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State Education Activities to Support Mission Growth*

Executive Summary

The significant growth in the mission of many military bases across the country is placing substantial demands on the capacity and curriculum of the educational systems in their respective states as a large number of students are expected to arrive within a very short time frame. In response, states are employing a host of new education strategies and initiatives that will allow them to meet the needs of military families and the surrounding communities and take full advantage of the economic development that accompanies mission growth. The states predicted to be most affected are **Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.**

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) is in the midst of a major transformation whereby dozens of bases across the country are enhancing their missions, increasing training activities and defense operations, and expanding the number of military and civilian personnel. The growth in military personnel and federal civilian employees will result in student increases in the surrounding community that may be challenging with respect to scale, timing and scope. Mission growth bases and the surrounding communities will experience growth at a rate not seen since World War II. For instance, Fort Bliss in **Texas** is expected to grow by at least 300 percent: from 9,000 soldiers and 15,000 family members in 2005 to 38,000 soldiers and 53,000 family members in 2012, 20,000 of whom will be school-age children.¹ Close to 50 percent of military members or DoD civilians have a child. Of those families, the average has 1.6 children.² Moreover, most incoming students will arrive by September 2011. Combined, these challenges place a large burden on the affected states to prepare for these students in a relatively short time.

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This is one of four issue briefs addressing state activities related to mission growth. An issue brief on state organization is online at <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0811MISSIONGROWTH.PDF> and another on workforce development is at <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0902MISSIONGROWTH.PDF>. An issue brief on transportation will follow.

Exacerbating the challenges of scale, timing, and scope is the lack of sufficient funding to build the necessary school facilities and to provide expanded educational programs such as enhanced Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) curricula. In addition, states and communities need to respond to the unique transition and emotional needs of military dependent students related to record portability, block leave, and graduation requirements. Also, there is a limited amount of detailed information related to how many students are coming, when they will arrive, and which school districts will be affected.

To respond effectively to the level of growth and the educational challenges of a defense community, affected states can take the following actions:

- ***Establish collaborative approaches that coordinate education responses and represent diverse stakeholders.*** Given the magnitude and scope of the issues involved, no one entity can meet all the challenges effectively. Mission growth states and communities need to form partnerships and coordinate with a number of diverse stakeholders ranging from the governor's office, elected officials, educational institutions, the private sector, and the military. These partnerships can leverage the strengths of different players to advance a number of goals such as conducting outreach, educating the public, identifying educational enhancement strategies and approaches to ease student transition, and establishing training initiatives.
- ***Adjust educational programs to allow for flexibility.*** Given the uncertain scale, scope, and timing of student needs, educational programs must allow for flexibility so that states and communities can realign their efforts to reflect current needs. These efforts should allow for preparation before—and quick adjustment after—the students arrive. States and localities should conduct frequent student head counts so that the appropriate number of school facilities, textbooks, and teachers are available. To respond to unexpected needs, reserve funding should be set aside for quick distribution.
- ***Focus on teacher recruitment, retraining, and retention strategies.*** Mission growth communities are growing so rapidly and substantially that the current local teacher workforce simply cannot meet the needs of the base and growing community. A major barrier many potential teachers face is that teacher certification standards often vary from state to state. To secure the necessary teachers, states should streamline certification procedures by establishing reciprocity requirements with the home states of relocating teachers. This will allow mission growth states to more easily recruit, retrain, and retain educators to meet the workforce demands.
- ***Establish educational programs that support military dependent students and prepare future workforce.*** It is important that mission growth schools develop an education curriculum that meets the unique transition and emotional needs of military dependent children by examining record portability, block leave, and graduation requirements. In addition, the new and increased activity on a mission growth military installation will require its own workforce, which it will draw largely from outside the gate. In many cases, the workforce will need to be skilled in the sciences and engineering. In response, states should provide the local population with the appropriate educational foundation to maintain a qualified and ready workforce able to meet the installation's needs. To accomplish these goals, states should work to establish STEM and other relevant curricula at the K-12 and higher education levels to meet the ongoing needs of a mission growth community.

States are making considerable progress to meet the challenge of accommodating the rapid and significant growth around a number of the nation's military bases. However, with rising student numbers, significant educational demands, and a short timeframe to reasonably respond, state efforts need to be complemented with federal action. The Mission Growth Working Group of the NGA Center for Best Practices (see text box below) recommends that to help affected states, the federal government can take the following actions:

- Provide clear and timely DoD military dependent student information: To allow states to adequately plan, DoD should provide more accurate and timely data via a comprehensive, secure, Web-based format on military dependent students who will arrive with military personnel.
- Direct federal agencies to afford priority consideration to mission growth communities. Under Executive Order 12788, executive agencies are directed to afford priority consideration to requests from mission growth communities for federal technical assistance and financial resources. * This executive order should be widely applied.
- Promote federal inter-operational collaboration and partnerships through the Economic Adjustment Committee. To maximize federal support, federal partner agencies should strive to align federal programs, oversight, and regulations; consolidate redundancy and conflicting regulations where possible; and establish transparent levels of responsibility and accountability. The Economic Adjustment Committee (EAC) is uniquely positioned to address these efforts and has the charge to facilitate and support the necessary federal agency relationships. †
- Create specific "mission growth" federal program assistance to ensure that adequate resources are available for planning, integrating, and implementing successful projects and strategies.
- Adjust current growth programs to be more flexible such as linking federal funding to DoD's transition timetable and budget cycle so that federal support is available to mission growth states and communities for the duration of the impact of DoD-related growth.
- Adjust Impact Aid programs to meet unique challenges of mission growth states by providing funding before the students arrive, basing funds on the quarterly student growth estimates provided by DoD, factoring in students who reside with parents who are employed on federal property (military base), and making new construction eligible for funding.

* Executive Order 12788, Section 5(b)(2), as amended on May 12, 2005 states that all executive agencies shall "Afford priority consideration to requests from Defense-affected communities for Federal technical assistance, financial resources, excess or surplus property, or other requirements, that are part of a comprehensive plan used by the Committee."

† Under Executive Order 12788, the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary's designee, chairs the Economic Adjust Committee (EAC) and the Secretaries of Labor and Commerce serve as Vice Chairmen. Other members of the EAC include the Secretary of Agriculture, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Interior, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Treasury, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Administrator of General Services, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and the Postmaster General.

- Factor “block leave” into No Child Left Behind framework. Students absences linked to time spent with a deploying parent can affect a school’s Adequate Years Progress (AYP). To avoid this situation, special consideration should be given to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) impacted by block leave absences.
- Offer interest free bond or loan options for school construction. These programs could expire in three years (end of 2011) when most military moves will be complete.
- Establish Federal Clearinghouse of Education Strategies. The sharing of this information would allow states to learn of successful examples in other states and avoid costly missteps.

Mission Growth Working Group

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) leads a Mission Growth Working Group, which consists of states that are significantly impacted by the growth of military bases. The group includes state representatives appointed by the governors of **Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia**. The group is co-chaired by state representatives from **Georgia and Maryland**. The effort is supported by DoD’s Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA). The Working Group’s goal is to enhance the relationship between states, military communities, and military bases, with a particular focus on addressing growth issues outside the military fence line. In response to the considerable student increases, the Working Group recently identified education as one of the top challenges mission growth states face. (See Appendix A for a list of Working Group members.)

Background

DoD is in the midst of a major transformation whereby dozens of bases across the nation are enhancing their missions, increasing training activities and defense operations, and expanding the number of military and civilian personnel. As a result of this “mission growth,” the surrounding defense communities must expand at a rate not experienced since World War II. Often referred to as “defense transformation,” the initiatives spurring this massive growth include Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), Global Defense Posture Realignment, Army Modularity, and Grow the Force. By law, most military transfers resulting from mission growth must be completed by September 2011.

