

California Purple Star School Designation Program 2026



Application Guidelines

Application Due Date:
Friday, November 21, 2025

Administered by the:

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Career and College Transition Division
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Overview

California is home to the nation's largest concentration of military personnel¹ and many are parents/guardians of minor children. In March 2025, California had 157,477 active-duty service members, 52,496 individuals serving in the National Guard and Reserves, and 63,832 individuals serving as Department of Defense contractors and civilians for a total of 273,806 service members.²

Military-connected students must move whenever their active-duty parent/guardian receives a Permanent Change of Station relocation order. These required relocations mean that a military-connected child can expect to change schools between six and nine times in their kindergarten through grade twelve educational career, three times more often than nonmilitary-connected children. As military-connected students transition between schools, often to different states and countries, they must adapt to varying cultures, school populations, curricula, standards, course offerings, schedules, and graduation requirements. As a result, military-connected students often face unique academic and social-emotional challenges, and struggle to stay on track to be college and career ready.³

In 2024, the California State Legislature codified the Purple Star School Designation Program in California *Education Code (EC)*, Section 51255,⁴ which aims to address the unique needs of military-connected students and their families.

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1. 2024 California Statewide National Security Economic Impacts.
https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=001779225245372747843:l2ikrt_n56e&q=https://www.library.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/crb-reports/2024_California_Statewide_MEIS.pdf&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiFIOe1m9iNAXVeL0QIHS7vDUYQFnoECAIQAQ&usg=AOvVaw1vBCIkCwk-KTtOpdpldTIj
 2. Defense Manpower Data Center: Military and Civilian Personnel by Service/Agency by State/Country, March 2025. <https://dwp.dmdc.osd.mil/dwp/app/dod-data-reports/workforce-reports>
 3. A Study of the Purple Star Designation Program:
https://www.militarychild.org/upload/files/purple%20star/MCEC_Purple_Star_Report_Final_20.04.pdf
 4. California Purple Star School Designation Program, California EC 51255,
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&sectionNum=51255.&article=4.6.&highlight=true&keyword=purple%20star

Purpose

The California Purple Star School Designation Program (Purple Star Program) seeks to reduce the burden on military-connected students and their families by articulating the most critical transition supports for military-connected students and their families. In addition, the Purple Star Program seeks to publicly recognize and designate schools that meet certain requirements and signals which schools are the most committed and best equipped to meet military-connected students and their families' unique needs. The Purple Star Program is a recognition program and the designation is not accompanied by funding. The Purple Star Program was designed to help mitigate the challenges of high mobility by setting standards for and publicly designating military-friendly schools.

Program Description

Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for a Purple Star School designation in California, an individual school site must be in active status, as identified on the California Department of Education's (CDE's) California School Directory web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/schooldirectory>. The school site will also need to demonstrate the following:

- **Designated Point-of-Contact:** A staff member to act as a liaison between military families and the schoolsite, easing military-connected students' enrollment and acclimation period, and assist with students' graduation requirements.
- **Professional Development:** Professional development opportunities to train staff on the unique considerations for, and needs of, military-connected students.
- **Dedicated Web Page:** A dedicated web page on the school's website with easily accessible information and resources for military-connected families.
- **Transition Programs:** A transition program to welcome and socially acclimate incoming military-connected students, which can be student-led.
- **Military Recognition:** Programming and events to include, celebrate, and honor service members and military-connected students and families, including community members.

Application Procedures and Processes

Application Timeline

Date	Activity
October 8, 2025	Application Guidelines Release Date
November 21, 2025	Applications must be received at the CDE, by 11:59 p.m. Pacific Standard Time (PST)
November–December 2025	Review of Applications
January 2026	Purple Star School Designations Announced

Application Due Date

The Purple Star Program application and supporting documents must be received by the CDE on or before **Friday, November 21, 2025**, by 11:59 p.m. PST, per the Application Submission Procedures (see below).

Application Submission Procedures

Applicants shall submit the application via an online survey. To complete the online application survey, visit <https://surveys3.cde.ca.gov/go/purplestar2026.asp>.

The online application will require applicants to upload a letter of support from the school site's principal and the local educational agency (LEA)'s superintendent/administrator (or designee). Please limit each letter of support to one page (single-sided) on official letterhead.

Note: If a LEA has multiple school sites that are applying for the Purple Star school designation, the superintendent/administrator (or designee) can sign a single letter of support that lists all the applying school sites. Each school site will then be required to upload the superintendent/administrator (or designee)'s letter of support to their individual application.

If a school site has already been designated as a Purple Star School, the school site will need to apply again after three years. For example, schools designated in 2023 (applied in 2022) will need to apply again this school year (2025–26); schools designated in 2024 will need to apply again next year (2026–27).

Incomplete and Late Applications

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Application Review

Each application will be reviewed by the CDE using the Scoring Rubric (Appendix A). Applications must meet all the requirements in the Scoring Rubric to receive a Purple Star School designation; applications that do not meet the requirements in the Scoring Rubric will not receive a Purple Star School designation. The application review process will occur during the months of November and December 2025.

As applicants complete the written program narrative, applications must adhere to the following requirements:

- Information included in the application must be relevant and unique to the program being administered by the applicant.
- An application that is plagiarized in any part or form from another school's application will be disqualified. Applicants must not submit an application where the text has been copied from another school's previous or current application, whether another school has voluntarily or involuntarily provided the information.

