CHALLENGES ELEMENTARY TEACHERS FACE WHEN TEACHING MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS

by

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B. A., University of Northern Iowa, 2005
M.S., Emporia State University, 2010

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2014

Abstract

Military-connected students are a highly mobile population who undergo a great deal of stress in their lives. These factors can overflow into life in the elementary classroom, causing challenges for teachers. This study looked at the percieved challenges elementary classroom teachers face when working with military-connected students in one public school district with schools located on a military base and other schools near it.

A Likert-type survey of questions was created and administered to teachers using an online survey tool. The survey was sent to elementary teachers working in schools in one public school district in the Midwestern United States with a garnered response rate of 42.2% (n=68). The schools in the district were located in a city near and on a military base. The study used exploratory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, an ANOVA, and step-wise regression analysis procedures to answer the research questions regarding the challenges teachers face when working with military-connected students.

The results of the study indicated that the number of years a teacher has been teaching influences their perceptions of challenges regarding military-connected students. In addition, teachers indicated that helping students catch up academically, supporting them emotionally, and family/parent issues are the top challenges when working with elementary military-connected students.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The United States has one of the highest mobility rates in the world (Titus, 2007). While mobility rates have been a little lower in 2013-2014, approximately 20% of American families move annually (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum 2010; Robinson, 2012). Additionally, individuals and families in the military move even more frequently with approximately between 33% and 37% relocating each year; three times that of their civilian counterparts with school aged children (Astor, Jacobson, & Benbenishty, 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Titus, 2007).

Wood, Halfon, Scarla, Newacheck, and Nessim (1993) reported that highly mobile students "are at a greater risk for a number of problems including reported delay in growth or development, learning disorders, failing a grade, and 4 or more frequently occurring behavioral problems" (p. 1337). Several studies have focused on the effects of student mobility student groups such as migrant children and those attending inner city schools (Astor et al., 2012; Gruman, Harachi, Abbott, Catalano, & Fleming, 2008; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Robinson, 2012).

The focus on these populations has left a large gap in the research about other groups such as military children (Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, & Richardson, 2010; Robinson, 2012), specifically challenges facing elementary teachers when they are teaching children from military families (Astor et al., 2012). Since military families move three times more often than their civilian counterparts, it is important that elementary teachers, especially those working in close proximity to military bases, be aware of the challenges involved in teaching transient students (Astor et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Morgan & Ross, 2013; Titus, 2007).

Students not only deal with academic and social challenges at new schools (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Phelps, Dunham, & Lyons, 2010), but also the psychological stress and emotional issues related to this and the reality and threat of parental deployment (Chandra et al., 2010; Petty, 2009; Phelps et al., 2010). The Interagency Policy Committee (2011), in "Supporting Our Military Families" Initiative, concisely illustrates the need for further attention to this :

> *Only 37 percent of our families live on military installations; the remaining 63 percent live in over 4,000 communities nationwide. Multiple deployments, combat injuries, and the challenges of reintegration can have far-reaching effects on not only the troops and their families, but also upon America's communities as well. These challenges should be at the forefront of our national discourse. (p. 1)*

To meet the challenges of supporting military families, schools should be well prepared to support these students (Astor et al., 2012; Petty, 2009; Phelps et al., 2010). It is often assumed that military families live on numerous bases nationwide, therefore sending their children to schools operated by the Department of Defense. However, "only about 7% of the U.S. military children attend these DoDEA schools" (Astor et al., 2012, p. 2). These challenges include academic, social, and emotional needs of the students, as well as managerial demands on the teacher (Astor et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Chandra et al., 2010; Gruman et al. 2008; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Petty, 2009; Phelps et al., 2010).

Currently, there is a lack of information and research about teaching military-connected students from the viewpoint of the teacher and particularly in the elementary school setting of public schools serving military children. As such, this study examined the

challenges facing elementary classroom teachers of mobile military students in public schools serving on and near a military base in the Midwest.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions elementary teachers have regarding challenges when working with military-connected students. This study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a difference in teacher's perceptions of challenges for those in classrooms with more than 50% military-connected populations and classrooms with less than 50% military-connected populations?
2. Are there differences in perception of challenges by gender, military service, or prior military teaching?
3. To what extent do years of teaching experience, teacher education level, number of professional development training hours received, grade level, use of resources, use of curricular strategies, preparation, and understanding of military-connected students predict perceived challenges?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: $H_:$ There is a significant difference in teacher perceptions of challenges for those in classrooms with more than 50% military-connected populations than those with less than 50%.

$H_{0:}$ There is no statistical significant difference in teacher perceptions of challenges for those in classrooms with more than 50% military-connected populations than those with less than 50%.

Hypothesis 2: H: There is a significant difference in perception of challenges by grade level, gender, military service or prior military teaching.

H_0 : There is no statistical significant difference in perception of challenges by grade level, gender, military service or prior military teaching.

Hypothesis 3: H : Years of teaching experience, teacher education level, number of professional development training hours received, grade level, use of resources, use of curricular strategies, preparation, and understanding of military-connected students predict perceived challenges.

H_0 : Years of teaching experience, teacher education level, number of professional development training hours received, grade level, use of resources, use of curricular strategies, preparation, and understanding of military-connected students do not predict perceived challenges.

Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations. Due to the unique location of the schools and teachers included in this study, the results are not generalizable to all elementary teachers. Additionally, the sample size was relatively small for a quantitative study. To generalize the results a greater population, a broader range of diverse school populations and locations would be necessary. This study was only done with elementary classroom teachers in kindergarten through fifth grades, so the conclusions may not be applicable to those teachers working with early childhood, middle school, or high school students.

In addition to sample size, the design of the study has some internal and external threats to validity. Internal validity threats include selection, mortality, interaction of selection and maturations, and the interaction of selection and the treatment (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Definition of Terms

Academic performance. Academic performance refers to the student performance on reading, math, science, social studies, and writing measured by grades or standardized test scores in a school setting (Robinson, 2012).

Challenges. A challenge is something that is difficult or hard to do (Merriam-Webster, 2013). In the case of this study, challenges are used to describe the logistical or emotional stresses that a teacher may encounter when teaching students. These could include, but are not limited to: helping a student academically, understanding military life, helping a student going through emotional traumas, creating a caring classroom environment, assessing students needs, and communicating with parents. A challenge for one individual may not be challenge for another.

Civilian. A civilian is a person not on active duty in the armed forces of the United States (Merriam-Webster, 2013). For this study an expansion has been made to include: those not in a military-connected family.

Common Core State Standards. According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2013), the standards are "a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt." "Forty-five states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense

Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013).

Department of Defense Schools (DoDEA). Schools that are operated by the United States Military (U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity, 2013).

Deployment. Deployment is the transfer of military personnel in order for them to fulfill their military contract. This can be within the intercontinental United States or worldwide. A deployment can be a training exercise, peacekeeping mission or to a warzone (Astor et al., 2012)

Elementary Public School. Schools that are currently owned and operated by the U.S. government apart from Department of Defense schools in the United States territories (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). "The term `elementary school' means a nonprofit institutional day or residential school that provides elementary education, as determined under State law" (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Elementary Teacher. A working definition of elementary teacher is a state-certified, practicing, and whole class teacher who is responsible for teaching a class in Kindergarten through fifth grades.

Military-Connected. A working definition for military-connected can be stated as a connection to the military by way of job or family relationship such as spouse, child, or parent. Connections beyond these immediate relationships will not be used.

Student Mobility. Student mobility is defined as "making a school enrollment change at a time not required by the grade structure of the school system" (Gruman et. al, 2008, p. 1833).

Stable Students. Stable students are defined as children who remain in the same school for the entire academic school year. Additionally, no more than one movement among years of school that are not considered normal transition years (i.e., between elementary and middle school or between middle and high school) (Robinson, 2012).

Military-connected Family. A military-connected family is a family in which an immediate member serves in any branch of the military in an active or reserve status (Gruman et al., 2008).

Mobile Military Student. Mobile military students, according to Bradshaw et al. (2010), are "school aged youth who have been relocated as a result of a military-related move that necessitated a school change (p. 85)."

PCS. PCS is an acronym standing for Permanent Change of Station (Williams, 2000). Simply it is the change of an active duty military member to another location/base. While the title suggests it is "permanent," this is often not the case (Astor et al., 2012).

Relocation. Relocation is an event in which students are mobile for "non-promotional" reasons and establish a new address as a result (Matter & Matter, 1988).

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

School populations are changing as students move in and out of schools at multiple times of the year (Astor et al., 2012; Beck, Kratzer, & Isken, 1997; Gruman et al., 2008; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Robinson, 2012;Voltz, 2000). Diminished academic performance is just one example of the difficult challenges facing students and their teachers as a consequence of student mobility (Beck et al., 1997; Gruman et al., 2008; Phelps et al., 2010; Robinson, 2012; Voltz, 2000). When looking at schools with high mobility rates, the schools usually serve large populations of migrant workers, homeless children, and/or low-income families (Astor et al., 2012; Beck et al., 1997; Education Week, 2004; Robinson, 2012;Voltz, 2000). "Changing schools frequently is associated with lower academic achievement, decreased access to the full curriculum, and, ultimately, dropping out of school (Voltz, 2000, p.2)."

Military students are also extremely mobile. However they have not usually been included in studies researching the effects of mobility on student performance in schools, which is concerning since they often have similar concerns as all children who change schools frequently (Astor et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Chandra et al., 2009; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Robinson, 2012). Military children also deal with a great deal of stressors related to their connection to the military, such as threat of deployment, relocation, or even the return of a parent; all of which can lead to maladjustment displayed in school (Astor et al., 2012; Chandra et al., 2009; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Phelps et al., 2010).

This section will provide support for the need of the study by examining the existing literature regarding student mobility and academics, social and emotional affects of mobility, teacher challenges, and resources for teachers working with military-connected students. Therefore, the discussion in this chapter is organized in the following sections: (1) mobility

and highly mobile populations, (2) mobile military-connected students, and (3) teachers and military-connected students.

Mobility

Moving from one school to another can be a stressful even for every age of student. However, for elementary students, the stress and detrimental consequences are intensified in the adjustment process (Gruman et al., 2008; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Voltz, 2000). Frequent moves disrupt the acquisition of critical building blocks on which late learning is based (Gruman et al., 2008). Some researchers define highly mobile students are those who change schools more than six times in their elementary and secondary career (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2001). Children who are highly mobile may take up to half of a year to adjust and catch up to the rest of the class (Voltz, 2000). Beck, Kratzer, and Isken (1997) found through their qualitative study that mobile students suffer from gaps in curriculum, teachers that are inadequately prepared to deal with their needs, and a lack of communication between families and schools resulting in frustrated students, parents, and teachers.

Highly Mobile Populations

Families and students may move for a number of reasons, but certain groups move much more often, including students from low income families (including migrant working and homeless families) and military families.

Low income. Student mobility should be a continuous concern for educators in the United States (Gruman et al., 2008; Robinson, 2012). Census data from the early 2000's showed that those renting homes and below the poverty line move more often than those who own homes and have higher annual income (as cited in Robinson, 2012). "Poor families

move 50% to 100% more often than non-poor families (Voltz, 2000, p. 3)." These poor families could be homeless, migrant workers, and/or working class families.

Robinson (2012) conducted a study through the lens of financial reasons for mobility. A sample of 213 African American and Caucasian students in grades 3-8 in a somewhat rural school system in Mississippi was used for the study (Robinson, 2012). A random sample of students, both mobile and stable, were grouped by their race and economic level (Robinson, 2012) These students' math and language arts scores were analyzed to determine if their race, socio-economic status and rate of mobility effected their academic performance. Robinson's findings were that race and income were actually a significant factor regarding the impact of mobility in students. Students that were of low-income standing and highly mobile scored lower on language arts assessments on average than their counterparts who were considered stable.

On average, homeless students move four times a year (Fitzsimmons, 1998). This creates an issue for schools and teachers for numerous reasons. Not only are students enrolling at odd times of the year, but they arrive with little to no records used for placement into a classroom (Fitzsimmons, 1998; Powney, 2001). In addition, the students may come with resentment about moving, educational gaps, and issues such as hunger (Fitzsimmons, 1998). Students learn best in a safe and stable environment, so it is important that public schools provide this atmosphere for them (Fitzsimmons, 1998). Teachers can work to remove the stressor of instability by creating an orderly, predictable place for students to spend their days learning (Fitzsimmons, 1998).

Military. The risk of relocation for military students is high. On average, they will experience nine military-connected relocations in their school career (U.S. Army Community

and Family Support Center, 2001 as cited in Bradshaw et al., 2010). Numerous studies have been done concerning the effects of mobility on civilian populations, but data are lacking about the possible detrimental effects of frequent mobility of elementary students due to being in a military-connected family (Astor et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Robinson, 2012).