These DoD transformation efforts will bring large numbers of people to bases across the country. One estimate indicates that military personnel and dependents will increase by a total of more than 340,000 at the 20 most impacted bases.³ On average, mission growth will account for a population increase of 35 percent, but at some bases, the population could double. For example, the expansion of Fort Riley in **Kansas** will increase the population within a seven-county area between 26 and 32 percent by 2012.⁴ Collectively, these initiatives will relocate and increase military personnel in a short timeframe, which will lead to considerable population growth on and around existing bases. For a more general discussion on mission growth, please refer to the NGA Center’s Issue Brief on “[Organizing State Efforts to Respond to Mission Growth](#).”⁵

Mission Growth Education Challenges

Mission growth will relocate large numbers of military personnel and civilians to the communities surrounding growing bases, many of whom will be accompanied by school-age children. The influx of new students to a mission growth community raises several education challenges, the most daunting of which is that incoming student numbers may exceed the current educational capacity, particularly regarding school facilities. Some areas will have to build new schools or enlarge or renovate existing ones to accommodate the increase in students. However, most students will likely arrive before new facilities can be built.

Mission growth schools also will be faced with the unique needs of K-12 military dependent students. For example, they move more often than non-military dependent students and frequently arrive at a new school in the middle of a school year. As these children move from school to school, they often face enrollment, placement, eligibility, and graduation obstacles related to differing curricular requirements between school districts and states. In some cases these children need special counseling to deal with a deployed parent. Another challenge mission growth states face is the uncertain number of military dependent children to expect as well as a lack of a clear timeline for their arrival.

In addition to these military dependent challenges, states are also struggling with their higher education and training demands. A growing military base often places significant employment demands on the local community. In response, many states feel the need to educate a workforce to support the base as well as providing military spouses with the skills required to find a job once they relocate. The connection between workforce development and education is further explored in the NGA Issue Brief titled *State Workforce Activities to Support Mission Growth*.

Scale Challenge: Incoming Students May Exceed Current Educational Capacity

There are more than 20 bases experiencing major mission growth activities.⁶ While these bases are spread across the country, there are a handful of states, such as **Maryland, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia**, that have more than one base that will grow. Fort Bliss in **Texas** will grow by at least 300 percent—from 9,000 soldiers and 15,000 family members in 2005 to 38,000 soldiers and 53,000 family members in 2012.⁷ However, the impact of mission growth is considerable at all growing bases, on average 35 percent.

When a military base grows, the relocating military personnel often come with K-12 school-age children.⁸ Close to 50 percent of military members or DoD civilians have children. Of those families, the average has 1.6 children.⁹ Based on these averages, coupled with DoD projections, many states have tried to estimate the incoming number of military-dependent students. For example, **Texas** estimates that the growth of Fort Bliss will bring approximately 20,000 students to the El Paso area. Fort Benning in **Georgia** will see a 13 percent increase with the arrival of nearly 5,400 new students.¹⁰ Cannon Air Force Base in **New Mexico** will gain 2,250 new military dependents, a 21 percent student increase. See Table 1 for estimates of mission growth student increases in five states.

Table 1: Mission Growth K-12 Student Estimates Examples

State	Growing Base(s)	Estimated K-12 Student Increases in Numbers and Percentages
Georgia	Fort Benning	5,400 (13%)
Kansas	Fort Riley	4,000 (NA)
New Mexico	Cannon AFB White Sands Missile Range	2,250 (21%) 2,200 (9%)
North Carolina	Fort Bragg Pope AFB	6,600 (NA)
Texas	Fort Bliss	20,000 (NA)
Virginia	Fort Lee	2,190 (NA)

Depending on the ability to expand classroom size (which is often at capacity), student growth may exceed the current educational capacity for states with student increases similar to those listed above. States are still working to estimate how many new classrooms will be needed to accommodate the additional students. Because classroom size nationwide varies based on state, grade level, and subject, each response will differ. However, with new students arriving in many mission growth communities in the thousands, some school districts in states such as **North Carolina** and **Texas** are not only considering additional classrooms, but contemplating building entirely new school buildings. In addition, absorbing this level of student growth may force these communities to recruit new teachers and adjust the educational curriculum to meet the unique needs of military-dependent children.

Scope Challenge: Variety of Education Needs

The collective education demands on a mission growth community will be substantial, but will also be diverse. There will be an immediate—and expensive—need for “hard infrastructure” such as new educational facilities and additional land on which to build the schools. At the same time, states and communities should also address the need for “soft infrastructure” such as teachers, counseling services, and other military student challenges such as transition of records, graduation requirements, and block leave.

Hard Infrastructure Needs

The large student increase in mission growth communities will likely place a strain on many schools that may be already overcrowded and in need of repair. Nationwide, the average school is 42 years old. Overcrowding is also a concern with more than 300,000 portable classrooms in use across the country.¹¹ It is under these circumstances that many communities will absorb an influx of new students. Some communities may choose to enlarge current schools and others may be forced to build entirely new facilities.

Building school facilities can be an expensive endeavor. In 2007, the average cost to build an elementary school was \$10.8 million and the average cost for a high school was \$25 million.¹² Furthermore, the cost to build a school has risen significantly over the last several years. In 2000, an elementary school in **Georgia's** Muscogee County near Fort Benning cost \$78 per square foot. That current cost has more than doubled to \$178 per square foot.¹³

Acquiring land on which to build schools also has been challenging for states and communities. When mission growth moves were announced in 2005, developers in many growth areas quickly purchased prime property for housing and commercial development. As a result, school districts in many growth communities have fewer options when selecting property adequate for a school.

Although difficult, a number of mission growth communities across the country have identified the estimated facility costs to absorb the influx of new students. For instance, the Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base region in **North Carolina** expects more than 6,600 additional students over the next five years as a result of mission growth. The school construction costs to build the necessary facilities total over \$273 million.¹⁴ The cost to add new facilities and classrooms to accommodate the 4,000 new students relocating to Fort Riley in **Kansas** is estimated to exceed \$48 million.¹⁵ The expansion of Fort Benning in **Georgia** will bring an additional 5,400 students to the state and will cost \$28 million in facility construction.¹⁶

Soft Infrastructure Needs

In addition to the need for new and expanded schools to house the influx of students, there are a number of education issues specific to the military that states and communities must address. These challenges include:

- Recruiting and retaining teachers to meet the surge of new students;
- Developing an education curriculum that meets the unique transition and emotional needs of military dependent children; and
- Establishing an educational pipeline of future workers—beginning with K-12 and continuing through higher education institutions—that can support the mission of the base.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Substantial student increases will require additional teachers. Attracting new teachers may be difficult given the national teacher shortage. Record enrollments in public schools, efforts to reduce class size, and the projected retirements of thousands of veteran teachers have placed a considerable strain on the teacher workforce.

Recruiting teachers to relocate to a mission growth community may be challenging, particularly in rural areas such as Fort Riley in **Kansas** and Redstone Arsenal in **Alabama**. Since teaching ranks as the fourth most common job for military spouses,¹⁷ it would be logical to tap into the military spouse population moving to a mission growth community to fill a portion of the teacher void. However, this approach is often problematic because teacher certification standards vary from state to state and the incoming spouses may not have the necessary certification to teach in their new state.

Curriculum: Between kindergarten and 12th grade, children of military families transfer schools an average of six to nine times.¹⁸ The frequent moves and lifestyle of military dependent children will challenge mission growth schools to accommodate their unique needs. As these children move from school to school, they often face challenges related to kindergarten and first grade: entrance age variations, transfer of records, enrollment, and placement.

Learning standards can also pose a challenge for these students. Learning standards and graduation requirements vary from state to state.¹⁹ Incoming military students often are forced to repeat a grade or take additional achievement tests.²⁰ In many cases, these obstacles can delay graduation.

