Montana Schools,

April is the Month of the Military Child! It’s a time to recognize and show our respect to all Military Youth for the sacrifices they make and celebrate them as the strong and resilient children they are.

Montana has over 6,000 military connected youth and hundreds of children across the state will have a parent deployed in 2019. We have included some ideas of how to celebrate the Month of the Military Child in your school, along with some resources and activities that will help their peers better understand the sacrifices military families make.

We hope these ideas are helpful and fun ways to recognize your Military Kids. Please send us photos of your celebrations! You can also contact the MTNG Child and Youth Program if you have any questions or would like further resources on how to support a military child experiencing deployment.

Warm Regards,

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Ideas to Celebrate:

- Wear Purple on Purple Up Day: Thursday, April 18th is Montana’s Purple Up Day for Military Kids. Purple represents all branches of service. Please feel free to take photos of your school participants and email them to us to be posted on our Facebook Page- this way we can see Military Kids across the whole State- please do not post any child’s name.

- Create a Hero Board: Each classroom can write the names of their family members who serve/served in the Military on Red, White, and Blue Stars to be displayed on a board in the school. Have them include the service members name and relationship: “My Dad- Eric”, “My Uncle- Rob”

- Have a Spirit Week or Dress Up Days in the Month of April
  > Red, White, & Blue Day
  > Camo Day
  > Super Hero Day
  > Stars & Stripes Day
  > Purple Up Day
  > Twin Day- students can dress up as their military youth friends

- Door or poster decorating contest between classrooms- Theme: Military Kids

- Have a thank you for your service morning announcement recognizing Military Kids in your school.

- Allow students to invite a family member who serves/served for breakfast or lunch. Maybe have a purple food item to celebrate!

- Have Military Connected Youth be “line leaders” in the Month of April

Activities to Learn about Military Families and their Sacrifice:

- Watch these video clips to learn more about what it’s like to be a Military Kid.
  o https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h_TNcCQq_k
  o https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJTqLFBRjQ
  o https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDFXxgZ0vHc
  o We are currently making a video by Montana Military Teens that we will provide.
    - Please watch these clips before showing to your classroom.
    - Important to note that many Military Kids in Montana are National Guard kids. They don’t move as much, but don’t live on a base, so they don’t have as many military peers/same level of support & resources.

- Invite a local Service Member or family member to your classroom to share their perspective on life in the military or their profession.

- Have Military Kids write an essay or poem about being a Military Kid for extra credit- with permission it could be shared with the school or shared anonymously.

- Get Active: Have a little mini boot camp challenge with relay races, pushups, running, sit ups, etc.

- Read a book! We have a list of book options on the next page.
“We Serve Too” Activity: A great game to learn about how a community can respond to deployment.

Give every participant a “Role”- Doctor, Teacher, Coach, Student, Kid, Chef, etc. [Just a sticker name tag, so they don’t have to try to remember their own role]. There can and probably should be 1-3 of each title, when possible. Number off participants 1-4, then tell them to move around however they like around the parachute or sheet- They absolutely don’t need to be in any order and can be mixed around however they like. On the parachute or sheet there will be multiple balls [or responsibilities], their job is to continue to wave the parachute/sheet, without letting any of the balls fall to the ground. When you call a number, those individuals have to instantly let go of the parachute/sheet to come help another teacher, principle, or special guest service member, while everyone else continues to keep the sheet waving and the balls in the air. After a couple “fails”, you can let students know ahead of time what number you will be calling soon, so they can communicate together and spread out to better help keep the sheet/balls going.

After playing the game, it’s a great time to review the activity. Our Service Members have a big responsibility that takes them away from their community responsibilities, but we can all step up and help to keep things going strong when they’re off to help and serve others. Military Families have to refigure how to take on all of their Hero’s responsibilities, but as community members there are things we can do to help too. Maybe a family friend can help carpool kids to practice, a teacher could offer after school help on homework; let the kids think about all the different community roles and how others can help support during deployment.

○ Supplies: Parachute or Sheet, A variety of different balls (all sizes), “Role Name Tags”, and participants!

Ideas on how to show support for Service Members and Families:

❖ Write thank you letters to Service Members & their families:
   We have a large deployment this fall and can provide these letters of support and thanks to these service members & families just before deployment. Thank You Coloring Card Included.
   Tips on writing letters: https://www.operationgratitude.com/express-your-thanks/write-letters/

❖ Create care packages for deployed troops from your classroom:

❖ If a student in your school has a parent being deployed- Ask the at-home parent if your classroom can do something special to help the family during deployment: Maybe to rake leafs, bake a treat, shovel the drive way, carpooling for kids events, etc. Let students brainstorm some ideas.

Read a Book about Military Youth and Families!

   ○ Youtube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj_JdmrRdt8


❖ K-3rd: “Is a Worry Worrying You”, by Ferida Wolff

❖ K-3rd: “How Many Stars in the Sky?”, by Lenny Hort

❖ K-3rd: “Night Catch”, by Brenda Ehramantraut

❖ 2nd-5th: “Pilot Mom”, by Kathleen Benner Duble

❖ 4th-7th: “Bravo Zulu, Samantha”, by Kathleen Benner Duble

❖ 4th-7th: “Operation Yes”- Sara Lewis Holmes- 2009