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ECSD (FL) Wins 8th and Largest DoDEA Grant to Date

\$1.5M for Programs in 14 Schools

Military-connected children face a unique set of circumstances and challenges. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) recognizes the impact additional supports and services can have on K-12 dependents of military service members. To help school districts fund these programs, they offer the opportunity for districts to apply for federal grant funds through the Military-Connected Local Educational Agencies for Academic and Support Programs (MCASP) initiative. Congress appropriates funding for these multi-year MCASP grants annually.

Since 2010, Escambia County School District (ECSD) has been awarded eight MCASP grants. The most recent, Project Afterburner, is a huge win for the district. It will cover 2020-2025, and brings in \$1,500,000 for programs in fourteen schools – the largest number of schools and students to benefit from one of the DoDEA grants.

“The Project Afterburner grant brings our DoDEA grant total up to \$10,320,000,” said Joel Hollon, ECSD’s Coordinator, Grants Management. “Each grant runs for 4.5 years, and they can overlap. Currently, our schools are operating four active DoDEA grants, providing students and teachers at participating military-connected schools with additional academic and social-emotional supports through enhancements to the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, summer camps, field trips and excursions, and professional development.”

Hollon explained that each grant has a unique plan and projects. “For example, Smooth Sailing focuses on helping students make transitions. Taking Flight focuses on mathematics and STEM, and Project Afterburner, our most expansive project yet, will focus on health science and will include enrichment activities centered around health science, fitness, and culinary standards.”

With support from the Project Afterburner grant, students in fourteen schools will develop health science skills and aptitude. Elementary students will learn and implement the fundamentals of nutrition and physical activity, and they will monitor personal progress with fitness trackers as they strive toward attaining the Presidential Youth Fitness Award.

Middle and high school students will earn industry certifications as they take part in expanded health science and culinary courses. The resulting learning experiences will prime learners for post-secondary opportunities and career pathways into health science and culinary fields which are the two industries in the United States with highest number of projected job openings over the coming decade.

The 4.5-year DoDEA project also supports the district's strategic goal of increasing the percentage of students who earn industry certifications while improving college and career readiness for military-connected students.

In summary, this is a list of all eight DoDEA Grants ECSD has been awarded with the years included, dollar amount, and the number of schools served:

Reaching Higher, 2010-2013, \$1,100,000, three schools

Anchors Aweigh, 2012-2015, \$1,350,000, four schools

Ship Shape, 2014-2017, \$1,620,000, four schools

Diamond Formation, 2015-2020, \$1,500,000, four schools

Smooth Sailing, 2016-2021, \$1,500,000, five schools

Operation Cyberworld, 2017-2022, \$1,000,000, five schools

Taking Flight, 2019-2024, \$750,000, four schools

Project Afterburner, 2020-2025, \$1,500,000, fourteen schools

The increase to 14 schools is due to a shift in the requirements for eligibility.

Hollon explained, “This year DoDEA reduced the eligibility threshold for the percentage of military-connected students enrolled in a school from 15% to 10%. This allowed us to include additional schools, including six schools never before eligible. We are very excited to be able to increase the reach of the DoDEA funded projects over the next five years with the Project Afterburner grant.”

Hollon also explained that DoDEA grant funded projects can be available to all students in the school. “They are not strictly for military-connected children.”

The schools included in Project Afterburner that have been involved in earlier grants include: Blue Angels Elementary, Hellen Caro Elementary, Navy Point Elementary, Pleasant Grove Elementary, Bailey Middle, Brown Barge Middle, Escambia High, and West Florida High. The additional schools that are new to the DoDEA grants program are: Beulah Elementary, N.B. Cook Elementary, Kingsfield Elementary, Beulah Middle, Pensacola, and Tate High.

Learn more about the DoDEA Grants and how they have been incorporated into ECSD schools by going to the page: <http://ecsd-fl.schoolloop.com/militarygrants>

Military families are encouraged to find many ECSD resources and links to information by visiting the page: <https://ecsd-fl.schoolloop.com/military>

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