Another challenge is that many children move to the military communities who are new English Language Learners (ELL). This complicates the process to provide an adequate education without additional trained staff.

Military dependent students also face attendance requirement obstacles. In many cases, state and federal standards conflict with the “block leave” most military families take when their loved one returns from deployment. In addition, prolonged and frequent deployment can place significant stress on military dependent students. As a result, many schools feel it important to establish special counseling programs to help these students cope with the emotional strain associated with a deployed parent.

Workforce Preparation

The new and increased activity on a mission growth military installation will require its own workforce, which it will draw largely from outside the gate. Military specific jobs are an outgrowth of the military base missions, many of which will require a high level of knowledge and experience, particularly for the technical, scientific, and research areas. As a result, states and communities must secure a skilled and educated workforce of engineers, technicians, scientists, and defense contractors.

Meeting these demands and maintaining a pipeline of qualified and highly skilled workers can entail a variety of education and training efforts. These can include K-12, higher education, graduate studies, and other programs for military spouses.

Uncertainty Challenge: Scale and Timing of Student Growth Remain Unclear

The Pentagon’s transformation efforts will span the next several years. DoD has established timelines for military personnel arrival at growing bases across the country, but the evolving nature of its transformation efforts can alter these plans.²¹ As a result, it is difficult for states and communities to determine with a good sense of accuracy when and if the military personnel and accompanying military dependent students will arrive.

Scale: Although there may be DoD estimates indicating the number of incoming students (based on broad calculations or national averages), many states and communities anticipate higher numbers. Many mission growth states and communities do not want to rely solely on the average that military families have 1.6 children because the figures may differ greatly based on the branch of the military, age of relocating military personnel, skill level, and rank.

Deployment can also affect the military dependent population, sometimes reducing the number of incoming students. In many parts of the country—regardless of growth—DoD has seen up to 30 percent of military dependent students choose not to reside near an installation if a family member is deployed.²² Further, change of station orders in the middle of the school year, or within an affected household where the military dependent student is close to graduation, have also impacted the migration.²³

Contractor activity linked to mission growth can also contribute to student numbers. However, it remains unclear whether these jobs will be filled by the existing population or by new residents moving to the area and bringing new students with them.

The impact of incoming military dependents on a state and school district also can be affected by choice of school. Not all students attend traditional public schools. Military dependent students may attend charter, private, or religious schools; DoD Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools; or could be home-schooled.

Where incoming military families choose to move can also affect student numbers. If the students move to a centralized area, it is likely that a fewer number of school districts will be affected. If the families locate in a variety of areas, the dispersed students will cause a number of schools to be affected, but with a reduced impact.

Timing: The timing of student moves can contribute to the uncertainty. Military families have a choice of several counties and communities close to the base when selecting a new home. These decisions may not be made until the move is imminent. As a result, communities are reluctant to build new schools until they are certain they will have the student base to fill the seats. This uncertainty has forced many states and communities to be reactive, rather than proactive, when responding to mission growth education needs.

State Policy Strategies to Address Mission Growth Education Challenges

Although many military families and students will not arrive until 2011, states and communities are quickly working on the education plans and strategies that will need to be implemented before the mission growth student population arrives. States and communities facing the considerable growth of their military installations understand that they must act rapidly if they want to successfully meet mission growth education demands.

Although clear and timely DoD student information is not always readily available, states can reach out to base commanders and the sending communities to get a general sense of how many students will be transferred. Based on these efforts, states can develop a broad picture of the education needs.

The level of anticipated growth that will result from DoD's transformation efforts is unprecedented. As a result, some states and communities do not have specific mission growth education programs or initiatives in place. Many are finding that traditional education approaches do not work under a mission growth scenario. Given the level of growth and the unique demands of a defense community, affected states should consider the following actions:

1. ***Establish collaborative approaches that coordinate education responses and represent diverse stakeholders.*** Given the magnitude and scope of the issues involved, no one entity can meet all the challenges effectively. Mission growth states and communities need to form partnerships and coordinate with a number of diverse stakeholders ranging from the governor's office, elected officials, educational institutions, the private sector, and the military. These partnerships can leverage the strengths of different players to advance a number of goals such as conducting outreach, educating the public, identifying educational enhancement strategies and approaches to ease student transition, and establishing training initiatives.

2. ***Adjust educational programs to allow for flexibility.*** Given the uncertain scale, scope, and timing of student needs, educational programs must allow for flexibility so that states and communities can realign their efforts to reflect current needs. These efforts should allow for preparation before—and quick adjustment after—the students arrive. States and localities should conduct frequent student head counts so that the appropriate number of school facilities, textbooks, and teachers are available. To respond to unexpected needs, reserve funding should be set aside for quick distribution.
3. ***Focus on teacher recruitment, retraining, and retention strategies.*** Mission growth communities are growing so rapidly and substantially that the current local teacher workforce simply cannot meet the needs of the base and growing community. A major barrier many potential teachers face is that teacher certification standards often vary from state to state. To secure the necessary teachers, states should streamline certification procedures by establishing reciprocity requirements with the home states of relocating teachers. This will allow mission growth states to more easily recruit, retrain, and retain educators to meet the workforce demands.
4. ***Establish educational programs that support military dependent students and prepare future workforce.*** It is important that mission growth schools develop an education curriculum that meets the unique transition and emotional needs of military dependent children by examining record portability, block leave, and graduation requirements. In addition, the new and increased activity on a mission growth military installation will require its own workforce, which it will draw largely from outside the gate. In many cases, the workforce will need to be skilled in the sciences and engineering. In response, states should provide the local population with the appropriate educational foundation to maintain a qualified and ready workforce able to meet the installation's needs. To accomplish these goals, states should work to establish a STEM and other relevant curricula at the K-12 and higher education levels to meet the ongoing needs of a mission growth community.

Establish Collaborative Approaches that Coordinate Educational Responses and Represent Diverse Stakeholders

Given the magnitude and scope of the issues involved, no one entity can meet all the challenges effectively. Many states and communities are forming partnerships with a variety of stakeholders to address the unique education and transition needs of military dependent students and to support a pipeline of workers who have the skills and training necessary to support the base. These mission growth task forces and committees consist of parties that may never have worked together before. Building and fostering relationships that had previously not been established is a major challenge for many states and communities. In addition to the governor's office, there are a number of stakeholders that should be involved in mission growth education efforts, such as:

- State agencies such as departments of labor, workforce, education, planning, economic development, veterans affairs, etc.;
- Other states: adjacent states and sending states;
- State and local elected officials;
- Workforce Development Boards;
- Economic development authorities;
- Educational institutions (K-12, community colleges, universities)
- The business sector;
- Employer and industry organizations;

- Community based organizations;
- Community representatives and the public; and
- Base commanders.

To respond to the mission growth challenges, some states have formed special mission growth education groups while others are tapping their existing framework of education organizations, such as departments of education, boards of higher education, school districts, and local school boards. In addition to these education groups, many states are working closely with workforce investment boards, task forces, and economic development corporations. Most mission growth states view education and workforce development as closely linked and have formed strong partnerships in these areas. These partnerships are important not just to make sure that all stakeholder interests are represented, but to ensure that the partners do not duplicate existing services. This approach also allows for coordination, outreach, and information sharing on a broader level. The goals of these partnerships range from conducting outreach and educating the public to identifying education enhancement strategies, identifying approaches to ease student transition, and establishing training initiatives. Examples of these partnerships can be found in a host of states.

