



November 2011

Dear Colleague,

Under the auspices of the Administration's *Joining Forces* initiative to improve support for military families, the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) have created "Operation Educate the Educators," a partnership to enhance the preparation of educators in order to meet the needs of military-connected students. We are writing today to ask you to join us in this important endeavor.

In America, there are currently 2 million military-connected students – children whose parents are active duty, members of the National Guard or Reserves or veterans. Nearly 1.2 million of these children attend PK-12 public schools, and every school district has military-connected students. There are an additional 144,191¹ military-connected students, ages 19-23, of which the vast majority attend higher education institutions. Military-connected students face multiple school challenges due to the impact of parental deployment, high mobility rates, learning challenges attributed to frequent school changes, and elevated stress. Too often, PK-12 schools and institutions of higher education are not equipped to adequately support the distinct social, emotional, and learning needs of these students.

Earlier this year, AACTE surveyed its membership to determine how many institutions offer specific programs to prepare their candidates to meet the needs of military-connected students. We discovered that very few institutions do this, even those that prepare educators for schools with high populations of military-connected students. Thus, over the next year and a half, AACTE and MCEC will implement a campaign to raise awareness among AACTE's membership about the learning challenges that military-connected students face and offer professional development opportunities for preparation programs on this issue.

As part of this effort, AACTE and MCEC, in close consultation with an advisory board of education school deans and faculty, developed a set of guiding principles that we are encouraging AACTE members to adopt. **We invite you to view "Guiding Principles for Preparing Educators to Meet the Needs of Military-Connected Students" and to have your program sign onto these principles.**

To assist you with integrating these principles into your programs, the [AACTE website](#) houses several resources on this important topic. You will find articles, books, and other websites of interest, as well as professional development opportunities that will be available over the next year to help you develop curriculum and clinical experiences to prepare educators to meet the needs of military-connected students. We also strongly encourage you to attend a preconference workshop at [AACTE's Annual Meeting](#) in February that will include presenters from MCEC and AACTE institutions.

We hope you will consider making your program a part of this initiative. When you are ready to commit your institution to this work, please contact our colleague, Mary Harrill-McClellan, at mharrill@aacete.org. Our goal is to have 100 institutions signed on by the end of the year!

¹ Defense Manpower Data Center, DRS#5800, May 2011 table.



Thank you for considering this opportunity. We know that your work in this area will make a significant impact on the more than 2 million military-connected students in our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Sharon P. Robinson".

Sharon P. Robinson, Ed.D.
President and CEO
American Association of Colleges
for Teacher Education

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Mary M. Keller".

Mary Keller
President and CEO
Military Child Education Coalition