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They Serve, Too! Supporting Military- Connected Children in Civilian Run Public Schools

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

THEY SERVE, TOO! SUPPORTING MILITARY-CONNECTED CHILDREN IN CIVILIAN-
RUN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By

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I dedicate this dissertation to my mother Rita Powell, I admire your strength, courage and resilience. You have taught me to never give up no matter how dismal the situation may seem. This journey was possible because you gave all of you, so I could become me! I love you, and I am forever grateful for your sacrifices.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose.....	4
Research Questions.....	6
Study Design Overview	6
Study Site Overview and Feasibility	7
Significance of the Study	9
Summary.....	10
CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND ANALYSIS	11
Known and Unknown Challenges	12
Previous Studies Focusing on Military-Connected Students.....	12
Military-Connected Children and Public-School Districts	13
Frequent Transition as a Challenge.....	14
Environmental Context and Assimilation	15
Geographical Factors and Implications for Support.....	16
Supportive Communities, Well-Being and Cultural Capital.....	17
Let Us Hear What They Have to Say	18
Orientation Within the Broader Landscape	19
Description of the Local Context.....	21
Summary.....	26
CHAPTER 3 INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH	28
Introduction.....	28

Methodology	29
Research Questions	30
Research Design Roadmap	30
Study Participants/Sampling	31
Data Collection	33
Data Analysis	38
The Researcher and Positionality Statement	40
Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations.....	42
Limitations	43
Summary	45
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND DISSEMINATION PLAN	46
Introduction.....	46
Study Summary.....	46
Study Context	46
Purpose of the Study	47
Research Questions.....	48
Methodological Approach	48
Presentation of Findings	50
Research Question 1: What Are the Experiences of Military-Connected Children as They Experience Frequent Transitions?	50
Research Question 2: What Are the Support Programs Available at Belvedere High School for Military-Connected Children, and How Are They Used in Response to Challenges Experienced?	61
Research Question 3: What Are Military-Connected Students’ Perceptions of the Support They Receive?	65
Discussion of Findings.....	70

Recommendations for Practice	71
Provide More Information on Existing Programs for Military-Connected Children	72
Provide a Variety of Programs on Life Skills, including Social Skills	72
Create More Awareness of Available Sports and Clubs at Belvedere School	72
Enhance Existing Partnerships with Belvedere High School and the School Liaison Office and Youth/Teen Center, Located on the Military Base at Fort Powell	73
Advocate for Safe/Supervised Social Media Use by Military-Connected Students	73
Increase, Support and Market Peer Support Group for Military-Connected Students.....	73
Parents Model Positive Social Skills and Encourage Children to Participate in Clubs, Sports and Societies, and Peer Support Groups	74
Recommendations for Future Study	74
Conclusion	75
Dissemination Plan	76
APPENDIX A LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT.....	78
APPENDIX B PARENT PERMISSION LETTER.....	82
APPENDIX C INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	86
APPENDIX D RECRUITMENT EMAIL.....	88
APPENDIX E IRB APPROVAL.....	89
REFERENCES	91
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	98

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Student Demographics Breakdown	32
Table 2. Participants' Characteristics	47
Table 3. Study Dissemination Plan.....	77

ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in studying military-connected children (Aronson & Perkins, 2012; Chawla & Solinas-Suanders, 2011; DePedro et al., 2011). Despite being the subject of much research, there exists a significant gap in the research literature concerning the voices of military-connected children. The 2019 Demographic Profile of the Military Community indicated approximately 1.6 U.S. million military-connected children worldwide, with 55.7% of the 1.6 million representatives of school-age children (DoD Demographics Report, 2019). As such, relocations resulting in frequent transitions for military-connected students have become commonplace. On average, military-connected students move at least 30% more than their civilian peers (Bradshaw et al., 2010). These frequent transitions were represented at Belvedere High School (pseudonym), located near Fort Powell (pseudonym) with a high military student population in the Northeastern United States. This study utilized semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore the challenges experienced by military-connected children due to frequent transitions and their perceptions of the support they receive to mitigate those challenges. Six themes developed from a thematic analysis: Military-Connected Children Experienced Various Challenges During Frequent Transitions; Military-Connected Children Displayed Resilience Amidst Frequent Transitions; Military-Connected Children Perceived Counseling Support Programs as Beneficial in Addressing Academic and Social Issues; Military-Connected Children Perceived the School Administration at Belvedere to be Responsive to Their Needs; Military-Connected Children Perceived Parents and Siblings as the Most Significant Support System, and Military-Connected Children Appreciated Peer Support in Navigating the New School. Study participants perceived the available support programs at Belvedere adequate

for meeting their needs and provide insights and recommendations on additional support programs that they believe could improve their overall experiences.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

Military-connected children experience frequent transitions between school districts. The frequency of such transitions necessitates evidence for how to best serve this population of students. A keen focus on the availability and use of the support programs offered helped to reveal strategies used by school districts, schools, and educators to help the military-connected student alleviate transition woes. The rate and frequency at which military-connected children transition between school districts in the K-12 setting almost triple that of their non-military peers. Some authorities on the subject of military-connected children transitions have put these transitions into perspective, indicating that military-connected children face relocation about six to nine times before they graduate (Astor, 2011; Berg, 2008; Ruff & Keim, 2014). Military-connected children who engage in frequent relocations are prone to disruptions in their educational experiences and find it difficult to acclimate to their new school environment.

Consequently, frequent relocations place transition burdens on military-connected children and require them to adapt quickly to varying situations. While frequent moves do not only apply to military-connected children, on average, military-connected children move at least 30% more often than their civilian peers (Bradshaw et al., 2010). These frequent moves can be difficult for the family in general as they navigate life, most often away from the civilian population (Railey, 2016). It can be especially challenging for military-connected children who often have to leave friends behind, and with this knowledge, many simply choose not to make friends. Vernberg (1990) posited that "highly mobile students tend to report having fewer close friends" (as cited in Bradshaw et al., 2010, p. 85). Military-connected children often have little advance warning of moves, making them even more challenging, especially if the school year

has already started in the new location and norming groups are already formed. The lack or interruption of this stabilizing factor that schools create in military-connected children's lives could lead to additional stressors. The terms "military-connected children" and "military dependent children" were used interchangeably in this dissertation and are defined as official dependents of active-duty military personnel, national guard, or military veterans. In-transition refers to military-connected children required to move with their military parents each time there is a military duty assignment change.

Recurrent transitions expose children to stress associated with the constant requirement of adapting to a new school environment (Aronson & Perkins, 2012; Harrison & Vannest, 2008; Ruff & Keim, 2014). Academic achievement is also of concern because of disruptions (Engel et al., 2010). Navigating the educational landscape is a task with which military-connected children contend, as academic requirements vary. Adapting to new state curriculum requirements, the new school's cultural expectations, and different instructional techniques could collectively negatively impact students' academic performance (Burkam et al., 2009; Grigg, 2012; Hanushek et al., 2004). Generally, highly mobile students are most at risk of experiencing negative impacts on their academic performance. The correlation of negative academic performance due to frequent mobility was supported by Mehana and Reynolds's (2004) meta-analysis in which the authors examined 26 studies concerning school mobility and achievement. The findings of this meta-analysis support other studies that have led to findings regarding negative correlations between high rates of mobility and academic performance (Reynolds et al., 2009; Engel et al., 2010; Heinlein & Shinn, 2000; LeBoeuf & Fantuzzo, 2018; Welsh, 2016).

Little is known about the long-term impact of non-structural moves where military-connected students change duty stations with their active-duty military parent(s). Non-structural

moves result from residential mobility that governs military-connected children (Schwartz et al., 2015). Federal guidelines resulting in loss of some services and unique accommodations is another consequence for such moves. The transitions that are experienced by military-connected children sometimes expose them to vulnerabilities such as diminished academic achievement, conflict in peer-teacher relationships, difficulty accessing educational services (e.g., special education accommodations), and absenteeism (Jagger & Laderer, 2014; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Williams, 2013).

A focused effort on partnerships aimed at providing support for military-connected children can be viewed as a matter of national security. During the transition process, supporting military-connected children enables military personnel to be mission-ready without the worry of unavailable programs and services. In 2011, the Department of Defense awarded through the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) \$20 million to nine organizations to support mentoring programs and other youth services for military-connected children (U.S. Department of Justice Archives, 2018).

Research on initiatives to limit the negative impacts of frequent transition for military-connected children is scarce. The majority of the studies conducted on military-connected children have focused on issues relating to the deployment of a military parent (Aronson & Perkins, 2012; Easterbrooks et al., 2013; Esqueda et al., 2012; Williams, 2013), mental health (Bonar, 2016; Cramm et al., 2019), educational outcomes and academic performance (Edwards, 2019; Esposito et al., 2014; Guzman, 2014; Weisman, 2012), and the impact of high mobility on educational outcomes for military-connected children (Biernat & Jax, 1999; Garner et al., 2014; Railey, 2016). The root of the problem, however, is that frequent transitions and exposure to varying states, and sometimes federal educational requirements, are the precursor for the

challenges experienced by military-connected students. While previous researchers have provided considerable insight, there is a substantial knowledge gap regarding military-connected students' perceptions of the challenges and the support needed to help them navigate those challenges. In essence, a clear need was indicated for learning from the children themselves.

The researcher of the current study sought to bring the children's voices into the conversation due to the limited empirical studies that have examined military-connected children's perceptions concerning available support services. Allowing the military-connected children within the local context to provide insight into how to support them best helped to ensure that school administrators do not miss opportunities to meet their needs. School districts with a population of military-connected children can model programs from the suggestions of the military-connected children, which could then be scaled up if successful. Military installations in which many military-connected children reside could use the information to strengthen existing support programs and create stronger partnerships with school districts that fully support the military-connected children.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of military-connected students associated with frequent transitions. The researcher also aimed to amplify military-connected students' voices by gaining insight into the support available to them in civilian-run public schools to assist in navigating the challenges associated with frequent transitions. A vast majority of military-connected children are highly mobile and must move with the active-duty parent(s) each time an order is received for a permanent change of station (PCS; Williams, 2013). As if moving repeatedly was not enough, there are varying requirements in curriculum and other policies and procedures with which they have to contend each time a move

occurs. Repeated moves present a challenge and sometimes even barriers to their educational experiences. They try to operate within the receiving states and school districts' parameters concerning the academic standards and expectations. Transitions and differences in school district requirements are not the only issues at play. Military-connected children also tend to experience challenges with building solid relationships as these are often cut short due to moving. Ruff and Keim (2014) stated that “Many students describe that the inevitable ending of close relationships led them to avoid making close connections with peers at new schools” (p. 105). The researcher examined the support available to these students as they navigate the different challenges.

Further, the researcher explored how military-connected students at Belvedere High School (pseudonym) perceive the support programs available to them to acclimate to the new school environment. The study amplified the voices of military-connected students, gaining insight into their perceptions concerning the challenges they experience and their thoughts on the existing support services. It was essential to include their non-military-connected peers to learn their perceptions in order to compare the two groups. The comparison of the groups provided additional insight and strength to the study by indicating the similarities and differences regarding how each student population perceives school-level supports.

The researcher hoped that, from this study, school districts, administrators, and educators involved in the educating of military-connected students would use the results to develop more robust and comprehensive support programs and services. The aim of these programs and services is to adequately help military-connected students mitigate their challenges due to frequent transitions.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences of military-connected children as they experience frequent transitions?

RQ2: What are the support programs available at Belvedere High School for military-connected children, and how are they used in response to challenges experienced?

RQ3: What are military-connected students' perceptions of the support they receive?

Study Design Overview

The aim of the current exploratory-descriptive qualitative study was to provide military-connected children with an outlet to share their perceptions of the available support programs.

This research shed new light on the broader issue of the highly mobile nature of military-connected children. The research was centered on the constructivism philosophical perspective to ensure the voices of the military-connected children were amplified and their experiences related to frequent transitions were understood. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) highlighted that “At its most fundamental level, constructivism is the notion that knowledge lies in the minds of individuals, who construct what they know on the basis of their own experiences” (p. 29).

The exploratory research model was best for the current study to allow the researcher to uncover aspects of transitions contributing to military-connected children's significant challenges due to ongoing relocations. Examining the issue through the exploratory lens most adequately addressed the problem of practice rather than the implementation or outcome model. The study participants were the priority, and the use of this approach allowed for the development of understanding regarding how they construct meaning from their experiences. One of the motivations for employing the exploratory model for this research was that it creates a starting

point from which more conclusive research may develop. The aim of the study was not to provide definite conclusions but to instead gain a deeper understanding of the issue presented.

In order to conduct the study using the exploratory model, it was necessary to interview military-connected children to gain insight on their perspectives. The majority of the military-connected children who participated in this study reside in the military installation Fort Powell (pseudonym). Others may not live on base at Fort Powell but nearby. All study participants attend Belvedere High School (pseudonym). The researcher obtained informed consent prior to interviewing military-connected children. Interviews were used to gather information and explore military-connected children's transition experiences and the support they receive as a result. Allowing military-connected children to share their perspectives resulted in useful strategies for mitigating these challenges using the proper support programs.

Study Site Overview and Feasibility

Exploring the issues concerning military-connected children in transition requires access to military-connected children. The selected study site was located close to Fort Powell in the Northeastern United States. The school was founded in 1959 and initially served grades 7-12; currently, it caters to students in grades 9-12. Fort Powell began operations almost 5 decades earlier, representing a pillar in the community. The majority of the military-connected students in attendance live at Fort Powell and are fully encapsulated by the military-connected lifestyle. The installation can serve as a self-contained community with all the necessities available on location. This lifestyle requires the flexibility of military families in support of the military's missions. Consequently, schedules change without much notice. Two-parent households can quickly be reduced to single-parent households for months at a time. Also, military-connected children in single-parent households may need to change states and live with other relatives

while their parents are away on military duties. According to the Military Demographics Report (2019), there were 15,659 military-connected children in the state of the study site. Of those 15,659 children, 9,924 (63%) were assigned to Fort Powell, which directly serves Belvedere High School. Of the total student population at Belvedere High School, 66% of current students are military-connected, and 34% are community residents. The school's student management system (SMS), SchoolTool, collects military-connected student data. The data includes all academic performance, attendance, discipline, and enrollment trends. During the onboarding process, data are collected from the students' previous schools.

The curriculum at Belvedere High School is multifaceted. The programmatic offerings are rigorous and include core academic courses, enrichment programs, and college classes for satisfying dual enrollment requirements. Each student at Belvedere High School meets individually with their assigned school counselor to discuss their upcoming year's schedule. A focus area during course selection is the achievement of the individual student's career goals. The Director of Guidance and Counseling stated, "We offer opportunity; for getting career training or college credits before students graduate. A solid education is a bedrock for any career, and it is our goal to make sure the course plans are reflective of that" (Personal communication, 2020). The 2019 graduation rate for Belvedere High School was 95%. Of the students who graduated, 61% went to college and university, 30% went into regular employment, 5% joined the military, and information is unknown for the remaining 4%. For military-connected students, the graduation rate was 97% compared to the overall graduation rate of 95% and 94% for non-military-connect students (nces.ed.gov, 2018-2019; Personal communication, 2020).

Keen attention to academic performance serves a dual role in that it supports the school's educational goals as well as the overall district goal of providing students with the resources and

a climate that will help them thrive emotionally, socially and academically. Additional insight for academic data obtained from the State's school data report card provides a holistic view of students' academic performance in attendance at this school. This data source was relevant, timely, and disaggregated by demographics. It includes achievement data for military-connected students compared to non-military students.