This transiency brings up a number of issues in regard to the education of these students. As Bradshaw et al. (2010) claim: "It is important to note, however, that most highly mobile civilian students also face other risk factors, such as family poverty, family instability, and parental unemployment, which likely compromise their ability to cope with frequent moves" (p. 86). Thus, it is important to consider these factors as more evidence that one cannot use findings from previous research regarding civilian mobile students to generalize for mobile military students (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

The research on the academic effects of mobility and deployment on military-connected students is inconclusive as some studies indicate students are scoring well on grade-level assessments on average in schools run by the Department of Defense (Department of Defense Education Activity, 2004; Voltz, 2000). However, in one study of fifth graders, researchers revealed that during a time of deployment, female students scored lower than male students on average on exams (Phelps et al., 2010).

In addition, other authors claim that students whose parents are deployed have lower test scores than their peers, and the authors point to numerous factors, one of which is teacher preparedness for working with military-connected students (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Phelps et al., 2010; Sparks, 2011).

Impact of Mobility on Students

Mobility can have an impact on students in a number of ways. In this section, the academic impact will be explored alongside how mobility can also affect students who are not considered transient or mobile.

Academic impact. In addition to Robinson (2012), Gruman et al. (2008) also found that mobility has a negative effect on school performance, including lower math and reading scores, behavior problems, and increase in the likelihood of being held back a grade. Gruman et al. (2008) did a longitudinal study regarding the effects of mobility on elementary school engagement in the classroom. They investigated the relationship between mobility, classroom participation and attitude toward school using growth curve modeling data analysis (Gruman et al., 2008).

Interestingly, despite frequent moves and lower levels of achievement, students in the study reported consistently highly positive attitudes toward school (Gruman et al., 2008). This should be encouraging to educators and schools as they are the reason behind the feelings many students have regarding school (Gruman et al., 2008). The study also showed that a single move may not impact children in terms of academic achievement, but the accumulation of many can have a collective impact (Gruman et al., 2008).

Kerbow, Azcoitia, and Buell (2003) stated the fact that students who transfer between schools may miss the presentation of key concepts, which hinders their ability to make connections among content and keep pace with the existing class. Kerbow et al. (2003) also examined the relationship between curricular variation and student mobility, finding that due to inefficiency in record transfers, students are frequently placed in classes inappropriate for their ability level. In order to meet the needs of students entering in the middle of the year,

teachers may have to compensate with slower pacing, resulting in less content coverage. Kerbow et al. (2003) contend that, "…students who change schools three or more times from first grade to sixth reveals that they are almost one academic year behind their stable counterparts" (p. 161).

Additionally, Black (2006, p. 3) found "many highly mobile students take four to six months to recover academically" after a given move. These findings are important to consider as the frequency and number of students moving increases year to year and as focus continues to be on student academic progress through assessment.

Social and emotional impact. Several researchers have addressed the emotional effects of mobility. Mobility could cause psychological concerns for students who may not be well adjusted, which often presents itself in academic and social settings (Astor et al., 2012; Robinson, 2012). Allan and Bardsley (1983) found that just one move, particularly in the primary grades, can be traumatic for a child. Changing schools has approximately the same stress effect on students as the hospitalization of a parent due to a serious illness (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1996 as cited in Robinson, 2012). Bowlby (1980) argued that moving and changing schools for a young child is comparable to the experience of grief due to a death. Likewise, Black (2006) found that students moving midyear experienced adjustment problems in their academics and social lives.

The change involves new peers to figure out and navigate the social norms, new procedures and routines, new teachers with differing expectations, and differences in the pace and content of curriculum (Morgan & Ross, 2013; Robinson, 2012). These can confound to be an extremely stressful time for a young child. Rumberger and Larson (1996) interviewed mobile students regarding their feelings about changing schools: "...Every time I moved I felt

less and less important" (p. 3). It is important to note that changes in behavior or academic performance in school may be due to stress stemming from a student's home life as well, not just the change in location (Robinson, 2012).

The family-stress theory can aid in understanding the complex conditions behind a student's actions. Just as understanding of child resilience emerged from studies of stress and coping in children, family resilience can be examined from the perspective of family stress and coping theory (McCubbin, Joy, Cauble, Comeau, Patterson, & Needle, 1980). Family stress can be due to normal daily life routines as well as those due to outside circumstances out of the family's control (Bradshaw et al., 2012; McCubbin et al., 1980). Families may be resilient in responding to one form of stress, but as new circumstances materialize, their ability to remain resilient could weaken (Boss, 2001).

Among family stress theorists, Boss (2001) has emphasized the contexts of family stress and the need to take account of community and cultural contexts in which a family resides to understand why and how families are stressed, as well as to understand how families respond to stress. Family resilience can be impacted positively by strong community institutional support to help them deal with stressful life events both presently and in the future (Boss, 2001; McCubbin et al., 1980). Family stress can impact children in different ways as all humans respond differently to different situations, but it is important to recognize the differences that may occur for military families in regards to the life transitions and stress (Astor et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Chandra et al., 2010).

Impact on other students. Fascinatingly, stable students are not immune to the negative effects of mobility in schools (Robinson, 2012). Stable students attending schools with high mobility rates have also shown to limited progress terms of their academics

(Heywood, Thomas, & White, 1997; Robinson, 2012). Student mobility is not only disruptive to those moving but also "impedes stable students from moving ahead because the teacher is attempting to help those students…to catch up to the rest of the class" (Robinson, 2012, p.19). In order to ease this concern some schools have considered adopting special classes for mobile students in order to protect the stable students from this effect (Hartman, 2002).

One theory that is used frequently in the literature to explain the relationship between mobility and meager educational performance is the "social capital theory" of Coleman (1988, 1990). Strongly related to the economic concepts of human and financial capital, social capital represents the link between a family and the network of relationships outside of the family such as friends and community members that may provide support to the family (Coleman, 1988). According to this theory, moving is detrimental to children's achievement because social ties are broken, in so doing upsetting the exchange of social capital in the network.

Mobile Military-Connected Students

Mobile military-connected students can have different stressors in their lives that add to the "normal" life stress that most children face. There are unique stresses that students may encounter in addition to the extreme stress of parental deployment. The following paragraphs explain these stressors that military-connected students may encounter.

Unique Stress

The purpose of the Bradshaw et al. (2010) study was to understand the "transition related stressors affecting mobile military students," specifically adolescents in middle and high school. Researchers used a phenomenological qualitative study to investigate the ways these students coped with the stress and also ways that schools might help students such as this. Bradshaw et al. (2010) conducted focus group interviews of students, parents, and

school staff to gain insight to the aforementioned topics. The study revealed that causes of stress included tension at home and relationships with peers, as well as, adapting to the new school, teacher/student relationships, academic challenges, and involvement in extracurricular activities (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

A common theme prevalent among all responders was that the relocations increased tension in the family (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Students also reported feeling angry at the military for taking their parents away, and they were also angry with their parents for choosing the military life (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Home stress was evident in student behavior at school with an "edginess" displayed by students especially around times of deployment and reunion, as some teachers reported (Bradshaw et al., 2010). The middle school and high school students seemed to correlate the importance of being involved in school both socially and academically to their feelings of adjustment. While this study focused on adolescents, it is likely that elementary students also feel that social acceptance and adjustment academically would be important to their success.

Stress of Parental Deployment

In addition to frequent transitions, many children of military personnel are learning to cope with the imminent threat of parental deployment. Chandra et al. (2010) gathered data from teachers about the perceived challenges and observed behaviors of military students in elementary, middle and high school. Researchers in this study focused on the effects of deployment. While there are some positive aspects of deployment for a family, such as a sense of family pride and financial benefits, it is a heavy emotional burden for family members (Chandra et al., 2010).

Deployment can have a disorganizing effect for children as many changes, in addition to relocation, occur (Astor et al., 2012). Children present their emotions and reactions to stress in a variety of ways, some reactions more visible than others (Chandra et al., 2010). In school, stress may be evident by low academic performance, difficulty in social interactions, and/or behavioral challenges (Chandra et al., 2010). The stress of deployment on children suggests that all ages exhibit emotional or behavior problems during parental deployment ranging from sleeping issues to anxiety and depression (Chandra et al., 2010). Moreover, research suggests that young children whose parents are deployed for an extended amount of time have a higher risk of mental health problems than whose parents did not deploy (Astor et al., 2012).

Many students feel as if they are the only ones going through stress related to parental deployment, especially in schools serving a smaller number of military-connected families (Chandra et al., 2010). This isolation can be detrimental to a child's mental health, and teachers should help other students understand what is going on. Therefore, talking about military-related issues such as parental deployment can be normalized, as one parent recommended in a study conducted by Chandra et al. (2010).

In the same study, teachers reported that boys exhibited stress differently than girls (Chandra et al., 2010). Boys were observed displaying outward expressions of anger and aggression, whereas girls demonstrated internal behaviors like depression and withdrawal from interaction (Chandra et al., 2010). While some students learn coping mechanisms to deal with repeated parental deployments, others seem to regress as deployments are repeated (Chandra et al., 2010).

Often family stress related to the absence of a parent due to deployment is recognized by outside members like family friends, school staff, and community members; however many forget the other stressful event: reintegration (Astor et al., 2012; Chandra et al., 2010). Children grow developmentally, socially, and physically during the time of deployment; as the family member returns, differences in interaction may be present, causing tension (Astor et al., 2012). Spousal conflict may occur as routines and procedures at home are rearranged to accommodate the deployed parent (Astor et al., 2012). This conflict between parents causes children to view the return of a parent with fear and anxiety instead of a "happy reunion" (Astor et al., 2012). All of theses factors can add to the "normal" issues all children have in school, creating a need for a teacher's understanding and support in order to make school a safe place for military-connected students.

Teachers and Military-Connected Students

Today, teachers are held accountable for paying attention to the performance of many groups such as those with disabilities or English language learners; however, there are various other groups that require attention too (Astor et al., 2012). Teachers working in schools that serve military-connected families should be aware of and informed about the unique situations these students and families experience in order to meet their needs (Astor et al., 2012). Whether a teacher is on or near a military base is not the only case in which further training and education is needed for teachers as many children of National Guard and Reserves service men and women attend schools far from military bases (Astor et al., 2012).

Research has indicated that schools play a critical role in disarming the negative effects of mobility on students. Therefore, school staff should be doing more to support these high-risk students (Gruman et al., 2008). "The way in which school members interact with military

students can either buffer or exacerbate the stress that student's experience" (Bradshaw et al., 2010). This is imperative for teachers to keep in mind when working in schools serving military families.

Bradshaw et al. (2010), Astor et al. (2012), and Petty (2009) all emphasize the importance of the teacher's responses, particularly for those who have a parent that is deployed. There are challenges when teaching a mobile population, as a teacher must have the ability to assess and plan for student needs (Beck et al., 1997; Robinson, 2012; Voltz, 2000). These challenges can be magnified when teaching a mobile military-connected student population (Astor et al., 2012).

Challenges may include meeting students' academic needs, supporting students' social and emotional needs, and communicating with parents/guardians. Most likely, teachers in schools serving this population of students did not receive training in their undergraduate degree programs "to recognize the unique circumstances and challenges that children face when they grow up in a military family…" (Astor et al., 2012, p. 2). While these challenges are at home, they spill over into life at school, so teachers need to be aware and ready to meet the needs of these students.

Academic Support

Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) found that teachers are trained to develop their instructional plans based on a classroom of students who will remain with them for an entire school cycle rather than assessing and teaching to the needs of students who enter in the middle of the year. This is a problem when working with highly mobile populations of students as new children join classrooms at unpredictable times of the academic year.

Fortunately, the adoption of Common Core State Standards across more than 45 states

may help ease students' academic transitions (Astor et al., 2012). Using the Common Core State Standards can minimize the disruption of academic progress. However, it is important to recognize that only the curricular areas of English and Math are currently established and all states have yet to implement the standards (Astor et al., 2012). This creates a challenge for teachers to assess the knowledge of the student quickly and accurately in order to help them fill in gaps or adjust lessons to their needs (Astor et al., 2012; Beck et al., 1997).

Social and Emotional Support

Helping students adjust to a classroom after the start of the year is a challenge for teachers (Beck et al., 1997; Gruman et al., 2008; Robinson, 2012). It is important to realize that they have to adapt quickly to new students being added and subtracted from their classroom. This can create a problem with existing groups in the classroom such as leveled guided reading groups or science fair teams, to name a few. While these may seem minor, the practical repercussions are major. Teachers need to determine how to help the new student learn the rules, routines, and procedures as well as make friends and get involved in extracurricular activities (Astor et al., 2012). Teachers have to decide the most practical way to accomplish these things all the while keeping up all existing routines and procedures with the existing students in the class.

