Easing Transitions of Military Dependents into Hawaii Public Schools: An Invitational Education Link

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Over 15,000 military dependent students attend Hawaii public schools, about 8% of the total student population. The transition to Hawaii schools has been identified by many military families as a challenge and one more difficult than other transitions their families have made. A generally acknowledged negative perception of Hawaii public schools among the military community worldwide does nothing to ease this transition, especially when schooling ranks near the top of military families' quality-of-life issues. Other factors that have made the transition difficult include cultural differences and some local school policies. This study draws on the following: federally funded research and programs to ease school transitions for military dependent students, five years of customer satisfaction surveys done with military families in Hawaii, and descriptions of the numerous programs and activities underway in the state. These programs and activities are sponsored jointly by the military and the Department of Education to welcome military dependent students into the public schools and provide them with a quality education. From a broad overview of the situation for military dependent students worldwide, this study hones in on efforts in Hawaii and the connections to the research literature including Invitational Education (IE). The study includes a description of the prevalence of IE at the University of Hawaii and its congruence with Hawaiian values as well as with the research on school connectedness that underlies much of the national-level effort at easing military student transitions.

Background

There are over half a million children of military families in the United States (Association of the United States Army [AUSA], 2001). These children move three times more often than other children and attend from six to nine schools during their K–12 school years (Military Child Education Coalition [MCEC], 2001). Moving every 1 to 4 years, military families live all over the United States and the world. These families have all the same hopes, dreams, and needs as other American families, among them the education and welfare of their children. However, unlike most of our citizens, military families have no choice in where they live, work, and raise their families. Additionally, they live with the uncertainty and stress that attends having a parent mobilized for duty in dangerous places whenever called (*USA4 Military Families,* n.d.).

Military families have needs that cannot be fulfilled by the Department of Defense (DoD) or any agency at the federal level. Educational issues, especially, can and often should only be addressed by changes in state policy or by civic and educational leaders in local communities. These issues include, for example, access to athletic and academic programs that generally have qualification requirements or try-outs and program entry only at the beginning of the season or school year, thus making them inaccessible to students who arrive mid-year. Needs and issues

involving education have always been at or near the top of any list of issues and concerns of military families (USA4 Military Families, n.d.).

Through the Department of Defense Education Activity—DoDEA—the federal government does provide an excellent school system for dependents of military personnel stationed overseas. There are Department of Defense Dependent Schools—DoDDS—in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific area as well as some Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools—DDESS—in some of the states and territories. DoDEA serves over 100,000 students in over 200 schools in 15 districts located in 13 foreign countries, 7 states, Guam, and Puerto Rico (DoDEA Facts 2003, 2004). For the most part, children of military families living in the U.S. go to public schools in the communities in which they live. When the military services refer to schooling of the military child, they are generally discussing public schools in the United States; there are more than 600 autonomous local school districts serving military children (AUSA, 2001). Because military personnel are expected to periodically serve overseas tours, students often transfer into and out of the DoDEA schools as well as into and out of public schools all over the nation.

A study by the U.S. Army shows the average military family moving every 3 years and nine times over a 20-year career, not including deployments that separate parents from children. Table 1 outlines a typical schooling sequence a military child might face wherein, during a 13-year period, the military child is moved five times, transitioning through two local school districts, two overseas DoD schools, and two continental U.S. DoD schools. It is these moves—the transitions—that are most stressful for families and children (AUSA, 2001).