Significance of the Study

Research findings on the support programs available to military-connected children at civilian-run schools strongly suggest that additional exploration is needed (Aronson & Perkins, 2012; Chandra et al., 2010; Garcia et al., 2015). From the findings of this qualitative study, the researcher explored the challenges experienced by military-connected children and examined the support programs' availability and use to mitigate the challenges. Further, the researcher explored how military-connected children perceive support programs. The results of this study may have implications for school administrators, the military installations, the school liaison office located at the military installation, parents of military-connected children, and, ultimately, the military-connected children. By exploring this phenomenon from the perceptions of the military-connected children, the hope was that stakeholders will leverage opportunities to channel resources to the local context.

Previous studies have failed to include an essential factor: the perceptions of military-connected children. The voices of military-connected children are an integral part of the conversation and are useful in addressing the problem of practice and adding to the knowledge gap in the research literature. Amplifying the voices of military-connected children allows them to present ideas to tackle the challenges they face. The approach may open up new areas that school administrators had previously missed or even ignored as an area to channel support. Once

ideas for support programs are generated from the military-connected children and successfully tested, they may become models for evidence-based practices. Documented evidence-based practices for support programs are rare for military-connected children in civilian-run schools (Esqueda et al., 2012). Furthermore, the frequent transitions experienced by military-connected children enable them to provide insight that ultimately aligns with the school's overall purpose of providing an equitable educational experience for all students.

Summary

There exists a plethora of research on military-connected children. Through this particular study, the researcher extended that body of research by examining student perceptions of support programs. While researchers' fascination with this unique student population is evident, previous researchers have neglected to examine input from military-connected children regarding what programs would best support them. This study's strong point was that the military-connected students' voices were the focus and contribute to the research literature.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

Perspectives put forth by previous research literature on military-connected children set the foundation for this current project. An examination of the existing research literature provided information about military-connected children in public schools, which is presented in this chapter. These topics were as follows: frequent transitions as a challenge, environmental context, assimilation, impact of deployment, geographical factors and implications for support, the correlation between supportive communities and well-being, cultural capital, and social networks. The topics presented an opportunity to listen to the military-connected children. In this chapter, the researcher dissects the literature concerning these topics to evaluate the study within the broader landscape. A description of the local setting establishes an understanding of the occurrences that necessitate this study before concluding with the implications it presents for stakeholders.

For almost 2 decades now, especially after the start of the Iraq war, increased interest in military-connected children resulted in numerous studies regarding this student population. Researchers such as Aronson and Perkins (2012), Chawla and Solinas-Saunders (2011), and De Pedro et al. (2011), among others, have explored a variety of topics focused on military-connected children. Previous researchers on military-connected children have described the military-connected student population, yet more information is needed to support them fully. It is useful to indicate areas of the research literature that illuminated the military-connected student population's significant demands. Doing so may help program planners and policymakers better understand areas where additional support is needed to enhance the educational experiences of military-connected students.

Previous studies have paved the way for additional exploration into the lives of military-connected children. Nevertheless, the researchers have failed to provide an opportunity for military-connected children to enter the conversation. In this study, the researcher examined the gap in the literature regarding military-connected students' perceptions of the school-level support programs and services available to them.

Known and Unknown Challenges

This chapter includes an overview of the conceptual framework that was used to examine and better understand the challenges faced by military-connected students. There was a particular focus on the support services offered at Belvedere High School to help navigate the known challenges. Known challenges are defined as the challenges that all military-connected children experience, such as frequent transitions, the need to adapt to a new environment, and forming new relationships. Similarly, unknown challenges such as course placement, delay of school records, and educational accommodations that differ from the previous local context were examined in the study. The researcher intended to explore the support services that include, but are not limited to, the Warrior to Warrior (W2W) program, lunch buddy program, tutoring through cooperation with a local university, positive behavior initiative, and mental health counseling. As part of the study, the researcher offered an open invitation to military-connected students to share their perceptions of these support services. In this chapter, the researcher examined previous research regarding these issues.

Previous Studies Focusing on Military-Connected Students

“I remember the smell of airports, new school new faces. Hanging up belongings each few years in new spaces. Leaving old friends, and meeting the new, piecing my life together with cheap glue. Should I stay, or should I go? Do I even have a choice? How do you feel about moving here? Do I even have a voice?” – Excerpt of Poem by a Military-Connected Child (Jill, 2019).

The researcher began this section with an excerpt from a poem written by a military-connected child. The portion of the poem shown here illustrates how this particular child feels about frequent transitions. The question about not having a voice is a clear reminder that it is vital to include military-connected children in conversations concerning how to best support them. The researcher aimed to provide an opportunity for military-connected children to contribute to the research literature gap concerning the challenges they experience and the support they need to navigate those challenges.

Military-Connected Children and Public-School Districts

The researcher begins the literature review by examining the evidence on military-connected children in civilian-run public schools. Military-connected children attend school districts throughout the United States. Knowing this fact gives the reader enough information to understand how their high mobility rate presents a challenge to them and the schools they attend. The research that follows directly relates to the study as it reveals this student population's predicaments in navigating the K-12 setting. On average, military-connected children typically spend 2 to 3 years in one location before relocating to the next (cited in Aronson & Perkins, 2012). The move, known as a Permanent Change of Station (PCS), dictates and requires military-connected children's adaptability, especially in education settings. The frequency of movements by military-connected children exposes them to stressors not typically experienced by their civilian peers (Aronson & Perkins, 2012; Chandra et al., 2010; Garcia et al., 2015; Ruff & Keim, 2014). The frequent transitions are not without challenges; proactive measures from schools are necessary for providing support programs to help mitigate the difficulties encountered.

Frequent Transition as a Challenge

One of the significant challenges for military-connected children is the frequency of transitions. Previous researchers have focused on a wide range of issues affecting military-connected students, including mobility (Berg, 2008; Jagger & Laderer, 2014; Rippe, 2012; Welsh, 2016). The rate of relocation requires students to be adaptable and navigate disruptions in their educational experiences. Moves occur year-round in military families, and the timing of those moves may increase or lessen their impact. For example, moving during the summer creates fewer educational disruptions than moving in the middle of a semester. In a systematic study by the State of Texas, students who moved later in the school year were more susceptible to significant disruptions in their academic progress. These findings were according to a study of mobility in Texas Education Agency (1997). The report includes an examination of the literature on mobility broadly and not specifically for military-connected students. It includes a review of 12 previous studies as well as a compilation of data from over 1,000 school districts and 6,000 campuses throughout Texas.

While moves can be challenging, the type of school students attend impacts their experience of moving to a new school. Marchant and Medway (1987) found that students who moved schools from base to base did not experience significant disruptions in their academic performance. Marchant and Medway argued that "the curriculum of military base schools is fairly standard from one base to another so that changing schools doesn't involve as significant curriculum changes as it does in non-military schools" (p. 293). Comparing military-connected children attending Department of Defense Educational Activity (DoDEA) schools on the base versus civilian-run schools can explain assimilation in different environmental contexts. The military-connected students within this study had all been exposed to frequent transitions,

requiring them to assimilate in varying degrees to the local environmental context. To that end, hearing from students and learning about their perceptions regarding what support is necessary to more adequately assimilate to civilian-run schools proved invaluable.

Environmental Context and Assimilation

Successful assimilation requires effective school-community partnerships, namely the local school and the military school liaison office (Garner et al., 2014). A purposeful partnership between the school and the military community may help effectively support this student population's needs. Allen and Staley (2007) suggested that schools create a safe and supportive learning environment for students and proposed using a buddy system for students new to the school as a support mechanism. Several other researchers have lauded the benefits of student-to-student interactions or buddy systems, stating that it may help reduce the anxiety faced by military-connected students who are new to a school (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Elfman, 2017; Harrison & Vannest, 2008; Mmari et al., 2010).

Peer support groups are more prevalent for military-connected students attending DoDEA schools than for students in civilian-run public schools (Brendel et al., 2013). School personnel in civilian-run public schools might be unaware of military-connected children's unique needs (Esqueda et al., 2012). DoDEA provides access to resources and information that civilian-run schools can utilize to support military-connected children (Shaw, 2020). When schools intentionally use the available resources to focus on military-connected children's unique needs, support for this student population may be more effective, and they may adapt more quickly within their new school.

Geographical Factors and Implications for Support

Proper support is essential in order for students to seamlessly assimilate to a new school after a PCS. Resource availability is as equally important as knowing and accessing those resources (Jagger & Laderer, 2014). While available, some families may not access the resources due to what Berg (2008) described as geographic dispersion. Geographic dispersion occurs when a military family lives far from the base. Families that reside off base may not know the support services available (Buehrle, 2014; Kudler & Porter, 2013). Each military base provides educational services through the school liaison office to ensure smooth transitions into the local schools connected to the base (www.militaryonesource.org). For students with unique learning challenges who may require special accommodations through provisions of a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP), the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) facilitates easier transitions to the local schools (Annual Education Issue, 2012; Jagger & Laderer, 2014). The Department of Defense recognizes the need for educational equity and formed partnerships with different educational organizations to provide additional tutoring for military-connected children at no extra cost to them (www.military.tutor.com). Collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of America provides educational services to military-connected children both on and off the military base (www.bgca.org). For military families who reside on the base, accessing these services is relatively easy.

The Department of Defense (DoD) housing policy, however, is such that more than two-thirds of military families reside in local communities close to the base (U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). While living in local communities, military families rely on those communities' social organizations and informal networks to gather educational resources (Mancini et al., 2005). Reliance on local community networks contributes to a

diminishing sense of community on the base as a source of connection and support (Bowen et al., 2003). The responsibility then falls on the school to adequately support the military-connected children and fill the gap of providing support not otherwise offered or accessed on the military base. Not only is it in the student's best interest to receive support services, but schools also benefit from these services. Researchers have presented the importance of collaboration between the military community and public schools (Aronson & Perkins, 2012; Benbenishty & Astor, n.d.; Buehrle, 2014). Such partnerships are instrumental in streamlining support during and after transitions with the singular focus of enhancing military-connected children's well-being in public schools.

Supportive Communities, Well-Being and Cultural Capital

As school transitions continue, it becomes critical to understand how these transitions affect student well-being. Measuring military-connected children's well-being is an area of interest for researchers, school administrators, and policymakers and is useful in providing practical tools that readily meet students' transitional needs (Garner & Moots, 2014). Findings from current literature include that when military families experience increased social connections within their communities, especially following a transition, they are more likely to experience a sense of well-being (O'Neal et al., 2018). Williamson et al. (2018) conducted a systematic literature review that directly compared the well-being of military and non-military connected children as measured by the impact of familial military service. The researchers found only a few differences between the military and non-military connected children. Those military-connected children with deployed family members and older siblings in the military had more difficulties with transitions and adjustments. They did not, however, have any other substantial detriments to their well-being compared to their civilian peers. The current researcher argues,

though, that the authors of the studies reviewed by Williamson et al. (2018) overlooked the importance of the support programs available that enhance well-being by not including such programs as a measure. Thus, the understanding of precisely how support factors into military-connected children's well-being based on this systematic review's findings remains incomplete. An opportunity exists to contribute to the research literature and facilitate the development of the military-connected child's cultural capital.

In the context of navigating the cultural environment within the school, cultural capital is knowing how to make the school work to support the students. Having such knowledge is fundamental to how socially connected the student becomes in a new school environment (Lareau, 2015). Possession of cultural capital further unlocks access to valuable learning opportunities (Convertino, 2015). Several demands are placed on military-connected children by the education system, their parents, and even the military community. Knowing how to navigate cultural norms within their institutions is beneficial. Lareau (2015) conducted a 20-year longitudinal study that began with 10-year-old children and uncovered the benefits of cultural capital in obtaining access to valuable resources such as support programs in schools. The study's findings regarding knowledge, expertise, and cultural skills for navigating institutions can also apply to military-connected students as they transition between schools. Ultimately, the goal is to amplify the voices of the military-connected children in the research literature.

Let Us Hear What They Have to Say

Listening to the military-connected children is pivotal for adequately supporting them by designing the right support programs to meet their needs (Gidman et al., 2011). Student voices as part of the process encourage decision makers to be reflective and develop workable solutions with a limited top-down approach (Gamlem & Smith, 2013). The research justifies the need for

school districts, administrators, and educators entrusted with military-connected students' educational well-being to take the initiative or perhaps a different approach for developing the support program offerings by including the perspectives of the students who use them.

Orientation Within the Broader Landscape

The Demographic Profile of the Military Community (2019) report indicated that there were approximately 1.3 million active component military personnel and more than 1 million serving in the reserve component. Of the identified military personnel, 32.2% are married with children, and 5.9% are single with children. The report shows that in 2019 there were 1.6 million U.S. military-connected children worldwide. Of the 1.6 million military-connected children, most were school-age, representing 55.7% of the 1.6 million (DoD Demographics Report, 2019). Relocations become an integral and expected part of the military family's lifestyle. With every PCS, families' adaptability levels in various areas are once again tested (Shaw, 2019).

PCS moves are laden with challenges of their own. Every U.S. military installation, however, offers the School Liaison Office (SLO) to help families navigate their new location's educational landscape. Collaborations between Belvedere High School and the SLO of Fort Powell occur regularly to support military-connected students. The SLO can provide incoming families with the local school's enrollment, registration, and documentation requirement process to get them started. At the start of the school year each fall, the School Liaison Officer meets with school administrators and educators and provides professional development workshops. The aim of the workshop is to help inform school personnel about the challenges that incoming military-connected students may face and refine strategies for supporting them. During this session, information regarding any new base initiatives or policy reforms is outlined. Within the

SLO, additional school support services are available to point parents new to the base in the direction of educational resources.

The Fort Powell military installation, recognizing that military-connected children face challenges with academics and assimilation at Belvedere High School, collaborated with the school district to mitigate those challenges through the School Liaison Officer. Encouraging engagement between the SLO and schools is an initiative to create community partnerships within the broader education and policymaking landscape.

The policymaking environment often determines the functioning of the educational landscape. The Department of Defense (2019) established the USA 4 Military Families Initiative, a foundational effort to stabilize military-families' overall challenges as they transition between duty stations. Fundamentally, the initiative's key objective was to engender an understanding of the obstacles military-connected children experience because of frequent transitions and to enact policies to limit the impact (Berg, 2008). Two key points of the USA 4 Military Families Initiative aimed at supporting the educational needs of military-connected students and facilitating a smooth transition between states: (a) temporary waiver of residence requirement for advance school enrollment and (b) virtual school enrollments in the receiving state (<https://www.statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil>).

On a broader scale, in 2008, the U.S. Department of Education established the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (ICEOMC) to streamline state education policies in order to support military-connected children. All 50 states are now part of the ICEOMC. The ICEOMC focuses specifically on the prompt transfer of records, course placement and enrollment, graduation requirements, and other administrative policies such as waiving deadlines for after school activities and other extracurricular activities to allow military-

connected students to participate (Railey, 2016). This coordination did not exist before 2008 (Esqueda et al., 2012).

The federal education policy reforms of the ICEOMC and the USA 4 Military Families Initiative set the stage for compliance of the Belvedere school district. The State has already adopted the ICEOMC, and the school district utilizes the mandates outlined. The State in which this study was conducted, however, has taken no action on the USA 4 Military Families Initiative. In fact, no state in the northeastern United States has adopted this initiative or indicated a legislative direction to do so.

