

# Seasons of My Military Student ★ Book Club

## SEASONS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Based on the book *Seasons of My Military Student* by Amanda Trimillos and Stacy Allsbrook-Huisman (Elva Resa).

### OVERVIEW

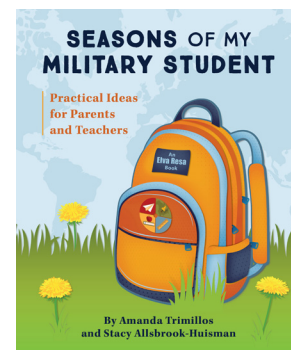
Military-connected students experience four Seasons of Transition™—Leaving, Arriving, Growing, and Thriving—with each change of school. These seasons follow the student's experience, rather than the calendar or academic year. A strong student-advocacy team of parents, teachers, and other adults actively involved in a student's life can effectively support students as they transition from school to school, by gaining an understanding of how the challenges of military life impact a student's education, employing key provisions of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, and creating an effective portable Seasons Education Binder.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### 1 THE TEAM AND TOOLS OF CULTIVATION

Please refer to "Introduction" and "The Team and Tools of Cultivation" in the book.

1. How does your school identify military-connected students? Why is it sometimes difficult? How can parents and educators work together to make it easier? Why is it important for a school to identify military-connected students?
2. Research shows some events in military life, such as frequent moves and deployments, impact the social and academic progress of military-connected students. What are some of those impacts, both positive and negative?
3. What signs or events trigger a new season of change for military-connected students? Share examples from your experiences at home or at school.
4. The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children was created to support military-connected students in kindergarten through high school. The compact addresses the differing educational requirements from state to state and school to school.
  - » How can the provisions of the Interstate Compact help students when transferring credits, obtaining special education services, and other situations?
  - » Who is the point of contact in your school or district for specific applications of the Interstate Compact?
5. How have you seen an Education Binder make a difference for a student? What are the most essential items and records to keep in an Education Binder?
  - » In the book, the example of Ms. Massey and her class shows how teachers, students, and parents can work together to build an Education Binder. What contributions might students make at various ages? What do these activities teach students about self-advocacy and responsibility?



“The resilience required to thrive in military life is not the automatic result of being born into a military family. Resilience grows when military-connected students are nurtured by support networks at home, at school, and in the community.”

—*Seasons of My Military Student*

## 2 SEASON OF LEAVING

Please refer to the chapter “Season of Leaving” in the book.



1. The Season of Leaving begins with the anticipation of orders for the service member’s new assignment, long before the actual departure. Knowing this, when should parents and teachers begin preparing for this crucial season?
2. In the book, stories of several different students reveal that military-connected students vary in how they are affected and how they respond to the anticipation and news of an upcoming move. What reactions have you noticed among your students anticipating a move? How can parents and teachers help students express their emotions and concerns about moving?
3. What would you include when creating an exit plan for a student? Why is it important for parents and teachers to work together on an exit plan?
4. An Education Binder is an effective way to compile and convey information about a military-connected student. What are the most important items to keep in the binder? If a new student does not have an Education Binder, what do schools and teachers rely on for information about the student?
5. What information would you include in a teacher-to-teacher letter?
6. What are some creative ways students can say goodbye to classmates and teachers? Why is it important to give them opportunities to say goodbye?
7. Families and students may get overwhelmed during a transition, and the amount and frequency of homework might become a problem. The examples of Ms. Branch and Mr. Garcia show how teachers can adjust homework expectations before a transition. Why is strong communication between parents, students, and teachers important for addressing issues about class assignments?



“A well-executed exit plan means a smooth transition—academically, socially, and emotionally—building a student’s confidence and ability to cope with future transitions.”

—Seasons of My Military Student

## 3 SEASONS OF ARRIVING AND GROWING

Please refer to the chapters “Season of Arriving” and “Season of Growing” in the book.

1. First days at a new school are critical. What should students do to prepare for the first day at a new school? What support and guidance can parents provide? How can teachers prepare to welcome new students on their first day, no matter when it occurs during the school year?
2. The Education Binder introduces a student to a new school and a new teacher, and helps place students in appropriate classes. In what ways has information like this helped you integrate a new student?
3. The first parent-teacher conference at a new school helps parents and teachers discuss how the student is adjusting. What topics should parents and teachers cover, beyond academic performance and grades?