The recently established USA4 Military Families initiative is addressing the issue of school transitions as number 3 of 10 "Key Issues" that need to be addressed to significantly improve the quality of life for military families. "Military

Table 1. Example of a Military Child's School Transition Experience

Grade of Military Child	Duty Location of Parent	School System Attended
K – 2	Germany	DoDDS (Europe)
3 – 5	Fort Benning, Georgia	DDESS School
6 – 8	Fort Shafter, Hawaii	Hawaii Department of Education
9	Northern Virginia	Fairfax County School District
10	Fort Campbell, Kentucky	DDESS School
11 – 12	Korea	DoDDS (Pacific)

children deal with differences in academic requirements and testing, as well as pressures associated with assimilating into new communities, including extra-curricular activities and sports" (USA4 Military Families, n.d., p. 4). As laid out by the Department of Defense,

> The USA4 Military Families initiative seeks to engage and educate state policymakers, not-for-profit organizations, concerned business interests, and other state leaders about the needs of Military members and their families, particularly as those needs intersect with state public policy. Through state/military partnerships, the DoD State Liaison Office seeks to develop relationships with states, work with them to remove unnecessary barriers, and significantly improve the quality of life for military families. (USA4 Military Families, n.d., p. 3)

As part of this initiative, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is leading an effort to identify best practices, particularly examining the DoDEA schools, acknowledged to be excellent and serving military families very well. As Leslye Arsht, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community & Family Policy, described the program at the Pacific Region Education Symposium in Honolulu, Hawaii, July 7, 2006, once best practices are identified, they are to be disseminated, and assistance in implementing them is to be provided free to military-impacted schools. A key to this whole effort is the state/military partnerships.

Literature Review

A number of studies, organizations, writers, and researchers have influenced the national level work on easing transitions for military families and students. Although not referenced in these works, the model of practice called Invitational Education® (IE) is a natural fit, particularly in Hawaii, with the effort to ease the transition of newcomers into their new school and to make them feel welcome and connected to school.

SETS—U.S. Army Secondary Education Transition Study

In 1997, the U.S. Army began an informal information gathering effort to find out more about the educational issues that impact Army-connected students. This effort grew into a formal 2-year qualitative research project, conducted for the Army by the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC). MCEC was asked to study the educational impact of transitions experienced by military students in grades 9–12 and make recommendations to improve transition by the following:

A. Learning about moves during high school in order to find meaningful ways to lessen the myriad of transition challenges.
B. Discovering processes, policies, and solutions that have the potential to make the mobile life better for the teen and military family.
C. Surfacing opportunities to improve and amplify the capacities of schools and installations to respond confidently to the complexities of transition.

(MCEC, 2001)

This research effort became the *U.S. Army Secondary Education Transition Study*, called SETS for short. Using structured interviews, SETS researchers collected data from 423 military students, 239 educators, and 217 military parents in nine Army installations and their major supporting school systems. In summarizing findings and making recommendations, the researchers used tests of "intensity," "severity," and "malleability"; thus they looked for problem areas that had the potential for solutions.

The study resulted in eight categorical findings and recommendations and three overarching findings and recommendations, which laid the groundwork and outlined policy changes that non-military schools could make to significantly improve transitions between schools for military dependent students. A major outcome of the study was the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) drawn up and adopted by the nine school districts in the study and subsequently proposed and adopted by many others around the country. The purpose of the MOA is defined in part as "designed to facilitate the mutual development of reciprocal practices, conduits for information between systems about requirements, and accelerate the exchange of emerging opportunities" (MCEC, 2001, p. 26). Some of the major issues addressed in the MOA are the timely transfer of records, systems to ease student transition during the first 2 weeks of enrollment, practices that foster access to extracurricular programs, procedures to lessen the adverse impact of moves of juniors and seniors, variations in school calendars and schedules, professional development systems to help teachers and staff better serve military dependent students, partnerships between the military installation and the supporting school, information concerning graduation requirements, and specialized services for transitioning students when applying to and finding funding for college (MCEC, 2001).