Description of the Local Context

The local context of this study was Belvedere High School, the only high school within the school district, which is located in a rural agricultural area in the northeast United States. The school district comprises eight schools all within minutes of each other and close to Fort Powell. The students attending Belvedere High School are a mixture of local students from the community and military-connected students living at Fort Powell and surrounding areas. The area is known for its brutal winters that run for 6 months out of the year, with very little to do in the surrounding area. For students in grades 9-12, Belvedere becomes the center of their universe. Belvedere has three school administrators: the principal, assistant principal, and athletic director. The school employs 70 full-time teachers and five teacher's aides.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019) shows that Belvedere High School is a Title I school. For the 2018-2019 school year, 263 students were eligible for free lunch and 154 for reduced-price lunch, representing 50.4% of the total number of students. The demographic breakdown of students enrolled at the time of this study is as follows: White 71.6%, Hispanic/Latino 11.4%, Black 9.7%, Asian or Native Hawaiian/other

Pacific Islanders, 4.1%, Multiracial 2.4%, and American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.8%. There are 860 students currently enrolled at this school, and 66% of them are military-connected students. Typically, military-connected students spend just 2 to 3 years at this school due to their military affiliation before transitioning to another school in a different state or a foreign country. The school's support services aim to create an environment where military-connected students' educational experiences are similar to those of their nonmilitary-connected peers.

The available support programs are open to all students in attendance at the school. One of the most notable programs is the Warrior to Warrior (W2W) program. The name "Warrior" is not military affiliated; it is the name of the school's teams. The aim of this program is to connect current students with incoming students to help them acclimate to the new environment. Part of the process involves partnering student volunteers with new students for at least 2 weeks to show them around the campus. The student-to-student support includes walking the new student to their lockers and demonstrating how to open them. The peer shows the new student the lunchroom, library, guidance office, and gym and is available to answer questions until the new student becomes familiar with the environment.

The diverse curriculum at Belvedere exposes students to a rich mixture of core academic courses and enrichment programs. A strong emphasis is placed on academics while simultaneously exposure to various extracurricular activities, ranging from clubs and athletics to robotics and agriculture, is encouraged. There are 24 varsity athletic teams and 10 junior varsity teams. There is no waiting period for military-connected students who are new to the school; they can participate in extracurricular activities as soon as they enroll.

The guidance and counseling department has four guidance counselors. Students are assigned to the guidance counselor based on their last names; typically, all students can meet

individually with their counselor to map out class schedules for the upcoming school year. Guidance counselors also provide a range of other services. For example, in grades 11 and 12, students receive assistance in preparing for college entrance exams, assistance in applying for financial aid for college, and up-to-date college and career information (Hynes, personal communication, February 13, 2020).

Due to a high population of military-connected students, through collaboration with the military-installation, Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLC) are available onsite at the school and Fort Powell to help with military-connected students' school or life-related difficulties. Information shared with MFLC is confidential unless there is a reason to believe the student will harm themselves or others.

At present, the main challenges for students at Belvedere High School are meeting the academic expectations and assimilation into social networks. School administrators have recognized these issues and responded by designing several programs to help students navigate them. The strategies for meeting academic requirements include the following: educational intervention services, using the response to intervention (RTI) methods, increased instructional time by an additional 30 minutes during the school day, after school tutoring services, and a requirement of every teacher to stay 1 hour after school 2 days per week to work with students individually. The Warrior to Warrior (W2W) program discussed earlier is the primary way that issues with assimilation into social networks are addressed (Moore, personal communication, February 13, 2020).

Because Belvedere serves over 60% military-connected children, the school receives federal impact aid, which funds enrichment programs that meet military-connected children's needs and provide other support. A partnership exists with a local university that offers after

school tutoring sessions Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to increase academic performance. A dedicated RTI and Student Study team tracks the lowest-performing students and provides interventions to improve their performance.

When military-connected children relocate to Belvedere, not only are they exposed to disruptions in their educational experience which may affect their academic performance, but they must also learn the socialization processes. Extracurricular activities are another way students can integrate into social dynamics (Batista et al., 2016; Ozturk et al., 2015). Students new to the school are eligible to participate in one of the many extracurricular activities as soon as they are enrolled. These services are beneficial to military-connected children because they provide normalcy and structure to their repeated transient enrollment in different schools.

To sufficiently explore the military-connected students' educational experiences, a key source for providing data was the military installation's School Liaison Officer. The School Liaison Officer was able to provide pertinent data on military-connected students associated with the installation. The data revealed trends in the frequency of transitions of military-connected students, the projected number of military-connected students on route to the installation, and the number of military-connected students on orders to transition from the installation to another. School Liaison Officers are familiar with the challenges that military-connected children face due to their transition between school districts and act as a communication link between the school district and the parents. Part of the School Liaison Officer's responsibility is to assist military families with the resources to address hindrances affecting their children's education. Collaboration with the School Liaison Officer yielded information that helped inform the study, as the military offers programs geared towards supporting military-connected children's educational pursuit. Forming such collaboration led to additional sources within the installation's

policy directives and education initiatives that provided data to help answer the questions posed by the researcher of the current study.

Fort Powell is a federal property that requires proper authorization access. The researcher had full access to Fort Powell, where the military-connected children who attend Belvedere High School reside. The open access to Fort Powell afforded ease of developing connections with key stakeholders such as the School Liaison Officer and parents of military-connected children. The School Liaison Officer was instrumental in providing information about programs and resources on and off the installation available to military families and provided that information to benefit the study. The informed consent needed to gather information from military-connected children was obtained from those children's parents, mainly those living on the installation.

A good working relationship exists between the researcher, school administrators, and educators at Belvedere High school. School administrators have a direct responsibility to ensure that the policies that govern the school's operations directly support military-connected students who make up 66% of the school's population. The existing relationships provided the feasibility needed to conduct this research. There were no anticipated barriers to accessing information pertinent to the study and study site.

The researcher aimed to understand the Belvedere local context and the perceptions of military-connected students regarding the types of support they receive and how they are used. The intent was to gather information by conducting interviews to learn about these perceptions and determine whether the problems identified by school personnel are genuinely the ones that students at Belvedere High School experience.

Summary

The lived experience of military-connected students is one in which change is constant. The longest approximation of time that a military-connected student will be in one location is 2 to 3 years. The high mobility contributes to difficulties primarily in the local education context. Additional support is necessary to afford them a comparable educational experience to that of their non-military peers. The researcher sought to examine local supports and the students' perceptions of them. Previous researchers, such as Mmari et al. (2010), have made a convincing case for support programs to help this student population assimilate to the local educational environment. When schools take a proactive approach to provide a safe and welcoming environment for military-connected students, they can navigate the challenges they face and develop the necessary cultural capital (Lareau, 2015). Additionally, it is equally important to invite them to share their experiences; the specific area of military-connected students' input on support programs has been long overlooked.

There is considerable progress in providing military-connected students with support services to successfully navigate their educational experiences (De Pedro et al., 2011; Harrison & Vannest, 2008; Natalicchio & Wooleyhand, 2020; Williams, 2013). Despite the progress, this current researcher may be the catalyst for adding student perceptions to the research literature. The current study was an opportunity for the researcher to gain useful feedback from students who use the support programs in the local context and Fort Powell. The timeliness of this study supports ongoing educational reforms geared towards military-connected students. While this study's results may not be generalizable, they may be beneficial to military families, the local school district, and government agencies instrumental in the transition process of military

dependent children in the northeastern United States. In the next chapter, the researcher provides a preview of the investigative approach for the study.

CHAPTER 3

INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of military-connected students associated with frequent transitions. The researcher also aimed to amplify military-connected students' voices by gaining insight into the support available to them in civilian-run public schools to assist in navigating the challenges associated with frequent transitions. This chapter includes a description of the research methodology for this qualitative study regarding military-connected students' perceptions of support services they receive at Belvedere (pseudonym) High School.

The study occurred in the bounded context of Belvedere High School. Scholars such as Merriam (1998), Smith (1978), and Yin (1994) identified case studies' essential features. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggested a holistic nature to the case study, meaning it accounts for the relationships of various parts that contribute to the case. The case study type employed by the researcher of the current study was exploratory and descriptive. The case study is situated in the disciplinary norm of education.

The focus of the study's research plan was on the qualitative design by using the case study approach. The research questions were selected to yield thick descriptions of the case and point to the research literature for existing concepts to look for during the data analysis process. Additionally, information regarding the researcher's positionality, study participants and the selection procedures for determining the sample, data collection procedures, and data analysis approaches used in the study are included. Equally important was the need to address the trustworthiness, limitations, and ethical concerns related to the study. The chapter ends with an

intricately woven summary that recaps the reader's journey and sets the stage for the next portion of the dissertation.

Methodology

The study's integrity and findings can be attributed to the methodology and methods used to conduct the study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The qualitative design best serves the methodological approach for an exploratory-descriptive case study. The study's design was appropriate because it provided participants the opportunity to describe their experiences regarding transitions and the support they receive. The researcher did not seek quantification; instead, the researcher explored and simultaneously described experiences. According to Holloway (1997), a qualitative approach is used by researchers to explore the behaviors, perspectives, and experiences of study participants.

Yin (1994) posited that one of the conditions for using a case study is that it must answer the "how," "why," "what," and "who" of the phenomenon. Creswell (2013) pointed to the exploration of a real-life bounded system in case study research. Smith (1978) and Merriam (1998) also added to the discussion of case studies' bounded nature. Merriam (1998) explained that one can "fence" in what is to be studied with a case study. These scholarly perspectives further provided the rationale for selecting a case study approach to conduct this study. Using this approach, the researcher aimed to learn how military-connected children experience transitions. Belvedere High School's bounded context where military-connected students attend offers a glimpse into such experiences to access this information.

Studying participants in their natural settings is how qualitative researchers derive sensemaking and the meanings study participants assign to a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The study participants' natural setting comprises Belvedere High School, Fort Powell, and

surrounding communities where they reside. Kirmmarberg et al. (2015) further stated that "qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning, and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant" (p. 499). Because the current researcher sought to unwrap the experiences of military-connected children and to learn their perceptions within their natural setting, utilizing the qualitative design using the case study approach was optimal. An additional rationale is that the majority of the research literature about military-connected children is qualitative, and as such, the current researcher chose to continue this tradition.

Research Questions

This study's overarching goal was to explore the perceptions of military-connected students attending the civilian-run public school, Belvedere High School, and learn about the support services they receive to help them navigate frequent transitions. The researcher sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences of military-connected children as they experience frequent transitions?

RQ2: What are the support programs available at Belvedere High School for military-connected children, and how are they used in response to challenges experienced?

RQ3: What are military-connected students' perceptions of the support they receive?

Research Design Roadmap

In this qualitative case study, the researcher used in-depth interviews to gather responses from military-connected students regarding their experiences with frequent transitions as well as the support they receive to assist in navigating such transitions. The military-connected students attend Belvedere High School and range in grade levels from 9-12. A screening of active-duty military members, veterans, and retirees with children attending Belvedere High School was first

conducted based on the criterion-based approach of LeCompte and Preissle (1993). From the screening, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling to select 12 participants and conducted in-depth interviews for this study. The study allowed for the amplification of military-connected children's voices, which have been largely excluded from the research literature. Once data was collected, deductive coding based on the a priori codes was used along with additional codes developed through the process. Patterns across participants' responses were noted and grouped into categories, which generated the overall themes for the study.

Study Participants/Sampling

Participant selection in qualitative research varies and draws from various approaches developed overtime (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). For qualitative research, a non-probabilistic sampling strategy is most appropriate and essential to the study's strength and rigor (Merriam, 1998). Purposeful sampling is a common non-probabilistic sampling strategy in qualitative research (Gentles et al., 2015; Patton, 2016; Merriam, 1998), which made it an appropriate approach for this study.

The study participants were military-connected children who, at the time of the study, had attended or were currently attending Belvedere High School in the northeastern United States. The military-connected children reside at Fort Powell and surrounding communities. According to the Military Demographics Report (2019), there were 15,659 military-connected children in the state of the study site. Of those 15,659 children, 9,924 (63%) were assigned to Fort Powell, which is in a school district that served Belvedere High School. Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown of students enrolled at Belvedere High School at the time of the study.

Table 1

Student Demographics Breakdown

Race	Percentage
White	71.6%
Hispanic/Latino	11.4%
Black	9.7%
Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islanders	4.1%
Multicultural	2.4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.8%
Total Students Enrolled	100%
Military-connected students	66%
Community residents	34%

Note. Student Demographic Breakdown was provided by the state education department where Belvedere High School is located

Of the total student population at Belvedere High School, 66% of the current 860 enrolled students are military-connected and 34% are community residents. Based on Belvedere High School's student population, the pool of military-connected students from which a sample was drawn was 567. Through purposeful sampling, the recruitment and selection strategies were aimed at selecting participants who were likely to provide the best information to inform the study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Patton (2016) advised researchers to consider selecting participants who can provide the richest information that answers the study's research questions. Prior to the data collection process, the purposeful sampling strategies proposed by the researcher were criterion and snowball sampling.

The research literature hails criterion sampling as a widely used purposeful nonprobability sampling strategy. Patton (2016) suggested that, through criterion sampling, research participants "meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (p. 281). For this study, the researcher selected military-connected children who attended Belvedere High School whose grade level ranged from grades 9 to 12. Students were eligible to participate in the study if they

had at least one active-duty military parent, a veteran parent or a retired military parent, and changed schools at least once due to military moves. Selecting only military-connected students at Belvedere High School created the bounded context needed in an exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) case study.

The research literature suggests that, on average, military-connected children move six to nine times between kindergarten and graduation (Astor, 2011; Berg, 2008; Ruff & Keim, 2014). In this study, the researcher opened participation to students who moved at least once due to military move. In making this decision, the researcher considered several variables. First, using six moves as a criterion would shrink the available pool of participants considerably. Second, the average number of years that an enlisted service member spends at a duty station is three years while the average number of years an officer spends a location before moving is two years. For military-connected students who moved at least four times, if their parent(s) are enlisted, the parent(s) would be in the military for at least 12 years. If the parent(s) are officers by the time data collection began for this study, they would have served eight years. Third, there was no way of knowing the percentage of active-duty service members whose assignment to Fort Powell was their first assignment. Fourth, not all active-duty service members remain in the military until retirement, further limiting the number of participants located at Fort Powell and attending Belvedere High School. The criteria used allowed the researcher to reach participants who met the study requirements.

Data Collection

Before data collection could begin, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and provided the approval to conduct this study due to its inclusion of human subjects. The submission deadline for the IRB was April 23, 2021. The researcher submitted the required

information and received IRB approval on May 17, 2021. While waiting on the IRB approval, the Qualtrics screening tool, which included the criterion for participation in the study, was created. The researcher collaborated with the Principal at Belvedere High School, and once the IRB approval was received, the researcher provided a copy to the school's principal along with a copy of the recruitment flyer along with the link to the Qualtrics screening tool.