Knowledge of military life. Teachers also must help civilian students to develop their understanding of the military so the classroom can support the military students appropriately (Astor et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010). Military parents have expressed comments that all teachers, especially those at off-base schools, need additional training in how to support military families (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Civilians are often unaware of the meaning of words like deployment, PCS, reintegration or relocation. So it is up to the teacher to inform

all students about these in order to help with understanding (Astor et al., 2012; Gruman et al., 2008). Sometimes teachers fail to do this out of lack of knowledge on their part and uncertainty if its "too sensitive of a topic" to talk about in class or with students both military-connected and those not (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

It is important to note that for military students these things are the "norm" and are not abnormal, so talking about them is no different than discussing that someone's mother or father is a doctor or teacher (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Conducting class meetings where students can share what is on their minds, creating hero bulletin boards, and having soldier pen pals are three ways teachers can help to inform civilian students about military life and the experiences of military-connected students in the classroom (Astor et al., 2012).

Class-building strategies. While Lash and Kirkpatrick (1990) conducted their study over 20 years ago in an urban setting, there are still some valuable practical applications that teachers can glean from their findings. Simple strategies like welcome packets with supplies and nametags ready for students can help them feel welcome and help ease the transition to a new school (Astor et al., 2012; Gruman et al., 2008; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990; Petty, 2009). These have proven successful in urban settings so it may also be helpful in military-connected schools (Astor et al., 2012; Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990). In addition, teachers should continually strive to create a strong classroom environment for all students by getting to know students, conduct class meetings, and celebrate diversity in the classroom (Burden & Byrd, 2013; Beck et al., 1997; Petty, 2009; Voltz, 2000).

Curricular strategies. Class websites can help keep the lines of communication with parents and/or guardians who are at home and those who are deployed. This allows the adults to know what is happening in the classroom, video chat with students, and message the

teacher if needed (Astor et al., 2012). Another good strategy is to create Hero bulletin boards (Astor et al., 2012) that can include photos of family members who are serving, recently deployed, retired, or deceased service men and women. It allows students to remember and honor military members in their families and community. Setting up a memory garden is a way to allow students a physical act of saying goodbye and remembering classmates who have left due to moving. Typically, teachers create a small area in the classroom where stones painted with student names are displayed. These are only a few small examples of what teachers can do to support military-connected students in the classroom (Astor et al., 2012; Petty, 2009).

Communication with Parents/Guardians

Communication with all parents/guardians is important, but with military-connected parent/guardians it may even be more crucial. In addition to building the classroom environment, teachers should strive to keep the lines of communication open between themselves and the parents/guardians of their military-connected students (Astor et al., 2012). Teachers need to stay informed about things such as upcoming deployments and other military-related issues (Astor et al., 2012). While it may be a challenge for teachers to keep deployed parents "in the loop," it is important to consider how to do this. Rather than requiring in-person meetings or parent teacher conferences, teachers should be available by email and phone for parents, especially those who are deployed (Astor et al., 2012).

Assessing academic needs, communicating with parents, and helping students adjust to the classroom are challenges every classroom teacher faces regularly. But in a highly mobile population of military-connected students with parents who may be deployed, it is a viewpoint from which very little research has been conducted. As the literature reveals, more

information is needed about elementary mobile military students and their academic, social, and emotional needs while in school and how these needs impact the teacher**.**

Summary

The academic, social, and emotional effects of frequent moving, combined with the stress of military life can have a big impact on the lives of children. This influences family life at home as well as a student's life at school. This study will help explain the challenges elementary teachers perceive when working with students in military-connected schools and provide starting point for further investigation of this important topic.

Chapter 3 - Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology of the study organized in the following sections: (1) research questions, (2) research design, (3) data collection, (4) measures, and (5) data analysis. To answer the proposed research questions, a quantitative survey was used. A survey was administered to teachers using an online survey tool. In addition to questions specifically related to the research questions, the researcher also obtained demographic information.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions elementary teachers have regarding challenges when working with military-connected students. This study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a difference in teacher's perceptions of challenges for those in classrooms with more than 50% military-connected populations and classrooms with less than 50% military-connected populations?
2. Are there differences in perception of challenges by gender, military service, or prior military teaching?
3. To what extent do years of teaching experience, teacher education level, number of professional development training hours received, grade level, use of resources, use of curricular strategies, preparation, and understanding of military-connected students predict perceived challenges?

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges that teachers face when teaching military-connected students in elementary school. To answer the three research questions, a non-experimental survey research study was conducted. Specifically, it was a static group comparison (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). According to Campbell & Stanley (1963), the static group comparison study is typically used when one group experiences a treatment or differs in one way in which the other does not. In this study, there were two groups of teachers (those teaching 50% or more military-connected students and those teaching 50% or less) surveyed and compared.

Internal and External Validity

When using this design, there are some built-in threats to internal and external validity. Internal validity threats include selection, mortality, interaction of selection and maturations, and the interaction of selection and the treatment (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

- *Selection* is a threat to internal validity because it is not a random selection of people (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The researcher controlled for this by asking for volunteers from a larger group to get a random sample in return.
- *Mortality* is the amount of people who opt out of participation or quit part way through the survey (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The loss of the results poses another threat to the internal validity of the design. To account for this, the design of the survey and data collection methods followed numerous guidelines recommended by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) to increase the response rate and motivation. These included the incentives, social-exchange theory, and the instrument design.

- *Selection-maturation interaction* occurs when the experimental group and the control group mature at a different rate (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). While Campbell and Stanley (1963) state that this is a threat to internal validity of this study design, the researcher did not find that this was an apparent problem in the case of the selected population in this study.

- In addition to these internal threats, the *interaction of the selection and treatment* is a threat to the external validity (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The researcher specifically chose the schools that were the participants in this study. This choice has some inherent threats to the external validity because it was not random and the characteristics of these schools and teachers were chosen to ascertain specific data. The results, therefore, may not be as generalizable to other teacher or schools.

While there are many threats there are also reasons for this type of study. This type of study was chosen in order to collect specific data from specific groups of people.

Variables

The independent and dependent variables are listed below. Each of these listed were used in data analyses to answer the research questions.

Independent variables: years of experience, % of military-connected students (more than 50% or less than 50%), education level of teacher, military service, gender, professional development, visual recognition of military-connected students, use of strategies, and use of resources.

Dependent variables: perceived challenges.

Data Collection

This section explains the data collection procedures of the study. This includes descriptions of the sample frame and setting, population, and detailed procedures for implementation of the survey instrument.

Sample Frame and Setting

The data for this study was collected from public school elementary teachers on and near an Army base in the Midwest of the United States. Over 8,000 students are enrolled in the school district in 14 elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. In 2009, the district received a large grant from the Department of Defense to provide students with enhanced learning opportunities and provide professional development and support for teachers regarding military-connected families. Of the 14 elementary schools, six are located on base while the remaining eight are in the city just outside of the base.

The solicited sample was drawn from elementary teachers in Kindergarten through fifth grades who work with military-connected students. The sample frame was elementary teachers who fell into two specific groups: (1) those working in schools located on a military base with a military-connected population in the classroom of more than 50% or (2) those teachers working in schools with a military-connected population less than 50% and located in the surrounding community near the military base. All participating schools belonged to the same public school district.

This was a convenience sample due to the researcher's proximity and contact with the population. The list of participants was gained through a district level administrator. The sample included all teachers in grades K-5 from the participating elementary schools.

Procedures

In order to ascertain the information needed to answer the research questions, a survey was developed using an online software source called *Qualtrics*. *Qualtrics* creates professional-looking surveys that are compatible with all computers and most mobile devices. In addition, a web-based survey eliminated the time and cost of telephone, mail, and in-person survey methods. The Institutional Review Board granted exemption for this study, and a letter of approval from the research site was secured. This letter has not been included in the Appendix as it provides identifying information about the district in which the study was conducted.

After approval was granted by the IRB, the subsequent steps were followed to implement the survey and collect data. First, the researcher talked to a district-level representative to obtain permission to conduct research in the particular school district. Additionally, the researcher sought that individual's approval to communicate with school principals at the designated schools. Next, a personal email was sent to the principals of the elementary schools with the corresponding populations of military-connected students to ask for their participation in the study. This email explained the purpose of the survey and how the data collected would inform the profession (see Appendix A). The researcher attached a sample of the survey for the principals to view (Appendix B). The researcher explained that the actual survey would be administered online through a link in an email to the teachers. After the principals agreed to participate, the researcher made arrangements to attend a staff meeting or send personalized emails inviting the teachers at each school to participate in the survey. The researcher also asked principals to send an email of support to their staff to promote participation in the survey.

In order to maximize response rates, an email delineating the purpose of the survey and requesting the teachers' assistance was sent one day prior to the official email with a link included (Appendix C & Appendix D). In each email, a cover letter was included asking teachers for their help with providing information and telling them that this information could be useful for other teachers in similar positions as themselves. The letter informed the respondents that their responses were in no way linked to their identities and would remain confidential. Participants were informed in writing that their participation was voluntary and they may skip questions or quit the survey at any time without penalty.

In compliance with the social exchange theory (Dillman et al., 2009) which states that "people are motivated to act by the benefits they expect to receive" (p. 23), the cover letter asked the respondents for help and gave them an opportunity to contribute something to other teachers and the profession. Providing information about the survey, asking for help and advice, showing positive regard and saying thank you were included in the letter also following the social exchange theory (Dillman et al., 2009). No form of incentive was given other than asking for their contribution to the profession. Two weeks after the initial launch of the survey, a reminder email was sent asking teachers to participate if they had not already (Appendix E). After the third week, a final email reminder was sent, which repeated the message from week two (Appendix E). The end of the fourth week was the close of the survey response and data collection period.

Measures

This section describes the development of the survey instrument using literature and cognitive interviews to validate, as well as Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman et al., 2009) to increase responses based on survey design.

Survey

The survey was administered using the online survey research software *Qualtrics*. The decision to use a web-based survey was based on the population and ease of administration. Teachers in the school district have district-issued email accounts and access to the Internet, thus reducing coverage error. These emails can be accessed from work, home, and mobile devices; therefore emailing a link to the survey allowed teachers to respond from the location and device of their choosing.

Instrumentation Validity

When creating a new survey, it is important to create items that will garner responses from participants in the manner that was intended. To do this, research about the content of the survey and knowledge of the intended audience is important to consider. Careful consideration regarding the development of the survey items following Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman et al., 2009) was exercised and is described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Development of survey items. Fifty survey items were created to gain the information to answer the research question (Appendix B). The researcher wrote the majority of the survey questions, as there was no existing instrument that could be used to answer the research questions for this study. Extensive searches for similar research were done using the search terms in the following combinations: "teacher challenges" and "mobility" or "Transient", "military children" and "school", "teacher" or "teaching" and "military dependent", "mobility" and/or "teacher challenges", "Support" and "military children" or "military connected" or "military students." The majority of the searches yielded results that were not in line with this specific study or population. Due to the lack of information about

elementary teachers and military-connected students, there were no existing instruments that could be adapted for this study. As such, a new instrument needed to be developed by the researcher.

Each question was developed from the literature reviewed for this study and conversations with practicing teachers and administrators in military-connected schools. A few questions were developed from some qualitative interview questions used in a study by about other mobile populations in schools. These questions were adjusted slightly to apply to the audience in this research.

After developing the initial survey items, the researcher conducted cognitive interviews using four separate subjects to make sure the questions were understood by participants in the way they were intended. Cognitive interviews are "a mode of testing questions and questionnaires" (Dillman et al., 2009, p.221). In a cognitive interview, subjects are asked to think aloud while responding to the questions so the researcher can understand their thinking process and give feedback on the questionnaire (Dillman et al., 2009).

The subjects were practicing teachers working in an elementary school in a neighboring district that services a high percentage of military-connected students. Participants completed the survey in a time frame of 8 to 15 minutes. Those that took the longest amount of time wrote more extended responses to the on the open-ended question than those that took only eight minutes. The feedback from these cognitive interviews helped to edit any confusing parts of the survey in terms of question wording and answer options. A chart of survey items and the rationale for each is included in Appendix F.