Third Culture Kids

In a presentation to the Pacific Region Education Symposium in Honolulu, Hawaii, July 7, 2006, Nancy Bresell, Director of DoDDS Pacific/DDESS Guam, described how DoDEA schools have used the work of Pollock and Van Reken (2001) on "third culture kids" (TCKs) to inform the development of their programs. TCKs are described as children who spend a significant part of their developmental years abroad. Pollock explains the concept of the third culture as follows:

> Living abroad for an extended period of time changes one sufficiently so that individuals are no longer as they would have been had they stayed in their home country (the first culture) but neither are they like the people in their host country (the second culture). The result is that they form a new community of people that we call the third culture and the children from that community are third culture kids. (Roman, 2004, ¶ 1)

Pollock and Van Reken (2001) describe the cross-cultural experience and a "TCK Profile," which includes personal characteristics, practical skills, experiences of rootlessness and restlessness, personal relationships, developmental issues, and unresolved grief. Their work includes the challenges and the benefits of "the experience of growing up among worlds." Most valuable to DoDEA in their work to ease transitions for their military dependent students are the suggestions these authors make to children, parents, and

organizations for making the best of the experience. Among these is use of the RAFT system to help children decide to leave right. Leaving right involves four issues: the reconciliation of conflicts (R), the affirmation of important relationships (A), farewells done in culturally appropriate ways (F), and thinking realistically and positively about the future destination (T). Bresell described the use of "building the RAFT" in DoDEA schools.

Pollock and Van Reken identify the key to adjusting to a new culture is being a willing learner and having a good mentor who can explain the culture in detail and introduce the newcomer to others. Also identified as most important to relocation preparation is the communication of children's relocation histories—their previous residences, curricula, achievements, stresses, and traumas—to people in the new locations so they can respond appropriately to the children. The RAFT model is credited with helping individuals understand their own behavior and responses as well as the behavior of those around them and some of the psychological issues they deal with in the process of transition. They understand that their reactions are normal (Roman, 2004).

Add Health, School Connectedness, and MCI

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a federally funded, multimillion-dollar, school-based study conducted during the 1994-95 school year, is the largest, most comprehensive survey of adolescents ever done in the United States. Data were collected from 71,515 students in 127 schools via written surveys as well as from school administrators with the goal of identifying risk and protective factors at the family, school, and individual levels as they relate to adolescent health and risky behaviors (Resnick et al, 1997; School Connectedness Means, 2003). Analysis of the data showed that students who feel connected to school are less likely to use substances, engage in violent behavior, experience emotional distress, or become pregnant. "School connectedness" was defined in the study as positive answers to questions asking whether a student felt close to people at school, felt like part of school, felt safe at school, and felt that teachers treated students fairly.

One of the study's co-investigators, Robert W. Blum, formerly at the University of Minnesota and now the William H. Gates Sr. Professor and Chair of the Department of Population and Family Health Sciences at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, is particularly interested in why some adolescents feel connected to school and others do not. He and his colleagues found that school size mattered but classroom size did not, neither did location of the school (urban, rural, suburban) or type of school (public, private, parochial), or the number of years of experience of the teacher. The strongest factor related to school connectedness was school climate. Blum says, "What matters is the environment that a student enters when he walks through the classroom door. Do students treat each other with respect? Do they get along well with the teacher? Do they pay attention in class and complete their assignments on time? These are the important questions" (School Connectedness Means, 2003, ¶ 8–9).

Blum now heads up a major new project at Johns Hopkins University, funded by the Department of Defense—the Military Child

Initiative (MCI). This new effort builds on 20 years of research including work on school connectedness as well as the vast array of effectiveness studies of "problem reduction" programs like violence prevention and anti-drug curricula. From this literature we know that families are key to the lives of young people. Next in importance are schools. As levels of connectedness to school go up, a whole set of undesirable behaviors goes down. Schools can be a stabilizing force in the lives of adolescents. When students feel connected to their school they are more likely to succeed. Blum's latest work shows three dynamic influences interact to build school connectedness: individuals, environment, and culture. Individuals: "Students who perceive their teachers and school administrators as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear and fair are more likely to be connected to school" (Blum, n.d., p. 3). Environment: "Schools have a responsibility to provide students with a safe environment in which to develop academically, emotionally and behaviorally, while at the same time developing relationships with others" (Blum, n.d., p. 6) Culture: "Schools that value learning and have the most demanding teachers have significantly lower levels of peer harassment" (Blum, n.d., p. 12). The Military Child Initiative has as its goal "to move research-based practical approaches into schools and school districts so that all children and youth can thrive, especially those who are most socially mobile and emotionally vulnerable" (Military Child Initiative, n.d., ¶ 3).