Initial recruitment was done through the school's guidance department using the Qualtrics link posted on the school's parent communication portal. The following week, screening results started to come in. From the screening, the researcher used the criterion discussed above to assist in the participant selection process. In the month of June 2021, the screening generated 12 potential study participants. This number presented an exciting possibility, but after contacting those 12 parents by phone and the email addresses provided, five parents did not return the researcher's call or email. After the three allotted tries, the researcher spoke to one parent who had two military-connected children attending the school three times. During the first conversation, she sounded excited about the study and was sure that her children would participate. During the second conversation, she and the researcher spent about 45 minutes on the phone discussing her transitions. During the last conversation, she stated that her children were still really excited about participating in the study and she would call back to inform the researcher of a good time to set up the interviews. Those interviews, however, did not take place, so they did not participate in the study. Of the 12 participants interviewed, five participants were interviewed through the month of June 2021.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher wanted to collect the data for the study in an in-person setting. A data collection timeline was created for June 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021. Sandelowski (1998) reminded researchers that the time for conducting research is a critical

component for setting the focus of the study. The timing of the COVID-19 pandemic greatly influenced the data collection process. Due to safety precautions, the researcher no longer consider the option of conducting in-person interviews, understandably, and thus data collection occurred virtually using the Zoom video-conferencing software.

Timing also played a role in when the interviews were conducted. At the start of the data collection process, students had three weeks left in the school year before the summer break. The first five interviews were conducted during this time. For the month of July 2021, no additional interviews were conducted, nor did any parents respond to the screening for participation eligibility to be determined, which may be attributed to school being closed for the summer. School was scheduled to resume in September, the day after Labor Day. The week of August 23, 2021, the researcher reached back out to the principal of Belvedere to provide an update of the data collection process. The screening link was once again sent out through the parent communication portal in anticipation that parents at this point would be more prone to check the portal, as school would reopen in two weeks and they expected communication from the school. This yielded another seven potential participants for the study. From those seven potential participants, four did not respond when contacted at least three times, one decided not to participate after agreeing to do so, and three completed the interview. The week of September 13, 2021, the screening link was sent out through the parent communication portal once more. This time, five potential participants were identified: one of whom did not return calls or emails after several attempts, and four of whom met the study criterion, agreed to participate, and completed the interviews.

There were additional parents who provided information through the screening link ($N=31$); however, they did not provide their contact email addresses or telephone numbers, so the

full screening could not be completed. To maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the study, although adequate information was provided through the screening tool that could be used by the school to reach parents who did not provide the contact information, the researcher opted not to do so. In selecting participants, the school was not made aware of which participants sought to be or were included in the study. The sample size for this study was 12 participants; at this time, the researcher began to reach saturation, which brought about information redundancy (Sandelowski, 2008) where similar comments began to appear over and over (Francis et al. 2010; Grady, 1998; Guest et al. 2006). Data saturation in qualitative research occurs when the research provides no new information (Bryant & Charmaz, 2003; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Morse, 1995).

At different stages of the data collection process, the snowball approach was utilized as a secondary sampling strategy (Merriam, 1998). Participants and their parents were asked to refer others who met the criteria listed and could contribute richly to the study. No participant, however, entered the study through the snowball sampling method. This was because participants stated they knew individuals who could contribute richly and would provide them with the researcher's contact information, but after following up, some stated that those individuals decided not to participate, while others stated that they did provide the researcher's contact information.

The participants in this study are minors. COVID-19 also played a role in how parental consent was distributed and collected. All parental consent/assent forms were distributed electronically to parents who agreed to allow their child to participate in the study. The forms were distributed immediately after screening the parents if their child(ren) met the criterion for the study. The digital signing platform DocuSign was the medium used to distribute the required

forms and obtain the required signatures. Once signed documents were in the researcher's possession and their confidentiality was secured, the researcher contacted the parents once more to set up the date and time of the interview. From all 12 study participants, only one participant's interview date and time needed to be rescheduled.

Information for the study was obtained through in-depth interviews. According to Merriam (1998), "interviewing is probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies in education" (p. 70). The researcher used open-ended interview questions in a semi-structured format. The intent of the interview questions was to answer the research questions and provide a detailed description of military-connected students' transition experiences and perceptions of their support at Belvedere High School. The researcher used Zoom, the video-conferencing platform, to collect the data. Zoom was beneficial because it enabled the researcher to adhere to the no-contact restrictions that came about due to the pandemic, and it also recorded the interviews electronically, which proved valuable during the transcription phase of the study.

Protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality is essential when conducting research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Before the data collection began, the researcher established processes that directly contributed to data management and confidentiality of the information obtained. All identifiable information within the study was anonymized using pseudonyms for the district, school, and participants. A document with the assigned pseudonyms, video recordings from the interviews, and scanned written responses was stored in the University's OneDrive, which requires a password to gain access. The computer used throughout the study was password protected, and copies of written notes were destroyed once scanned.

At the beginning of the interviews and before recording the interviews, the researcher again obtained verbal consent from each participant in addition to the previously received

parental consent. Participants were reminded that participation was completely voluntary. Throughout the research process, participants' privacy was protected by assigning a gender aligned pseudonym. The researcher had intended to have participants select their own pseudonym which would be used to identify them throughout the remainder of the study, but after the first three participants opted to have the researcher assign the pseudonym instead, the researcher continued doing so without asking the remaining participants. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour. The average length for the interviews was around 48 minutes. Each interview was transcribed soon after it was completed. Doing so was advantageous, as it helped to capture additional thoughts about the interview in a journal memo. This memo writing helped limit the potential of the researcher later inserting her own judgments, and also assisted in reducing bias, which could later affect the study's trustworthiness and reliability. Memoing is lauded as an essential tool in the research process. Bryant and Charmaz (2008) discussed its usefulness for encouraging researchers to record and develop their ideas throughout different stages of the research process which, by doing so, raises the level of the research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a crucial component of qualitative research that should be ongoing from the initial data collection stages (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Hatch (2002) stated that “analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories” (p. 148). The data analysis method used for unpacking the study’s data was constant comparison. Using constant comparison, the researcher first read through the data sets then conducted chunking, labeling, and comparing different data areas to identify similarities (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Comparing the old data with the new data helped to

identify information as it emerged. This is what Merriam (1998) referred to by stating, "comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and other instances" (p. 159). Constant comparison was well suited for this qualitative case study because it is well aligned with the concept-building orientation of all qualitative research. As this study's aim was not substantive theory building, the constant comparison data analysis technique was a good fit (Merriam, 1998).

Saldana (2016) discussed the first and second cycle of qualitative coding data and differentiated between the cyclical rather than linear nature of coding. Interview transcripts were coded early after interviews were completed. This process enabled the researcher to observe trends in the data and to use those to revisit and revise interview questions accordingly. During first-cycle coding, the researcher proactively recorded her thoughts, reactions, inferences, and reflections in a research journal, which assisted in the continuous analysis process and helped in the further development of themes.

To best serve the qualitative research design and the case study methodological approach, the researcher used an exploratory coding method. One of the first cycle coding methods in qualitative research is exploratory coding methods. According to Saldana (2016), exploratory coding methods are defined as the "exploratory and preliminary assignment of codes to the data before more refined coding systems are developed and applied" (p. 165). The specific exploratory coding method used was provisional or a priori coding. The researcher generated a list of codes derived from the literature, conceptual frameworks, and research questions as a starting point for the data. To sufficiently address my research questions, the researcher generated the following list of a priori codes:

- Frequent School Transitions

- School Support Services/Systems
- School Community
- Program Benefit
- Challenges and Opportunities
- Parental Support
- Family and Peer Relationships
- Differing School Policies

Opinions in the literature differ regarding the number of a priori codes a researcher should generate in their start list. Miles et al. (2014) recommends approximately 12 to 60 codes, while Creswell (2013) suggests a shorter list of five to six codes. To satisfy this study and draw from the literature on military-connected children's subjects, the researcher opted for eight a priori codes. The initial coding of the data involved the grouping of excerpts from the transcripts that had similar meanings with the a priori codes. Four additional codes were developed inductively, and they are listed below:

- A child's attitude
- Social skills
- Use of social media and phones
- Children were researching on the new school

In the second cycle of coding, these provisional codes emerged into themes that group the codes from the first cycle coding into more meaningful units of analysis (Saldana, 2016).

The Researcher and Positionality Statement

The researcher holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) with a Finance concentration and an Educational Leadership Specialist (Ed.S.). The researcher worked for

nearly eight years as an educator, teaching grades 8-12. The researcher is also a military spouse who moves every two to three years, similar to the research participants. No direct relationship exists between potential study participants and the researcher, nor were there any anticipated conflicts of interest that may skew study results and lead to bias.

As a Jamaican who grew up in the country's rural parts, education became the researcher's saving grace from a very early age. Growing up, the researcher was keenly aware of the powerful influence that educational opportunities provided and was never oblivious to the individuals who obtained the chance to seek out educational pursuits and those who, despite their potential, slide into oblivion due to their lack of equitable educational opportunities. Through the years, education became the researcher's currency, and it has shaped the perspectives held by the researcher today, which is to champion educational equity for others.

The researcher's travels in the United States, stemming from her role as a military spouse, allowed her to directly observe military-connected students' transitions. The educational stories the researcher experienced firsthand reminds her of the days as a child walking barefoot against the hot pavements and dusty dirt roads in their small community, dreaming of obtaining the educational support to unlock the potential bubbling on the inside. On each military base the researcher has lived, she came across individuals whose stories of transitions and challenges associated with those transitions in the educational landscape often go unheard. The experiences might be similar, but the meaning assigned to such experiences varies by individuals.

The almost two decades of being intricately involved with the military community could potentially cloud the researcher's judgment and lead to biases. She, however, utilized memoing and journaling to initially record thoughts, impressions, and hunches when interacting with participants. Reflexivity helped the researcher self-examine and reflect on her position as a

researcher. Kobayashi (2003) cautioned researchers to connect reflexivity to the research's broader purpose so that its value is worthwhile. Considering this approach through each cycle of the research process, from data collection to analysis and interpretation, helped to improve the trustworthiness of the research.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

The researcher took several steps to improve the reliability, validity, credibility, and trustworthiness of the study. According to Merriam (1998), "ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner" (p. 1998). The first step towards this study's trustworthiness required that the researcher bracket her experiences and assumptions and not allow them to intrude on participants' perceptions. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) discussed research transparency as a contributor to trustworthiness. This was also achieved through the documentation of procedures and protocol. Using and maintaining proper documentation provided a clear path for how the study was conducted and as well as the protocols that were followed. These undertakings coincided with Yin's (1994) ideas of maintaining evidence to improve the case's reliability. As part of keeping such evidence, the researcher kept notes of how data were collected and analyzed. An additional step was member checking as suggested by Merriam (1998), which entails that the researcher allow participants to review data and provide clarification. The researcher conducted member checking with at least half of the participants in this study. Another method that the researcher would have liked to use was triangulation; however, the time, scope, and resources of this study did not warrant it. For example, Foreman (1948) suggested the use of independent investigators who can help to establish validity through pooled judgement.

The study involved school-aged children. Before attempting to collect and data, the researcher sought the approval from the IRB of Florida State University in April 2021 to conduct the study. The approval was received May 2021. The researcher then leveraged professional networks at Belvedere High School through emails and telephone calls to inform them of the approval and request assistance in recruiting potential study participants. The researcher was keenly aware and kept in mind the power imbalance presented by their position. Honesty and integrity were used in reporting findings to ensure the study was objective. Because the participants were minors, parental consent was required and obtained prior to their participation in the study. Participants were also required to provide verbal consent before starting the process. Mandel and Parija (2014) pointed to the fundamental principle of trust that informed consent portrays by signaling to participants they have the latitude in deciding whether or not to participate in the study.

Limitations

This study presents several limitations: (a) the researcher as the research instrument with potential inherent biases, (b) lack of multiple investigators as a tool for triangulation, (c) only one military branch accounted for and the bounded context minimizes generalization, (d) the researcher's positionality and connection with the military lifestyle and transitions, and (e) the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patton (2016) stated that "the researcher is the instrument" (p. 14). As the instrument of this study, the credibility of the findings hinges heavily on the researcher's skills. With that in mind, the researcher utilized reflexivity as a tool by acknowledging and being self-aware of how power imbalances between could influence the findings. From that perspective, drawing on the tenets of reflexivity as a mutual collaboration (Finlay, 2002) by viewing participants as co-

inquirers throughout the study reduces the researcher as the instrument influences. Confirmation bias and other biases were initial concerns because the researcher was the research instrument (Shufutinsky, 2020). It became the researcher's ethical obligation to limit those biases, bracket experiences, and not allow them to hinder and flaw the research findings.

The study's timeframe and the available resources to conduct the study presented another limitation, which was the lack of multiple investigators as a tool for triangulation. Having multiple investigators could have proved advantageous to the study, as it would contribute to the confirmation of emerging findings and establish the validity of the study (Foreman, 1948). Additional investigators may also have helped in gaining observations that the researcher might have missed, which could possibly strengthen the study and contribute to its overall credibility.

Another limitation to note is that the participants of this study represent only one branch of the military and a small geographical area. While the experiences may be common, the researcher was unable to compare the experiences of military-connected children across branches of service to provide a broader picture of such experiences. From this study, it is difficult to determine whether the geographical locations played a role in how the transitions were experienced. Another point to note is that the bounded-context of this study minimizes generalizations of the findings. Such bounded context, however, brought about an understanding of the challenges experienced by the students in this study and how they view the support they receive in their local context.

A noted limitation is that of the researcher's connection with the military lifestyle and frequent transitions. Having transitioned multiple times, similar to study participants, the researcher's positionality, experiences, and beliefs could have presented biases and influenced the study's findings. On the other hand, this positionality may have provided parents of the

military-connected students with peace of mind knowing that the challenges experienced by their children due to frequent transitions are challenges that are understood by the researcher. Such understandings could have also provided parents with the full understanding of the research and its potential to benefit future military-connected students. Study participants were more forthcoming when sharing their experiences because of the rapport and trust of the researcher.

The final limitation is the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic ceased face-to-face interactions and therefore all interviews were conducted via the Zoom videoconferencing software. During the initial stages of the study, the researcher had planned to collect data face-to-face, which would have helped to account for and observe interactions such as body language during each interview and possibly collect data through focused groups. Having done so, there could have been additional richness to the data obtained in the study. While the use of technology was sufficient for the study, the opportunity to observe the military-connected children in their natural settings could have proved valuable. The researcher has not worked at Belvedere High School and did not know the students personally; however, that appeared to contribute positively to the study's objectivity.

Summary

The chapter included a description of the methodological approach used in this study. The chapter began with a discussion of the qualitative research design and the use of the exploratory-descriptive qualitative approach. The researcher also discussed the participants and sampling criteria. The data collection methods, data analysis strategy, and the researcher's role and positionality in the study were also discussed. Lastly, issues related to trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and noted limitations were presented. In the next chapter, the researcher presents the data analysis details and research findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND DISSEMINATION PLAN

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher summarizes the study, describes the study context, and outlines the research questions and the qualitative data analysis approach utilized in the study. A description of data themes is also presented within the research questions, and research findings are discussed. Also, the researcher outlines recommendations based on the study findings and offers a conclusion and a dissemination plan.

Study Summary

Military-connected children experience frequent transitions between school districts in the K-12 setting. Astor (2011), Berg (2008), and Ruff and Keim (2014) indicated six to nine transitions on average for military-connected children before high school graduation. The transitions were more common among military-connected children than their civilian peers: up to 30% more according to Bradshaw et al. (2010).

There is limited knowledge on the long-term impact of frequent moves where military-connected children change duty stations with their active-duty military parent(s). Furthermore, even less is known regarding military-connected students' perceptions of the challenges and the support needed to help them navigate the school transitions. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to explore the experiences and perspectives of military-connected children to understand challenges related to their frequent school transitions and the support they need to navigate those challenges.