Application Questionnaire

The following represent the items contained in the 2026 Purple Star Application Survey. Applicants will also be asked to provide school and contact information and upload a file (support letters) within the application survey.

1. The school site must designate a Purple Star School Point-of-Contact to serve as a liaison between military families and the schoolsite. Please identify the Point-of-Contact, including contact information, and describe the duties assigned to the Point-of-Contact. The Point-of-Contact needs to be employed by the local educational agency.
2. Each Point-of-Contact is required **to participate** in professional development activities focused on the unique considerations for, and needs of, military-connected students. Please describe the professional development activity/activities; be specific and include dates, the provider and a brief summary of the impact of the professional development activity. Include any future professional development activities.
3. The Point-of-Contact needs **to provide and/or coordinate** professional development and supports to school staff, describe the professional development activities that have occurred in the past and include a description of planned professional development activities.
4. The school site needs to demonstrate that they have a transition program to welcome and socially acclimate incoming military-connected students. Please describe the transitional program, who facilitates the program (staff and/or

students), how students are identified and encouraged to participate in the program, and describe how the following topics are addressed:

- Welcoming and acclimating a new military-connected student.
 - Educational support for military-connected students, including special populations.
 - Social-emotional support for military-connected students.
5. The school district and/or school site needs to have a dedicated web page that serves as a resource for military-connected families and include the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of the web page. The web page needs to contain the following:
- The contact information of the Point-of-Contact for the school site. If the web page encompasses the whole district, there should be a list of the contact information for each Purple Star School site to ensure ease and clarity for potential military-connected families.
 - Easily accessible information and resources useful for incoming military-connected families, such as information on relocation, enrollment and registration, academic planning, counseling, and other support services and information.
6. Provide programming and events to include, celebrate, and honor service members and military-connected pupils and families, including community members. Initiatives can include, but are not limited to:
- Participation in Military Child Month (April) and/or Military Family Month (November) to celebrate, recognize, and support military-connected students and families for their strength and sacrifice.
 - Encourage and provide opportunities for active-duty service members and individuals serving in the National Guard and Reserves to volunteer at local school sites.

Optional prompts:

1. Provide evidence or a plan if the school plans to have the local school board show support for military-connected students and families.
2. Provide any other supporting information to demonstrate why the school site should be recognized as a Purple Star School.

Appendix A: Scoring Rubric

Prompt	Requirement
1. The school site must designate a Purple Star School Point-of-Contact to serve as a liaison between military families and the schoolsite. Please identify the Point-of-Contact, including contact information, and describe the duties assigned to the Point-of-Contact. The Point-of-Contact needs to be employed by the local educational agency.	The applicant provided all contact information for the Point-of-Contact and described their duties that specifically support military families and military-connected students. The Point-of-Contact is an employee of the LEA applicant.
2. Each Point-of-Contact is required to participate in military family professional development activities. Please describe the professional development activity/activities, be specific and include dates, the provider and a brief summary of the impact of the professional development activity. Include any future professional development activities.	The applicant provided information on the professional development activities the Point-of-Contact participated in and plans to participate in. Professional development activities are specific to military-connected students and their families.
3. The Point-of-Contact needs to provide and/or coordinate professional development and supports to school staff, describe the professional development activities that have occurred in the past and include a description of planned professional development activities.	The applicant provided information on the professional development activities the Point-of-Contact provided or coordinated for school staff to help support the unique needs of military-connected students and their families. The applicant also described future professional development activities for staff that support military-connected students and their families.

Prompt	Requirement
4. The school site needs to demonstrate that they have a transitional program for military-connected students. Please describe the transitional program, who facilitates the program (staff and/or students), how students are identified and encouraged to participate in the program, and describe how the following topics are addressed: • Welcoming and acclimating a new military-connected student. • Educational support for military-connected students, including special populations. • Social-emotional support for military-connected students.	The applicant describes how a new military-connected student is welcomed to campus, including a description of the academic and emotional supports that are provided to ensure the unique needs of military-connected students are supported for student success.

Prompt	Requirement
5. The school district and/or school site needs to provide a specific web page that serves as a resource for military-connected families and include the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of the web page. The web page needs to contain the following: • The contact information of the Point-of-Contact for the school site. If the web page encompasses the whole district, there should be a list of the contact information for each Purple Star School site to ensure ease and clarity for potential military-connected families. • Specific items useful for military families, such as military liaison contact information, information on relocation, enrollment and registration, academic planning, counseling, and other related support services and useful information.	The applicant provides a URL link to the specific web page dedicated to supporting military connected students and their families. The webpage also includes support links and contact information of the Point-of-Contact. The webpage is easily accessible from the school site's home page.
6. Provide information on military-connected family initiative(s) that the school site has promoted and/or plans to promote. Initiatives can include, but are not limited to: • Participation in Military Child Month (April) and/or Military Family Month (November) to celebrate, recognize, and support military-connected students and families for their strength and sacrifice. • Encourage and provide opportunities for active-duty service members and individuals serving in the National Guard and Reserves to volunteer at local school sites.	The applicant describes activities and/or initiatives that celebrate and include military-connected students and their families as an important part of the school community.