the amount of communication that is present with the family. I have used an MFLAC counselor in the past when there were issues with deployments. We could use school counselors in place of MFLAC counselors when the need arises.

Another staff member stated that a very important strategy is building rapport with the students and their parents.

> With kids, it is important to build relationships. I make the connection with students to my family and how I remember when we had to move and how my kids reacted. We also use different programs to keep in constant contact with families, and some of these include Remind 101 and Class Dojo. I make an effort to reach out the parents within a week of the students enrolling. A huge barrier is when students come in from different schools and districts, and the curriculum and grading systems are very different. We are a very mobile school with around a 36% mobility rate. Well, it could be more, but that is what it was when I was in school.

The staff members at the study schools sites understand that there is a need to develop strategies that will assist the military families during moves and their responses in the interviews showed a true concern for the academic and social success of these students. There are strategies currently in place at the study school sites, there is just an inconsistency across the three schools. Although staff members have developed strategies to aid in assisting students when they transition due to military mobility, there are also some problems that can arise with these transitions and RQ 2 addresses these problems.

Research Question 2 What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile students? How are these problems handled by staff?

Interviews with the staff members were used to answer this question. Staff member responses from the following themes were used to answer this question: Barriers, supports needed identified by staff, and concerns associated with military transition. Throughout the transcripts, staff members identify barriers and supports needed to help military students be successful.

Barriers and Supports Needed Identified by Staff

One school staff member stated: "I don't know if the school can help with the workload or level that the student is on. The kids show up a little behind." Another staff member also addressed students being behind due to transition. "The students show up way behind when transitioning due to constant moves that are out of their control. Being uprooted all the time makes it hard to make friends and learn the curriculum in detail at different schools." Other staff members noted problems with a lack of counselors being available for students. This is an account from a teacher at School 1:

We need more support for the students. I was on a campus before that had a counselor

that was specifically for students affiliated with the military that helped them with social

skills, emotional skills and helped the families with all aspects to include financial needs,

emotional, etc. They met every week, once a week during their lunch time. This was a

very comfortable setting for them. This allowed the kids to know that there were other

kids in school just like them.

Another staff member expressed a need for other programs that are available to support military

students.

I know that there are some campuses that have Communities in Schools for military

students. When you live on base, you have students that live around you that understand

what you go through. When don't live on base, there are more kids that do not understand

what you are going through, having programs in which students can talk to other kids their

age about things that they are going through. There are some students on our campus that

do not even know where the military base is.

Although having programs available to support students are a necessity, one staff member

expressed the importance of building relationships and having an understanding. She stated,

"Understanding is key, all educators must have an understanding of the mission and purpose of

the military."   Although staff members have identified barriers and problems that are faced

when working with military students, they have identified some strategies to aid in overcoming

these barriers.

Concerns Associated With Military Transition

 The themes developed that identify resolution initiatives included: Current transition strategies,

supports for children provided by the military, identified factors that aided in a smooth transition

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and current strategies used by staff members. Many parents showed concern due to a lack of consistency in the district with transition practices. It has been observed by both staff members and parents, that there are more strategies available for students that are on post versus those that attend school off post. One parent stated,

> This school is on post and has a lot of strategies in place, but we had to move on post just to receive these services. I feel that since the entire district services military students, they should make military counselors and behavioral specialists readily available at all locations. It is very unfortunate for students.

There were also concerns with the different curriculums the students have to master with each move. "My child has not had the same curriculum amongst grade levels with any of our moves. I feel as though each time we move he is shown to be further behind. Due to the nature of the military lifestyle, military schools that all have the same curriculum should be available at all military bases."

The responses to this question give the data to support a system being implemented in which all schools in the district are utilizing the same transitional methods. The study school district has a high population of military students and there have been many identified problems by both staff and parents that have the possibility of being addressed with utilizing the suggested strategies in a more succinct manner.

Research Question 3 What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff successfully support the transition of military dependent children?

Interviews with the staff were used to answer this research question. Many staff members responded that they rely on their own personal experiences to aid in how they assist

military students. The theme that correlates to this research question is Staff Prior Training on

Working with Military Children; Parent ratings of staff; and Personal connections by staff.

Staff Prior Training on Working with Military Children

One staff member gave the following account, "There was no training that I recall on

how to work with military children. Most of the trainings are tailored toward all children. My

personal experiences allow me to make connections to the students and families." The majority

of the staff members interviewed stated that specific training in relation to military students

transitioning was not received. Another staff member stated the following about not receiving

training, "I have not received any training that helps us with military training. I just rely on my

own personal experiences of being a child affiliated with the military." The following was

another staff member interview response, *"I have not received any training in this district to help

with that assistance. I would like to see some trainings."*

A staff member in an on post school described the following trainings received:

> I have been to the Military Children Education Coalition training. It is available if your
>
> campus enrolls in that program. A couple of years ago, the district picked certain
>
> campuses to participate and now it is open to all campuses. I have done the rest of my
>
> training in reference to the military on my own through deployment material, books, and
>
> experiences.