Study Context

The study site was a school close to Fort Powell in the northeastern United States. The school was founded in 1959, and it currently serves children in grades 9-12. Of the students

enrolled, 66% are military-connected, with a majority of them residing at Fort Powell. Twelve Military-Connected Students (MCS) participated: 58.3% were female, and 41.6% were male. The study/grade level attained by the participants was as follows: 41.7% in 9th grade, 8.3% in 10th grade, 25% in 11th grade, and 25% in 12th grade. The average number of transitions for study participants was 6.25. Table 2 below indicates the characteristics of individual participants.

Table 2

Participants' Characteristics

Participant Number	Pseudonym	Gender	Grade	Number of Transitions
MCS1	Mary	Female	9 th	4
MCS2	Prudence	Female	11 th	5
MCS3	Jessica	Female	11 th	6
MCS4	Mario	Male	12 th	12
MCS5	Lucas	Male	12 th	9
MCS6	Tameca	Female	12 th	11
MCS7	Mario	Male	9 th	4
MCS8	Carl	Male	10 th	4
MCS9	Donna	Female	9 th	9
MCS10	Ryan	Male	9 th	2
MCS 11	Diana	Female	9 th	3
MCS12	Nicole	Female	11 th	6

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the experiences of military-connected children associated with their frequent school transitions. The study also aimed at amplifying the voices of military-connected students by gaining insight into the support available

to them in civilian-run public schools to assist in navigating the challenges associated with frequent transitions.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the experiences of military-connected children as they experience frequent transitions?

RQ2: What are the support programs available at Belvedere High School for military-connected children, and how are they used in response to challenges experienced?

RQ3: What are military-connected students' perceptions of the support they receive?

Methodological Approach

The study utilized constant comparison using the steps Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) outlined, including reading through the data sets and conducting chunking, labelling, and comparing different data areas to identify similarities. Merriam (1998) argued that the constant comparison approach was appropriate for the study because the study's aim was not substantive theory building.

The study utilized cyclical coding as described by Saldana (2016). Interview transcripts were coded soon after interviews were completed to revise interview questions based on observed trends. During the first coding cycle, the exploratory coding method was used (Saldana, 2016). This refers to the exploratory and preliminary assignment of codes to the data before the development, refinement, and application of the coding systems. The specific exploratory coding method used was provisional or a priori coding. Below is the list of a priori codes generated from literature, conceptual frameworks, and research questions:

- **‘Frequent school transitions’** refer to the frequency of school transitions that study participants had experienced before the study.
- **‘School support services/systems’** refer to services and support programs available in each of the schools attended by study participants aimed at supporting children to navigate the challenges of school transition. These programs were either specifically for military-connected children or the entire student population.
- **‘School community’** refers to peers, teachers, and school administration and how study participants interacted and made meaning of the existing relationships.
- **‘Program benefit’** refers to the perceived positive impact or advantages of the various programs available to study participants within and outside the school.
- **‘Challenges and opportunities’** are associated with military-connected children who experience frequent school transitions.
- **‘Parental support’** refers to various ways parents make the transition process easier and meaningful for their children.
- **‘Family and peer relationships’** refer to study participants' views on either benefits or challenges posed by family members (i.e., siblings and extended family) or their peers during the frequent transitions.
- **‘Differing school policies’** refer to those policies in each of the schools attended by the study participants and how these affect the transition experience.

The initial coding of the data involved the grouping of excerpts from the transcripts that had similar meanings with the a priori codes. Four additional codes were developed inductively:

- A **‘child’s attitude’** refers to feelings and thoughts expressed by children about the transitions.

- **‘Social skills’** refer to the skills that children utilize to communicate and interact with others within or outside the school.
- **‘Use of social media and phones’** refers to the use of technology by children to communicate with peers or friends.
- **‘Children were researching on the new school’** before a transition.

Transcript excerpts were grouped into the a priori codes based on their similarities in meaning.

Presentation of Findings

The findings in this section are organized according to the research question, and within the research questions, themes are presented. Throughout the presentation of the findings, excerpts of participants responses from the data are incorporated. Merriam (1998) proposed that “qualitative data consist of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (p. 70). The coded data has been converted into themes, showcasing the unifying idea (Savin-Badden & Major, 2013). Direct quotes are provided for each theme to validate the data confirmability of the findings. To increase readability and flow of information, punctuation was added and filler words that were present in the data were removed such as “uh” “um” and “yeah.” Participants were assigned pseudonyms to help readers better connect with the experiences shared.

Research Question 1: What Are the Experiences of Military-Connected Children as They Experience Frequent Transitions?

The aim of research question one was to explore the experiences of military-connected children as they navigated through the frequent school transitions. Two overarching themes were found to address research question one and highlight the experiences of military-connected

children with frequent transitions. The themes addressed the military-connected children's perceptions of challenges and how military-connected children displayed resilience amidst frequent transitions. In the section below, each of the two themes is discussed.

Theme 1.1: Military-Connected Children Experienced Various Challenges During the Frequent Transitions

Military-connected children identified several challenges they had experienced during their school transitions, including loss of friends, differing academic policies, difficulties forming meaningful connections with peers, learning new languages, and adjusting to new environments. They also indicated that it was difficult to part with close friends during the frequent transitions from one school to another. One participant explained the sad emotions she and her friends experienced when she had to move to another school. She reported that she could not explain to her friends the reasons for moving for her safety:

Well, a lot of them (friends) were sad. I remember we were crying a lot. I threw a party, actually, and a lot of my friends were able to come over, and we were able to hang out. Some of them didn't quite understand because, unfortunately, the climate there is slightly different regarding the military. Cause I do remember that my mother on base gave security classes to the military members, and they would tell them, 'If you have kids, teach your kids not to tell anybody that you are in the military. And I would see that happen, that like, I'd be trying to explain, hey, I have to move. And they, they wouldn't understand. And I couldn't tell them it was because my mother was in the military. After all, you know, it wasn't safe to do so. (Tameca)

Participants used words such as helplessness, sadness, upset, and isolation to describe

their feelings during a transition from a school where they had made close friends. Mary and Tameca reported how they felt helpless and upset about leaving friends while transitioning from one school to another:

I think sometimes it's a bit of helplessness. Like you, you're trying to get things as under control as you can, but just when you're starting to get used to one place, you're starting to build lasting friendships and feel (adapted) in the place. You have to pick up and move again and start completely new (Tameca).

That's when I had to leave my friend Davina. She was at school with me all the time in xx (school name withheld). She was a grade higher than me. So, when I had to leave, it was upsetting because I couldn't see her as often (Mary).

Throughout the in-depth interviews, these feelings emerged as the consensus. Participants shared that such feelings are revisited each time a school transition is experienced. Unfortunately for some military-connected children, based on the nature of work performed by the military parent, they are not able to divulge certain information, making the transition that more challenging.

The second challenge is closely linked to the first in that having experienced emotional difficulties when leaving friends, some of the participants were reluctant to make friends at their new school. For instance, a participant indicated that the fear of losing friends made him refrain from forming meaningful connections with peers: "...You make friends, and then you lose friends. So, I don't feel like making friends if I'm just going to lose them." (Mario) Additionally, Jessica stated that making friends became more difficult as one progressed to high school because kids in the new school had stronger connections, as they had known each other longer:

When I was little, it was easy because obviously when you're little, you're like you move somewhere new and you're like, oh, you're my new friend and everything. And as I got older, like now when I came from Arizona to New York, it was harder because I had just gotten into high school. So, I was starting at a new school. Everybody here knows each other or is related to each other. So, it was harder as I got older to make new friends and everything (Jessica)

Based on participants responses, frequent school transitions resulting from military moves contributed negatively to their ability to develop and maintain meaningful friendships. Taken a step further, some military-connected children have avoided making friends as a way to spare the emotional upheaval of losing those friends.

The third challenge reported was that schools had different policies that guided the academic experience. There were cases where the curriculum in the new school was more advanced than that of the previous school. For instance, Lucas had to take a course with younger children in his new school because his classmates had already covered the content. Tameca reported a similar experience where she had to work hard to catch up with the advanced curriculum in her new school:

There were some struggles when I was transferring from school because the curriculum there was a lot more advanced than the curriculum I had at my previous school. So, when I moved there, I had to play catch up and my classes, you know, my parents, they had to help me study on my own at home. It was a lot of placement exams that I was taking, so I could be put in the correct courses.

On the other hand, some participants transitioned to a school where the curriculum was less advanced than their previous school. For instance, Troy reported that he had to re-take an

algebra class that he had previously completed in his last school: "So I passed Arizona's algebra class, but when I got here, I had to take another algebra class because I had to pass the State's Regents." This participant's account of challenges with curriculum resulting from differing state policies indicates a clear lack of uniform curriculum mandates nationwide. Underwood (2019) called this a tricky balancing act, where "on one hand, the federal constitution has primacy; on the other, each state has the authority to create and control school districts and define their standards and curriculum" (p. 75). The participants' struggles with the lack of curriculum uniformity between schools in different states, whether transitioning to a more advanced curriculum or a less advanced one, indicates that there is still a gap in the definition of standards and curriculums, as earlier noted by Underwood (2019).

The last two challenges were reported by participants who had to move to a place with diverse cultures. For instance, Mary, Mario, and Carl moved from the United States to Germany or vice versa. Carl reported difficulties moving from one place to another due to inability to comprehending the new language:

Also, I moved to Germany, which was different because it was in a foreign country, and I couldn't speak German. So, it was kind of like when you went off base, and it was kind of difficult. Like, when we first got there, we went out one time, and we got lost because we couldn't read the bus signs. So, it took us like two hours to get back to the hotel that we had to get to.

Other challenges included the inability to adapt to the behaviours and norms at the new school. For instance, Donna reported an experience where she had to be home schooled because she had problems with the teacher at her new school:

I did not want to go to school because I was dreading having that class with that one teacher. So being able to just not go to that school and be home-schooled was just, I guess you could say a relief...

Similarly, Nicole reported that it took some time to understand the culture at her new school. Nicole described how the school culture was different and how she feared to ask questions and be viewed as different from her peers:

It sucked because everyone was standing in a hallway right at the start of school, and I didn't know why we were standing in the hallway. But I was going to stand in the hallway too, because of psychology; who would want to walk away from the hallway when everyone's there. So that was frustrating right off the bat because I didn't know why I was standing there or what we were waiting for, but we were waiting. And the teachers were talking about stuff they would have done pre-COVID. Before, they did online school, and I didn't know what they were referencing, and it makes it hard to raise my hand and ask when everyone around you knows the answer, and you don't.

When asked about the challenges experienced due to frequent school transitions resulting from military moves, the participants collectively indicated that frequent school transitions present a variety of issues that they have to navigate. Participants shared the emotional roller coaster of friendships, navigating different school policies, learning new languages, and adjusting to different environments. Overall, the challenges presented by participants were not experienced differently based on the age at which the participant moved or the gender of the participant. Participant responses indicated that the main challenge of moving to a foreign country for a military move, beyond those already discussed when the move occurred in the United States, was a language barrier. The language barrier became more prevalent, however,

when they left the overseas military base and got out into the community. This could potentially be explained by the fact that schools attended by military-connected children in foreign countries on military bases were run by the DoDEA. DoDEA schools are familiar with frequent school transitions, and they are well-versed in the cultural norms associated with the military.

Theme 1.2: Military-Connected Children Displayed Resilience Amidst Frequent Transitions

Military-connected children displayed resilience in the face of the challenges associated with frequent transitions. They demonstrated the ability to cope and address some of the challenges outlined in Theme 1.1 above. The coping strategies displayed by participants included the use of social media to maintain connections with friends, cultivating social skills by participating in school programs and youth center activities, researching about the new school before the transition, and having a positive attitude towards frequent transitions.

Most of the participants thought that social media and phones helped them maintain contact and relationships with peers from previous schools. Sam, for example, described how he was able to keep in touch with his friend by playing online video games:

The friend I did stay in touch with for a long time through social media is more like video games; we both like playing real games. And before he moved, we played a lot of video games together. So, when he did move, we just continued to keep playing them together. And then, over time, when we both were using other forms of technology, like our phones and stuff, that's when we started using social media, and it made it easy to stay in contact. That makes it very accessible to stay in touch, and it plays a significant part in communication.

A similar experience was reported by Tameca, who felt that the school transition was easier with the knowledge that she could call and have FaceTime with her friends:

...social media has allowed me to stay connected with the people from my previous duty stations. Many of my friends now I don't have to be crying, saying goodbye, thinking I'm never going to be able to talk to them again like when I was younger. Now that I have a phone and social media, I can get their numbers and call them up. I can Facetime them.

Another participant felt that social media made her feel more isolated from her friends. Nicole articulated that, through social media, she was able to see her friends form a new relationship with an individual whom she viewed as her replacement:

...the school I just left, I had two close friends, and we were like a pack of three. Well, they recently posted photos of them with another person that they had used to fill my slot, which is how it feels. So, I think social media made it quite worse than that situation because seeing my slot being filled in that friend group just broke my heart.

In the above quote, Nicole explains the harmful effects of social media where, unlike other participants, the experience made her feel more isolated. This quote differs from others indicated above, as some participants felt that they could stay socially connected because of social media. Another display of resilience was cultivating social skills, as participants tried to make new friends either by joining school programs or going to the youth center after school. Participants willing to join clubs and sports found it easier to make new meaningful relationships with peers. For example, Tameca explained how she strived to make friends, although she considered herself introverted. In the quote below, Tameca indicates that, although she was shy, talking to people created opportunities for her to develop a sense of belonging to the community:

We try to be as social as possible to be a part of the community. Sometimes it works, a lot of times, it doesn't, but we try as much as we can so we can talk to people. For me, that's been a personal struggle of mine because I have always been a shy person, not as

outgoing, but I've had to learn that I have to be outgoing if I want to be welcomed in the community because otherwise, they're going to stay in their corner and they're not going to come and talk to me. I have to go out of my way to talk to everybody.

Participants described how being a member of a club and participating in sports helped them make friends. For instance, Jessica expressed that joining the swimming team helped her make friends at her new school: “Everybody had their little groups, it was harder. And I didn't see where I fit in at first, but because I joined the swim team when I first came in...It helped me out.” Prudence stated that sports and clubs created an open atmosphere where someone could expand their social network:

It (sports and clubs) gives you more of an open atmosphere. I would say, like, you have more accessibility to different kids. And like, I have my sports friends and then my art friends. So, I have a lot of different friend groups from it, but it's still always interchangeable.

Overall, when participants were asked about joining clubs and participating in sports, they indicated that doing so provided them with an outlet and a way to concentrate on different opportunities rather than the challenges that frequent transitions present. Participants of both genders engaged equally in available clubs and sport activities.

The youth center on the military base was reported as a place where some participants spent time with friends and participated in various activities and sports. The youth center is a facility on each military base that caters to military children in grades 6-12. The youth center is part of the Child, Youth and School Services (CYSS) and provides a variety of facilities and activities such as gym access, basketball courts, music rooms, a recreation hall, tutoring services, technology center, and lounge areas. The services provided at the youth center are free to

military-connected children. The youth center is open from 2pm – 9pm on school days and 12pm– 9pm on weekends. It is closed on federal holidays. When discussing the youth center, Donna noted that she would meet her friends in the gym: “I just kind of use those places (youth center) to meet up with friends ... I would normally play sports with them in the gym.” Prudence mentioned that she and her friends met at a teen center for military-connected kids: “It’s good to have friends and a central place where you can hang out, where your parents know that you're supervised.”