State Responses

In response to the significant mission growth in **Maryland**, Governor Martin O'Malley created an entire subcabinet dedicated to mission growth. Established by state law, the mission of [Maryland's Base Realignment and Closure Subcabinet](#) is to "coordinate State activities and work with the federal and local governments to prepare for and accommodate incoming households and jobs while sustaining and enhancing the quality of life throughout the State."²⁴ The state's lieutenant governor chairs this group, and its members consist of the cabinet-level secretaries of the nine state agencies most directly affected by mission growth.²⁵ **Maryland** believes this approach forms a cohesive, comprehensive, and transparent process that supports the work of the governor's BRAC Subcabinet and provides stakeholder investment in the state's [BRAC Action Plan](#). Education is a major focus of this state plan.

The **Maryland** State Department of Education (MSDE) plays an active role in the BRAC Subcabinet. The state's BRAC Action Plan has a strong education element which consists of initiatives related to capital improvements; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); teacher recruitment and certification; employment opportunities for **Maryland** students; and security clearance programs. To identify such an ambitious plan, MSDE needed to tap the resources of other state agencies such as the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; the Department of Planning; the Office of Military and Federal Affairs; and a host of other agencies. The state also reached out to a variety of other stakeholders to include local superintendents and their school systems, local county representatives, military representatives, local planning commissions, and the public.

North Carolina has formed a number of inter-related partnerships to help address the mission growth needs of the state. For example, the [BRAC Regional Task Force](#) (BRAC RTF) represents 11 counties that are planning and preparing for the significant impact on the state's communities anticipated from the growth at Fort Bragg and realignment of Pope AFB. The overarching goal of the BRAC RTF is to unify and coordinate the efforts for the 11 counties and to provide a regional approach to the planning and implementation efforts regarding education, workforce, and economic development.

The BRAC RTF also formed a Joint Education and Workforce Advisory Group to explore new education initiatives and to connect the education and workforce institutions in the region. The

group includes representatives from workforce development agencies, K-12 schools, community colleges, proprietary schools, and universities. The BRAC RTF has an educational program whose mission is to:

- Facilitate collaborative communication between educational institutions, workforce support agencies, and the business community;
- Promote technology and innovation to improve student success;
- Ensure the infrastructure necessary to facilitate more effective vocational and technical training; and
- Promote literacy in lifelong education throughout the region to include improving the high school graduation rate and progression to postsecondary programs.

Another example of a regional partnership addressing mission growth challenges is North Carolina's Eastern Region Military Growth Task Force which represents 7 counties around Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, and Marine Corps Air Station New River. These areas are experiencing significant growth and have identified their priority challenges as availability of child care and after school slots, teacher shortages, availability of facilities, education-related transportation, guidance and social workers, and impact aid process and procedures.

Kansas has identified education as one of its greatest mission growth challenges. To help coordinate these efforts, Governor Kathleen Sebelius issued an [executive order](#) forming the Governor's Military Council. This 24-member council is a partnership among the administration, key legislators, business leaders, and military representatives. It was formed to continue to foster cooperation between the installations and the private and public sector and to ensure **Kansas** is a friendly state to the military and their families. In addition to the council, a special task force was created to focus on education which consists of 16 superintendents, state representatives, school board members, and community and city leaders. Some of the issues that the task force addresses include facilities, appropriate class size, curriculum, student transitions, and the requirements of "No Child Left Behind" for incoming students.

In **Texas**, the Texas Education Agency works closely with Fort Bliss, the El Paso community, and the nine independent school districts to support the base, the incoming troops, and the military dependents. In addition to regular meetings of these stakeholders, some of the school districts have established military liaison positions to facilitate communication and coordination. To further assist the school districts that to prepare for this surge, the Texas Education Agency has announced it will provide up to \$300,000 to fund additional field service agents. Field service agents are problem solvers who help school districts deal with issues of student records, immunizations, and testing requirements.²⁶

Adjust Educational Programs to Allow for Flexibility

Given the uncertain scale, scope, and timing of student needs, educational programs should allow for flexibility so that states and communities can more quickly react to new information and realign their efforts to reflect the current needs. These efforts should allow for preparation before—and quick adjustment after—the students arrive. States and localities should conduct frequent student head counts so that the appropriate number of school facilities, textbooks, and teachers are available. To respond to unexpected needs, reserve funding should be set aside for quick distribution.

The fluid nature of mission growth requires a flexible approach which allows communities to adjust their efforts if incoming student numbers are higher or lower than expected. In other cases, the timing of student arrival can change, bringing students to the area sooner than expected. Under these uncertain circumstances, communities may be forced to expedite school construction that will accommodate the early arrival of students. In other cases, communities may need to reduce the school facility expansion plans based on fewer students than expected. There are only a handful of communities that have experienced mission growth; these include Fort Leonard Wood in **Missouri** and Fort Drum in **New York**. The number of incoming residents and students that actually relocated to these areas was less than estimated, which forced these communities to adjust their efforts.

To successfully adjust to these changes, mission growth states and communities need to establish strategies that allow them to quickly refocus their efforts. For example, school districts often receive state funding to support their education efforts. Enrollment counts are a crucial determinant of the amount of state aid allocated to local school districts. In many states, school districts receive additional funds based on a simple percentage growth estimate that is often based on the previous year's enrollment. Given the unpredictable, and at times rapid, influx of new mission growth students, these formulas fail to meet the current needs of a school district.

State Responses

To address this gap, the **Kansas** Legislature passed a bill that increased state financial assistance to school districts experiencing an increase in enrollment due to BRAC actions. The [School District Finance and Performance Act](#) changed the Kansas school finance law by allowing school districts affected by mission growth to submit a second headcount mid-year to reflect the increased enrollment of active duty military dependents.²⁷ In order to receive additional state funding for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years, school districts may update enrollment counts only if there is an increase of at least 25 students or 1 percent or more of total enrollment, and the newly enrolled students are dependents of active duty military or military reserve members. The Kansas Department of Education has estimated approximately 700 additional students will enroll for the 2008-2009 school year as result of BRAC 2005. Under current Kansas law, the expected enrollment increase is projected to cost the state an additional \$3.2 million per school year in addition to financial adjustments made in the local school districts' budgets.²⁸

In **Colorado**, the state legislature passed a law that established a second-day count for military students in the local districts effective only during the BRAC growth timeframe.²⁹ This allows districts to apply for "per student state assistance" after the official October count, benefiting schools that receive an influx of military dependent students during the course of the year.

To better accommodate student growth, **Georgia** projects student enrollment five years in advance and updates these projections annually. For example, school districts may apply for fifth-year construction dollars in the first year of the projection. If the state legislature approves, construction dollars will be available in the following year's appropriations. To complement the projection process, Georgia requires a student count both in the fall and spring of each state fiscal year. This allows both the State Department of Education and the state legislature to address the most current school district needs for teachers, operations, and transportation. The rebalancing by the legislature of a fiscal year appropriation provides flexibility in addressing unexpected school district needs that have arisen during the current fiscal year.

To address the increased need for teachers in mission growth communities, the **North Carolina** General Assembly included a provision in its state budget bill allowing local schools to hire additional teachers to address mission growth demands. Under these circumstances, the state will

allot additional teachers to the growing community based on the greater of its first month average daily membership or 50 percent of the projected mission growth related increase that is in excess of the anticipated increase in average daily membership.

Focus on Teacher Recruitment, Retraining, and Retention Strategies

One of the top challenges states and mission growth communities face is to recruit and retain teachers. Furthermore, many mission growth areas do not have a ready pool of teachers to accommodate the number of incoming students. In response to this need, states and communities are establishing a broad outreach campaign to attract teachers from other areas. These recruitment efforts are local, regional, and national.

A major barrier many potential teachers face is that teacher certification standards often vary from state to state. Many states and communities do not have a large enough teaching workforce. As a result, recruiting teachers from out of state is becoming a common practice. However, lack of certification reciprocity and the long wait-time to receive certification has significantly reduced the pool of current eligible teachers.