There are also parents that have identified the need for staff members to receive more training in

the area of military lifestyle and how to assist military families when transitioning throughout the

school year. One parent that was interviewed stated,

> I think particularly in [school district name], they are a lot more prepared than other areas
>
> due to it being a military town. I also think there can be more education for teachers to

know what field training is like, deployment and other aspects of military life. Have an

understanding of the frequency that soldiers are not at home and that they are in a

revolving door single parent environment so stability in the school is a necessity.

Students need to feel as though school is their safe place.

Both parents and staff have identified the importance of staff training in reference to

implementing the best strategies for military students. Overall, only one school in the study had

staff members that stated training was received in reference to military students, and this was a

staff member from the on post school.

Parent Ratings of Staff

The interview transcripts yielded results that showed the parents are overall confident in

the teachers' abilities to assist the transient students with being successful both socially and

academically. A parent that was interviewed stated, "From talking to the teacher, I feel like she

does have an amazing lesson plan. She knows exactly what she is teaching them. It is very

interactive for her." The parents also reviewed how well administration handles new families

enrolling into the schools.

Any time we have noticed any behavior issues that may be occurring,

administration has been very sensitive to that whether it is transitioning from field

training, deployment, etc. They were available to help them understand what was

occurring at home to assist with their behavior in the classroom.

Another parent stated the following about administration, "The administration is pretty good. It

has gotten better. One of the APS use to be in the military as a drill sergeant." This statement

shows the correlation between staff member prior experiences and he strategies implemented to

help military students transition into the school.

Personal Connections by Staff

Many of the staff members have prior connections to the military outside of their experiences in the school setting. Appendix 2 gives the demographics of the participants and describes the staff members other affiliations if any. One staff member gave an account of her prior experiences by stating the following, "My personal experience with the military is that I have been a military spouse for 19 years. My children are military children and I have worked for DoDEA schools for 8 years." Another staff member stated, "I have been working with this district for 7 years. Often, I get students that are affiliated with the military. I was a military child myself so I am familiar how to deal with students that are dealing with deployment, parents at training, etc." Other experiences included,

> My dad was in the army for 25 years. We moved around a lot. I am an army brat. As a teacher in the classroom, I know they have a difficult time in the classroom. They also have difficulty when parents are deployed, TDY, or in the field. I think a lot of their performance depends on their age, the support from school and the support from home.

These personal connections/affiliations with the military aided in gaining a wealth of knowledge in the area of student need and helpful strategies that will assist children that are struggling academically and socially due to military mobility.

Summary

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. The three research questions presented in this study seek information on current practices in a school district with a military population of 43%. Understanding the

current practices will aid in identifying consistent strategies that will aid in military students transitioning successfully into the district without their student achievement and social experiences being impacted.

This chapter presented the data collection process and summarized how the data was analyzed. Student achievement data from the three schools in the study in the areas of math and reading were reviewed to gain an understanding of the performance of each school. Interviews were conducted to gain insight on current transition practices. The participants in the study included the parents of military students from three different schools in the study site district. The other participants included staff members from the same three schools. All of these staff members had experience working with military students in the school setting. Some of these staff members had other military affiliation to include being prior service, military spouses, and also having parents that served in the military. There was a wide range of years for parents and staff members experience with the military.

The interviews were analyzed and coded both electronically using a program called Nvivo 12. This program involved uploading all interview transcripts, and categorizing quotes into Nodes. The Nodes that were identified were reviewed and used as the themes that formed the basis for the answers to the research questions in the study. The interview transcripts were also hand coded using the process of open coding. I color coded the responses and connected the quotes to the themes in the study. The themes were then categorized into parent themes and staff member themes. The results to the study were identified when I categorized the themes based on their correlation to the research questions. Each theme in the study directly correlated to one of the research questions. Table was developed to show which themes included the data to answer each research question.

Presented in Chapter 5 is the discussion of the data and conclusions to the study based on the data. The results of the research will be evaluated, interpreted, and connections to the community of practice will be made and presented in this chapter. The theories that formed the basis of the literature review will be reviewed in connection with the results of the study. Further work in relation to this study will be examined and the strategies that need to be implemented at the study school sites will be identified.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. The challenges and strategies that these military students from the study schools and their families experienced were shared through personal narratives presented in interviews. Three schools from a highly mobile military school district were examined and data was collected in reference to school performance and staff member accounts on current practices were also taken through interviews. In this chapter, I will briefly summarize the findings of the research, review how the results connect to current literature, discuss implications of the results, present limitations and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Results

The research in this study serves as an explanatory case study with the purpose of examining the supports provided by public elementary schools for highly mobile students from military families. A summary of the results as they relate to the research questions is discussed below.