Included among the recommendations Blum makes to schools to strengthen their connections with military students are the following: (a) to set up structures to welcome new students by providing them with peers to talk to and eat lunch with and to show them around the school and (b) to know their students. Both of these are consistent with the work of Pollock and Van Reken (2001) on third culture kids: they identified as important to adjusting to a new culture (a) having a good mentor who can introduce the newcomer to others and (b) the communication of children's relocation histories to people in the new locations so they can respond appropriately to the children.

Invitational Education®

The researchers and writers described above have all had influence on the efforts to ease transitions for military dependent students. Consistent with the previously described literature, another area of research and practice that has a place in helping schools create highly protective environments that include caring programs for students and well-planned strategies for family and community involvement is the model of practice called Invitational Education® (IE). Particularly in Hawaii, where the culture of *aloha* would seem to predispose the school community to welcoming behavior, IE would seem to be a natural fit, extending the hospitality more broadly and intentionally into all aspects of school life, making new students truly feel like part of the school. As a comprehensive organizational structure that could consolidate efforts, IE is an easily understandable practice that when broadly applied would yield the results that research shows promote school connectedness and adjustments to a new culture.

Invitational Education provides an overarching framework for touching on all aspects of schooling: the processes, the structures, the relationships, and more. According to one description, invitational theory draws

from "John Dewey's 'democratic ethos,' Carl Rogers' 'client-centered psychotherapy,' Sidney Jourard's 'self-disclosure,' Albert Bandura's 'self-efficacy,' and Martin Seligman's 'learned optimism'" ("What is," n.d., ¶ 4). Indeed the "Five Ps"—for people, places, policies, programs, and processes—are the means to address the whole school experience, to apply steady and continuous pressure from all angles to transform the character of the school (Purkey, 1999). The goal is to make all factors so intentionally inviting that the character of the school is one that promotes in every person full development intellectually, socially, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Invitational Theory has been described as "a way of thinking about positive and negative signal systems that exist in all human interactions" ("What is," n.d., ¶ 4). The theory is based on four basic assumptions or propositions: trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality. These four propositions provide the consistent "stance" for operating to create and maintain an optimally inviting environment (Purkey, n.d., ¶ 14).

In addition to the five focus areas of people, places, policies, programs, and processes, IE involves four levels of functioning. Those four levels are intentionally disinviting, unintentionally disinviting, unintentionally inviting, and intentionally inviting. The latter is most desired and emphasizes the importance in the theoretical framework of the basic assumption of intentionality. It is intentionality that leads to creating and maintaining total environments that consistently and dependably invite the realization of human potential (Purkey, n.d.).

The theory applied to education implies that every person, every program, every structure, everything about school adds to or subtracts from the process of schooling being a positive force in the realization of human potential ("What is," n.d.).

The availability of the Inviting School Survey-R (ISS-R) is another factor arguing for IE's utility in Hawaii schools. Designed with the idea "that everything counts in a student's education: from the overall physical facility to the way each individual child is treated in each individual classroom" and useful for assisting "school personnel in identifying weaknesses in the system that could be corrected," the ISS-R could be way to assess progress toward creating a protective school environment as described in Blum's work on the Military Child Initiative (Inviting School, n.d., ¶ 4).