Another reported display of resilience was shown in participants’ efforts to research their new schools and neighborhoods to anticipate challenges and identify solutions in advance. For example, Tameca pointed out that, before moving to a new school, with support from parents, she would research available programs, clubs, and classes:

It is so much research, you know, having to search the area, knowing what programs are given in the area for me, what clubs can I join? What schools are there and within those schools, what clubs or programs do they have, what classes do they give? And I have to have already a plan of what I want to do before I even arrive at the new school.

Tameca further explained how she used social media and prior planning to link her current and former counselor to make her education transition smoother. She pointed out that the counselors were able to come up with a support plan that considered what was available to her at the previous school:

The other things that have also helped me, my counselor, for example, I'm able to stay in contact with my old counselor so that my old counselor and my new counselor can be talking to each other, and they can be trying to come up with a plan so that I can better

transition in education. Ensure what I was receiving in my old school is what I will be receiving at my new school. (Tameca)

Finally, a positive attitude towards the school transition made the experience easier for participants. The positive attitude was indicated by the positive feelings and terms that participants used to describe their perceptions of transitions, such as when Jessica expressed, "I was excited to experience new places...and try new activities such as swimming and surfing in Hawaii" and Troy's statement that "I feel like anywhere I go I can meet new people." Also, Tameca reflected on her transition and indicated that, "I'm really sad to leave these things behind, but there's something new for me to be able to experience." It appeared that, with a positive attitude, some participants seemed to have more positive experiences. In the following quote, Carl describes his last day in school before a transition:

It was sad, again, I'm used to it, so it didn't bother me that much. I am beginning to understand that you will have to move into the military, and maybe one day you'll see your friends again.

In short, the resilience displayed by participants puts into perspective the grit and maturity levels of military-connected children who experience frequent school transitions. Participants utilized social media to their advantage to remain in contact with close friends after moving. The need for belonging was also a powerful force that motivated participants to seek out programs and opportunities to connect with other likeminded individuals, especially through the activities offered at the youth center. The maturity level of participants played a huge role in easing the transition process and contributed tremendously to the needed resilience. Such maturity became evident as one participant utilized social media to her advantage to connect her current and former counselors, making her educational transition a smooth one.

Research Question 2: What Are the Support Programs Available at Belvedere High School for Military-Connected Children, and How Are They Used in Response to Challenges Experienced?

The aim of Research Question 2 was to explore the perceptions of military-connected children regarding available support programs and how the programs were utilized to respond to the students' challenges. Two themes were found to address the second research question. Theme 2.1 indicates that military-connected children perceived counseling programs as beneficial in addressing academic and social issues. Theme 2.2 demonstrates that military-connected children perceived the school administration at Belvedere to be responsive to their needs in school.

Theme 2.1 Military-Connected Children Perceived Counselling Support Programs as Beneficial in Addressing Academic and Social Issues

Many ($n=8$) of the participants were aware of the availability of counselor/counseling services at Belvedere to offer support to children. The participants sought counseling services to deal with their academic or social problems while at school. The counseling services were not specifically targeted at military-connected children. The counselor was perceived to assist students when their parents were either deployed (resulting in a school transition) or when students felt isolated following a transition into a new school. Donna stated that she perceived the counselor as a skilled individual who could help her to process her feelings:

I think it's beneficial for those in the military who need to have someone to talk to, especially if, let's say, their parent is deployed, and they're having a tough time adjusting to it (to a new school). They can have someone skilled in that area to talk to them about it and get their feelings sorted out.

Similarly, Jessica also indicated that a counselor was available to talk if one's parents were deployed or if a student felt isolated in their new school. Jessica further reported that information about the counselor was given to children during their first school day:

The first day of school, the first thing you get, if you are in the military, is a sheet of paper that says, if you want to sign up for a military counselor to like talk to about things, you have the opportunity to do it, and that it was free.

It is, however, important to note and make the distinction between the regular guidance counselors employed by Belvedere to provide counseling services to all students and Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLC). The Department of Defense (DoD) implemented the MFLC Program in 2004 to provide non-medical confidential counseling services to military members and their families. These counselors are available in many schools nationwide that include a large military student population.

Only two participants, Tameca and Nicole, indicated that they had sought services from a counselor. The counseling services sought, however, were that of a regular school counselor and not the MFLC. Nicole reported that she sought out the counselor when she was struggling to make new friends at Belvedere: “So, my counselor and I've met once because I've struggled to find friends or to find anyone.” Nicole pointed out, however, that she perceived the counselor to be supportive with academics as opposed to social life:

So, my counselor, she's mostly for academics, and I know she's also used for talking, but when I think (about her), I think academics, so I feel odd going down to her to talk about transitioning with friends and personal life and things that otherwise I wouldn't want to talk to anyone about. So that has been one of the barriers.

Another participant gave positive feedback about the school counselor based on the reports of others. The counselor was described as a good and kind-hearted lady: “I've heard their (counseling services) are excellent. And the lady that does come and talk to you outside of class, she's always been very good. She's a kind-hearted lady, and you can tell she enjoys what she does” (Troy).

Three participants mentioned the MFLC program while discussing counseling services. None of the three, however, had utilized the program's services at Belvedere. Nicole had learned the purpose of the MFLC program from her mother, who had indicated that the program could help her to improve her social school life: “...she (mother) tells me that they help you figure out like where to go from where you're at. So how to find friends and ways to like open yourself up to the community” (Nicole). Ryan had utilized the services of MFLC in his previous school but did not provide details of the specific support that he had received:

The only one (program) that I know well is MFLC, and I used it for that one year just because I wanted to try it out. It wasn't anything crazy you would go in there. I'm still kind of hazy on it because it's been years since I used it.

Carl indicated that they did not use the programs at Belvedere because they had become accustomed to being self-reliant: “(How do you feel about programs for military-connected students?) I'm not sure. I haven't thought about that. I normally just try to figure things out for myself.” Most of the participants reported that they were not aware of the programs for military-connected children at Belvedere. For instance, Prudence said that the programs were not advertised or discussed at the school:

(Are you aware of any programs geared specifically towards military-connected students?) Not really. They don't advertise them at our school. I've heard about different

lunches where you can go and talk to people like other military-connected students, but they don't talk about them a lot.

Overall, participants indicated that the counseling programs that were provided, whether through the regular school counselors or the MFLC, were beneficial to both their academic and social life. A concern that emerged is that participants felt that some support programs needed to be advertised more to students even though parents of military-connected children were aware of available programs.

Theme 2.2: Military-Connected Children Perceived the School Administration at Belvedere to Be Responsive to Their Needs

The school administration team at Belvedere was keenly aware and responsive to the needs of military-connected children. The school administration was aware of some of the children before they reported at Belvedere. Troy mentioned how surprised he was when a member of the school administration addressed him by name on the first day: "Well, he knew who I was before I knew who they were. (Why do you think that was?) Because they called me my name whenever I walked in." While reflecting on available programs for military-connected students, Ryan thought that the school administration was aware of their challenges and had put programs in place such as MFLC to assist military-connected children with their transitions:

(How involved is the administration with military-connected students?) I'd say pretty well. They bring a lot of options to the kids and many opportunities to the kids. They like to help them because they know it's sometimes hard for transitions. They help them get used to everything, and I see them participating (Ryan).

Nicole, however, felt that the administration needed to do more to reach out to older military-connected children like herself. In her opinion, the administration's support was more present in

the lower grades. Nicole explained, “I felt like I had to actively try to find someone who could help me find friends or help introduce me to clubs.”

The sentiments echoed by Nicole were not common, as no other participants expressed a similar opinion. For example, Jessica reiterated that the administration at Belvedere was welcoming to military-connected students because it is a common occurrence. Other participants also pointed out that families of military-connected students were made aware of numerous programs available for support by administration. Perhaps the information of such programs was not passed from families to the military-connected children.

Research Question 3: What Are Military-Connected Students’ Perceptions of the Support They Receive?

The aim of Research Question 3 was to explore the perceptions of the military-connected children regarding the support they received from various support structures. Two themes were found to address Research Question 3: Theme 3.1 demonstrates that parents and siblings were the most significant support system for military-connected children, while Theme 3.2 includes a discussion of the aspects of peer support that helped military-connected children to navigate their new school.

Theme 3.1: Military-Connected Children Perceived Parents and Siblings as the Most Significant Support System

The participants were asked whom they went to for support during transitions, and most reported that they leaned on their parents and siblings. The experiences differed because some participants received help from both parents, whereas the available parent provided support for those not living with both parents. Donna indicated that she and her siblings discussed their school transition experiences with their parents:

I talk with my family about how I feel and stuff when we move from place to place because that's always the number one question to us. How do you feel about going to a new place, and how can we make you feel more comfortable going somewhere new? And we always answer those as honestly as we can when we get told we're going somewhere new. So yeah, I use my family a lot for my support when we're going through new places.

Parental support included emotional support, purchasing academic books, tutoring, and organizing fun activities. For instance, Jessica expressed how her mom always made the transition enjoyable. The participant communicated that her mom was able to cheer her up during her transition from a school in Hawaii to the mainland United States:

Mom always made it fun. Like when we moved from Hawaii to here, we flew into Arizona, and then we made it like a five-day road trip here. So, we got to go across the United States, and it was really fun. So even though we were all sad to be moving, she made it fun.

Participants recounted that parents were helpful during their transition into a new school either through tutoring or accompanying them during new school orientation. For instance, Tameca reported that her dad supported her in learning math by reviewing the math textbooks with her: "It was more of me on my own having to take the time to study with my parents. My dad (would take) all of the math books and be like, okay, let's review this math." Diana reported that her mom accompanied her to the new school and that it helped with orientation to the school layout:

So, my mom and I went through my schedule and went to my classes. And since the classrooms were numbered, it was easy because we just looked for the area where those

rooms were. Like (where) those room numbers were, we would just walk around. It's a pretty big school.

Nicole revealed that sometimes parents had difficulties supporting military-connected children because they lacked first-hand experience with frequent transitions. Nicole reported that although her mom was her support system, she had limitations because she had attended the same school until graduation. Additionally, Nicole mentioned that although her dad had experienced transitions at work, it was not comparable to her frequent school transitions:

Well, I used to use my mom a lot, but as I've gotten older, I feel like it's got a lot harder to use her. My mom is a big transition tool because I know she tries to act as she understands, and I really would like her to be able to understand. But she stayed in the same district in the same county through elementary to high school. And there's no way she could understand the way that I feel. And even my dad, my dad says he tried it. He understands it because he has to move works as well. And he has to meet all the new people in his company again. But it's just not the same.

Siblings were also reported as an important support structure during the school transitions. The frequent school transitions were viewed by some participants as shared experiences with siblings of close age groups: "I and my siblings we are all very close and I feel like part of the reason we're so close is that we are military, and you can always count on your siblings after every move" (Troy). Siblings could be relied on during the transition for moral support and academic tutoring. Tameca discussed how having an older brother helped her to navigate the frustrations and catch up on her studies:

My brother is going (through) what I'm going through with the same perspective as me. So, it's easy for us to relate to each other and talk out what we're feeling. Because as

excited as we can get, we do get sad. We sometimes get frustrated about the situation, and we can talk it out because we understand we're going through the same thing. Also, when I said that I had to play catch up in my classes, he helped tutor me since he's a year older than me. So that's always been advantageous, but mostly it's been us leaning on each other by talking things out and trying to get each other excited, wherever it is that we're going.

Another participant also described how she had developed a close bond with her brother through the school transitions. She indicated that she could rely on her brother, whom she regarded as her best friend:

(Whom do you look to for help?) I rely on my siblings because they've been there for everything. There are four of us, so we've all grown close throughout all of the moves and everything, because going to different places, we always have each other to be with. And especially my brother, who's still in school with me right now. When we moved here, it was like immediately, and he was the one person I had at the school. So, he grew to be my best friend here... (Jessica).

Overall, the majority of the participants reported that their family was an important support system during the school transition. They described how they relied on their parents for emotional and academic support during the school transition. In addition, participants with siblings of close age groups indicated that they viewed the transitions as shared experiences with their siblings, which strengthened their relationships. Particularly, when the siblings were slightly older, participants leaned on them for moral and academic support.

Theme 3.2: Military-Connected Children Appreciated Peer Support in Navigating the New School

Some of the participants reported that peers were helpful in the initial days when they needed help navigating the new school environment. Prudence explained that peers helped her find her way in the school: “(How has the support been for the transition?) It's good because you get a lot of kids who are willing to help you throughout the school if you don't know your way or kids that will be willing to help you.” Donna also indicated that peers helped her find her way around the school on the first day: "... the first day of school, I got lost on my way to the gym and I didn't know where I was. So, I asked some students, and they all helped me out to get where I needed to be.” According to Lucas, there were specific students who were responsible for escorting new children at the beginning of the school year. Also, a party had been organized to welcome new kids at Belvedere:

In the beginning, they had a student walking around, and I don't remember their name, but they were some kids (who had) grown up in the area; they were friendly. Then they had this sort of like a new kid party at Belvedere. Usually, it's a lot of new students, so they had something set up. But that's all I remember. There was a kid who walked me around. They showed me where everything was in the school because, at first, it felt complicated (Lucas).

Ultimately, participants reported that peer support was an integral part of assisting them with successfully navigating their new school. Overall, the theme provided insight into the importance of peer-to-peer connections and assisted in helping to create closer bonds between siblings who transitioned together. Peer-to-peer connections became vital for networking opportunities and helping these students navigate the new school culture.

Discussion of Findings

Military-connected children in this study experienced frequent transitions between school districts—an average of 6.25. This aligns with the average frequency of school transitions reported in the literature, six to nine times, as reported by Astor (2011), Berg (2008), and Ruff and Keim (2014). It is worth noting, however, that the average number of transitions is likely to increase by high school graduation, as some of the participants had 2 to 3 years remaining before they graduated.

This study highlighted the challenges experienced by military-connected children as they navigate frequent transitions. Similar to the findings of Bradshaw et al. (2010), some highly mobile military-connected children had fewer friends. In some instances, such children indicated that they were afraid of making friends because of the frequent movements. Similar to Burkam et al. (2009) and Grigg (2012), this study highlights the varying academic requirements that sometimes negatively impact children, such as when a student moved to a school with a more advanced curriculum or a slower one. This study also highlights the emotional distress experienced by military-connected children due to loss of friendships. Similar to the findings in the literature by Aronson and Perkins (2012), Harrison and Vannest (2008), and Ruff and Keim (2014), highly mobile children experienced emotional distress related to constantly adapting to new environments and cultures. Also, the findings indicate that it was more difficult for adolescents to form meaningful relationships during transitions, especially in their senior years, because their peers in the new schools were likely to have known each other longer, and group norming had already occurred.

This study adds new knowledge on resilience displayed by the highly mobile military-connected students. The children had developed coping strategies to address their various

challenges, including the use of social media to maintain connections with friends in their previous schools, cultivating social skills by participating in school programs and youth center activities, researching their new schools before the transition, and having a positive attitude towards their frequent transitions. This study also shed light on the perceptions of military-connected children regarding the support systems available to them. Parents and siblings were described as the most significant support system for children, and they provided moral and academic support. Older siblings of close age groups who had shared experiences were helpful, as they found it easy to empathize with and support each other to navigate the challenges of frequent transitions. Peer support within the school environment was found to be invaluable in helping military-connected children navigate the new school culture.

Specific programs for military-connected children at Belvedere school were found to be useful but not adequately advertised. The children applauded the school counselors and the MLFC program for helping them to navigate academic and social issues. More children could benefit, however, if the information on its purpose and benefits was availed directly to more military-connected children and not only to their families. Regarding the programs for military-connected children at Belvedere, the children who were aware of their existence commended the school administration. Opportunities exist to create awareness about the programs for all military-connected children.

