GUEST COLUMN

Military families find stability in virtual education

Being the new kid in school is never easy. For students of military-connected families, it's a regular occurrence, with active duty often requiring relocation every few years.

As these families move – often to different states – the children of service members must repeatedly adjust to new schools, academic expectations and social environments.

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It's for this reason why education can begin to feel like a moving target. As a result, many military-connected families are pivoting to virtual education, which presents a new opportunity for K-12 students to receive the stability and ongoing specialized support they need.

Supporting military-connected students requires understanding the unique challenges they face. Frequent moves mean students are often adjusting to new curricula, navigating unfamiliar social dynamics and managing the stress of change. As educators, we have a responsibility to recognize these experiences and provide the empathy, consistency and resources these students need to thrive.

Virtual education is uniquely positioned to support military students by offering consistency despite geographical changes. At Insight School of Oklahoma (ISOK), students can continue their education uninterrupted – even if their family moves out of state! They benefit from maintaining the same peer group, academic expectations and school culture throughout their educational journey. This stability is invaluable in reducing stress and fostering academic success.

Changes in curriculum and graduation requirements are another pain point for military-connected students. High school students specifically may find that credits don't always transfer seamlessly, potentially delaying their path to graduation. At ISOK, we help military families navigate these obstacles by providing clear guidance on Oklahoma graduation requirements and offering academic support to ensure a smooth transition.

Another major hurdle is the social disruption caused by frequent relocations. Making new friends, adapting to new school cultures and dealing with the emotional strain of deployments can be overwhelming. To address this, we create opportunities for military students to stay connected. This includes hosting special social sessions, providing extra academic support to ensure students aren't falling behind and offering accommodations for assignment deadlines. Although military-connected students tend to be highly responsible, managing their workload can be especially difficult during transition periods. We recognize these challenges by offering them the resources and encouragement necessary to succeed.

With Oklahoma home to several military installations, we're proud to support service members and their families through educational stability and personalized care.

For military-connected families who are struggling with traditional school models, I encourage them to consider virtual education. Making the transition has the potential to provide their children the support, continuity and empathy that are vital to their growth and success.

Lauren Bone is an academic counselor at ISOK, a tuition-free virtual public school serving students in grades 6-12.