RQ 1. How are issues of military mobility addressed at the study school sites so students are academically and socially successful?

Interviews with staff and parents were used to answer this research question. An integral component for all schools with high populations of military students is to have specific school/district wide transitions strategies in place. The staff at the study school sites suggested some of the following strategies.

School 1 Findings

Set up counseling groups on campus that discuss deployment, making friends, and

building social ties. Allow families to hand carry records and accept records that are brought in

by parents so that all of the students' academic history is accessible from the first day by their

teachers. The staff members utilize school wide benchmark assessments to determine the

appropriate instructional level for students when they enroll in the campus. This will aid in

students receiving their accommodations and services as soon as possible without waiting on

their previous school to send this information. Being consistent with assessments being

administered upon enrollment so that teachers can obtain accurate data and tailor instruction

based on the student's current levels of performance. Building rapport with the students and

families was noted as a very important strategy for all students transitioning in the school at

School 1.

School 2 Findings

The staff at School 2 discussed the use of a counselor to aid in student's successfully

transitioning in the school. The counselor is available to show them around campus and

introduce them to other students. Most staff members were not aware of specific strategies to aid

in assisting military families when they transition into the school.

School 3 Findings

Give the students and their families a tour of the school so that they can become familiar

with the new academic setting. Assign the new students a buddy to aid in having a friendly face

to help them navigate through the building and become familiar with the new school. The buddy

can be someone from their class or from the Student Council. It was also suggested to have an

MFLAC or Military Family Life Counselor available at all times that only works with military

students. These counselors can conduct deployment and transition groups, and also just be

available for the students to have someone to talk to when needed. Another strategy

implemented at this school is that all teachers keep packets readily available for the families of

new students so that they will understand all of the school/classroom policies from day one and

have access to the contact information for the teachers. Staff education is also an integral part of

student achievement so that they have an understanding of the needs of these students and an

awareness of the lifestyle.

There are teachers in highly mobile schools who struggle with fully investing in students

and building rapport due to a fear of the students moving (Maehr, Karabenick, & Urdan, 2012).

In an effort to ensure that students are socially successful when transitioning, the staff must have

an understanding of the following theories: family stress theory, social capital theory, Maslow's

Hierarchy of Needs, and the transition shock theory. These theories give an understanding to the

different stages that are faced by children when changes occur due to transition. The family

stress theory suggested that an accumulation of life stressors, military demands, and possible

deployments causes military families to have a harder time coping and it causes them to suffer

from maladjustment (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). Staff members

understanding of this information will aid in their responses and approaches when interacting

with students facing these stressors.

Social Capital theory reflects the importance of social networks and trust in promoting a

sense of belonging and well-being (Leonard, 2005). When making a connection from the social

capital theory to the lives of children, it is important to understand that social capital in the lives

of children is the byproduct of adults/parents' relationships with others and the result includes

their own social networks being rendered as invisible (Leonard, 2005). It is important for staff

members in the school setting to make connections to not only the students, but the parents as well to enhance the social ties of the family and the overall transition of the student.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is another theory that supports the importance of meeting students' needs socially especially during times of transition. All schools must make efforts to ensure that students' needs on every level of the hierarchy are met to ensure that students can focus on being successful academically (Desautels, 2014). Many children can feel a sense of alienation when moving to a new school or learning environment (American Counseling Association, 2016). New schools and parents/guardians of this population of children must take time to consider the changes that will be faced and ensure that children are able to regain confidence, competence, stability, and feelings of safety (American Counseling Association, 2016). It is suggested that students have access to counselors, social workers, or psychologist so that they can assist in meeting students' needs so they are successful during times of transition.

The last theory that formed the basis of this study is the transition shock theory. During the period of transition shock, students experience the following: anxiety, helplessness, threat, fear, guilt, depression, gradual acceptance, moving forward, disillusionment, hostility, denial, This theory presents several transitional strategies that will assist in quality practices for schools when dealing with transitions (Stavem, 2014). These practices included enrollment, academic placement, student placement, classroom connections, family connections, unique needs, school/community connections and exit transitions (Stavem, 2014).

The strategies to include specific enrollment procedures, student placement based on academic needs, and family connections that were presented in this theory along with the strategies mentioned above in reference to meeting student needs presented in the other theories should be implemented into the study schools to assist in more successful student transitions.

These strategies will aid in increasing student achievement and with building positive social ties. As stated above, there are many strategies currently being implemented at the study school sites; however, the data showed that there are not specific and consistent strategies implemented district wide. The staff identified current strategies as well as problems that are faced when students transition at different times of the year due to military transition.