Dillman's Tailored Design Method. To avoid non-response error, the questions were written to keep a clear sense of the intended audience in order to gain maximum response

rates. Dillman's Tailored Design Method (TDM) (Dillman et al., 2009) was followed as much as possible in the design and implementation of the survey. The social exchange theory is the underlying basis for Dillman's TDM, and it provided the framework for increasing the likelihood of response from participants (Dillman et al., 2009). Using this theory and the TDM, the researcher attempted to appeal to participants on a number of levels in order to encourage their participation. "According to social exchange, people are motivated to act by the benefits they expect to receive (Dillman et al., 2009, p. 23)." Some ways that were used to motivate respondents included providing information about the purpose of the survey, asking for help or advice, showing positive regard and respect for the person, making the questionnaire interesting, and saying thank you (Dillman et al., 2009).

In addition, the format of the survey increased the likelihood for responses. For example, questions were be grouped by topic, the format of the survey was simple and easy to follow, and visual distractions were kept to a minimum. Furthermore, all respondents of the sample should have been able to easily answer the first question as it is opinion based and applies to all teachers. This kind of question follows Dillman's TDM (Dillman et al., 2009). Any possibly sensitive and demographic questions were placed at the end, as recommended by Dillman et al. (2009). The online survey had 2-5 questions per page, allowance for written in responses if their choice was not given (i.e., "other" categories), and the option to skip a question was allowed.

Data Analysis

After collection, factor analysis of the data was performed to determine instrument validity of the new survey instrument. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each factor to check reliability. Then the data was cleaned and used for further evaluation.

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, an ANOVA, and step-wise regression analysis procedures to answer the proposed research questions.

Summary

To address the three research questions, this study included an online survey of elementary teachers who taught on or near a military base in the Midwestern United States. The researcher developed the survey, so multiple methods were used to validate the survey items and the instrument as a whole. After approval from the IRB and district personnel, the survey link was sent to teachers via email asking for their help and participation. The combination of Dillman's Tailored Design Method, social exchange theory, and item development provided a good framework for attracting participants to take the survey.

Chapter 4 - Results

This chapter reports the findings from the survey that was administered. This information is organized to explain the data in the following sections: (1) missing data, (2) response rates, (3) demographic data, (3) instrument validity and reliability, (4) data transformations, and (5) hypothesis testing.

Missing Data

To account for the missing responses of some participants Frane (1976) recommends using the mean scores from all participants who did answer the scale item to replace missing data. This method was used for each of the missing scale items on the survey totaling 10.4 percent of all responses. According to Downey and King (1998) using mean scores to replace missing data does not affect the reliability of the data as long as it totals less than 20 percent of the responses.

In addition, the intent of this research was to survey classroom teachers responsible for one single class of K-5 students. However, some respondents indicated that they taught subjects such as special education, ELL, library, speech, and/or reading in multiple grade levels. To keep the data consistent, their responses were deleted from the dataset. This left 68 participants who answered all of the demographic questions in addition to the scale items. Two participants answered some of the demographic questions, but not all so their responses are included only in some of the demographic data. All further data analyses were done using this set of data.

Response Rates

The solicited sample from which volunteers were garnered was 161. Of this, 118 responded to the survey, giving an initial response rate of 73.3%. However, not all respondents completed all questions, dropping out at various points in the survey. Due to this mortality, the final response rate was 42.2% with 68 participants completing all items on the survey as illustrated in Figure 1.

Some participants chose not to answer some questions while giving responses to others. To keep their input, mean scores were entered for the questions they left unanswered following the method previously described by Downing and King (1998). The range is reflective of a combination of participants failing to answer one or more of the demographic questions and/or they indicated they did not teach the grade levels of interest as specified in the missing data section following.

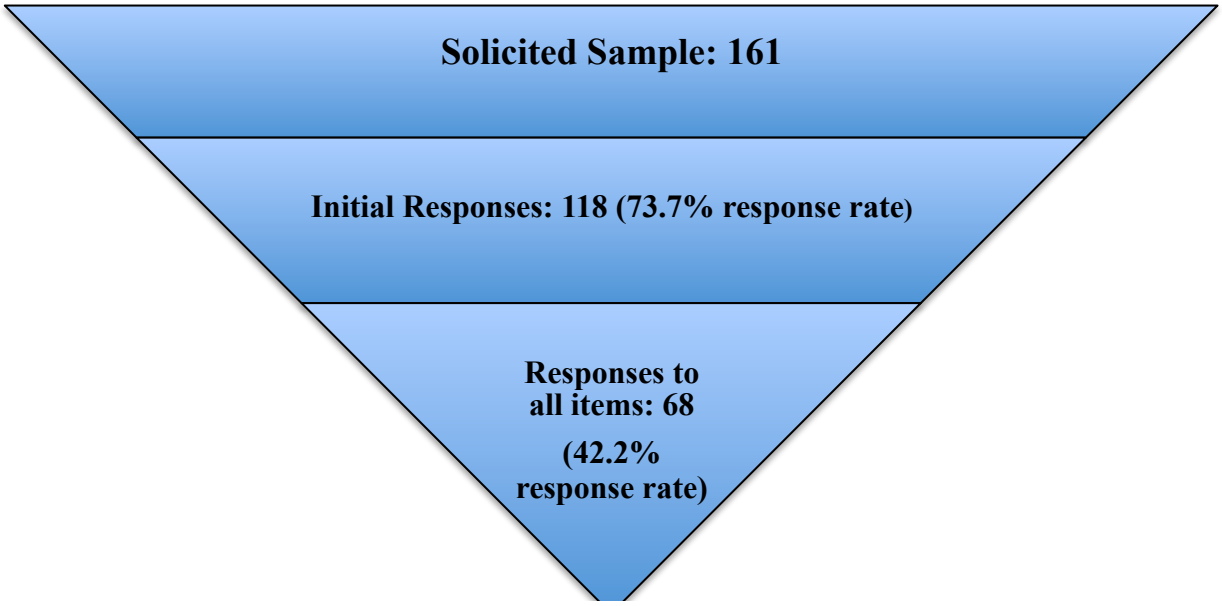

Figure 1 Response Rates

Demographic Data

A number of demographic-type questions were included in the survey. These asked teachers to indicate (1) the location of their school, (2) the percentage of military-connected students in their classroom, (3) their gender, (4) their highest level of education, (5) their years of teaching experience, (6) their military service, (7) prior military teaching experience, and (8) the grade level they currently teach.

Location of School

All of the participants in this study were employed by one public school district in the Midwestern United States, however the location of their particular schools varied. Some respondents worked in schools physically located on a military base while others were located in the neighboring city. Fifty-seven percent (n=39) of teachers reported working in a school located on the military base, while 43 percent (n=29)work in the nearby city, as indicated in Figure 2.

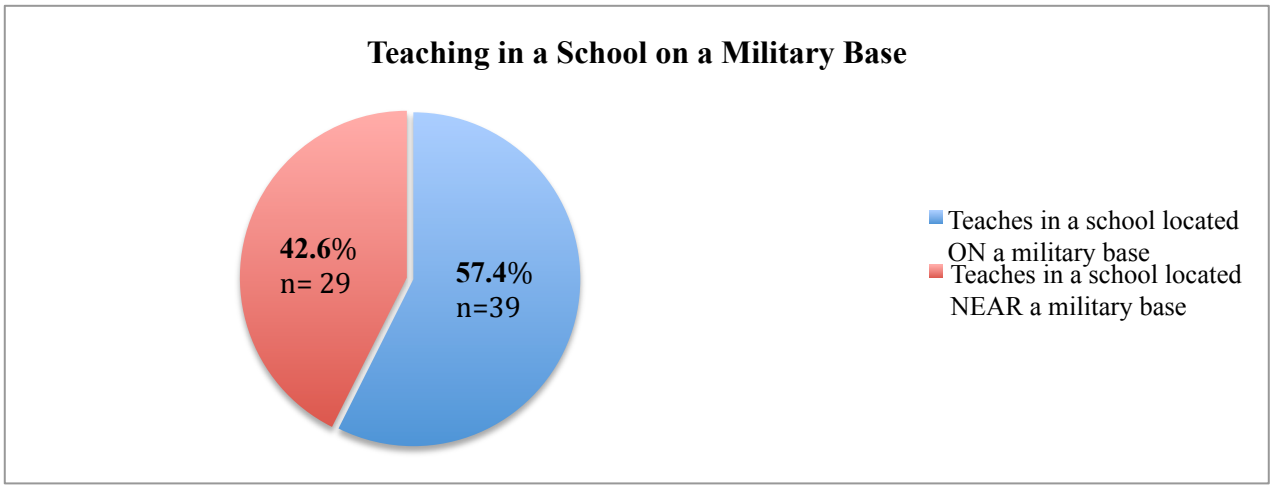

Figure 2 Percentage of Teachers Working in a School on a Military Base

Military-Connected Students

Teachers reported on the percentage of students in their classrooms who were from military-connected families. Their choices were in the following ranges as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Percentage of Military-Connected Students in the Classroom

Percentage of Students	Frequency	Percentage of Responses
0% - 25%	8	11.8%
26 - 50%	15	22%
51% - 75%	3	4.4%
76% - 99%	10	14.7%
100%	32	47.1%
Total	68	100%

As shown, approximately one-third of participants (33.8%, n=23) reported that 50 percent or less of their students were from military-connected families while the other 66 percent (n=45) indicated that over half of their students were military-connected. In fact, just over 47 percent (n=32) of the responding teachers reported that 100% of the students in their classroom were military-connected.

Gender

Cumulatively, 90 percent of the respondents were females (n=61) and 10 percent were males (n= 7).

Level of Education

All respondents had earned at least a bachelor's degree, with 36.7 percent (n=25) holding it as their highest degree earned at the time of the survey. Over 23 percent (n=16) had earned an additional 15 hours of credit beyond a bachelor's degree, while 39.7 (n=27)

percent of respondents had earned a master's degree. No respondents held an associate's degree or doctoral degree.

Years of Experience

The numbers of years the participants had been teaching ranged from new first year teachers to those who had taught for more than 19 years. A breakdown of the data is detailed in Table 2 below. Nearly one third of respondents (30.9%, n=21) were in their beginning years of teaching (1-3 years), and 60.2 percent (n=41) of the respondents had less than 10 years of experience. Notably, 17.6 percent (n=12) of the participants were teachers with 19 or more years of experience.

Table 2 Reported Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percent
1 - 3	21	30.9
4 - 6	13	19.1
7 - 9	7	10.2
10 - 12	4	5.8
13 - 15	4	5.8
16-18	7	10.2
19 or more	12	17.6
Total	68	100.0

Military Service

Two teachers reported that they had served or are currently serving in the military. One was currently serving, while the other had served previously or retired. Both of these participants were female. All other participants were civilians with no prior or current military service.

Prior Military Teaching

When asked if they had taught in a school located on a military base prior to the current year, 55.9 percent (n= 38) reported "Yes," 42.6 percent (n=29) reported they had not, and 1.5 percent (n=1) were unsure.

Grade level

The respondents reported teaching a variety of grade levels, with the most respondents from Kindergarten and third grade teachers and the least amount from fifth grade teachers. Figure 2 represents the breakdown of respondents by grade levels they reported teaching.

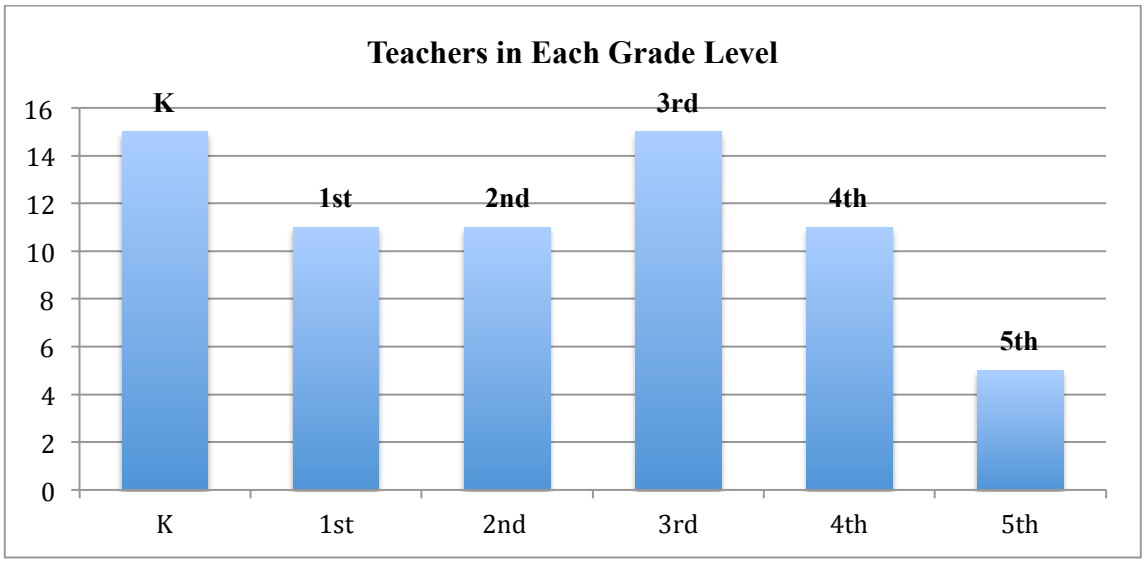

Figure 3 Teachers' Reported Grade Levels

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Since the researcher developed the survey instrument, measures of validity and reliability were necessary to determine the strength of each item and the instrument in its entirety. The following sections explain what steps were taken to test the validity and reliability of the survey instrument.