To address this obstacle, states should consider teacher certification reciprocity with other states. This could apply to adjacent states as well as the states sending military spouses who are teachers. **Maryland** has reciprocity for educator preparation programs with all states and territories by virtue of the National Association of State Director's of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Interstate Agreement. In addition, recent regulatory changes allow for a teacher with an approved program, a professional certificate, and the test used to attain that certificate, to be issued a comparable Maryland certificate. In addition to reciprocity, another approach to meeting the need for teachers is to ease the certification transition process. This can be accomplished by providing short- and medium-term certifications. For example, **Texas** passed a law that provides temporary teaching certificates while teachers are undergoing certification. The law extends the temporary certification period for an additional year in mission growth impacted districts.³⁰ This approach can be particularly effective for military spouses. In **Florida**, military spouses who hold professional licenses, including teaching licenses, receive expedited processing for state certification and can work for up to 90 days pending licensing.

In **Kansas**, a teacher with an approved license from another state immediately qualifies for a one-year, non-renewable state license. This change was introduced to assist teachers who have high mobility rates, such as military spouses, and provides them time to become fully certified. Kansas also has a "Transition to Teaching" program through certain universities and automatically issues a license to teachers who are National Board Certified.

Another way to expand the teacher ranks in a mission growth community is to tap into the pool of veterans. **Georgia** participates in the ["Troops to Teachers"](#) program, which is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Defense. The program assists men and women who have served as members of the armed forces and now seek second careers as teachers in the nation's public schools. Eligible service members can receive a stipend of up to \$5,000 to help pay teacher certification costs or a bonus of up to \$10,000 for teaching in high needs schools.

Retaining teachers in high-growth areas is also important. Many states require teachers to work in a state for close to 25 years to qualify for a retirement package. To attract and keep teachers in the state, teachers in **Georgia** become eligible for retirement benefits after only 10 years.

Establish Educational Programs that Support Military Dependent Students and Prepare Future Workforce

Mission growth communities present several education transition and emotional challenges ranging from transition of records, block leave, and differing graduation requirements to the training and skills needed of the military workforce. A curriculum should be established at the K-12 and higher education levels to meet the ongoing needs of a mission growth community. For example, mission growth state and communities should address the unique challenges that military dependent students face such as streamlining graduation requirements, improving student record portability, and addressing block leave. In addition, educational programs should prepare students to enter the mission growth workforce by promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs for younger students and supporting higher education students through tuition assistance and credit reciprocity. Creating these programs will benefit any community, not just mission growth areas.

Establish Programs and Policies that Meet Unique Needs of Military Dependent Students

It is important that mission growth schools develop an education curriculum that meets the unique transition and emotional needs of military dependent children. These challenges include graduation requirements, block leave, portability of student records, and special counseling. Every military dependent student faces these hurdles, not just in mission growth states.

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

In response to the host of military dependent needs, a number of states have signed an agreement called the [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#). Below is how the compact addresses some key concerns:

- Educational Records – Provides that schools must share records in a timely manner in order to expedite the proper enrollment and placement of students. If the sending school cannot provide the parent a copy of the official record, an unofficial copy will be provided that may be hand-carried to the school in lieu of the official record. This unofficial record can then be used for preliminary placement while the school sends for the official record. Once requested, the sending school has 10 days to provide the official record to the receiving school.
- Age of Enrollment/Course Continuation – The Compact requires, absent a new enrollment in Kindergarten, that a student shall be allowed to continue their enrollment at grade level in the receiving state commensurate with their grade level from the sending state.
- Course placement/Educational Program placement – When the student transfers before or during the school year, the receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational courses based on the student’s enrollment in the sending state school and/or educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state if the courses are offered.
- Absence as related to deployment activities – A student whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services—as defined by the Compact—and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted additional excused absences at the discretion of the local education agency superintendent to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian prior to leave or deployment of the parent or guardian.

- Graduation/Waiver requirements – Local education agency administrative officials shall waive specific courses required for graduation if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another local education agency or shall provide reasonable justification for denial. Should a waiver not be granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, the local education agency shall provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.

In addition to these and other challenges, the Compact covers enforcement, administration, finances, communications, and data sharing issues. The Compact establishes an independent agreement operating authority, the Interstate Commission, which will be positioned to address future interstate problems and issues as they arise. The Compact is still quite new and its effectiveness has yet to be tested, but for many states, it serves as a starting point as they try to ease the transition of military dependent students into their state.

Identify Graduation and Compulsory School Age Requirements in Sending States

The Compact is not the only approach for states who want to address the unique needs of military dependent students. States can individually research the educational requirements of schools in sending BRAC states and try to adjust their educational programs to streamline the transition. For example, a state can refer to a handful of national resources to inform them of the graduation requirements in other states. For example, the Education Commission of the States maintains a high school [database](#) that provides graduation requirements in all 50 states as well as individual subject area requirements. The [National Center for Education Statistics](#) offers similar information. The compulsory school age for students and employment provisions also vary from state to state. To identify the requirements of the states sending the student, states should refer to the U.S. Department of Labor, which maintains a complete list of school and work age requirements by state.

Streamline Transfer of Student Records Process

Transfer of student records is often complicated because student identification numbers are not portable across state lines. For example, some states use social security numbers. Other states don't use this practice because of privacy concerns. To ease the portability of student records, gaining states should create partnerships with sending states to ease the record transition process, rather than requiring record collection for these new students on a school-by-school basis. In addition, states should consolidate all student educational data (under the specific identification number) in a database that is accessible to state boards of education and school districts nationwide.

Alleviate Overcrowding through Alternative School Environments

The large student increase in many mission growth communities will place a strain on many schools that already are overcrowded and in need of repair. Given the number of facilities that need to be built and the short timeframe in which to build them, states should consider short-term solutions to alleviate the overcrowding. Both dual enrollment programs and virtual courses are good options for states and school districts to consider when looking to reduce the number of students in traditional classrooms.

To address overcrowding, states should consider dual enrollment programs that allow high school students to take postsecondary courses in two- and four-year state institutions. These programs currently exist in some communities in 47 states, but only 18 states mandate that students have opportunities for dual enrollment. As a pressure valve for mission growth communities, states could place incoming students in current college facilities. These programs have become

increasingly popular not just to alleviate overcrowding but because these programs have been shown to increase student enrollment in college. Unfortunately, eligibility, tuition requirements, funding, and program features vary widely from state to state.³¹ As a state reference, the U.S. Department of Education has a “[State Dual Enrollment Policies Report](#),” which includes a 50-state matrix of dual enrollment policies.

Virtual courses also are a popular student overcrowding strategy that mission growth states could consider. Currently, 44 states offer significant online learning opportunities. Additional benefits of virtual courses to mission growth states include:

- Students can take credit recovery courses outside of the typical school day to graduate on-time;
- Virtual courses require fewer teachers and less money spent on facilities and equipment; and
- The courses limit money spent on transportation and are accessible from any location in the state.

States could consider creating a state-run virtual school (rather than contracting various courses) as a long-term solution to ease school overcrowding. A broader selection of courses could also be offered. When building a state virtual school, a state must consider several issues, including seat time requirements, data collection, teacher certification, student privacy, and assessment and accountability. States interested in exploring virtual classrooms should review the North American Council for Online Learning [50-state index](#) of online learning laws and programs.

Provide military dependent students support counseling

In many cases, military dependent students may need counseling to deal with the stress associated with a deployed parent. **North Carolina** provides four school counselors to local educational administrative units around the military installations. Hired locally by the county of the installation, these counselors also serve the surrounding counties to address the needs of military children. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction also has developed a Web site to provide teachers and counselors materials addressing the special needs of military students. Workshops that provide specialized training on the unique needs of military children also have been made available for teachers and counselors.