  RQ 2 What problems are noted by school staff when working with highly mobile

     students and how are these problems handled?

  There were many themes in the data that identified problems faced by staff members. The following themes can be used to answer this question in the research: Staff member responses from the following themes were used to answer this question: Barriers, supports needed identified by staff, current strategies used by staff members, and staff prior training working with military students. There were many of the same problems found at all three schools.

  One of the problems faced is the fact that students show up on various levels academically. A staff member from School 3 stated, "I don't know if the school can help with the workload or level that the student is on. The kids shows up a little behind." There can be different academic standards based on where students are coming from so it is important for teachers to be prepared for this. Some teachers stated that they have assessments already prepared that will give them data on the students' current academic levels. Another identified problem was the fact that students struggle to make friends.

  A strategy used by School 3 in the study was to assign a buddy. Doing this aids in building those first social ties. A staff member from School 3 stated, "The students are assigned a buddy to bring them around to show them the school. They also are assigned buddies in their

classrooms. The buddy teaches them about the school. We are on post so our school is very transient, so we are really prepared for transitions." A strategy identified by a staff member at School 2 involves having counseling groups in which the students are interacting with other students that are faced with the same stressors as them.

These connections will aid in making friends and building positive social ties. The last identified problem based on the data collected is a lack of staff training which forms the basis for research question number three. A staff member from School 2 stated, "I have not received any specific training on how to assist military children when they enroll at my school, I just do what is best for students." The identified problems from this study can be addressed with the use of specific, consistent strategies that are implemented district wide when new military families enroll in the school.

RQ 3. What training initiatives are implemented at the school study sites to help staff
successfully support the transition of military dependent children?

The research collected in this study in regards to staff training was very consistent. The majority of the staff members at School 1 and School 2 have not received any specific trainings in relation to military students and military mobility. The staff members have learned how to implement strategies based on personal experiences or experiences with students transitioning in and out of their classroom. A staff member from School 1 stated, "My personal experiences allow me to make connections to the students and families."

School 3 Findings

There were two staff members from the on-post school who received specific training from the Military Child Coalition and this was due to them being on post. A staff member stated,

I have been to the Military Children Education Coalition training. It is available if your

campus enrolls in that program. A couple of years ago, the district picked certain

campuses to participate and now it is open to all campuses. I have done the rest of my

training in reference to the military on my own through deployment material, books, and

experiences.

This training was not received by the entire staff or the staff at the other study sites. Most of the

staff members believe that adding mandatory staff trainings provided by the district will aid in

increasing positive experiences for military children and their families when they transition into

the district. Many of the staff members have military affiliation, so this has allowed them to

develop strategies that do meet the needs of military children. One staff member stated, "I have

been working with this district for seven years. Often, I get students that are affiliated with the

military. I was a military child myself so I am familiar how to deal with students that are dealing

with deployment, parents at training, etc." The school district that forms the basis of this study

has a military population of almost 50% so staff training and awareness is a true necessity to

increase student achievement.

Themes From the Interviews

The following themes emerged from interviews with parents: Concerns Associated with

Military Transition, Supports Needed Identified by Parents, Identified Factors that Aided in

Smooth Transition, and Parent Ratings of Staff. The following themes emerged from interviews

with staff members: Supports for Children provided by the Military, Support Needed Identified

by Staff Members, Current Strategies used by Staff Members, Staff Prior Training on Working

with Military Children, and Personal Connections by Staff. There were two themes that emerged

from interviews with both parents and staff members and they included: Barriers and Current

Transition Strategies.

Discussion of the Results

The findings of this study were surprising in nature due to my thoughts of there being

more consistency throughout the district in terms of military support. Almost half of the school

district's population has ties to the military, and there are no specific, research based strategies in

effect at the schools to make the transition process smooth for students. It is evident that based

on staff responses, the staff developed strategies based on their personal experiences and

experiences as the educators of military children. Although this is the case, it cannot be assumed

that all educators will take these measures. Without having consistent and mandatory strategies

in place at all schools throughout the district, some students will fail academically and socially

due to a lack of support from the school. When asked about strategies available at one of the

study school sites, the staff member being interviewed could not recall any specific trainings that

were attended. She was able to describe some personal strategies that she uses in her classroom

to support these students.   The responses from staff members shows the need for more teacher

awareness and training on the best strategies to help this population of students succeed.

Although the study did yield results that show a need for training, it must be noted that

students have been provided transitional strategies by the staff members due to a large number of

staff members having personal military affiliation to include prior service, military spouses and

also being the children of service members. Having these personal connections have aided in

these staff members doing what is best for students and utilizing strategies to aid in smooth

transition. Some of the strategies used include building relationships with the families based on

personal connections of their own children being military children; making connections with the

parents within the first week of school to answer any questions and find out what works best for the student; also find out the curriculum from the students' previous school so that gaps in the learning can be identified early.