Validity

Testing the validity of an instrument is necessary to determine if it measures what was intended. For this study, exploratory factor analysis was performed to uncover the underlying factors in the set of survey data. This process also helps to identify strong and weak items within a survey. The following section describes the step-by-step process of the factor analysis done on the survey instrument.

Exploratory factor analysis. After the raw data was cleaned (i.e., replacement of missing values, and coding of responses), all data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To validate the new survey instrument, an exploratory factor analysis of all scale items was performed. This principal components analysis can provide statistical evidence for the validity of the construct. Kaiser (1960) recommended retaining factors having eigenvalues greater than 1. Additionally, Stevens (2002) produced a critical values table in which he recommends "cut off" scores based on sample size. Stevens (2002) "recommends interpreting only factor loadings with an absolute value greater than 0.4 (which explain around 16% of the variance in the variable)" (as cited in in Field 2009, p. 645). For this study, a value higher than .512 can be considered strong and retained in the rotated component matrix.

A principal components analysis was performed on all of the items simultaneously. Every item was entered into analysis. The exploratory principal components analysis, with an orthogonal rotation of components, initially revealed a 9-factor structure, accounting for 66.1% of the total variance as seen in Table 3. Many items were cross-loading, revealing an ambiguous construct. George and Mallery (2001) recommend eliminating items that cross-load and re-running the analysis to define new component-variable correlations. The process of systematically removing items and re-running the factor analysis is repeated until the items

are loading cleanly on each factor. In this study, the analysis was performed 13 times before the items loaded cleanly

By deleting items that loaded low and also cross-loaded, one-by-one, the end resulted in five factors accounting for 71.5% of the total variance. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy revealed a coefficient of .745, providing for an adequate sample size for the principal components procedure. The sample is adequate if the value of KMO is greater than 0.5 (Field, 2009).

Each of the five "clean" factors contained items loading at .5 or higher, and they were retained for further analysis. The rotated component matrix is provided in Table 3. Using this exploratory process revealed that 14 items from the survey were not valid to be included in the instrument, so they were removed from the instrument, leaving 16 items remaining in five factors accounting for 72.49 % of the variability.

Table 3 Factor Analysis

Rotated Factor Matrix[a]

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in...-communication with parents	**.819**	-.059	.014	-.108	.116
Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in...-meeting the individual learning needs of students	**.809**	.159	-.060	.094	.089
Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in...-creating a safe and collaborative learning environment .	**.804**	.137	.145	.004	.136
Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in...-providing emotional support to students	**.731**	-.065	-.067	-.292	-.025
Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in...-the adjustment of the classroom due to students leaving and arriving at various times in the school year	**.712**	-.104	-.170	.035	-.185
Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in...-assessment of student's background knowledge	**.690**	.285	-.062	.029	.196
I utilize books and materials about military families/life to help me understand military-connected students.	.073	**.836**	.219	.038	-.008
I have actively sought information about military-connected students by searching for books, websites, and other resources to understand and meet the needs of my students.	.086	**.817**	-.042	.172	.125
I utilize on-line resources about military-connected students to help me meet the needs of my students.	.033	**.746**	.291	.117	.123
I am prepared to support military-connected students in my classroom and school.	-.130	.085	**.847**	.213	-.050
I have received adequate training from my school about how to support military-connected students and their families in the classroom and school.	.066	.143	**.769**	.061	.191
I am prepared to support the parents/guardians of military-connected students in my classroom.	-.091	.198	**.730**	.247	-.196
I understand the challenges that children and families face when a parent/guardian is deployed.	.029	.240	.197	**.880**	.043
I understand the challenges that military-connected students go through when moving and changing schools.	-.151	.072	.280	**.867**	-.097
I use a memory garden to visually acknowledge military- connected students who have left my classroom.	-.022	.104	.001	-.050	**.860**
I use Hero bulletin boards in my classroom to visually acknowledge military-connected students and families.	.214	.086	-.009	.008	**.839**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was calculated iteratively with the factoring procedures to determine the internal consistency reliability of each scale in this study as shown in Table 4. All alpha coefficients were above 0.6 and as such, no items were deleted due to low internal inconsistency reliabilities. The five factors were named, as they consistently aligned with the theoretical framework of the study. The order of factors listed in Table 4 below is not based upon the reliability score, but instead on the strength and number of items that loaded in each factor as seen in Table 3 previously.

Table 4 Reliability of Factors

Factors		**Cronbach's Alpha**
1	Challenges Teachers Face with Military-Connected Students	.860
2	Use of Resources for Military-Connected Students	.783
3	Preparation to teach Military-Connected Students	.743
4	Understanding of Military-Connected Students	.849
5	Use of Curriculum Strategies	.687

Overview of Statistical Procedures

Each research question for this study required a different type of analyses. Before performing these, the data was organized for ease of analysis. The following sections describe the data transformations and analysis with results for each research question.

Data Transformations

Data transformations were conducted to ready the factors to answer the research questions. For each factor in Table 3, mean scores were computed and used for hypothesis testing. In other words, for each participant, their answers to all the items regarding *challenges* were averaged and a mean score was entered for the factor labeled *challenges.*

This process was repeated for all individuals for each of the other factors as listed in Table 4. This transformation was necessary to make sure each variable was consistent and aligned with the research question and analyses.

An independent samples t-test, ANOVA, and step-wise regression analyses were used to answer the three main research questions as explained in the following sections.

Research Question 1

"*Is there a difference of teacher's perceptions of challenges for those teachers with classrooms with more than 50% military-connected populations and classrooms with less than 50% military-connected populations?"*

To analyze this question, an independent samples t-test was run. An independent samples t-test was chosen because it would determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means in the two groups.

The following assumptions were met (Field, 2009; Laerd, 2013):

Assumption #1: The dependent variable was measured on an interval or ratio level. The dependent variable in this question is the perception of challenges.

Assumption #2: The independent variable consists of two categorical, independent groups. The independent variables are more than 50% military-connected population and less than 50%.

Assumption #3: There is independence of observations, meaning that participants are only in one group, no participant is a member of both groups.

Assumption #4: There are no significant outliers.

Assumption #5: The dependent variable is normally distributed. ($\bar{x}$ =3.12, M= 3.13,

Mo=3.13, *S*= .468, ses =.250, *K* = -.274, sek = .495, SD= .773

Assumption #6: There is homoscedastiscity.

Levene's Test for Equality of Variance (Field, 2009) test showed equal variances were assumed (p = .410). On averages, participants who reported 50% or more of their class were military-connected indicated greater perceived challenges (M=3.221, *SE* = .123) than teachers with less than 50% of their students as military-connected (M= 2.898, *SE* =.195). This difference was not significant $t(67) = 1.45$, $p = .153$; however, it did represent a medium-sized effect $r = .41$.

Table 5 Independent Samples t-test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Challenges Teachers Face	Equal variances assumed	.688	.410	-1.445	67	.153	-.32246	.22315	-.76787	.12294
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.392	40.033	.172	-.32246	.23161	-.79055	.14562

Research Question 2

"Are there differences in perception of challenges by gender, military service, or prior military teaching?"

A full factorial analysis of variance (2 x 3 x 3 ANOVA) was performed. This analysis was used to study the effect of gender, military service, or prior military service on teachers' perceptions of challenges.

In order to analyze this question fully, some assumptions had to be met, including: (1) the dependent variable was interval, (2) data was normal, (3) homoscedasticity, and (4) no multicollinearity. To ensure homoscedasticity, Levene's Test (Field, 2009) was run to addresses this assumption. Because the factorial ANOVA includes two or more independent variables it is important that the model contained little multicollinearity.

Due to the small sample size, Levene's test of homoscedasticity (Field, 2009) indicated that variance is not assumed (f=2.547, $df1$=6, $df2$=60, p=.029), and no statistically significant differences can be seen. Since the assumption of homoscedasticity was not met, no further analysis or interpretation of results could follow.

Research Question 3

"To what extent do years of teaching experience, teacher education level, number of professional development training hours received, grade level, use of resources, use of curricular strategies, preparation, and understanding of military-connected students predict perceived challenges?"

A multiple regression analysis was run to answer the final research question of this study. Specifically, a step-wise regression model was implemented because there was not literature to support which factor(s) would be mostly highly correlated, and stepwise regression is recommended when the study is exploratory (Field, 2009). The highest simple correlation was years of teaching experience ($r = .316$, $p < .05$) as detailed in Table 6. No other predictors had f ratios high enough to enter in the regression equation. As such, 8.5

percent of the variability in perception of challenges is predicted from years of teaching experience (Adjusted R Square =.085, p = .012).

Table 6 Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.316[a]	.100	.085	.82152	.100	6.761	1	61	.012	1.962

a. Predictors: (Constant), How many years have you been a practicing classroom teacher? (include this year in your answer)
b. Dependent Variable: Challenges Teachers Face

Supplemental Analyses

After performing the full factorial ANOVA for research question two with no significant results, the researcher chose to run an independent samples t-test using gender and perception of challenges to see if there was any significance due to gender. On average, female participants indicated greater perceived challenges (M=3.155, *SE* = .117) than male teachers (M= 2.777, *SE* =.209), however this difference was not significant $t(65) = 3.034$, $p = .086$.

Open and Selected Response

For the one open-ended question, responses were sorted according to their content and themes. The researcher read through each response, and seven main themes emerged. A small number of participants indicated that they did not have any challenges, so this created an eighth category. After discovering these themes, responses were re-examined and sorted

according to their content. Some responses fit in more than one category while others remained in one. This sorting can be seen in Appendix G. In addition to the open-ended question, there were two selected response questions asking teachers to choose "all that apply" or "three that apply." The following sections describe the results of the data from the open-ended and selected response questions.

Open ended response. One question on the survey asked an open-ended question, "What do you consider to be the challenges for YOU when teaching military-connected students?" The responses from participants fell into one or more categories of challenges: (1) students' emotional issues, (2) students' academic needs, (3) students' family/parents, (4) students' frequent moving and/or absences, (5) the teacher's understanding of military life, (6) creating a good classroom climate, (7) students' behavior in the classroom, and (8) no challenges.

The top three challenges that teachers reported were: Academic concerns, student's emotional issues, and frequent moves and/or absences as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Challenge Categories from Open Response Question

Categories of Challenges		**Frequency**
1	Students' emotional issues	23
2	Students' academic needs	22
3	Students' family/parents	22
4	Students' frequent moving and absences	21
5	Teacher's understanding of military life	9
6	Creating good classroom climate	8
7	Students' behavior in the classroom	7
8	No challenges	2

Selected response. In a follow up question, participants were asked to choose the top three challenges from a list provided. The three that were most frequently chosen were: (1) *"Helping the student play "catch up" academically"*, (2) *"Assessing student's academic*

needs quickly," and (3) "*Obtaining information about the student (past school records, grades, etc.)*," with *"Finding time to get to know the student on a personal level"* as the fourth greatest challenge.

Summary of Findings

The results of the study indicated that the number of years a teacher has been teaching influences their perceptions of challenges regarding military-connected students. In addition, teachers indicated that helping students catch up academically, supporting them emotionally, and addressing family/parent issues are the top challenges when working with this population. Based on the data collected in this survey, there was no statistically significant difference between teachers' perceptions of challenges in classrooms with a high percentage of military-connected students (50%-100%) than those with less than 50% military-connected.

In addition, grade level, gender, prior military service, prior military teaching, use of resources, preparation, use of curricular strategies, hours of professional development, understanding of military life, and education level had no significant difference on teachers' perception of challenges. However, the open and selected responses indicated that teachers found students' emotional, academic, and family issues the most challenging aspects of teaching military-connected students.

Chapter 5 - Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter includes a discussion of (1) the purpose of the study, (2) an overview of the methodology, (3) a summary of results, (4) discussion of the results, (5) recommendations for practice, and (6) recommendations for further research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges facing elementary classroom teachers of mobile military students in public schools serving on and near an army base in the Midwest. Specifically the aim was to discover the perceptions of challenges that teachers had regarding teaching this population of students.

