

Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools

April 2011

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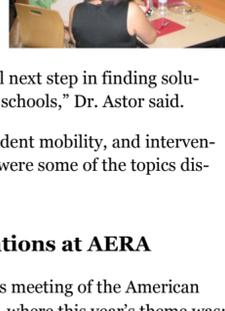
Building Capacity Team Hosts Open House

Faculty members from across USC became more familiar with the *Building Capacity* project at an April 15 Open House hosted by principal investigator Dr. Ron Astor and other members of the team.

The gathering was intended to introduce researchers from a variety of fields, including education, medicine, psychology and public health, to the project and brainstorm about ways for them to collaborate.

“Including the issues of students from military families in their research and university training programs is a critical next step in finding solutions to help military students thrive in schools,” Dr. Astor said.

The California Healthy Kids Survey, student mobility, and interventions for children experiencing trauma were some of the topics discussed.



Building Capacity Researchers Make Presentations at AERA

The *Building Capacity* project was well represented at this year’s meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), held in New Orleans, where this year’s theme was “Inciting the Social Imagination: Education Research for the Public Good.”

Kris De Pedro, a Ph.D. student in the Rossier School of Education, and Dr. Ron Astor presented a literature review titled *Military Connected Schools: Community, Family, School, and Individual Factors That Impact Social and Academic Outcomes*. Kris discussed how “the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have led to adverse mental health, social and academic outcomes for the children of military service members.” This review was the first AERA presentation related to military families and schools.

Monica Esqueda, also a Ph.D. student in Rossier, and Darnell Cole, an associate professor of education, did a presentation on *Military Service and Associate’s Degree Attainment Among Males*. According to Monica and Darnell “few studies have examined the experiences and educational outcomes of military veterans.”

Joey Nuñez Estrada, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Social Work, and Dr. Astor presented *Questioning Theoretical Stereotypes on Gang Membership: Examining Prevalence Rates Across California Schools and Geographical Regions*. Joey mentioned the importance of researching and exploring the school context in relation to gang membership. Joey’s article was accepted as part of a session on New Developments in Conflict Resolution in Schools.

Their papers are available on our [Website](#). Click on “Links to Research.”

-Ana Castor

New Study Highlights Military Families’ Need for Quality Early Learning Programs

Finding reliable and high-quality early-childhood education programs—especially when a parent is deployed—ranks as one of the top concerns for military families, according to a new survey released by The Pew Center on the States.

The demand for child-care and preschool, including temporary and drop-in programs during times of increased stress, ranked even higher than the need for health care, the survey found.

The respondents—500 active duty, National Guard and Reserve members—said they value the quality of the 800 military Child Development Centers located on base. But many parents still don’t have access to these programs, particularly National Guard members and Reservists who don’t live on base.

The report, [“On the Home Front: Early Care and Education a Top Priority for Military Families.”](#) recommends an increase in infant and toddler care for military families, greater access for military children to state-funded prekindergarten programs, and using Impact Aid funds allocated to military-connected school districts for early learning programs.



FEATURED RESOURCE

The [Military Child Initiative](#) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health offers a variety of materials to help public school teachers and leaders create more welcoming environments for military students.

[“School Connectedness: Improving Students’ Lives”](#) is a monograph discussing practices that help students feel more connected to their schools. The companion [executive summary](#) discusses implications specifically for military students. And a one-page [tip sheet](#) gives teachers simple suggestions for making students feel more connected.



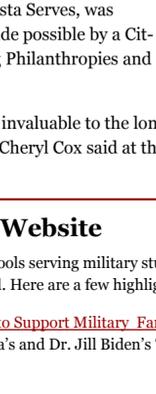
A [“Building Resilient Kids”](#) web course is also offered for a higher level of training. Continuing education credit is available.

As part of the initiative, Johns Hopkins researchers are also conducting surveys and focus groups with military families in Hawaii to better understand their experiences in public schools and to identify ways to improve programs and services for children and parents.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Resiliency Conference: This month, members of the *Building Capacity* team will give a workshop on the many components of the project at the 2011 DoD/USDA Family Resilience Conference. The meeting is being held in Chicago, April 27-29th.

School Bullying Conference: On May 2-3, Dr. Ron Astor will speak in Paris at the French Ministry of Education’s National Conference on School Bullying.



USC Interns Take Part in Chula Vista Volunteer Effort

Using skills they’ve learned while working at military-connected schools in Chula Vista, USC Master’s of Social Work interns are participating in a city-wide effort to strengthen educational outcomes for students and improve the health and wellness of local residents. The project, Chula Vista Serves, was launched at a press conference March 22, and was made possible by a Cities of Service Leadership Grant, funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Rockefeller Foundation



“Our ability to make lasting change through service is invaluable to the long-term success of our city – we all have a stake in our future,” Mayor Cheryl Cox said at the event, which was attended by the MSW students.

Find News and Resources on Our Website

We have featured several important stories of interest to schools serving military students on our website in recent weeks. Check the [site](#) often to stay informed. Here are a few highlights:

[“National PTA and Military Child Education Coalition Unite to Support Military Families”](#) focuses on the two organizations’ response to First Lady Michelle Obama’s and Dr. Jill Biden’s “Joining Forces” initiative.

[“School Liaison Officer a Bridge from Goodfellow to Classrooms”](#) featured Catholic priest Larry Lumpkin’s work at the Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas.

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