School staff members and military parents identified other strategies that are not currently utilized by the district in an effort to assist with the development of a consistent district wide transition plan. Some of these strategies were categorized into the following themes: Supports Needed Identified by Staff and Supports Needed Identified by Parents. Some of the helpful strategies that were recommended will really aid the study sites school district to enhance the support for military students. One strategy was to utilize Federal Impact Aid funding to equip every district school with a Military Family Life Counselor or a Communities in Schools representative. They have specific interventions that can be used to assist students and train staff members on campuses.

Another strategy that was suggested by a parent was to have mandatory staff training on the military lifestyle. She stated, "I would say that because not all the administrators and teachers are not affiliated with the military, training to assist them and give them educational awareness for the teachers on military families and things that happen with military students." Increasing the number of clubs and organizations available was another strategy identified because this would aid in the students being able to make social ties more easily. One requirement would need to be allowing those clubs and organizations accepts members all throughout the school year so that students still have the opportunity no matter if their family has a PCS during the middle of the school year.

This study yielded some strategies that will aid in enhancing the transition process for students at the study school sites as well as other schools in the district. Although this need was

identified, it is commendable that the district schools do make efforts to support this population of students even though trainings are not conducted currently. One type of research that could have enhanced this study is having specific data in regards to the academic performance of this population of students. There has been no specific subgroup tracking required for military students; however, the legislative enactment of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is currently changing requirements for schools. As a result of this law, it is now mandatory that all school districts/states include military affiliation as a subgroup for assessment tracking purposes (Adams, 2016).

Student Achievement Data Trends for the Schools

All of the sites had similar performance ratings of 'Met Standard' for the academic years of 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 (TAPR, 2018). There was a decline in scores each year for all three schools; however, the decline was not significant enough to bring about concern for the instruction received by the students. This decline in scores can possibly be attributed to the change in the state standards during the year of 2015. These changes in the state standards caused some gaps in learning for students. The specific score reports for each academic report can be found in Appendix 2. The scores from all three schools show that the staff members are successfully implementing the curriculum and providing students with a rigorous education. The performance of these three schools from the district can give the parents a since of comfort that their children are attending high performing schools when transitioning to this area and not having accessibility to DODEA schools.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

Almost 2,000,000 students have at least one parent who is active duty or reserve military with majority of these students attending the nation's public schools (Adams, 2016). Student

mobility and the effects on student achievement is a growing concern in the field of education. Military personnel are often forced to be mobile and uproot their families due to job placement. Many school districts with high populations of military students have the following characteristics as a result of high mobility for military families: inconsistent student exposure to the curriculum; lower student achievement; high grade retention; higher school dropout rates; and curriculum planning challenges (Thompson, Meyers, & Oshima, 2011). Due to these characteristics, it is a must that strategies are implemented into schools that service military students. Strategies based on the data collected were presented earlier in this chapter. There are also other strategies that are currently being used in some schools that have been successful for this population of students.

Student achievement at schools on military bases is higher than achievement for students educated in public schools (Smith, 2012). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011), students that attend the Department of Defense Education Activity schools (DODEA) are performing at or above the national average in the areas of reading and math when compared to students that attend this nation's public schools. DODEA schools are highly organized, and follow a chain of command similar to actual military personnel and this includes clear communication between administration and teachers (Smith, 2012).

These schools place a large emphasis on teacher development and school initiatives that support student achievement (Smith, 2012). The military uses surveys and questionnaires to improve quality for service members and their families in many different aspects. Surveys are currently used in schools to collect data and improve performance. Recent surveys have deemed class size as a huge concern for students, staff and parents (Smith, 2012). Implementing surveys

into civilian schools would be an avenue to collect data on the fidelity of current practices and also to gain an understanding of the areas in which they need to improve.

Utilizing these strategies for success have aided in the success witnessed in schools that are a part of the DODEA system. Civilian schools should make an effort to network and collaborate with stakeholders at DODEA schools in an effort to identify the best methods for serving military students, especially on military bases where DODEA schools are not accessible. The provisions of ESSA, now require that schools implement tracking requirements for military students not enrolled in DODEA schools so that all schools are prepared to meet the needs of military students and they have high levels of success just as DODEA schools (Adams, 2016).

Limitations

There were some limitations involved in this study which were analysis and sampling. The analysis of student data was limited and only used to determine school performance due to there not currently being a military subgroup on test scores. There is recent literature involving the possible addition of a military subgroup to school demographics for data reporting purposes. The Every Child Achieves Act was signed into law on December 10, 2015 and serves as the nation's education law governing education policy on everything to include testing, teacher quality and school performance (Richmond, 2017). Proposals are currently being made to amend the law and create a military student identifier which would require mandatory reporting on data reports just as other demographics to include race and ethnicity, Special Education, etc. are included (Richmond, 2016). The addition of this subgroup to data reporting will allow further developments in this study to include an analysis of student data and a comparison of the performance of military subgroups.