4. Standards, curriculum, and teaching methods vary widely from school to school, which may cause a student to experience a gap or overlap in learning.

- » In the book, the story of Aimee shows how a strong student can be affected by differences in lesson plans and teaching methods. Have you known a student with a similar experience?
- » If a student falls into a gap between curricula, the student may need special instruction or time to catch up with classmates' lessons at a new school. What are some ways parents and teachers can recognize when a student is struggling with a gap? How can they help the student overcome it?
- » When a student has an overlap at a new school, it could result in repeating material already learned. What problems might this pose for the student and the teacher? What creative solutions would you suggest?

5. When a new student is struggling, and gaps and overlaps have been ruled out, the problem could be personal adjustment to a new environment.

- » In the book, Jen's new third grade teacher found a creative way to alleviate Jen's loneliness and help her connect with her peers. What else might help a new student make friends?
- » In the book, Amanda reveals how she, as a high school teacher, created connection with her students and encouraged them to connect with each other. How are the challenges different for encouraging peer friendship between older students? What methods have you found most successful?
- » Emma's story in the book shows that learning issues might be mistaken for adjustment issues. When a new student is struggling, what are some ways to can determine whether the problem is related to a transition?




---

“A well-stocked Education Binder provides the new school with a holistic history of the military-connected student, allowing for a smooth integration into a new school environment.”

—Seasons of My Military Student

---

## 4 SEASON OF THRIVING AND STORMS

Please refer to the chapters “Season of Thriving” and “Storms in Any Season” in the book.

1. The academic strengths and personal confidence gained during the Season of Thriving prepare the student for the next cycle of transition. To grow and thrive, a student must set goals and take risks. How have you helped your students set challenging goals for themselves, academically and personally?

- » In the book, Emily's story shows how the teacher's encouragement inspired her to set a higher academic goal for herself. What are some examples of academic goals not directly related to grades?
- » What are some ways teachers and parents can encourage students to pursue non-academic, social, and other personal goals?

2. As a student matures, she will take a larger role in her own advocacy—ideally leading the student-advocacy team. How can setting goals and taking risks in age-appropriate ways prepare students to speak and advocate for themselves? What self-advocacy goals would you suggest for students at different grade levels?

3. A watchful student-advocacy team will recognize when a student is struggling and determine when intervention is necessary. What behavioral signs could alert parents and teachers a student needs help? What steps would you take or resources would you suggest for a student struggling in this way?

4. It's important to make time to celebrate military-connected students. What events does your school host during Month of the Military Child in April? How does your school show recognition for military students and their families throughout the year?

5. Storms of military life may include family separation, combat injury, or the death of a parent. Any of these storms can affect the education of the military-connected student and require focused attention from the student-advocacy team.

- » For military families, not all separations are deployments. Are you familiar with other kinds of separations? Which ones have your students experienced most often. How were students impacted?
- » When a parent is away—for deployment, temporary duty or in a geo-bachelor situation—even the most resilient of students may need a little more attention and compassion. These situations impact a student's academic performance and behavior. In your experience, what are the most effective ways to support students during family separations?
- » The death of a parent impacts both military and civilian students. At your school, what processes are in place to support bereaved students and families? What unique support might a military-connected student need after the loss of an active-duty parent?
- » Why might the death or injury of a service member require a military family to relocate?

6. What are some ways a school can provide shelter for military-connected students experiencing any storm of military life? How does the Education Binder reflect a storm in the life of a student?

7. Adapting to new environments and situations, and overcoming difficult experiences, builds resilience when the military-connected student has a dependable support network. What strengths and characteristics have you seen in military students that you attribute to their experiences in military life?



## STUDENT-ADVOCACY TEAM IN ACTION

What is one memorable story or experience shared in this discussion group that gave you a broader perspective of military-connected students' experience?

What strategies or tools will you put in place right away to support the military-connected students in your community?




---

“Each new school,  
family separation,  
or time of loss  
has potential  
for growing  
knowledge and  
strength.”

—Seasons of My  
Military Student

---

Seasons of My Military Student  
and discussion guide materials  
©2018-2019 Elva Resa Publishing

Seasons of Transition™  
Elva Resa Publishing