Invitational Education in Hawaii

Invitational Education has been an area of interest and research for University of Hawaii (UH) scholars for many years. Through their influence, particularly through courses taught in the preservice education program at the UH College of Education, familiarity with IE has been for many years widespread among Hawaii Department of Education (HI DOE) teachers, since the primary teacher training institution in Hawaii is UH. In her bibliography chronicling research on Invitational theory from 1970 through 1991, Stanley (1992) listed seven entries by eight different UH professors—in 1982, 1984, 1987, 1988, and 1991—making up 5.5% of the total number of articles (128) listed in the bibliography not written solely by Purkey or Novak, primary theorists of IE. A quick Internet search revealed additional articles by UH scholars in 1996 and 1999. In the *October Faculty Development Newsletter* in 2001, UH Faculty Development Coordinator Jerry Cerny described IE in his

opening message, referring to the Purkey and Novak (1984) book *Inviting School Success: A Self-concept Approach to Teaching and Learning* and exhorting faculty to invite success for their students.

Up until recently the Web page for the UH Department of Educational Psychology listed IE as an area of expertise for one of its nine regular faculty members (who has since retired). Since 1996, there has been at least one UH professor listed on *The Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice* editorial board, and University of Hawaii scholars have been and still are active in the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group (SIG) on Invitational Education.

There is evidence in the research literature not only of the use of IE by classroom teachers in Hawaii (Maaka & Lipka, 1996), but also of the congruence of IE practices with Hawaiian cultural values. In a study of Hawaiian preservice teachers that involved examining themes of cultural identity, experiences with schooling, and literacy development, one of the participants referred in her writings and interviews to "disinviting" teaching practices and discussed IE in relation to Hawaiian culture. For her, Invitational Education "encompassed many of the Hawaiian values that she held dear—*ʻohana* (family), *aloha* (love), *kokua* (helping others), *ʻike* (knowledge/recognition), *hoʻoponopono* (forgiveness), *kuleana* (responsibility), *laulima* (cooperation), and *lokahi* (harmony/unity)" (Maaka, Au, Lefcourt, & Bogac, 2001).

The Current Study

From the national context, we now further examine the situation in Hawaii where we find ourselves at the leading edge and, in many ways, a potential model for other communities, particularly our unique state and military partnership. The partnership predated the SETS report, which subsequently recommended the development of just such relationships between communities and the military. Some of the initiatives supported by this partnership are right in line with suggestions now being made by the Military Child Initiative at Johns Hopkins, consistent with the recommendations of Pollock and Van Reken, and congruent with IE.

Context

In Hawaii, there are over 15,000 military dependent students in our public schools. They comprise about 8% of the total student population, which numbers about 200,000. Military students significantly impact 26 of the approximately 250 public schools in Hawaii, where they make up from 20% to over 90% of the school population.

Unfortunately, for many years now the military community has had a negative perception of the Hawaii public schools. This became a real issue for the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), headquartered in Hawaii, in the 1990s when many high caliber military personnel expressed reluctance to accept assignments in Hawaii because of concerns for their children's education.

USPACOM brought this issue to the attention of the community and the HI DOE, and, working together, they formed the Joint Venture Education Forum (JVEF) in 1999. JVEF was formed to help military dependents successfully adjust to life and learning in Hawaii public schools. It encourages active military participation in Hawaii public

schools through open dialogue on educational concerns that

- promotes an understanding of and support for the needs of military children and families, in particular, transition issues, and
- facilitates educational support for Hawaii's public school students.

(Department of Education [DOE], 2005, p. 14)

JVEF had support and encouragement from Hawaii's senior Senator, Daniel K. Inouye, who helped find funding for the organization, which has received $5M per year since its inception to use on the activities of the schools and the organization. JVEF is chaired by both USPACOM and the HI DOE, and on the Board of Directors sit representatives from the major Service components on the Islands as well as education, business, and community representatives. USPACOM funds a federal civilian position to provide an executive director function for JVEF, and in 2006 the HI DOE established a liaison position as well to work with JVEF (DOE, 2005).