The other limitation, was the sample selected for the study. The sample was chosen from only one district for the study and based on military family status. This affects the generalizability of the study. The problem with mobility in schools extends out to students with other demographics outside of military affiliation. Limitations exist because the only participants in this study were those affiliated with the military due to the focus of the study being the impact that military mobility can have on student achievement. Further research can investigate the strategies and supports that can be utilized with all types of mobility. When conducting research, there was a wide variety of literature on the effects of mobility in general on student achievement.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy and Theory

This study has shown the importance of all stakeholders to include families and school staff working together during times of mobility for students. Effective communication is critical in an effort to determine new ways to support our mobile military connected children with their academic and social success. The strategies outlined in the findings of this study include strategies incorporated by staff members and those that parents have seen implemented at other schools. Some strategies that were developed from the interviews in this study include: Assigning a buddy; taking families on tours of the building; accepting hand carried records that families bring in; assessing students upon arrival so that teachers can begin meeting their needs; developing peer groups with other military children; and having Military Family Life Counselors available at all campuses.

This study has shown the importance of schools developing a systematic approach to handling the issue of mobility. The study site school district has the responsibility to provide high levels of support and leadership in an effort to minimize the effects of mobility on academic success. The strategies put in place by stakeholders in schools and districts with a high

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concentration of military students may look different than those implemented at a typical public school.

When identifying the strategies that will be most effective for the military population served in the study school district, it is important to review the theories that correlate to military mobility that formed the basis of this study. Family stress theory assists in describing the stressors faced by military families during transition periods. This theory describes the difficulty that children can face during military deployments, transitions and relocations. Having this understanding will aid in identifying how to best provide these students with assistance. Although the staff members that had personal military ties understand the stress associated with the military, those other staff members that do not have personal ties can gain an understanding of the stressors faced by military students from the family stress theory. Another theory that forms the basis of this study on student mobility is the social capital theory developed by James Coleman, which mirrors the concept of human and financial capital, but it differs by showing the relationship between parents and children and the network of relationships between parents, community members, and friends that interact and help support different aspects of the family's lifestyle (Gruman, Harachi, Abbott, Catalano, & Fleming, 2008). When these social ties are broken, students' needs for development are not completely met. Parents in the study stressed how much it meant to be greeted by administration and for their children to be paired with a buddy. These strategies really made them feel welcomed and eased the transition process. These strategies aided in building social capital for the families in the study.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is another theory that is associated to student mobility and the theory includes five tiers that address the following: physiological needs, safety needs, love/belonging needs, esteem, and self-actualization (Desautels, 2014). All student needs must

be met in order for them to focus and have high achievement in school. When students are uprooted from their environment, all of the needs in the Hierarchy of Needs area effected, and it takes explicit effort to develop the needs in a new environment. Another theory to utilize of the basis for developing research based strategies includes the transition shock theory. Common symptoms of this theory include discouragement, resistance to change, and withdrawal (2014). As noted in the study, counselors can aid in reducing transitions shock and with helping the students to successfully transition. The purpose of reviewing the theories listed above is to identify successful strategies that are theoretically based and will aid in meeting the needs of military connected children during times of transition.

Recommendations for Further Research

Military families serve our country on a daily basis so it is critical that research continues to be conducted on this topic. Future research should expand district wide to determine what transition strategies are utilized on both the middle and high school levels as well. Further research should expand for this study through the collection of data from other military installations. Department of Defense Education Activity schools can be researched for specific strategies that aid in high student achievement due to their success and high levels of student academic achievement.

An effort should be made in future studies to include an even more diverse group of participants. Other demographics to include are as follows: Single parent active duty households; Dual military parents; Geographic bachelor households, or households in which the soldier relocated to another duty station without his/her family; and families with special needs children. Collecting data from military families will provide a wide range of data in support of strategies that can be implemented based on new data and research.

The opportunities for strategies to be integrated into school districts that have large populations of military connected students can be achieved by researching the needs of the families. Results from the data collection also revealed a need for school staff members to receive some form of training on the military lifestyle and how to assist students and families with transition. Future research should include conducting a needs assessment to determine what needs staff members have in becoming educated in this area. The needs assessment would give information on the types of training needed and the content that should be included. Literature should be reviewed to determine trainings that have yielded positive results for school districts that service military students.