Establish Educational Programs that Support Mission Growth Workforce Needs

The growth of a military base and the increase in mission activities will require a workforce for years to come. The new and increased activity on a mission growth military installation will require its own workforce, which it will draw largely from outside its gates. States should provide the local population with the appropriate educational foundation to maintain a qualified and ready workforce able to meet the installation’s needs. Since the majority of mission growth jobs demand high level technology skills and deal with military programs, states should consider establishing science programs as well as security clearance initiatives.

Support Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Programs

In response to mission growth workforce needs, many states are strengthening their science curriculum. The jobs that many mission growth bases will generate require a high level of knowledge and experience, particularly for the technical, scientific, and research areas. To meet the long-term needs of the growing base, states and communities must foster a skilled and educated workforce of engineers, technicians, scientists, and defense contractors. In response, states should consider establishing a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) curriculum for K-12 that offers local students the basic knowledge to be competitive in the

military arena. Community colleges close to growing bases should offer technical classes and internships that provide the skills necessary for specific jobs that support the base. States should also support post-secondary educational institutions that provide advanced degrees in the fields of engineering, biology, chemistry, electronic communications, foreign languages, and other military-related fields to encourage students to enter these professions and support the mission of the base. These collective efforts build a “homegrown” highly skilled workforce that provides a mission growth base with a pipeline of qualified workers.

In an effort to be proactive and meet the long-term needs of their growing bases, a number of states have incorporated topics important to the military profession into their K-12 curriculum. Meade High School (near Fort Meade) in **Maryland** has a Homeland Security Signature Program with a curriculum heavy on science, math, and languages—areas critical to the mission of the base. As students progress through high school, they will be offered internships, mentors, part-time jobs, and job assistance by local agencies and organizations that work in homeland security-related fields. In return, those agencies and companies get to guide the curriculum so that the program produces graduates able to perform jobs in technology, defense, science, and other homeland security fields.

Many of the immediate jobs associated with military installations require specialized or technical training. In response, several states support community college and other higher education programs that provide students with the skills necessary to support the mission of the base. For instance, **North Carolina’s** Fayetteville Technical Community College receives funding from the state to offer classes and training that will help the local population secure incoming jobs linked to the growth of Fort Bragg. **Georgia** participates in the [“Troops to Teachers”](#) program, which is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Defense. The program assists men and women who have served as members of the armed forces and now seek second careers as teachers in the nation’s public schools. Eligible service members can receive a stipend of up to \$5,000 to help pay teacher certification costs or a bonus of up to \$10,000 for teaching in high needs schools.

Junction City High School in **Kansas** is a Talent Development high school utilizing the latest reform model to place emphasis in four areas: The Science, Engineering, and Technology Academy focuses on mission critical careers for the Army.

Security Clearance Programs

A number of military related jobs require workers to have security clearance. In an effort to support qualified candidates for these jobs—as well as establish a pipeline of long term workers to support the mission of the base—states should consider creating programs that better educate workers on the security clearance process. For example, this type of initiative can be implemented in community colleges and other institutions of higher learning to guide candidates through the process. These programs also can be established in high schools. **Maryland** public schools also offer “security clearance” educational programs for students to make sure Maryland’s workforce has the training and clear records to compete for high-paying defense jobs. Under the education plan, students are taught the consequences of having a criminal record, particularly for jobs requiring security clearance. The state also intends to create “financial literacy awareness” with personal resource management courses established in all school systems that would teach students how to avoid debt, which can damage prospects for a security clearance.

Support Higher Education

Many of the immediate jobs associated with military installations require specialized or technical training. In addition to supporting higher education programs that provide students with the skills

necessary to support the mission of the base, states could ease the transition for workers and military spouses relocating from other states. To accomplish this, several states are offering tuition assistance and credit reciprocity.

Tuition assistance and scholarships are good strategies states can use to support military communities and improve military families' quality of life. Because of their high mobility and deployment rates, many military personnel and their families often are not eligible to claim in-state tuition for education at postsecondary institutions. To address this concern, many states now provide in-state tuition rates at higher education institutions for service members, spouses, and dependents. **Alabama, Georgia, Kansas, North Carolina, and Texas** are just some of the states that offer this benefit. A promising practice is in **Florida**, where the state has extended in-state tuition rates for military families who live outside of the state but on military installations that are close to the state line (e.g., military personnel who are stationed in Georgia but for whom it is much closer to attend a postsecondary institution in Florida). Florida also has extended in-state tuition to foreign military officers and their families. Additionally, if a military dependent graduates from a **Georgia** public high school or completes a year at one of the state's colleges or universities, they qualify for HOPE scholarships, which provide free tuition and books.

The **Maryland** College Credit Plan was established to improve college credit reciprocity and attract greater numbers of students and potential employees to the region around military bases. Maryland hopes this program will improve the process to validate credits for employees considering transferring from **Virginia** and New Jersey (BRAC sending states).

Funding Strategies to Address Mission Growth Education Challenges

Creating, implementing, and sustaining mission growth education programs and building the needed hard and soft infrastructure will be costly. As a result, states and communities are struggling to secure necessary funding. DoD and other federal agencies currently provide little financial support to states and localities for these needs. Amidst state and local budget cuts nationwide, states and localities are challenged when trying to secure the necessary funding to meet the increasing and urgent education needs. While some support may come as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)³² recently passed by Congress, how much will be available to support mission growth projects is unclear.

Building or renovating a school takes time and cost large sums of money. As a result, many mission growth states consider school construction, renovation, and modernization as one of their top educational priorities. In response, this section focuses primarily, although not exclusively, on identifying and securing funding for building schools. The resources include federal assistance through impact aid and tax credits, state appropriations, and local bonds and taxes. These approaches are not specific to mission growth and are used by many states and communities with education needs. An overview of these strategies is provided below.

Federal Education Resources

There are a handful of federal programs that can be used to help states and localities defray educational costs associated with mission growth. These include Impact Aid, Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs), and Qualified Public Education Facilities Bonds (QPEFs). See [*NGA's Impact of Military Mission Growth on States and Local Educational Agencies*](#) for a detailed background on these programs.

Impact Aid: Impact Aid programs are administered by both the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Defense.

U.S. Department of Education Impact Aid

Impact Aid is a federal program that provides funding for a portion of the educational costs of federally connected students. It serves approximately 1,400 school districts and more than 1.2 million students, of which more than 500,000 are militarily connected. Given that states and communities cannot tax federal property, Impact Aid represents the federal government paying the equivalent of its “tax bill” to local school districts for the presence of a military installation or other federal property. Impact Aid is the only federal education program where the funds are sent directly to the school district. The monies go to a school district’s general fund and can be used for whatever educational purposes a district deems necessary.

U.S. Department of Defense Supplement to Impact Aid Programs

DoD has established a handful of programs to support the Department of Education’s Impact aid Program. DoD’s efforts include:

- Assistance to Schools with Significant Numbers of Military Dependent Students (known as DoD Supplemental Impact Aid);
- Impact Aid for Children with Severe Disabilities which provides financial assistance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that are heavily impacted by the presence of military or DoD civilian dependent students; and
- Assistance to Schools with Enrollment Changes Due to Base Closure, Force Structure Changes, or Force Relocation” (known as “Impact Aid for Large Scale Rebasing”) to assist communities in making adjustments resulting from changes in the size or location of the Armed Forces. To qualify for aid under large scale rebasing, the number of dependent military children must have increased or decreased by 250 or by 5 percent over the preceding year.

Challenges: There are a number of challenges mission growth states and communities face when securing impact aid:

- DoD historically has not asked for Impact Aid funds in their yearly budget request;
- The Department of Education’s Impact Aid program is distributed amongst all communities affected by a federal presence, not just a military presence. As a result, mission growth communities only get a small piece of the pie;
- Both the Department of Education and Department of Defense Impact Aid funding lags behind the arrival of the federal student by up to two years. As a result, these funds are rarely available for school construction because they usually arrive after design and construction are complete;³³
- Impact Aid threshold inconsistencies often result in payment disparities; and
- Impact aid provides funding to LEAs and generally does not provide any assistance or support to states.