JVEF Accomplishments

An early accomplishment was facilitating the signing by the HI DOE of the Memorandum of Agreement that grew out of the Army's *Secondary Education Transition Study* and seeing the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines all establish School Liaison Officer (SLO) positions. The SLOs all sit on the JVEF Board.

Other activities and accomplishments of JVEF include development and delivery of a Military Culture Course for teachers and school staff. Started in 2002, the course "has served two critical purposes: 1) to inform school staffs about military culture and the particular needs that military dependent students come to school with, and 2) to be that catalyst to institute school-based efforts to meet those needs" (Joint Venture Education Forum [JVEF], 2006, p. 9). The eight courses conducted through 2006 reached 200 teachers and counselors from over 25 schools. Another 600 school personnel and 100 university students were reached through mini-sessions conducted by the SLOs.

The establishment in 2003 of MIPC, the Military Impacted Principals Council, was another milestone. The Council meets monthly, and membership has steadily grown to include more and more of the principals from the state's 45 military-impacted schools. MIPC developed the guidelines for waiving the Hawaii history course and developed criteria for designation of a school as "military student and family friendly." To earn the designation, a school must do the following: provide services to transitioning students and families, update its Web site with pertinent information, actively participate in JVEF initiatives, engage parents in school activities, accommodate schedule and curricular needs of new students, and maintain a safe environment for all students (JVEF, 2006).

Project Aloha is a new campaign to promote customer service throughout the HI DOE. To assist this effort another project was added that involves the makeover of the front offices and transition centers of several schools to create a more professional and welcoming first impression for military families and other newcomers to the schools and to facilitate operation of the schools' transition processes (JVEF, 2006).

The Transition Centers have been particularly effective and noted as very helpful by parents and students on the annual surveys. Radford High School, with a student body that is about 60% military dependents, developed their first transition center several years ago, initiating a "Student-2-Student" program. The model has been further developed and disseminated by MCEC—the Military Child Education Coalition. Other schools in Hawaii have developed transition center programs as well, most of which emphasize using students for program delivery. This makes the program affordable and adds to the validity of the information being shared with the new students, since it comes from their peers and is delivered often more effectively. This model is also consistent with suggestions by Pollock and Van Reken (2001) regarding providing mentors to teach newcomers about their new culture.

The U.S. Pacific Command funded an annual customer satisfaction survey to identify issues of concern and to help gauge the effect of the many JVEF activities and initiatives on the perceptions of military parents and students in the schools. Those activities and initiatives over the last 5-plus years have included repair and maintenance of schools, purchase of textbooks, support to military-school partnership projects, establishment of technology labs in schools, new school playground equipment, recognition awards, citizenship grants, and transition initiatives—totaling over 26 million dollars (DOE, 2005). Of late the priority has shifted to student respect. Beginning in fiscal year 2004, JVEF has offered schools grants to promote programs dealing with respect, diversity, tolerance, and behaviors (JVEF, 2006).

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

In 2002, USPACOM initiated the Hawaii School Study to assess military families' experiences and perceptions of Hawaii public schools. The objectives of the annual survey were to assess satisfaction with the schools in general and in key areas among three groups: parents, students in grades 5–8, and students in grades 9–12. The survey was conducted by mailing questionnaires to all active duty military parents of children attending Hawaii public schools and students of military members in grades 5 through 12 (Beers, Carr, & Okinaka, 2005).

Four annual surveys were conducted through 2005. Because of the use of convenience samples, generalizing results had to be done very cautiously. A further limitation was the difficulty of reaching the target population with the surveys. By the time surveys were mailed in the spring of the year, the address information was over 6 months old. With an average tour length in Hawaii of just 3 years, a third of the population turns over each year. Add to that problem that many children change schools once their families settle into permanent housing, and the proportion of bad and incomplete addresses increases significantly. Note that there are approximately 15,000 military dependent students in the Hawaii public schools. Response numbers for the 2005 survey were 3,142 parent surveys; 512 student surveys from grades 5–8; and 412 surveys from grades 9–12. These numbers represent response rates of 40%, 22%, and 24%, respectively, of the total number of possible responses in a group (7,810; 2,293; 1,673, respectively), eliminating any cases for which addresses were bad or incomplete. Responses were also possible using the Web for the 2005 survey administration (Beers,

Carr, & Okinaka, 2005). The kinds of questions asked tap into many of the factors that the research identifies as being important to school connectedness and Invitational Education. Table 2 is a summary of results for the 2005 survey.