Some of the research identified in this study was determined to be a limitation. Due to the recent changes in the Every Student Succeeds Act, more data can be collected on military student achievement in comparison to their peers due to the recent development of a military subgroup. This data will aid future studies in determining areas of weakness and have more explicit data for developing interventions to assist students. The study site district released a new military affiliation tracking system on May 12, 2018 which will allow the military subgroup state test scores beginning in 2018 to be analyzed in comparison to other subgroups. Further research on the comparison of this subgroup with other subgroups will add more relevant research to this study.

Since this was a qualitative study, a causal relationship between the strategies and achievement could not be established. Quantitative research is needed to fill this gap. This study presented strategies that will aid in increasing student success when transitioning; but further research could work to determine a systemic approach for school districts that serves as a guide for all schools and districts that service a large population of military students. A common

theme identified in this study was the importance of school administration, teachers, counselors and parents working together to reduce the number of educational challenges that mobile military children face daily and especially during times of transition. Once all of these stakeholders begin to work together on implementing a systemic approach, barriers due to frequent moves will begin to be eliminated.

Conclusion

The data collected from this study on military mobility provided helpful information on the stressors faced by young military children to include breaking social ties; living in single parent households; constant worry about their parents while they are away; making new friends; and learning a new curriculum with each move. Strategies were identified in this study that were used at different schools. However, there is a need for consistent transition strategies for all military students no matter the school that they enroll in during the school year. This study was an eye opener for the need for organizational growth. The impact that mobility has on student achievement was the focus for this study, and the research shows that it is integral for all stakeholders in the organization to have an understanding of the potential impact that fluctuating curriculums can have on student achievement over several transitions.

A systemic assessment and district resource should be utilized to determine how the students are performing and what deficits they have so that teachers can tailor instruction accordingly in a timely manner. The parents and staff members showed integrity during the interviews and were very transparent with the information that was shared. It was very reassuring to know that so many staff members in the school district have personal connections so they are able to assist students with different challenges that are faced due to their personal experiences.

District staff members to include administrators, teachers, and other school personnel play a critical role throughout each transition from duty station to duty station for the military families. I plan to share the strategies and initiatives that were discovered in this study with the district central office staff and alert them of the inconsistency with transitional strategies throughout the district. I will also bring to light the fact that there are no specific training initiatives in place to teach district staff members how to assist military students. It will be my effort to work with the district to develop a district wide initiative in which consistency can be seen to assist students transitioning throughout the school year. Developing this initiative will aid to eliminate some of the stress and worry from the parents.

As an administrator, I will also ensure that teachers are educated on the challenges faced by military children so that they will understand how to approach the families upon their arrival during different times of the school year. My research and data collected in this study will serve as a resource for the study site district to enhance practices since the district services high populations of military students. This will allow district stakeholders to address many of the challenges and barriers discussed in this study. It is my hope that information about these strategies will be shared at other schools and districts that service high populations of military students due to families moving and sharing ideas with other stakeholders in other districts.

Military service members work hard daily to serve our country and put their lives on the line for our freedom. While doing this, they should not have to stress over whether or not their children are receiving a quality education or have supports available when they move to a new area. It is integral that all educators have the mindset of providing a quality education to all students and have strategies in place for our mobile military connected children.

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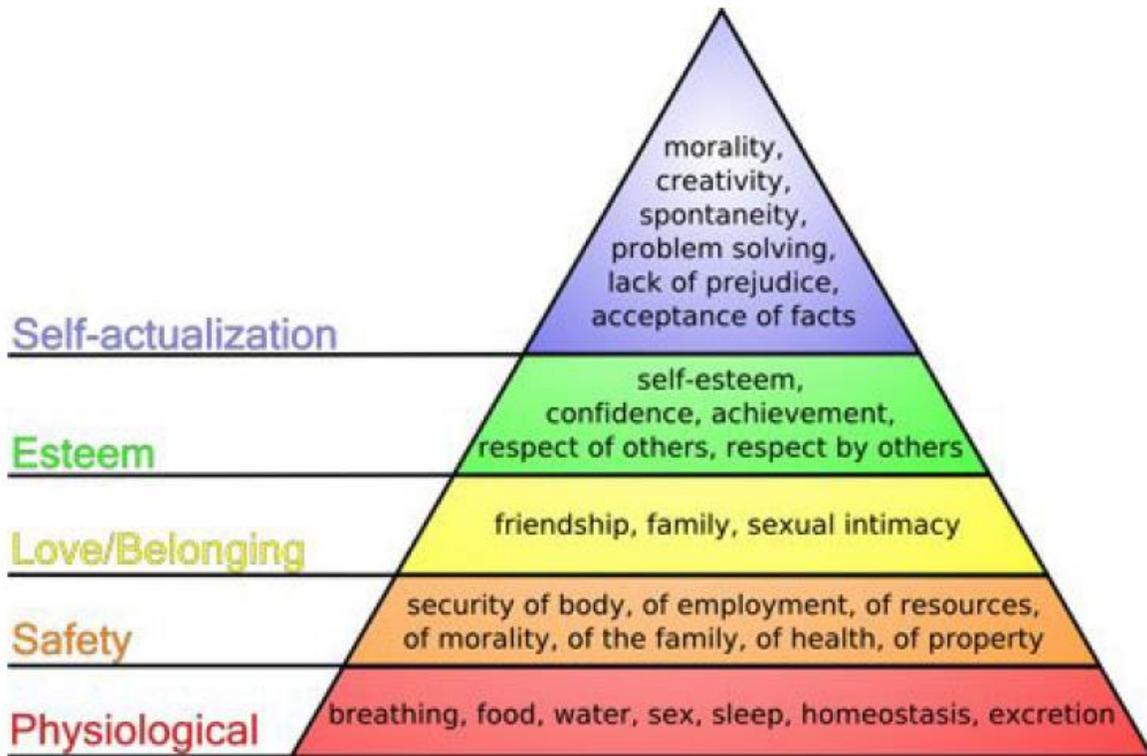
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Appendix B: Demographics of Interviewees in the Study

