

The State of Vermont / The Purple Star Award

Pete LuPiba, US Navy & OIF '06 Veteran and Founder of Purple Star Schools

I developed this initiative in the summer and fall months of 2016 as an Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran and a Military Families Advocate while staffed at the Ohio Department of Education.

Sounds like Purple Star is sweeping the nation! The U.S. DoD itself is embracing Purple Star Schools as a quality-of-life priority for our service-members, and their families and local schools.

I've been in touch w/ K12-MIL leaders and state legislators from California to Maine, and Florida to Alaska. These 30-40 States are initiating their very own coalition and founding efforts through zoom and screen.

I've been collaborating directly w/ local educators and nonprofits who want to hear about Ohio's story of Purple Star. Ohio's mission is exactly this: a grand grassroots, localized "bottom-up" organic framework as first organized by agencies, professional educator associations, and more back in 2016-2017.

The genius of Purple Star is that it is led by genuine "boots on the ground" – an all-volunteer force by people with a passion which do not view this sacred, shared work as "other duties" as assigned. It is a labor of love for that music teacher, school nurse, varsity coach, and so on.

From your own spheres and communities will find this coalition of the willing worthy of Vermont's championing of these brave kids and resilient families. I think I can use the term "kiddos" as a dad of five, all under the ages of 10! Purple Star is for Active Duty, Reserve Duty, and National Guard service-members, and of course, for their local educators!

The Commonwealth of Virginia was the first to call on over to Columbus, Ohio and request the Purple Star background and rubric and mission statement. Purple Star thrives in every part of Virginia, but also in your neighboring New Hampshire! Purple Star is in some 36 States!

To date here in the Buckeye state, there are more than 400 Purple Star Schools from 10 classes (Fall and Spring Rounds each Academic Year for Schools to Apply for Purple Star Designation) of this state-wide voluntary application which support real "MIL" families from Lake Erie to the Ohio River.

Each campus has a Purple Star School Liaison, a local educator to champion of our MIL kids. These leaders are in the hallways and classrooms of their local schools – this is about school culture and climate and civics – in support of MIL kids and their families...whom serve, too.

I hope you will give your local educators and leaders the opportunity to make the impacts they already do but on that extra level for those kids – and families, who are serving all of us.