The fourth USPACOM School Study closed on July 15, 2005, and a report was completed that looked at the trend of results over the four years of administration. The fourth survey was found to reaffirm the conclusions after the first three surveys, that parents who responded were quite satisfied with the teaching in the schools and less satisfied with the resources, and that their overall perceptions continue to improve, although families are still reluctant to recommend their school to others. Since funding priorities of the Joint Venture Education Forum have been set to reflect survey results, the need became obvious for a more scientifically administered survey to assure the accuracy of the conclusions. The report noted that responses to the first four surveys were voluntary and that a fifth survey might need to be more statistically valid and reliable, using random sampling and survey methods to ensure generalizability of the results. Also recommended was the addition of qualitative methods like focus groups to get at the reasons behind the consistently lower ratings on global satisfaction items (like willingness to recommend their school to others) (Beers, Carr, & Okinaka, 2005).

2006–2007 Survey and Focus Group Study

USPACOM declined to fund another annual survey. Instead the Hawaii DOE contracted the University of Hawaii to conduct a survey using a random sample that could be used to generalize results to the overall military public school population.

The survey proposed for 2006–2007 was two-fold and included a written survey of military families and a newly added focus group study done by a group from Johns Hopkins University and the Military Child Initiative. We conducted a preliminary survey in June 2006, using this pilot study to revise the survey instrument and develop methodology to identify the target population, design the probability sampling to draw a stratified random sample stratified by school, and set up survey administration procedures to yield sufficient data collection to ensure an accuracy of at least ±5%. Appropriate follow-up procedures were developed, which included cooperation with USPACOM to utilize military email white pages to search for military sponsors and follow-up via email. Extensive use was made of the Web-based surveys. Results were sufficient to be a proof of concept for the selection and follow-up methodology and were used to flag certain issues to be followed up on in the focus group interviews. The final survey was mailed in February 2007, that being the very earliest we could get the data with military dependent student information from the HI DOE.

The focus group interviews were conducted in fall of 2006, and the preliminary results were used to revise the survey questions. It became apparent that the original survey did not touch on important aspects of schooling that were factors in judgments about school quality. We added questions that tapped more deeply into the social environment of the school, about bullying and being treated fairly, and tried to get at the respondent's openness to new experiences. We rewrote some questions as negatives to help prevent careless responding.

Table 2. Summary of Parents' and Students' Responses to Survey Items

	Percent Agreeing		
	Parents*	Grade 9-12	Grade 5-8
Questions	2005	2005	2005
Students are able to learn at school	87%	88%	90%
Teachers care about students	78%	70%	80%
Students feel safe at school	78%	68%	64%
Students feel welcome at school	77%	68%	73%
School provides information about student progress	71%	73%	82%
Students learn critical thinking	71%	74%	78%
Teachers are well qualified	70%	67%	85%
Students receive adequate help	69%	77%	83%
School is clean and well-maintained	69%	56%	55%
Students are learning grade-appropriate information	68%	69%	76%
School has created a good learning environment	67%	63%	63%
Assignments are meaningful and challenging	67%	66%	76%
Administrators care about students	64%	55%	66%
Discipline is fair and timely	62%	61%	60%
Adequate access to computers and technology	62%	73%	65%
School has adequate facilities	61%	73%	69%
Students treat each other with respect	59%	45%	53%
Textbooks are adequate, up-to-date, and relevant	55%	60%	68%
I would recommend this school to others	52%	58%	53%
School has made positive changes in the last year	52%	51%	44%

* Note: Results are sorted according to parents' overall agreement. (Beers, Carr, & Okinaka, 2005)

Results from this survey are expected to be extremely useful to the HI DOE and the military-impacted schools as well as to JVEF as future years' projects and expenditures are planned. The survey report will cite the literature on school connectedness as well as the principles of Invitational Education insofar as both will be useful to schools to make their environments more invitational and welcoming.