Table 2

Demographics of Interviewees in the Study

Participant Type	Gender	Age	Race	Years of Military Affiliation for Parents	Military Affiliation	Years working with military students for school personnel
Administrator						
A1	Female	31	White		N/A	10
A2	Female	61	White		Spouse	22
A3	Male	45	White		N/A	19
Counselors						
C1	Female	32	White		N/A	12
C2	Female	34	African American		Spouse	10
Teachers						
T1	Female	67	African American		Spouse	31
T2	Female	38	Hispanic		Prior Service	12
T3	Female	32	Hispanic		Prior Service	10

	Gender	Age	Race			
T4	Female	33	White		N/A	10
T5	Female	55	White		N/A	11
T6	Male	49	Hispanic/White		Prior service	15
T7	Female	62	White		Spouse	20
Paraprofessionals						
PP1	Female	21	African American		N/A	1
PP2	Female	21	Hispanic		N/A	1
PP3	Female	28	Hispanic		Spouse	4
Parents						
P1	Female	24	White	2	Spouse	
P2	Female	42	White	21	Spouse	
P3	Female	32	Hispanic	3	Spouse	
P4	Female	32	White	9	Spouse	
P5	Male	38	White	10	Spouse	
P6	Female	29	African American	8	Spouse	
P7	Female	28	African American	8	Spouse	
P8	Female	31	Asian	3	Spouse	
P9	Female	48	African American	25	Spouse	

P10	Female	47	Hispanic	22	Spouse	
P11	Female	47	Pacific Islander	27	Spouse	
P12	Female	33	Hispanic	1	Spouse	
P13	Female	25	African American	5	Spouse	
P14	Male	30	Hispanic	4	Spouse	
P15	Female	29	White	7	Spouse	

Concordia University – Portland Institutional Review Board Approved: July 20, 2017 ; will Expire: July 20, 2018

CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title: The Effects of Military Transition on Military Students in grades 3rd-5th Grade
Principal Investigator: Courtney Williams
Research Institution: Concordia University
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sally Evans
Purpose and what you will be doing:
The purpose of this interview is to determine the effects that mobility for students affiliated with the military can have on student achievement in public schools. Strategies will be researched to aid in improving the achievement of students in public schools that are affiliated or connected to the military. We expect approximately 30 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on November 4, 2017 and end enrollment on January 20, 2018. To be in the study, you will participate in an interview with the principal investigator. The interview will consist of questions to gather information on the current practices in your school district that are utilized with students that are mobile due to the military. The information will be used to evaluate current practices and determine what practices will benefit transition for these students. The interview should take less than 30 minutes of your time.

Risks:
There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside my personal files. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will refer to your data with a code that only the principal investigator knows links to you. This way, your identifiable information will not be stored with the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:
Information you provide will help to determine strategies for enhancing the educational experience for students affiliated with the military and that experience high mobility rates. You could benefit by bringing awareness to the needs of military students in your school district.

Confidentiality:
This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety. Audio recordings will occur to ensure the fidelity of information. The recordings will be protected and kept in a password protected and

encrypted computer. The recordings will be transcribed, and while transcribing any personally identifiable information that is thought to identify you or your child by name or other personal identifying characteristics will be stricken from the transcript. The recording will be deleted as soon as possible after transcription. The other study documents will be kept for three years after the study ends, and then deleted.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Courtney Williams at [Researcher email redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____ _____
Participant Name Date

_____ _____
Participant Signature Date

Appendix D: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University- Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

_____
Digital Signature

Courtney Williams_____
Name (Typed)

_May 31, 2018_____
Date