Methodology

A Likert-type survey of questions was created and administered to 161 elementary teachers in one public school district in the Midwestern United States using an online survey tool *Qualtrics*. The schools in this district are located in a city near a military base and also on the military base. Data were collected over a 4-week period. After collection, factor analysis of the data was performed to determine instrument validity since it was a new survey instrument. Based on this analysis, the data was cleaned and used for further evaluation. The study used exploratory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, an ANOVA, and step-wise regression analysis procedures to ascertain whether or not there was any significance regarding the way teachers responded to 32 Likert scale items.

Summary of Results

The results of the study indicated a few things about the challenges elementary teachers face when working with military-connected students.

1. *Years of experience teaching influences perception of challenges*. In other words, the number of years a teacher has been teaching influences their perceptions of challenges regarding military-connected students. Teachers who have been teaching longer indicated a greater perception of challenges than those in their beginning years.
2. *Teachers indicated that academic, emotional, and family issues rank high on their list of challenges when working with military-connected students.* Helping students catch up academically, supporting them emotionally, and family/parent issues are the top challenges when working with this population.

Discussion of Results

Each research question yielded results that were either significant or not significant. In the following sections, the interpretation of the results is given based on the researcher's knowledge, the surrounding literature, and data analyses results from the survey.

Research Question One

1. *Is there a difference in teacher's perceptions of challenges for those in classrooms with more than 50% military-connected populations and classrooms with less than 50% military-connected populations?*

This research question yielded no significant results. This was surprising, as one would expect teacher perceptions to be different based on student demographics. It was expected that in a classroom consisting of over 50% military-connected students the teacher would consider some things more challenging. However, the result of this study showed that the difference between having a high number of military-connected students or just having a few does not seem to impact the challenges that a teacher perceives.

While military-connected students bring with them different background knowledge and experiences, as well as heightened emotional stressors due to parental deployment or moving, the number of students dealing with this in a classroom does not seem to impact the challenges it presents for teachers. This was surprising as one would expect it to be a greater challenge when more than half of students in a classroom are in need of academic and emotional support due to moving in and out. Instead the data indicates that this is no more challenging than if only two or three kids in a class were military-connected.

The resulting medium effect size for this question presents practical significance as it indicates that as the percentage of military-connected students increases, the perception of challenges also increases, and vice versa.

Research Question Two

2. *Are there differences in perception of challenges by gender, military service, or prior military teaching?*

Again, this question generated no statistically significant results as indicated in chapter four. Since 91 percent of respondents to this study were female, the sample of males was too small to reveal any changes in perception based on gender alone. This ratio also impacts how military service would change perceptions of challenges. While females make up the majority of teaching positions, the percentage of females in the military is only 14.5% (CNN, 2014). So it is not surprising that only two female participants indicated prior service; one currently serving and the other prior service or retired.

Research Question Three

3. *To what extent do years of teaching experience, teacher education level, number of professional development training hours received, grade level, use of resources, use of*

curricular strategies, preparation, and understanding of military-connected students predict perceived challenges?

Teacher education level, number of professional development hours, grade level, use of resources, use of curricular strategies, preparation, and understanding of military-connected students do not predict perceived challenges. However, years of teaching experience does predict perceived challenges; therefore, the entire null hypothesis cannot be rejected. As the years of teaching experience increase, the amount of perceived challenges with teaching military-connected students also increases.

This is interesting as one might assume new teachers would struggle with the seemingly unstable circumstances. But instead, perhaps it's harder for teachers who have "set ways of doing things" to change and become more flexible as needed when teaching this mobile population. On the other hand, perhaps this result is due to more experienced teachers ability to look beyond the day-to-day things and see the "root of the issues" or as it's said, see the forest beyond the trees. They are no longer consumed by the tasks of lesson planning and are able to focus on students in a different way as they become more comfortable about typical challenges involved in teaching.

Open Response

The responses from the teachers gave a great deal of insight into their ideas, thoughts, and feelings regarding their work with military-connected students. In several cases, teachers expressed things like "I have difficulty knowing and truly understanding what a military family is up against. Since I am not military myself, I do not really know their difficulties" or "I can't relate to the military life because I'm not familiar with the unique challenges." This indicates a lack of general background knowledge about military life for some teachers. This

could be remedied easily by incorporating discussions and information about military life into teacher education coursework.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings from the survey offer suggestions for what teachers may need in terms of support and information from their teacher education programs and district administrators. The following describes the recommendations for each of these.

For Teacher Education

As Astor et al. (2012) pointed out, it's unlikely that teachers today were trained "to recognize the unique circumstances and challenges that children face when they grow up in a military family…" (p. 2). This is reinforced by this study with teacher responses to, "My teacher training program has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher of military-connected students" garnering only a mean score of $\overline{x} = 2.91$, the lowest scoring item on the survey.

The following is a list of suggestions for teacher education programs as they prepare teachers to meet the needs of all the students in classrooms today.

1. *Include military-connected students in courses related to diversity.* While other populations of students are commonplace in these courses (low-income, ELL, special education, etc.) military-connected students are not usually discussed, leaving teachers with a gap of knowledge about this population as revealed in this study. Teacher preparation programs should include strategies for working with this population as well as background knowledge of military life for the civilians who teach the children of military personnel all over the world. Helping teachers understand military life,

deployment, and the stress on children can assist teachers in making classroom decisions that will positively impact these students and families.

2. *Provide pre-service teachers with resources about military-connected students and families.* Providing teachers with online, text, and human resources from which they can pull information and ideas to use in their classrooms is valuable. Simply give them a list of children's literature about military life, videos that teach kids about deployment, and websites with lesson ideas can give new teachers strategies and tools to use in their classrooms immediately.

For School Districts

With the challenges identified by teachers, school districts would serve their population of teachers, students, and parents better if they:

1. *Provide help with assessing new students upon arrival.* Since teachers indicated that assessing student academic needs quickly was a challenge, it would be helpful to have a system in place to assist teachers when new students are added. This could include using other school personnel to do basic skills assessments or giving the teacher time to get to know the student and assess them themselves while another person covers their classroom. The more time it takes to find out what a student knows, the longer it takes for meaningful learning to occur for him or her in the classroom.

2. *Provide teachers with as much background knowledge of students as possible as soon as possible when receiving new students.* Corresponding with the previous recommendation, it would benefit the school, teachers, and students to have a solid welcome system in place to assist teachers when new students are added. This could include a smooth system for gaining access to school records and information from

family members and setting up a parent conference immediately so the teacher can ask questions and provide information about the classroom.

3. *Provide teachers with professional development focused on military-connected students.* These sessions could vary in topics regarding academic catch up, new students, deployment, PCS (Permanent Change of Station), emotional stress students go through, parent communication, and other topics as problems arise. These topics will be needed on a yearly basis as turnover rates of teachers is rising and new teachers are entering these schools each year needing this knowledge and support.

4. *Provide a counselor or other staff member dedicated to help students, parents, and teachers deal with military-related issues that arise.* While teachers reported that their administrators showed support for military-connected students, others expressed their wish for someone (like a counselor) who could help support the teachers and students' emotional needs, as they feel unprepared to meet these needs.

Recommendations for Further Research

From the data in this study, it is clear that further research is needed to understand the challenges that military-connected students may produce for teachers in the elementary classroom. Based on the results of the survey, it is clear that all teachers do not feel prepared or knowledgeable about their military-connected students, so further research in this area is needed.

1. *Extend the study qualitatively.* Further extension of this survey would be helpful in understanding their unique needs and desires for knowledge and training. Using in-depth interviews could provide more information about the challenges teachers' face

and their needs. This could help to supplement the survey and continue to validate the existing items.

2. *Increase sample size population.* It could be useful to increase the sample and survey a greater number of teachers. To do this, teachers from more locations would be surveyed. It could be useful to extend the study to communities near other military bases in a variety of locations.
3. *Look at other factors in data set*. There are other ways to look at the data from this study using simple correlations between things such as teacher's perceptions of challenges and use of resources, or their use of curricular strategies and years of experience. It may be interesting to find more information by forming other research questions and further exploring the existing data.
4. *Study male teachers*. Seek out male participants so the number of males and females in the study are more equal and can provide a large enough sample size to determine differences based on gender like in research question 2.
5. *Extend the study to include middle and high school teachers*. Encompass other levels of teachers including middle and high school in order to compare perspectives and gain a deeper understanding.

Gathering a larger sample from broader range of locations would help in continuing to validate the survey instrument.

Conclusion

In sum, while more research is needed there are plenty of things that teacher education programs and school districts can do immediately to help teachers deal with the challenges

that come when teaching military-connected students in elementary school. Offering resources, knowledge, training, and support to teachers could alleviate the stress of feeling unprepared as well as continue to serve students and their families more effectively and with greater empathy.

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Appendix A - Email Letter to Principals

Good Morning,

My name is Julia Mittelberg and I'm a Ph.D. student and instructor at K-State. I'm contacting you today to get your permission to contact the classroom teachers in your school to participate research I am doing for my dissertation. The IRB, as well as the superintendent in your district have approved my research study.

Participation involves each classroom teacher taking a short, 10-minute online survey about their experiences working with military-connected students in the classroom. My goal is to gather information that could be used to help teacher education programs prepare their teachers for working with this population of students and families.

For your information I have attached a letter that teachers would get via email that explains the purpose of the survey in greater detail.

There are two options in how to approach this if you agree to allow your teachers to participate:

1) I can come to a staff meeting or grade level meetings in the next week or two to briefly (5 minutes or less) explain the survey, it's purpose and ask for teachers to participate. The link is compatible with computers or mobile devices so teachers can respond at their convenience rather than disrupting the school day.
2) I can send the information via email to your teachers.

While I think option #1 would be best, I also know life in an elementary school is very busy so I wanted to give another option. I greatly appreciate your time and I hope we can arrange a way to get the valuable opinions of your staff included in this study.

I'd be happy to meet with you at your convenience at any time if you have questions or we can talk by phone and/or email if you prefer.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and appreciate your help!

Regards,
Julia Mittelberg
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Appendix B - Survey Instrument

Military-Connected Students in Elementary Classrooms

Please indicate your opinion about the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I am prepared to support military-connected students in my classroom and school. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am prepared to support the parents/guardians of military-connected students in my classroom (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have received adequate training from my school about how to support military-connected students and their families in the classroom and school. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
My teacher training program has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher of military-connected students. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
My prior experience as a teacher has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher of military-connected students. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate your opinion about the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I utilize books and materials about military families/life to help me understand military-connected students. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I utilize on-line resources about military-connected students to help me meet the needs of my students. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I utilize what I've learned in professional development programs provided in my school about military life/families/students to help me meet the needs of military-connected students. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I utilize Student Resource Officers (SRO's) to help my military-connected students. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I utilize military personnel assigned to our school to help in my classroom (i.e.- come to read aloud to the class, tutor, etc.) (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I know who to ask to get more information and resources about military-connected students and families. (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

I have actively sought information about military-connected students by searching for books, websites, and other resources to understand and meet the needs of my students. (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate your opinion of the following statements:

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the Time (4)	Always (5)
I use class meetings in my classroom to develop a strong classroom environment (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I use team-building or class-building activities with my students to develop a strong classroom environment. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I use get to know you activities each time a new student arrives in my classroom. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have a routine for when new students arrive in my classroom after the beginning of the school year to help the student feel welcome and adjust to the classroom. (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have a routine for when students move and are leaving my classroom to help all students deal with the transition. (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate your opinion of the following statements

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Most of the Time (4)	Always (5)
I use military pen pals to connect students in my classroom with active military personnel. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I use a memory garden to visually acknowledge military- connected students who have left my classroom. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I use Hero bulletin boards in my classroom to visually acknowledge military-connected students and families. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate your opinion about the following statements

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
My school utilizes the community to help and enrich the education of students in my school (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The leadership at the school actively shows their support of military-connected students and their families. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate the approximate number of professional development training (hours) you have attended in regards to military-connected students and/or families. (Use numbers like : 0,1,2,3,4, etc.)

_____

What do you consider to be the challenges for YOU when teaching military-connected students?