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds

Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs) are bonds issued by state or local governments to renovate and improve eligible public schools. The federal government subsidizes the bonds by providing tax credits to the bank or other financial institution that holds the QZAB. The credits are approximately equal to the interest that states and communities would pay the holders of

taxable bonds. Therefore, issuers are generally responsible for repayment of the principal only. This enables schools to save up to 50 percent of the costs of a renovation project. This is a tax credit program, not a grant program.

Allowable uses of QZABs include renovation and repair of school buildings, purchasing equipment, developing curricula, and/or training school personnel, but QZABs cannot be used for new construction.

Each state is allotted an amount of money based on state percentages of the national population of individuals with incomes below the poverty line. States manage the allocation of awarded QZAB funds and must use their allocated funds within two years.

Challenges: There are two main challenges states and communities face when securing QZABs such as:

- Not all LEAs impacted by mission growth will qualify for this program, given the poverty threshold for eligibility; and
- New construction is not allowed under this program.

Qualified Public Education Facilities Bonds

The Qualified Public Education Facilities Bond Program (QPEF) allows private companies to use the proceeds of a tax-exempt bond to build and repair schools then lease those facilities to school districts. At the end of the lease, which coincides with the life of the bond, the facility automatically becomes the property of the school system with no additional charge. Each state is authorized to annually issue up to \$10 per capita of state residents or \$5 million, whichever is greater, under the program. The bonds are issued outside the state's private activity bond volume cap.

The idea behind this program is that by using a private entity, which should have large-scale construction experience, to construct a school, the Local Education Authority (LEA) saves time and money. Additionally, the LEA does not have to enter into a bond referendum. However, as part of this arrangement, the private entity, in an effort to recoup costs, can bring in extra revenue by renting part of the facility during off-school hours for other activities such as daycare or evening classes.

Challenges: States, LEAs, and private investors voiced substantial concerns regarding several technical aspects of the QPEF program, which led the program to be underutilized. The challenges states and communities face when trying to secure QPEFs include:

- Many public entities appear to be hesitant to enter into an agreement with a private developer that may conflict with state procurement laws requiring sealed bids,³⁴ and
- The private sector is uncertain of the tax advantages it will gain from the program. Because the program requires that ownership of the school facility revert to the school district at the end of the lease, it is unclear whether the private developer would be considered the owner and could deduct the depreciation of the facility's value. If the lost depreciation were corrected through an increase in the lease payment paid by the public owner, the incentive of the school district to enter into the arrangement may be undermined. In addition, there is the concern that if the leaseholder is required to maintain the building, in the final years of the lease they may reduce costly maintenance

in favor of less expensive repairs, and building quality would deteriorate as a consequence.

State and Local Education Resources

In most states, school construction is financed with a combination of state and local funding. There are a number of general infrastructure financing strategies that states and localities can use to finance school construction, but the traditional sources include: property taxes, business taxes, and state funds. However, given the current fiscal challenges state and communities face, securing these funds increasingly has become difficult. While totals vary from state to state and community to community, generally 50 percent of funds come from the state while 50 percent come from local taxes; half of which come from private property and half from business property. According to the 2007 report on state expenditures from the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO), elementary and secondary education is the second largest spending category of a state budget, on average comprising 20.9 percent of total state spending.

Bonds are the most popular tool school districts use when faced with the need to finance school construction, renovation, and repair projects.³⁵ Educational bonds are often paid for with local taxes, most frequently the property tax. In fact, nearly half of the property tax dollars collected in the United States are used to finance public elementary and secondary education.³⁶ Local sales and income taxes are also common sources of funding. In order to issue a bond, a school district usually must first submit the proposal to a community referendum. If passed, traditionally, states and local school districts issue bonds and the Internal Revenue Code exempts the bondholders from paying federal taxes on the interest they earn. Many investors consider this an incentive to purchase the bonds; therefore, school districts can sell these bonds at lower interest rates than standard corporate bonds.

State support for school construction and education varies from state to state. State-wide taxes are a common resource and include sale taxes, property taxes, corporate income taxes, and cigarette taxes. In many states, the state legislature allocates education and school construction funds on an annual basis. Some states have tapped into alternative funding sources such as tobacco settlement funds as well as gambling, state trust land, and speeding ticket revenue.

Local Funding Challenge: Normally, a community grows at a gradual rate, and the growing tax base covers the need for additional infrastructure and services. But under the mission growth model, military personnel and the accompanying population relocate to the area in a very short timeframe and often in substantial numbers. This tax lag affects schools because many states and communities rely heavily on property taxes to finance education efforts. Moreover, the national housing crisis has significantly reduced the value of many homes, which will result in reduced tax revenue. Moreover, given the current fiscal challenges states and communities face, getting a community to approve a bond referendum is becoming increasingly difficult. Moreover, many investors are reluctant to purchase bonds, and the current state of the financial markets makes bonds more costly and difficult to secure.

State Funding Challenge: State school construction and education funds likely will be limited given the recent nationwide downturn of the economy. Just in the first several months of fiscal year 2009, 18 states have cut budgets by \$5.5 billion.³⁷ Most states are now re-estimating their budgets, but given the recent jump in unemployment and the substantial erosion in both income and sales tax revenues, the expectation is that the shortfalls for both fiscal year 2009 and 2010 will grow dramatically over the next several months. Under these circumstances, state funding will become difficult to secure.

Sampling of State and Local Funding Approaches

Despite the economic conditions, the considerable demand for school facilities has prompted several states and localities to identify strategies to secure funding.

The El Paso area in **Texas** is expecting close to 20,000 new students as a result of the growth of Fort Bliss. To address this need, El Paso School District voters approved a \$230 million bond initiative of which \$101 million will go to support growth at Fort Bliss. In addition, the community surrounding Fort Bliss approved bonds totaling over \$600 million for school construction intended to serve an increased student population.

In anticipation of mission growth at Fort Riley in **Kansas**, the communities surrounding the military base have implemented several strategies to meet the demand for school infrastructure expansion. Voters in Geary County recently passed a \$33 million school bond referendum to finance a new 1,100-student middle school, a new 400-student elementary school, and the expansion of existing elementary schools.³⁸ The school board authorized an additional \$4.5 million to expand Geary County's schools capacity. This was the first such bond passed in Geary County since 1955. In addition, Junction City/Geary County approved a \$34 million bond initiative that allowed for the construction of a new elementary school and a new middle school. The bond also included planned upgrades for the four existing elementary schools. The state contributed \$21 million to supplement local efforts. To further support school facilities, Manhattan-Ogden passed a \$99 million school bond initiative that will update all its schools and educational infrastructure.

Federal Education Recommendations for Addressing Problem

The federal government is the catalyst for the rapid and significant growth around the nation's military bases, but it provides limited support to help states impacted by the growth and offers few federal programs that specifically assist with growth efforts. As a result, states are trying to access federal programs and resources that were created to address very different challenges, and states often face qualifications and regulations that restrict usage. However, a number of changes and realignments could help remedy this problem. To alleviate the workforce development burden of impacted states, the Mission Growth Working Group (see Appendix A) offers the following recommendations to the federal government:

Provide clear and timely DoD military dependent student information. DoD should provide more accurate and timely data via a comprehensive, secure, Web-based format on military dependent students who will arrive with military personnel and federal civilian personnel. Information should include the number of students, age of students, special needs requirements, and a timeline of student arrival. Information on the number of incoming military spouses who are teachers would also help states with teacher recruitment efforts. This information should be provided to growth states and communities and updated on a quarterly basis.