Recommendations for Practice

In this section, seven recommendations are outlined based on the study findings. Recommendations include some strategies proposed by study participants to address some of the challenges that they had experienced. They are also informed by strategies that have been shown to work in programs that target adolescents and youth.

Provide More Information on Existing Programs for Military-Connected Children

The findings indicate that the school utilized orientation days at the beginning of the school year to provide information on the programs for military-connected children. The forums of disseminating information need to be spread out because transitions for military-connected children occur throughout the year. The school can increase the use of peers who are already using the available programs as advocates to inform others about how they have benefited them.

Provide a Variety of Programs on Life Skills, including Social Skills

The study findings demonstrate that social skills can help highly mobile military-connected children to form meaningful relationships in their new schools and neighborhoods. The skills can assist the children in developing a sense of belonging and enable them to contribute more to their school community. The essential life skills include sharing, cooperating with others, teamwork, conflict resolution, managing emotions, asking questions, and active listening. The school can promote these skills through existing clubs, sports, and even adding components of them in classes.

Create More Awareness of Available Sports and Clubs at Belvedere School

The findings demonstrate that sports and clubs created a platform for children to meet with peers and make friends. Study participants who were active in clubs and sports had more social connections. The forums that can be utilized to reach military-connected children include the use of information education and communication materials and social media platforms that are most popular among young people.

Enhance Existing Partnerships with Belvedere High School and the School Liaison Office and Youth/Teen Center, Located on the Military Base at Fort Powell

The findings indicate that children spent time with their school friends at the youth center. The popular activities reported included exercising with friends, dance class, and gymnastics. Military-connected children who frequented the youth center reported having more friends within and outside school. Enhancing and strengthening partnerships also helps to disseminate information about available support.

Advocate for Safe/Supervised Social Media Use by Military-Connected Students

The study findings indicate that social media was useful in alleviating the stress associated with losing friends due to frequent transitions. Study participants were able to maintain relationships with friends in their previous schools. Some of the boys indicated that online video games helped them connect and maintain relationships with peers. Parents must continue to supervise these interactions to ensure that children's safety is upheld.

Increase, Support and Market Peer Support Group for Military-Connected Students

The findings indicate that peer support is vital in ensuring that new children adapt to their new environment. The school-based peer support group can either be organized in pairs or small groups of fewer than 10 students. The groups should not be exclusive to military-connected children because there is a need to foster relationships between those who are military-connected and their civilian counterparts. These groups aim to provide a safe space and encourage dialogue on challenges and solutions for military-connected children. School administration and peers can market the peer support group to create awareness of their existence, potentially increasing student participation.

Parents Model Positive Social Skills and Encourage Children to Participate in Clubs, Sports and Societies, and Peer Support Groups

In this study, some parents effectively encouraged children to participate in school programs and seek counselling support where needed. Parents can also model positive social skills and practice role-playing with children who report struggles with making meaningful connections. They can also encourage their children to participate in sports and clubs by attending sports events, joining the school's PTA, and volunteering when applicable.

Recommendations for Future Study

Future research on military-connected children should aim to increase the understanding of the population and help amplify their voices in research literature. The first recommendation is for researchers to conduct studies that provide a comparison between military-connected students and their civilian peers. Such a study could be beneficial in assessing the differences, if any, in academic skill levels. Next, research with a focus on the relationship between the military parent(s) and their child(ren) could provide insight as to whether parents are receiving pertinent information towards navigating the available services to help mitigate perceived challenges, especially those that occur with frequent transitions. Researchers could also conduct an evaluation of support programs available on military bases and across military services to assess their effectiveness. This would allow for needed improvements, if any, and funding provided in the areas where it is most needed. Additionally, future research is needed to examine the effects of wartime trauma and how issues such as PTSD factors into family dynamics as well as overall academic outcomes for children. This type of research will help to create targeted intervention for those students whose family members suffered such trauma, especially if the students' academic performance is affected as a result. Finally, researchers should create longitudinal

studies to examine resilience of military-connected children to see if such resilience leads to success.

Conclusion

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of military-connected children associated with frequent school transitions. The researcher also sought to amplify military-connected students' voices by gaining insight into the support available to them in civilian-run public schools to assist in navigating the challenges associated with frequent transitions.

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made for each research question. The first research question aimed at exploring the experiences of military-connected children as they navigated through the frequent school transitions. Two themes were found to address this research question. The first theme focused on the perceptions of military-connected children on challenges, including loss of friends, differing academic policies, difficulties forming meaningful connections with peers, learning new languages, and adjusting to new environments.

The second theme indicated that military-connected children displayed resilience in various challenges. Various examples of resilience were displayed, such as using social media to maintain connections with friends, cultivating social skills by participating in school programs and youth center activities, researching the new school before the transition, and having a positive attitude towards frequent transitions.

The second research question explored the perceptions of the military-connected students regarding available support programs and how they utilized the programs to respond to their challenges. Two themes were found to address this research question. The first theme indicated that military-connected children perceived the counseling program at Belvedere as

beneficial in addressing both academic and social issues. The second theme indicated that military-connected children perceived the administration at Belvedere to be responsive to their needs.

The third research question explored the support received by military-connected children and their perceptions. Two themes were found to address Research Question 3. The first theme demonstrated that parents and peers were the most effective support system for military-connected children. Parents and siblings provided moral support and academic support to the children during the transition into a new school. The second theme discussed aspects of peer support that helped military-connected children to navigate their new school, such as assisting new children in finding their classes or gym and organizing events that would promote socialization.

Across the three research questions, experiences and perceptions of military connected children were not influenced by gender, age, or number of transitions. Children who had developed coping skills reported a more positive experience despite the numerous challenges posed by their frequent transition. Similarly, children who had a sibling of the same age group found it easier to navigate through the school transition. With better awareness and access to counselling and other available programs, military-connected children can be supported to steer through the challenges posed by frequent school transitions.

Dissemination Plan

The principal researcher will continuously use the findings of this study to advocate for programs that address the challenges faced by the highly mobile military-connected students. The dissemination plan will be developed and implemented for 6 months, from June to December 2022. Some of the activities that will be conducted include (a) Dissemination to the

district-level personnel, (b) Dissemination to the school administration and military school liaisons, (c) Dissemination to military-connected children and their parents, (d) Dissemination to teachers of military-connected children, and (e) Dissemination to researchers and the international community at conferences. Table 3 below provides more details on the dissemination plan.

Table 3

Study Dissemination Plan

Audience	Product	Channel/Media	Time Frame
Military connected children	Child-friendly Pamphlet	School bulletin board/ Annual military interstate children compact commission	Fall 2022
Parents of military-connected children	Pamphlet	Parent communication newsletter/ Online parent communication	Summer 2022
Teachers who serve military-connected students	Power-Point presentation/ Pamphlet	Teachers training day/ Conduct professional development of staff	Summer 2022
Belvedere School District/ administration/ Liaison officer/	Power-Point presentation/ Pamphlet	Webinar/ Staff meeting	Before the year 2022-2023
District level Personnel	Power-Point presentations/ Policy briefs	Teachers training days	Before the year 2022-2023
Researchers and education practitioners	Power-Point presentation/ Manuscript/ abstract	March 2023 Annual conference	March 2023

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

June 1, 2021

Title of Research Study: *They Serve Too! Supporting Military-Connected Children in Civilian-run Public Schools.*

Principal Investigator:

Olivette Thompson-Plunkett
Education Leadership and Policy Studies



What is this study about?

A research study is usually done to understand how things work or to find a better way to take care of people. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a current high school student, and you are identified as a military-connected student who changed schools at least once due to a military move.

What should I know about a research study?

In this study, I want to find out more about and better understand the experiences of military-connected students associated with frequent transitions. The study also seeks to gain insight into the support programs available to military-connected students and allow them to join the conversation about how to serve them best as they navigate frequent transitions. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to do so. It is up to you if you want to take part. You can choose not to take part now and change your mind later if you want. Your decision will not be held against you. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

How long will the research last?

I expect that you will be in this research study for one session that will last 45- 60 minutes.

What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview session conducted via Zoom. Based on that interview, you may be contacted once more (only if necessary) to provide clarification about portions of the interview and to ensure that what you shared is accurately depicted.

The interview will occur in a three-part process: (1) Introduction, (2) Discussion, and (3) Conclusion

1. Introduction (5 minutes): I will begin with a self-introduction, and invite you to introduce yourself by stating your name and then select a pseudonym by which you would like to be referred to as throughout the study. I will then restate the purpose of the study and review the informed consent. Next, I will reiterate that participation in the study is completely voluntary and you have the option to opt-out at anytime if you choose to as well as refuse to answer any question that you are uncomfortable answering.
2. Discussion (50 minutes): In this section I will ask you to respond to several questions about your experiences, with transitioning between schools due to military moves. I will also ask you to respond and provide your perceptions of support programs available to you to help with challenges you experience resulting from those transitions. The interview will be recorded using Zoom, and your name will be attached to a pseudonym to help maintain your confidentiality. The video recording of the interview will be housed on the Florida State University's OneDrive which I am the only one with access to your information as this is password protected. The footage will be stored for one year and will then be destroyed.
3. Conclusion (5 minutes): After the interview, I will thank you for your participation, and contribution to the discussion. I will briefly discuss steps I will take to contact you if further clarification on the information that you provided is needed.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There is nothing bad that will happen to you although you may feel uncomfortable answering some of my questions or sharing your personal experiences with me. You can skip any questions you do not want to answer, and you will not be penalized for doing so. If, at any point, you feel uncomfortable, please let me know.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Your contributions to the discussion will be used and reported in a study about how military-connected students experience transitions due to military moves. The information that you provide of your experiences and perceptions regarding frequent transitions and support programs available in helping you to navigate challenges associated with transitions will help school administrators to know your thoughts about what works. You will also create the potential for policymakers to listen to the military-connected students and consider the information when developing policies that affect you.

We will do everything that we can to protect and secure any information about you that we collect. Your information will only be shared only with people who must review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy but we will work to keep your name and other information private. I will store your information in a password-protected online drive. After one year, the information will be destroyed.

What else do I need to know?

You and your parent have the right to inspect all discussion questions, documents, and materials related to your interview for this study. These materials will be provided to you within one week of your request. You can request this information via email at [REDACTED]. To participate in this study, I will need to access your academic record to confirm your grade level, the names of parents/guardians, and that you are a military-connected student.

Who can I talk to?

If you have any questions or complaints about the study, you can talk to your parents or you can talk to Olivette Thompson-Plunkett at [REDACTED]. You can also talk with the people that reviewed and approved this study. They can be reached at 850-644-7900, or humansubjects@fsu.edu.

How do I submit this Permission Form?

Please sign digitally in the sections provided using the DocuSign.

STATEMENT OF ASSENT

I have read and thought about the information about the study that is described in this form. I understand why the research is being done and what I will be asked to do. I also understand that I may ask questions at any time, and that I can stop taking part in the study at any time. By signing below I show that I am willing to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audiotaped/videotaped
YES (initial) ____ NO (initial) ____

STATEMENT OF PARENTAL PERMISSION

I have read and considered the information presented in this form. I confirm that I understand the purpose of the research and the study procedures. I understand that I may ask questions at any time and can withdraw my child's participation without prejudice. I have read this consent form. My signature below indicates that you have my permission to include my child as a participant in this study.

Printed Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

I give permission for my child to be audiotaped/videotaped

YES (initial) _____ NO (initial) _____

Researcher's Signature

I have fully explained the research study described by this form. I have answered the participant and/or parent/guardians' questions and will answer any future questions to the best of my ability. I will tell the family and/or the person taking part in this research of any changes in the procedures or in the possible harms/possible benefits of the study that may affect their health or their willingness to stay in the study.

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Assent/Parental Permission

Signature of Research Team Member

Date

APPENDIX B

PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

June 1, 2021

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY: They Serve Too! Supporting Military-Connected Children in Civilian-run Public Schools.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Olivette Thompson-Plunkett
Florida State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Dear Parents,

I am asking for your child's voluntary participation in this research project. Please read the following information about the project below. If you would like to participate, please sign in the spaces provided.

What is this study about?

A research study is usually done to understand how things work or to find a better way to take care of people. Your child is being asked to take part in this research study because they are a current high school student, identified as a military-connected student who changed schools at least once due to a military move.

What should I know about a research study?

In this study, I want to find out more about and better understand the experiences of military-connected students associated with frequent transitions. The study also seeks to gain insight into the support programs available to military-connected students and allow them to join the conversation about how to serve them best as they navigate frequent transitions. Your child does not have to be in this study if they do not want to do so. It is up to your child if they want to take part. You or your child can choose not to take part now and change your mind later if you want. Your decision will not be held against you or your child. You and/or your child can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

How long will the research last?

I expect that your child will be in this research study for one session that will last 45- 60 minutes.

What happens if I consent to my child participating be in this study?

If you and/or your child both agree to be in this study, your child will be asked to participate in an interview session conducted via Zoom. Based on that interview, you and/or your child may be contacted once more (only if necessary) to provide clarification about portions of the interview and to ensure that what your child shared is accurately depicted.

The interview will occur in a three-part process: (1) Introduction, (2) Discussion, and (3) Conclusion

1. Introduction (5 minutes): I will begin with a self-introduction, and invite the participants to introduce themselves by stating your name and then select a pseudonym by which you would like to be referred to as throughout the study. I will then restate the purpose of the study and review the informed consent. Next, I will reiterate that participation in the study is completely voluntary and you have the option to opt-out at any time if you choose to as well as refuse to answer any question that you are uncomfortable answering.
2. Discussion (50 minutes): In this section I will ask the participants to respond to several questions about their experiences, with transitioning between schools due to military moves. I will also ask participants to respond and provide their perceptions of support programs available to them to help with challenges they experience resulting from those transitions. The interview will be recorded using Zoom, and participant's name will be attached to a pseudonym to help maintain your child's confidentiality. The video recording of the interview will be housed on the Florida State University's OneDrive which I am the only one with access to your information as this is password protected. The footage will be stored for one year and will then be destroyed.
3. Conclusion (5 minutes): After the interview, I will thank participants for their time, participation, and contribution to the discussion. I will briefly discuss steps I will take to contact you and your child if further clarification on the information that your child provided is needed.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There is nothing bad that will happen to your child although they may feel uncomfortable answering some of my questions or sharing your personal experiences with me. Your child can skip any questions they do not want to answer, and they will not be penalized for doing so. If, at any point, they feel uncomfortable, please encourage them to let me know.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Your child's contributions to the discussion will be used and reported in a study about how military-connected students experience transitions due to military moves. The information that your child provides of their experiences and perceptions regarding frequent transitions and support programs available in helping you to navigate challenges associated with transitions will

help school administrators to know your child’s thoughts about what works. You will also create the potential for policymakers to listen to the military-connected students and consider the information when developing policies that affect them.

We will do everything that we can to protect and secure any information about your child that we collect. Your child’s information will only be shared only with people who must review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy but we will work to keep your child’s name and other information private. I will store your child’s information in a password-protected Online Drive. After one year, the information will be destroyed.

What else do I need to know?

You and/or your child have the right to inspect all discussion questions, documents, and materials related to their interview for this study. These materials will be provided to you and/or your child within one week of you or your child’s request. You and/or your child can request this information via email at [REDACTED]

Who can I talk to?