_____

__

Please indicate your opinion about the following statements

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I understand the challenges that military-connected students go through when moving and changing schools. (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I understand the challenges that children and families face when a parent/guardian is deployed. (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am confident in my ability to help a child through the loss of a parent/guardian as a result of their service in the military. (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate your opinion about the following statements:

Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in regard to...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
creating a safe and collaborative learning environment . (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
assessment of student's background knowledge (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
meeting the individual learning needs of students (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
communication with parents (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
filling in students' knowledge gaps (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
providing emotional support to students (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
the adjustment of the classroom due to students leaving and arriving at various times in the school year (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Listed are some of the other challenges teachers may face when a new military-connected student is added to their classroom. Please select any that you think are challenges (Check all that apply)

- ❑ Assessing student's academic needs quickly (1)
- ❑ Obtaining information about the student (past school records, grades, etc.) (2)
- ❑ Integrating the new student into established groups in the classroom (e.g.-teams, reading groups, science fair groups , etc.) (3)
- ❑ Helping the student adjust socially (4)
- ❑ Helping the student learn classroom rules, routines, and procedures (5)
- ❑ Finding time to get to know the student on a personal level (6)
- ❑ Gathering supplies and materials for the student (7)
- ❑ Helping the student play "catch up" academically (8)
- ❑ Other (Please specify): (9) _____

Again, listed are some of the challenges teachers may face when a new military-connected student is added to their classroom. Please select THREE that you think are the biggest challenges (Check only 3)

- ❑ Assessing student's academic needs quickly (1)
- ❑ Obtaining information about the student (past school records, grades, etc.) (2)
- ❑ Integrating the new student into established groups in the classroom (e.g.-teams, reading groups, science fair groups , etc.) (3)
- ❑ Helping the student adjust socially (4)
- ❑ Helping the student learn classroom rules, routines, and procedures (5)
- ❑ Communicating with parents/guardians (6)
- ❑ Finding time to get to know the student on a personal level (7)
- ❑ Gathering supplies and materials for the student (8)
- ❑ Helping the student play "catch up" academically (9)
- ❑ Other (Please specify): (10) _____

Thinking about your class this year, about what percentage of your class is made up of military-connected students?

- ❍ 0% to 25% (1)
- ❍ 26% to 50% (2)
- ❍ 51% to 75% (3)
- ❍ 76% to 99% (4)
- ❍ 100% (5)

How many students have LEFT (or you know are planning to leave) your classroom this year due to military-related reasons?

- ❍ 0 - 1 (1)
- ❍ 2 - 3 (2)
- ❍ 4 - 5 (3)
- ❍ 6 or more (4)
- ❍ I'm not sure (5)

How many new students have JOINED your classroom this year due to military-related reasons?

- ❍ 0 - 1 (1)
- ❍ 2 - 3 (2)
- ❍ 4 - 5 (3)
- ❍ 6 or more (4)
- ❍ I'm not sure (5)

How many students have taken extended absences (3 or more days) this school year due to military-related reasons? (Please exclude those due to illness)

- ❍ 0 - 1 (1)
- ❍ 2 - 3 (2)
- ❍ 4 - 5 (3)
- ❍ 6 or more (4)
- ❍ I'm not sure (5)

Have you served or are you currently serving in the U.S. military?

- ❍ Yes, Currently serving (1)
- ❍ Yes, retired (2)
- ❍ No (3)

Is someone in your immediate family a military service member (retired and/or active)? For this question, Immediate family includes spouses, children, siblings, and parents)

- ❍ Yes (Please specify their relationship to you in the box below) (1)

  _____
- ❍ No (2)

At what grade level are you currently teaching? (check all that apply)

- ❑ K (1)
- ❑ 1 (2)
- ❑ 2 (3)
- ❑ 3 (4)
- ❑ 4 (5)
- ❑ 5 (6)
- ❑ Other (Please specify in the box below) (7) _____

At what levels have you taught in the past? (check all that apply)

- ❑ Elementary School (1)
- ❑ Middle School (2)
- ❑ High School (3)
- ❑ Other (Please specify in the box below) (4)

How many years have you been a practicing classroom teacher? (include this year in your answer)

- ❍ 1 - 3 (1)
- ❍ 4 - 6 (2)
- ❍ 7 - 9 (3)
- ❍ 10 - 12 (4)
- ❍ 13 - 15 (5)
- ❍ 16-18 (6)
- ❍ 19 or more (7)

Please indicate your highest level of education completed:

- ❑ Associates Degree (1)
- ❑ Bachelor's Degree (2)
- ❑ Bachelor's plus 15 credits (3)
- ❑ Master's Degree (4)
- ❑ Doctorate Degree (5)

Please indicate your gender.

- ❍ Male (1)
- ❍ Female (2)

Do you currently work in a school located on a military base?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Have you taught in a school located on a military base before this school year?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)
- ❍ I'm not sure (3)

Appendix C - First Introductory Email to Participants

Challenges Teachers Face When Teaching Military-Connected Students

Date:_____

Dear Teacher,

I am writing you today to ask for your participation in a survey I am conducting for my dissertation research at Kansas State University. I am asking teachers like you, to think about and reflect on your experiences with military-connected students in your elementary classroom.

Military students move three times more often than their civilian counterparts. This mobility is a challenge for the student, their family, and also for *teachers*.
Your responses to this survey are very important and will help advance teaching and research regarding this unique population.

Tomorrow you will receive another email from me containing a link to this survey. If you can take a short amount of time to complete the survey I would appreciate it greatly. It is compatible for computer and mobile devices for your convenience.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and all of your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses in any reports of this data.

While the survey is voluntary, my hope is that you will respond so we can continue to learn more about how to best meet the needs of teachers who teach military-connected students just like you!

I greatly appreciate your consideration.

Many Thanks,
Julia Mittelberg
Ph.D. Candidate
Kansas State University

Appendix D - Email to Participants with Survey Link

Challenges Teachers Face When Teaching Military-Connected Students

Date:_____

Dear Teacher,

I am writing you again today to ask for your participation in a survey I am conducting for my dissertation research at Kansas State University about teachers who work with military-connected students. I am asking teachers like you, to think about and reflect on your experiences with military-connected students in your elementary classroom.

Like I mentioned in the previous email, military students move three times more often than their civilian counterparts. This mobility is a challenge for the student, their family, and also for *teachers*.
Your responses to this survey are very important and will help advance teaching and research regarding this unique population.

The link below will take you to a survey that should take no more than 10 minutes of your time. Please click on the link below to go to the survey website (or copy and paste the survey link into your Internet browser).

LINK: _____

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and all of your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses in any reports of this data. Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at juliamitt@ksu.edu or 309-992-8481.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration in completing the survey.
Thank you for participating in this study! It is only through the help of teachers like you that we can help guide the direction of teacher education and professional development.

Many Thanks,
Julia Mittelberg
Ph.D. Candidate
Kansas State University

Appendix E - Reminder Email to Participants

Dear Teachers,

Hello again! I am writing you today to remind you about the survey regarding military-connected students in the elementary classroom. If you have already taken the survey, thank you so much for your participation!

If you have not completed the short survey I ask that you would please take it soon. Your opinions and experiences are very valuable to me! Your responses to this survey are very important and will help advance teaching and research regarding this unique population.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and all of your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses in any reports of this data. While the survey is voluntary, my hope is that you will respond so we can continue to learn more about how to best meet the needs of teachers who teach military-connected students just like you!

The link below will take you to a survey that should take no more than 10 minutes of your time. Please click on the link below to go to the survey website (or copy and paste the survey link into your Internet browser).

LINK: https://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_06Plh28M9NKAj89

Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at juliamitt@ksu.edu or 309-992-8481.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration in completing the survey. Thank you for participating in this study! It is only through the help of teachers like you that we can help guide the direction of teacher education and professional development.
I greatly appreciate your consideration.

Many Thanks,
Julia Mittelberg
Ph.D. Candidate
Kansas State University

Appendix F - Survey Item Reference Table

	Survey Item	Rationale
1	I am prepared to support military-connected students in my classroom and school.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
2	I am prepared to support the parents/guardians of military-connected students in my classroom	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
3	I have received adequate training from my school about how to support military-connected students and their families in the classroom and school.	Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
4	My teacher training program has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher of military-connected students.	Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369. Grant, L., Stronge, J. H., & Popp, P. (2008). Effective teaching and at-risk/highly mobile students: What do award-winning teachers do? National Center for Homeless Education. Retrieved from http://www.sonoma.edu/TRIO-training/research/homeless/mobile.pdf. Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1).
5	My prior experience as a teacher has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher of military-connected students.	Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369. Grant, L., Stronge, J. H., & Popp, P. (2008). Effective teaching and at-risk/highly mobile students: What do award-winning teachers do? National Center for Homeless Education. Retrieved from http://www.sonoma.edu/TRIO-training/research/homeless/mobile.pdf. Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1).
6	I utilize books and materials about military families/life to help me understand military-connected students.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
7	I utilize on-line resources about military-connected students to help me meet the needs of my students.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
8	I utilize what I've learned in professional development programs provided in my school about military life/families/students to help me meet the needs of military-connected students.	Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
9	I utilize Student Resource Officers (SRO's) to help my military-connected students.	District Level Administrator; District website.

10	I utilize military personnel assigned to our school to help in my classroom (i.e.- come to read aloud to the class, tutor, etc.)	District Level Administrator; District website.
11	I know who to ask to get more information and resources about military-connected students and families.	Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1).
12	I have actively sought information about military-connected students by searching for books, websites, and other resources to understand and meet the needs of my students.	Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1). Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
13	I use class meetings in my classroom to develop a strong classroom environment	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1). Burden, P. R. & Byrd, D. M. (2013). Methods for effective teaching: Meeting the needs of all students (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
14	I use team-building or class-building activities with my students to develop a strong classroom environment.	Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1). Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
15	I use get to know you activities each time a new student arrives in my classroom.	Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369. Burden, P. R. & Byrd, D. M. (2013). Methods for effective teaching: Meeting the needs of all students (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Gruman, D. H., Harachi T. W., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R. F., Fleming, C. B. (2008). Longitudinal effects of student mobility on three dimensions of elementary school engagement. Child Development, 79 (6), 1833-1852. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
16	I have a routine for when new students arrive in my classroom after the beginning of the school year to help the student feel welcome and adjust to the classroom.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Gruman, D. H., Harachi T. W., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R. F., Fleming, C. B. (2008). Longitudinal effects of student mobility on three dimensions of elementary school engagement. Child Development, 79 (6), 1833-1852. Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1).
17	I have a routine for when students move and are leaving my classroom to help all students deal with the transition.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Gruman, D. H., Harachi T. W., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R. F., Fleming, C. B. (2008). Longitudinal effects of student mobility on three dimensions of elementary school engagement. Child Development, 79 (6), 1833-1852. Voltz, D. L. (2000) Challenges and choices in urban teaching: The perspectives of general and special educators. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 4(1).
18	I use military pen pals to connect students in my classroom with active military personnel.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

19	I use a memory garden to visually acknowledge military- connected students who have left my classroom.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Conversations with university Military Initiatives Committee - Teacher Trainer.
20	I use Hero bulletin boards in my classroom to visually acknowledge military-connected students and families.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Conversations with university Military Initiatives Committee - Teacher Trainer.
21	My school utilizes the community to help and enrich the education of students in my school (1)	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369. Grant, L., Stronge, J. H., & Popp, P. (2008). Effective teaching and at-risk/highly mobile students: What do award-winning teachers do? National Center for Homeless Education. Retrieved from http://www.sonoma.edu/TRIO-training/research/homeless/mobile.pdf
22	The leadership at the school actively shows their support of military-connected students and their families.	Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
23	Please indicate the approximate number of professional development training (hours) you have attended in regard to military-connected students and/or families.	Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
24	What do you consider to be the challenges for YOU when teaching military-connected students?	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Gruman, D. H., Harachi T. W., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R. F., Fleming, C. B. (2008). Longitudinal effects of student mobility on three dimensions of elementary school engagement. Child Development, 79 (6), 1833-1852. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
25	I understand the challenges that military-connected students go through when moving and changing schools.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Gruman, D. H., Harachi T. W., Abbott, R. D., Catalano, R. F., Fleming, C. B. (2008). Longitudinal effects of student mobility on three dimensions of elementary school engagement. Child Development, 79 (6), 1833-1852. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
26	I understand the challenges that children and families face when a parent/guardian is deployed.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
27	I am confident in my ability to help a child through the loss of a parent/guardian as a result of their service in the military.	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
	#29-35 Teaching military-connected students creates a challenge for me in regards to...	