Direct federal agencies to afford priority consideration to mission growth communities under Executive Order 12788. Presidential [Executive Order 12788](#) directs executive agencies to afford priority consideration to requests from mission growth communities for federal technical assistance and financial resources.[‡] This executive order should be widely applied. For example,

[‡] Executive Order 12788, Section 5(b)(2), as amended on May 12, 2005 states that all executive agencies shall "Afford priority consideration to requests from Defense-affected communities for Federal technical assistance, financial

federal agencies were recently allowed special hiring authority to non-competitively appoint military spouses to positions in the civil service.

Promote federal interoperational collaboration and partnerships through the Economic Adjustment Committee. Mission growth actions cross-cut a number of departments and agencies within the federal government, including the departments of Defense (DoD), Transportation, Commerce, Labor, and Education to name just a few. This myriad of administrations, agencies, funding sources, regulations, and responsibilities needlessly complicates—and in some cases prohibits—the kind of true alliances and collaborations that are necessary to provide seamless services at the state and local level. To maximize federal support, federal partner agencies should strive to align federal programs, oversight, and regulations; consolidate redundancy and conflicting regulations where possible; and establish transparent levels of responsibility and accountability. The Economic Adjustment Committee (EAC) is uniquely positioned to address these efforts and has the charge to facilitate and support the necessary federal agency relationships.[§]

Example of agency partnership: The [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) between DoD and the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of this MOU is to establish a framework for collaboration between these two agencies to address the quality of education and the unique challenges faced by children of military families.

Create specific mission growth program assistance. Federal program assistance specifically targeted for mission growth and designed to meet the unique challenges of states that are home to a growing military base will help ensure that adequate resources are available for planning, integrating, and implementing successful projects and strategies.

Adjust current programs to be more flexible. Current federal programs that offer “growth assistance” should be made more flexible to meet the distinct needs of mission growth states. For example, federal funding opportunities should be linked to DoD’s transition timetable and budget cycle so that federal support is available to mission growth states and communities for the duration of the impact of DoD-related growth. Another example would be to make federal funding available for a broader range of activities including planning, implementation, recruitment, retention, training, and education.

Adjust Impact Aid programs. The impact aid programs at both the U.S. Department of Education and DoD should be adjusted to:

- Provide funding before the students arrive, rather than up to two years after. The funds should be based on the quarterly student growth estimates provided by DoD;

resources, excess or surplus property, or other requirements, that are part of a comprehensive plan used by the Committee.”

[§] Under Executive Order 12788, the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary's designee, chairs the Economic Adjust Committee (EAC) and the Secretaries of Labor and Commerce serve as Vice Chairmen. Other members of the EAC include the Secretary of Agriculture, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Interior, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Treasury, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Administrator of General Services, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and the Postmaster General.

- Factor in to funding formulas students residing with parents who are employed on federal property (military base); and
- Make new school construction eligible for funding under all impact aid programs.

Factor “Block Leave” into No Child Left Behind framework. Military personnel are expected to spend time with their families before and after they are deployed. Under these circumstances, military dependent students often take “block leave.” However, these absences can affect a school’s Adequate Years Progress (AYP). To avoid this situation, special consideration should be given to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) impacted by block leave absences.

Offer interest-free bond or loan options for school construction. To expedite the construction of education facilities, interest-free federal bond and loan programs should be made available to mission growth states and communities. These programs could expire in three years (end of 2011) when most military moves will be complete.

Establish federal clearinghouse of mission growth strategies. A clearinghouse of state best practices related to mission growth should be established at the federal level. The sharing of this information would be helpful to mission growth states and communities.

Conclusion

States have a key role in assisting the U.S. Department of Defense as it enhances and grows the mission of a number of military bases nationwide. Support for educational programs is one of the top priorities for many mission growth states. There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to meet the education needs of a growing state. To respond to both the needs of the incoming military dependent children, as well as the long term workforce needs of the base, affected states can take actions as listed below.

Establish collaborative approaches that coordinate educational responses and represent diverse stakeholders. Mission growth states and communities are forming partnerships and coordinating with a number of diverse stakeholders ranging from the governor’s office, elected officials, educational institutions, the private sector, and the military. Building and fostering relationships that did not previously exist has been difficult, but rewarding for many states. **Maryland** has been particularly successful in bringing interested groups together at the state and local level through the formation of the state’s BRAC Subcabinet.

Texas is noteworthy because the state and school districts have partnered to establish military liaison positions to facilitate communication and coordination. States could take this lead and establish formal cooperative partnerships between school districts and military installations. Under this approach, states could encourage the placement of military representatives on school boards and state boards of education. This will help to synchronize the BRAC planning on-post with what is happening off-post.

Adjust educational programs to allow for flexibility. Given the uncertain scale, scope, and timing of student needs, educational programs should allow for flexibility so that states and communities can realign their efforts to reflect current needs. These efforts should allow for preparation before—and quick adjustment after—the students arrive. **Kansas** and **Colorado** have taken this approach by passing laws that allow schools to submit student head counts twice, rather than once, a year. Since these head counts are the basis for state funding, this approach provides schools “two bites at the apple” by allowing them to adjust their student counts mid-year to

reflect an increase in students. **Georgia** is even more proactive by providing certain school funds up to five years in advance.

Focus on teacher recruitment, retraining, and retention strategies. Mission growth communities are growing so rapidly and substantially that the current local teacher workforce simply can't meet the needs of the base and growing community. In response, states such as **Texas** are streamlining and expediting the certification process. Other states are establishing military specific teacher reciprocity programs. **Maryland** has created an initiative to ensure that state licenses, including teaching certification, have reciprocity with the BRAC sending states. In **Florida**, military spouses who hold professional licenses, including teaching licenses, receive expedited processing for state certification and can work for up to 90 days pending licensing.

Establish educational programs that support military dependent students and prepare future workforce. Mission growth communities present unique education challenges ranging from military dependent needs to the training requirements of the mission growth workforce. To ease the burden on incoming military dependent students, states should address obstacles such as graduation requirements, transfer of student records, and block leave. A number of states have signed onto the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children that essentially creates reciprocal agreements between the states easing the burden on students.

In addition to assisting military dependent children, a number of states are establishing or enhancing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Science (STEM) programs to prepare students to enter the mission growth workforce. **Maryland** has taken a proactive approach through its high school Homeland Security Signature Program as well as its Security Clearance initiative. These programs are noteworthy because they are tailored to meet specific military workforce needs. Other states, such as **North Carolina** and **Georgia**, have created similar programs in their higher education institutions.

Identify and Secure Funding. To establish and maintain these types of educational programs as well as build the necessary school facilities, state and localities will need to secure funding in advance of student arrival. Some localities have received state funding as well as passed bond referendums to address these needs, but such efforts often do not cover all expenses. Moreover, not all localities have the power to issue debt without specific authorization from the state legislature. To support these efforts, states could pass legislation that authorizes all local governments to issue debt for activities such as school construction.

States should also consider reaching out to the private sector for finance and construction assistance. However, some states have procurement laws that deter private sector involvement. In these cases, states should consider amending their procurement laws to encourage private-sector support.

States are making significant progress in their efforts to support incoming military dependent students as well as prepare a future mission growth workforce. Yet, due to the scope and short timeframe, even the best state efforts cannot fully address these education challenges. To ease the burden on states, the federal government should adjust a number of programs to better meet their immediate mission growth needs. Clear and timely information from DoD, flexibility of programs such as Impact Aid, and streamlined federal support will give states a needed boost so that they can become self-sustaining in the future.

APPENDIX A
MISSION GROWTH WORKING GROUP

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State Senator Seth Harp
State of Georgia

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Endnotes

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⁷ Maj. Gen. Howard Bromberg, commander of Fort Bliss and the Air Defense Center and School, quoted in “Fort Bliss, El Paso Working to Adapt to Expanding Post,” Jim Tice, *Army Times* (October 27, 2008).

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