If you have any questions or complaints about the study, you can talk to your parents or you can talk to Olivette Thompson-Plunkett at [REDACTED]. You can also talk with the people that reviewed and approved this study. They can be reached at 850-644-7900, or humansubjects@fsu.edu.

How do I submit this Permission Form?

Please sign digitally in the sections provided using the DocuSign.

STATEMENT OF PARENTAL PERMISSION

I have read and considered the information presented in this form. I confirm that I understand the purpose of the research and the study procedures. I understand that I may ask questions at any time and can withdraw my child’s participation without prejudice. I have read this consent form. My signature below indicates that you have my permission to include my child as a participant in this study.

Printed Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian Date

I give permission for my child to be audiotaped/videotaped
YES (initial) ____ NO (initial) ____

Researcher's Signature

I have fully explained the research study described by this form. I have answered the participant and/or parent/guardians' questions and will answer any future questions to the best of my ability. I will tell the family and/or the person taking part in this research of any changes in the procedures or in the possible harms/possible benefits of the study that may affect their health or their willingness to stay in the study.

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Assent/Parental Permission

Signature of Research Team Member

Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Title: They Serve Too! Supporting Military-Connected Children in Civilian-run Public Schools.		
Date:	Interview Time:	Interview Location:
Interviewer: Olivette Thompson-Plunkett		Interviewee:
Interview Procedure/Script: <p>Thank you once again for taking the time to participate in the interview for this study. My name is Olivette Thompson-Plunkett, and I will be facilitating the interview. The purpose of this interview is to get your perception of your experience with the support available to you as you transition between school districts. Your input to this study is valued and will ultimately help shed light on how military-connected children feel about and perceive the support they receive in civilian-run public schools. Hopefully, the information gained from the insight you provide will assist in policymaking decisions aimed at providing an equitable educational experience for military-connected children.</p> <p>There are no right or wrong answers to the questions that I will ask you during this interview. The goal here is to feel comfortable enough to be completely honest with the feedback you provide by saying exactly what you think about the available support.</p> <p>The interview will last approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. During this time, I will be asking you various questions about your experience with frequent transitions, the support you receive in schools to help with those transitions, and what you think about the support. You are under no obligation to answer the questions; feel free to let me know if you would rather not answer a particular question, and I will move on to another. Also, if you have any questions during the interview, please do not hesitate to ask me.</p>		
Interview Recording: <p>The interview will be recorded and transcribed verbatim so that your words do not lose any substance, and they represent your precise thoughts, feelings, and ideas. All information you provide will be kept strictly confidential, and you will not be identified during the write-up. If you would like a copy of the transcript for this interview, I will be happy to provide one to you once the transcription is complete.</p>		
Informed Consent: <p>Do you verbally consent to participate in this interview? If you have any questions, please feel free to ask at this time.</p>		
Interview Questions:		
How many times have you moved?		
Tell me a story about the first time you changed schools due to a military move.		

Explain to me what happened when you told your friends you would be leaving?

You mentioned that your friends were (**FILL IN THE BLANK HERE**), describe to me how that affected the last day at your previous school?

Know that you would not be returning to your previous school, explain to me what that was like.

How does social media play into the transition process?

Describe your thought process with having to transition to a new school.

(Follow-up Probing Questions:

1. Who else do you utilize for support with your transition?
2. What about non-school activities, like church or some other organization?
3. Based on your experience with moving more than once, who do you look to for help (parents, school, peers)?

Think of your experience on your first day at Belvedere HS, what was that day like?

Describe the support programs at Belvedere HS, and tell me about your experience with them.

You mentioned that you received support in (**INSERT NAME**) program, tell me why is this program beneficial?

Describe your involvement in your school community.

How involved is administration with military-connected students who transfer into Belvedere High School?

How do you feel about the resources provided to military-connected students by the school?

What programs do you think can help shape military-connected students who transition into Belvedere High School?

Closing:

Thank you once again for talking to me today, the insight you provide is quite valuable. You may be contacted for the purpose of follow-up and clarification. If you have any questions feel free to reach me at the contact information provided to you earlier.

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear [*insert name*]

My name is Olivette Thompson-Plunkett, and I am a doctoral student from the College of Education Leadership and Policy Studies at Florida State University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about your experiences as a military-connected student. You're eligible to be in this study because you are identified as a military-connected student who experienced school transitions due to a military move, at least once. I obtained your contact information from your school's guidance office.

Participating in study will provide vital information useful in understanding your experiences with frequent transitions. If you decide to participate in this study, you will also have the opportunity to help school districts and policymakers develop and implement meaningful policies that directly affect your educational experience. I will use Zoom video conferencing software to conduct the interview which will last about 45-60 minutes. I would like to record your discussion about your experiences and perceptions, and then will use the information to in a study about military-connected students' experiences with frequent transitions, and perceptions about available support programs to help navigate challenges associated with frequent transition. Your information will not be shared with teachers, parents, or club sponsors. In the final report of this study, pseudonyms will be used so that your identity, the school you attend, and the district in which your school is situated will not be identifiable.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at [REDACTED]

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Olivette Thompson-Plunkett

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE of the VICE PRESIDENT for RESEARCH



APPROVAL

May 17, 2021

Olivette Thompson-Plunkett
850-644-5260
[REDACTED]

Dear Olivette Thompson-Plunkett:

On 5/17/2021, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Expedited (7)(a) Behavioral research; (7)(b) Social science methods
Title:	They Serve Too! Supporting Military-Connected Children in Civilian-run Public Schools
Investigator:	Olivette Thompson-Plunkett
Submission ID:	STUDY00002249
Study ID:	STUDY00002249
Funding:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thompson-Plunkett_Appendix F_Letter of Support-IRCSA.pdf, Category: Other;• Thompson-Plunkett_Appendix C_Interview Protocol.docx, Category: Protocol;• Thompson-Plunkett_Appendix A_Letter of Informed Consent_Assent Document.docx, Category: Consent Form;• Thompson-Plunkett_Appendix B_Parent-Guardian Permission Letter.docx, Category: Consent Form;• Thompson-Plunkett_Appendix D_Recruitment Email.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Thompson-Plunkett_Appendix E_Research

	Recruitment Flyer.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Thompson-Plunkett_IRB Main Protocol Application.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;
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The IRB approved the protocol, effective from 5/17/2021.

Your study conforms to FSU policy on COVID-19-related requirements and restrictions related to research activities that involve in-person interventions or interactions with human research participants.

Note that once the COVID-19-related requirements and restrictions are lifted and IF you plan to substitute remote interactions or interventions with in-person alternatives, please be sure to submit a modification to the IRB for its review of these substitutions; if however you only plan to discontinue other COVID-19-specific risk mitigation (e.g., social distancing, screening, use of PPE), then no study modification request need to be submitted to the IRB for review before these changes may be implemented. For all other study modifications, see notes below.

You are advised that any modification(s) to the protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation of the proposed modification(s).

Federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report any new information related to this protocol (see Investigator Manual (HRP-103)).

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,

Human Subjects Research Office
humansubjects@fsu.edu

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Olivette Thompson-Plunkett

EDUCATION

Florida State University | *Tallahassee, FL*

Doctor of Education Leadership and Policy (May 2022)

Cumulative GPA: 3.983

Nova Southeastern University | *Fort Lauderdale, FL*

Education Leadership Specialist (January 2013)

Cumulative GPA: 3.90

Nova Southeastern University | *Fort Lauderdale, FL*

Masters in Business Administration – Finance Concentration (January 2010)

Cumulative GPA: 3.70

Florida Atlantic University | *Boca Raton, FL*

Bachelor of Arts in Finance (December 2005)

Cumulative GPA: 3.39

CERTIFICATION

- Certificate in Program Evaluation | *Florida State University, July 2021*
- Administrator I | Maryland Department of Education | January 2021
- Education Leadership K-12 | Florida Department of Education | January 2013
- Business Education 6-12 | Florida Department of Education | January 2008

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTEREST

Educational experiences of individuals within the military community; Educational funding disparities based on socio-economic factors; Federally funded programs; Education equity; Critical Race Theory; Emotional Intelligence in education; Social emotional learning; Educational Program Evaluation and Monitoring; Educational outcomes within the African Continent

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Manager, Residential Living/Counseling

Woodland Job Corps Center

Laurel, MD

02/2022 – Present

- Direct supervision of 30-35 personnel
- Plans, administers, directs, and supervises residential living, counseling, recreation, and student leadership programs in accordance with policy requirements
- Directs all departmental functions, activities and programs to assure they meet their specified needs and aligns goals and objectives of Center activities and operations

- Oversee, develops and implements residential living center specific policies and procedures
- Develops and revises Departmental Standard Operating Procedures
- Provides leadership to assure staff understanding of the goals and philosophy of the program
- Guides and promotes safe work performance
- Describes goals and outline performance expectations and standards, and articulate how staff individual performance supports such expectations
- Develops job performance standards and work assignments for staff within the department and monitor the work performance of the department
- Evaluate employee performance in a timely and consistent manner
- Provides on-going professional development opportunities for staff
- Performs other job-related duties as assigned by designated an/or authorized staff

Senior Residential Counselor/Shift Manager

Woodland Job Corps Center

Laurel, MD

09/2021 – 02/2022

- Direct supervision of 10-15 team members
- Train, develop and monitor performance of staff to ensure accuracy of case notes and other documents
- Conduct regular team meetings and one-on-one meetings to communicate policy, process, and strategy to achieve goals and set outcomes
- Foster team cohesiveness and build consistency in processes and service approach
- Plans and manages the Dorm Life/Independent Living area in compliance with Center policies and procedures
- Assess personnel needs, screens and interviews potential staff members
- Describe goals, performance expectations and standards, and articulate how staff individual performance supports the admission, career preparation, career development and career transition of students
- Evaluate employee performance in a timely and consistent manner
- Coordinates building usage and other physical equipment needs necessary to accomplish functions of Residential Living department
- Maintain the timely completion of all records and reports as directed by the Residential Living Director
- Responsible for all shift operations of the residence.
- Ensure effective communication of daily work info and expectations
- Counsels and, assist and supervise Residential Advisors as needed
- Notify the Residential Director of any issues or concerns related to staffing schedules and coverage
- Provide coaching and counseling of Resident Advisors and Recreation Staff to enhance individual and team performance.
- Work collaboratively with the Residential Director and provide input into annual evaluations for Resident Advisors.
- Arrange and assist with on-site orientation and training activities for new employees and existing staff

- Reviews and recommends for approval all Work Order Request, Position Requisitions, Vouchers, Travel Requests, Vacation Requests, Overtime Requests, etc.
- Monitor operation and condition of the building and supplies; ensure building security
- Develop and maintain an effective communication network with the individuals, program staff, families, community agencies, and other Center departments.
- Ensure compliance with all pertinent government and Center regulations and operating standards.

Career Counselor

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

Inverness Technologies

Fort Drum, NY

10/2018 – 10/2020

- Worked collaboratively with transitions team and oversaw the transitioning process for military officers, senior enlisted, and retirees to the civilian workforce
- Facilitated the transition process of over 350 senior military service personnel from the military to the civilian environment
- Provided one-on-one Transition Counseling to over 150 senior military personnel monthly
- Adept at increasing knowledge by instructing and facilitating workshops
- Conducted monthly Pre-Separation Briefings, workshop facilitation, training counseling, and connecting separating personnel to service providers
- Dynamic public speaker and presenter, capable of keeping the focus on instruction to meet professional objectives
- Knowledgeable of research design and analysis techniques useful in delivering curriculum objectives
- Specialized access to sensitive information on government systems of record
- Collaborated with Transition Service Manager to provide outreach and additional information and resources
- Compiled and delivered Commanders' reports and notify service member of transition timelines and requirements for transition
- Safeguarded personally identifiable information IAW regulations that govern the contractual agreement
- Consistently documented records and delivered top-rated service to a diverse population
- Adept at creating and delivering high-quality presentations

Secondary Mathematics Educator

Waiialua High School

HIDOE – Waiialua, HI

07/2015 - 09/2016

- Applied professional knowledge and instructional strategies to deliver curriculum requirements for algebra 1, algebra 2, trigonometry and pre-calculus
- Participated in mathematical curriculum development, focusing on virtual and horizontal alignment
- Collaborated with other educators, administrators, students, parents, and members of the community

- Utilized limited available resources to coordinate programs that assess the special needs of students
- Advisor for the National Honors Society Chapter; acted as the liaison for school and community partners engaged in service-learning projects
- Participated in numerous committees and additional duty assignments

CYS Program Associate

Child, Youth & School Services (CYSS)

Department of the Army – Schofield Barracks, HI

04/2014 - 07/2015

- Provided academic support and strengthening to center participants in core subject area to effectively accomplish the program objectives
- Worked with interdisciplinary teams to create educational programming that fosters and encourage additional learning opportunities
- Utilized written and verbal communication to effectively problem solve and attain program goals of providing a safe environment for military school-aged children
- Connected and worked cooperatively with the trainer, supervisor, and other CYS Program Associates to ensure that there is a unified conveyance of quality service to program participants
- Maintained a positive work environment while providing accountability for program participants per AR 608-10
- Coordinated efforts to engage with parents and the community regarding program benefits and to meet program goals for community outreach
- Completed all mandatory CYS training in less than the required time allotted
- Proactively researched and completed additional training including but not limited to CYMS and FMWR Delivery System

Accounting & Technology Teacher – High School

Charter Schools USA – Coral Springs Charter

01/2011- 09/2013

- Facilitated classroom instruction for Accounting I, II, and III
- Created curriculum and administered instruction for Introduction to Information Technology classes
- Achieved a 98% pass rate for all students
- Observed and evaluated students' work to determine progress, provided feedback, and made suggestions for improvement; 100% of students received feedback within a 36-hour turnaround time.
- Acted as the school's intermediary in the year-round network-wide curriculum cadre
- Trained for two years as part of the Leading-Edge Team for school administration
- Facilitated SLC's focusing on best practices within our network of schools
- Provided mentoring to new teachers in our mentor-mentee program
- Facilitated meetings with parents, students, and other pertinent stakeholders
- Analyzed data to improve instruction and student outcomes
- Incorporated culturally relevant pedagogy in the lesson, so students can identify and relate

- Aligned lessons with FLDOE CTE initiatives
- Collaborated with core subject area teachers to help incorporate technology in their lessons
- Adviser for National Junior Honors Society (NJHS)

Business Education Teacher- Careers – Middle School

Charter Schools USA – Coral Springs Charter

01/2008 – 01/2011

- Advised students on career decisions, course selection, and other vocational concerns
- Conducted classroom instruction to teach the principles, procedures, and methods of career selection
- Administered formative and summative assessments, both orally and written, to measure progress and evaluate instruction effectiveness
- 100% of students were successful and promoted to the next grade level.
- Collected and maintained students' data on assessments to determine progress, examine learning trends, and provide feedback for improvement. Students received feedback no later than 36 hours after any given assessments.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Student, School of Education, Florida State University (2019 – current)

- Researched and wrote a term paper outlining Educational Policy Implementation at the District, School, and Classroom Level
- Researched and wrote a term paper that explored Teaching Strategies Employed by Teachers; aimed Promoting Educational Equity During the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Researched and wrote term paper analyzing Educational Policies aimed at Mitigating Challenges for Military-connected Students as they Transition Between School Districts
- Conducted in-depth interviews of military-connected students regarding their educational experiences, and frequent transitions.
- Created a research case study which analyzed the experiences of military-connected students with frequent transitions.