Discussion

Hawaii seems to have been at the forefront of the efforts to improve education quality-of-life issues that are now part of the focus of the new national USA4 Military Families initiative by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. We have had OSD and DoDEA officials make a number of visits to the island to confer with the military and the HI DOE as well as with legislators, university, business, and community members—visits

often facilitated by the JVEF executive director. Hawaii will be partnering with these national efforts as they develop, although just what form these partnerships take has yet to be determined. There has been some pressure on military impacted schools to adopt the DoDEA curricula school wide and even complex wide. (A complex consists of a high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools.) But Hawaii's comprehensive system of state standards and accompanying assessment program must be used for the federally mandated *No Child Left Behind* accountability requirements, and the DoDEA curricula scope and sequence have not been reconciled with these state standards.

The latest survey of military families to assess their experiences and satisfaction with Hawaii public schools is an effort to get more valid and generalizable results by using stratified random sampling methodology and increasing the response rates. The preliminary report from Johns Hopkins University and the Military Child Initiative on the focus groups has revealed some previously unrecognized factors that go into judgments about school quality. This will open up new possibilities for the improvement of our public schools and an increase in their invitational character. For example, R. W. Blum (personal communication, May 23, 2007) found that "for many military families, their experiences in Hawaii represent a drastic shift from the world they have previously known. For some this means being a minority for the first time in their lives and for others it means not being a minority for the first time in their lives. Some find the experience very positive, at least in hindsight."

From the focus group data—transcripts of discussions with military parents and with students—Blum also noted that when families were generally satisfied with their experience in Hawaii they seemed to also appreciate the culture; when they were not satisfied they seemed to resent the time and emphasis put on Hawaiiana in the curriculum. Blum found much praise for the transition programs in the Hawaii public schools, but he also heard complaints about counselors and teachers not knowing how to support students during a parent's deployment (R. W. Blum, personal communication, May 23, 2007).

Part of the survey report will focus on those programs and activities that have made a positive difference for transitioning military dependent students and their families. There were multiple opportunities for comments on the survey instrument, and those qualitative data are expected to also yield information about things parents and students believe can make the Hawaii public schools more invitational and make for a quality educational experience that facilitates students' follow-on transitions to other schools around the nation and the world.

When all the results are in—the quantitative results of the survey and the qualitative results from the focus groups and written comments on the surveys—we expect that some sensitivity training will be called for among all the groups involved in military dependent education in Hawaii public schools. Newcomers need to be alerted to the cultural differences they will encounter in Hawaii. Those who live and work in Hawaii need to be made aware of the special circumstances and stresses that confront military families and, beyond being understanding and tolerant, must also be empathetic and helpful. Here is where Invitational Education can be very instructive, and we could use a resurgence in its teaching and

use. We need to think of all the ways that we can help our young people reach their full potential, and this would include helping them learn the social skills they need to get along in this world as well as the academic skills they'll need to earn their way. Although research in IE seems to have waned recently at UH, its relevance to the need in HI DOE schools serving military dependents warrants its reintroduction to those school faculties and follow-up studies as to its effectiveness.

We know that living in and going to school in Hawaii's multiethnic, multicultural community can be an invaluable learning experience for students and their families, especially if they embrace the diversity and opportunity to learn and are offered and accept the invitation to join our island family and to experience the best of Hawaii. The results of this study will be used to help make that positive experience more available to military families in Hawaii public schools. The results will be used to open the eyes, minds, and hearts of all the stakeholders in our educational endeavor.

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