28	creating a safe and collaborative learning environment .	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369. Petty, K. (2009). Deployment: Strategies for working with kids in military families. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
19	assessment of student's background knowledge	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
30	meeting the individual learning needs of students	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
31	communication with parents	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
32	filling in students' knowledge gaps	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
33	providing emotional support to students	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
34	the adjustment of the classroom due to students leaving and arriving at various times in the school year	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
35	Listed are some of the other challenges teachers may face when a new military-connected student is added to their classroom. Please select any that you think are challenges (Check all that apply)	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
36	Again, listed are some of the challenges teachers may face when a new military-connected student is added to their classroom. Please select THREE that you think are the biggest challenges (Check only 3)	Astor, R.A., Jacobson, L., & Benbenishty, R. (2012). The teacher's guide for supporting students from military families. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Beck, L. G., Kratzer, C. C. & Isken, J. A. (1997). Caring for transient students in one urban elementary school. Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 3(3), 343-369.
37	Thinking about your class this year, about what percentage of your class is made up of military-connected students?	Demographic

38	How many students have LEFT (or you know are planning to leave) your classroom this year due to military-related reasons?	Grant, L., Stronge, J. H., & Popp, P. (2008). Effective teaching and at-risk/highly mobile students: What do award-winning teachers do? National Center for Homeless Education. Retrieved from http://www.sonoma.edu/TRIO-training/research/homeless/mobile.pdf. Conversation with Administrators and teachers about turnover rates.
39	How many new students have JOINED your classroom this year due to military-related reasons?	Grant, L., Stronge, J. H., & Popp, P. (2008). Effective teaching and at-risk/highly mobile students: What do award-winning teachers do? National Center for Homeless Education. Retrieved from http://www.sonoma.edu/TRIO-training/research/homeless/mobile.pdf. Conversation with Administrators and teachers about turnover rates.
40	How many students have taken extended absences (3 or more days) this school year due to military-related reasons? (Please exclude those due to illness)	Grant, L., Stronge, J. H., & Popp, P. (2008). Effective teaching and at-risk/highly mobile students: What do award-winning teachers do? National Center for Homeless Education. Retrieved from http://www.sonoma.edu/TRIO-training/research/homeless/mobile.pdf
41	Have you served or are you currently serving in the U.S. military?	Demographic
42	Is someone in your immediate family a military service member (retired and/or active)?	Demographic
43	At what grade level are you currently teaching? (check all that apply)	Demographic
44	At what levels have you taught in the past? (check all that apply)	Demographic
45	How many years have you been a practicing classroom teacher? (include this year in your answer)	Demographic
46	Please indicate your highest level of education completed:	Demographic
47	Please indicate your gender.	Demographic
48	Do you currently work in a school located on a military base?	Demographic
49	Have you taught in a school located on a military base before this school year?	Demographic

Appendix G - Open Response Question: Sorted

	E = Emotional **A**= Academic **M**= Moving/Transiency **F** = Family Life **B**= Behavior **U** = Understanding of Military Life **CC** = Class Climate **X**= No Challenges	**CODE**
1	I feel the emotional challenges are the most challenging. In a school that does not have an adult trained to address issues military students may have is very hard.	**E**
2	Getting students caught up in curriculum they haven't received when they are new.	**A**
3	Psychological/emotional support for students. We do not have councilors.	**E**
4	Helping students to get caught up when they have not covered the same skills/material that my class has already covered.	**A**
5	Determining where they are at academically and filling in "gaps" that have been missed due to mobility.	**A**
6	Having a complete understanding of their emotions when a parent is gone.	**UE**
7	There are often hidden agendas that I am unaware of. Parents have previous experiences with schools that carry over to the current school that negatively influence their expectations of me and our school. Students also come missing skills to be successful in my classroom and it takes a lot of extra time to close the gaps and parents are often resentful of the extra time it takes and students sometimes feel punished by needing to put in the extra time to close the gaps.	**A**
8	The transition of students in to my room and having them not know things we've already covered this year.	**MA**
9	The mobility of the students. Sometimes when we get new students they are below grade level and we a lot of catching up to do. And during a family deployment, the stress that can cause on the family can carry over into the classroom.	**MAF**
10	Discipline. It seems like most of the students that are in a military family the father is not around as much as a kid would like them to be. So as a first grade teaching I have tons of kids come in and they act as if they have never been told no. They think if they do not want to do something then they don't have to..... They soon learn that is not the case :)	**BF**
11	The students coming and going.	**M**
12	I have difficulty knowing and truly understanding what a military family is up against. Since I am not military myself, I do not really know their difficulties.	**U**
13	Sometimes the students have a hard time settling in and creating a "family" in our classroom, due to their mobility at home.	**CC**
14	Comforting the students because of all the emotions they go through with all the changes in their lives.	**E**
15	It is very hard when I get new students because it is hard to get them caught up on new math content they have missed out on.	**A**
16	Students' moods can be unpredictable. They may be performing poorly and not putting forth maximum effort and then you find out Mom has left for training. It would be much easier if you always got a heads up when parents were leaving, but that's not always he case. It's hard for young children to sort out their feelings about such things.	**FAE**
17	My husband was military for a long time so I believe I understand the challenges and advantages quite well. It is sad to see a student leave but we try not to make a big deal out of it. Instead, we write a farewell book. Their picture stays on our word-wall for the remainder of the year.	**MCC**
18	There seems to be more intense behaviors and a lot of emotional times when parents leave or are gone.	**BFE**
19	Parent support and involvement	**F**
20	Having students come in to my classroom from all different backgrounds of life. This can be challenging because the teacher never knows what kind of background knowledge they may have about the curriculum being taught. Also, students come in with extreme variations of the amount of schooling they have had. The range of abilities in my classroom is vast!	**AM**

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21	Also, when a student leaves it can be very hard for my 5 and 6 year olds to grasp and come to terms with. They miss their friends months after they have left. They make connections with each other and then all of a sudden, sometimes in a matter of weeks they are not in our class anymore. Students notice this change in classroom dynamics and comment in their longing for their friends.	**MEC**
22	I have noticed that many talk about guns and killing more than my other school. I do not know how I should go about stopping this.	**CCB**
23	Knowing where they are in the curriculum and catching them up to speed.	**A**
24	To know what to say or if I should say anything. 5th graders keep things to themselves, so they don't seek me out very often. I never know if it's something I bring up or not.	**CC**
25	Parent's lack of investment in the school	**F**
26	Gathering materials, supplies, etc. at the last minute when a new student arrives	**M**
27	Bridging the achievement gaps with students that have missed school time	**A**
28	There experiences and backgrounds-I grew up a farmers kids who never moved. I never knew what it was like for my dad to be gone the whole year. Most of my kids are missing one or both of their parents right now. Some days they are in good moods and others spend days crying and shut down. Keeping my kids motivated without hitting their emotional nerve is balancing act in my teaching.	**FEU**
29	Inconsistent schedules and expectations at home affect kids at school.	**F**
30	Knowledge gaps due to moving.	**MA**
31	How many times have the student moved already and where in the curriculum is this child at	**MA**
32	Knowing how to ask about their family's situation while being sensitive, figuring out (quickly) what a new student knows and doesn't know, finding a balance of talking about the military family members enough but not bringing them up too much which also bings up emotions in the student	**EA**
33	Helping students as they transition either into or out of the classroom.	**M**
34	It feels like a lot of times there is a lack of discipline at home if a parent is deployed. It makes it hard to develop a good system for calling home when there is an issue. A lot of times it feels like the issues are never resolved beyond the school.	**FB**
35	The major challenge is for the military connected student to feel part of our class "family" as quickly as possible.	**CC**
36	The biggest challenge is the parents. They don't have an understanding of how school works here and consistently reference their old school. The kids adapt quickly.	**F**
37	I really don't have challenges.	**X**
38	I can't relate to the military life because I'm not familiar with the unique challenges.	**U**
39	I struggle with knowing exactly how to explain things to them. All families explain situations differently.	**UF**
40	Up to this point, students come into the classroom with completely different skills and curriculums so getting them caught up to our curriculum is difficult. Many have "holes" in their education because of moving so much.	**A**
41	Understanding the struggles they have when a parent is deployed or gone from the home for any period of time. I never went through that and don't know how to help with the problems it creates until the problem is there.	**U**
42	The students are often not at the same place in terms of their education. Students often come in knowing either more or less than I have taught in my class. I often also find the mobility challenging. Students have entered my class and stayed through the whole year, but I often have students come and go in a matter of weeks--sometimes without warning.	**AM**

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43	Teachers are not always told by parents of changes occurring in their home life status. If a parent deploys, returns, they are moving, etc. teaching staff are not always told until the last minute. I teach Kindergarten and those students are not always privy to what the intricate workings of the military in connection with home life are and parents, much of the time, do not share changes with those young students until the change is occurring-especially if they know a few months in advance.	**FM**
44	Dealing with deployed parents/lack of mother or father figure at home while they are away	**F**
45	The biggest challenge for me is having to say goodbye to classmates and then the very next day hello to a new one. It's a constant turnaround and it's difficult sometimes for my students and myself to adjust.	**EM**
46	Knowing how to best handle individual family situations	**F**
47	How to help students through deployment and long periods of separation.	**E**
48	How to help with a child's feelings about a deployed parent.	**E**
49	Where has the child moved from and what are their circumstances? How has the student performed in other schools?	**A**
50	The atmosphere in my classroom versus the atmosphere at home.	**CCF**
51	The challenge is how to connect with some of the students. I am a military spouse and I have dealt with deployments with my husband so I am able to relate. There are some students though that have a hard time with adjustment or have that parent that "shuts down" and it is hard to keep the students motivated if they have no support at home. They want to accomplish things but they feel lost and it is hard to keep them going if they don't have someone at home pushing them as well. Another challenge is filling in the gaps with the students. Having students coming in from different schools, there seems to be gaps on the knowledge that they know. It is hard to find where they are and to try to get them caught up with the rest of the class.	**FEA**
52	Families deal with being a military family in so many different ways. It is hard to know how to support. It is a also a challenge when spouses of deployed soldiers become checked out and the kids are suffering.	**EF**
53	Education does not always seem to be a huge priority for military families - though this isn't true of ALL military families for sure. I feel like there are more absences with military kiddos, and that can be really difficult, especially if they have missed school or transferred a lot and have gaps in their knowledge. The kids also sometimes have more worries - like deployments or when they will be moving again; it can definitely be hard to overcome those challenges, especially when you think about brain research and the implications of anxiety, not feeling safe, etc.	**ME**
54	They come not thinking they matter in their short time they may reside at our school	**ECC**
55	I struggle with knowing what to say and how to support them when they have a parent deployed or are anticipating deployment.	**UE**
56	We get an extremely short notice when we are getting a new student. Sometimes we are notified minutes before the bell rings and have short time to get desk, chair, student supplies prepared.	**M**
57	Students of divorced parents often exhibit a high amount of attention seeking, especially when the parent they live with is also in the military and that parent gets deployed or is away on training. Student will typically stay with a grandparent and it greatly affects their behavior in school.	**FB**
58	The frequent leaving without notice.	**M**
59	when parents deploy.	**F**

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61	Knowing how to talk to the families without prying for too much information and knowing what is appropriate to talk about with the kids at school about their parents.	**UF**
62	The knowledge that the students enter with when they enroll varies a lot.	**A**
63	This is my first experience with military-connected students. I would say that my biggest challenge has been some of the anger issues I have seen both in the very young students and in the parents that are military-connected.	**EF**
64	Students live in such close proximity that sometimes problems in the neighborhood come to the school as well.	**F**
65	I am not aware of current programs that support my students. It is a challenge to fill in gaps in student's learning if they have not been taught skills we have already introduced. Sometimes information from previous school's is delayed so if the student has a learning disability or requires other services and the parent does not inform us then we spend quite a bit of time getting to know the child and beginning unnecessary paperwork. Occasionally students come to us without basic supplies and while I always provide everything a student needs it's nice when they have their own things to claim rather than "borrow" from me or other students.	**AM**
66	It has been tough saying goodbye to students when they move to a new school. I try to keep the students 'happy for their friend' but inside I'm quite sad to say goodbye (which I feel is somewhat normal!). It almost feels tougher saying goodbye and having the tone of the classroom change drastically when each student moves away. We have o learn how to learn together with one less friend.	**ME**
67	Time; patience and understanding	**U**
68	In kindergarten I don't feel that I have much of a problem.	**X**
69	Intense emotional behavior of students can make it hard not to have an emotional response. For example: Stubborn student who refuses to cooperate until given what is wanted? Makes me feel stubborn as a teacher. You can have _____ as soon as you do whatever the behavior is I am seeking as teacher.	**BE**
70	The students have much more intense reactions to sometimes strange triggers outside of non-military classroom. Sometimes trivial belongings, a delay in snack or lunch time etc. can set them off.	**EB**
71	Student turn over averages between 30%-50% yearly. Getting new students and families up to speed can be both disruptive and takes time to adjust. Assessing where students are and what needs to happen to catch them up or challenge them quickly is a challenge.	**MA**
72	building trusting relationships with parents	**F**
73	Students who do not want to open up and talk	**E**
74	Deployments. I understand what they are going through because I have been there. The stress put on the families can be overwhelming	**F**
75	They may move in and be unprepared for the content I am teaching.	**MA**
76	moving a lot with in a year or so	**M**