

Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools

August 2011

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Readiness Express To Visit San Diego Schools

The U.S. Navy's Fleet and Family Support Division is bringing its "Family Readiness Express" to schools that are part of the *Building Capacity* consortium. The luxury RV usually parks at military housing communities for a month at a time to serve as a resource to families, especially during times of deployment.

But in partnership with the *Building Capacity* team at USC, the colorful and massive vehicle will be parking—and attracting attention—at several schools in the San Diego area over the next few months. Put into service in 2010, the "Express" is currently the only unit of its kind in the country.

The first school stop for the "Express" will be at Jefferson Middle School in the Oceanside Unified School District on Sept. 28-29.

Future stops are being scheduled, and we will notify readers when we have the dates.



USC Intern Forms Military Student 'Pride Club'

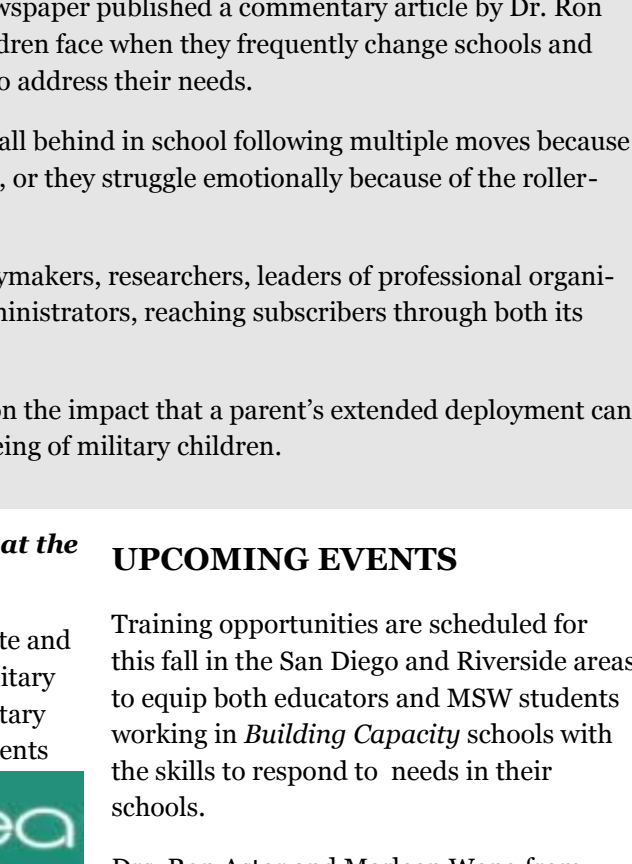
Here's an idea that any military-connected school can use to help students feel positive about themselves and their families. Gena Truitt, a Master's in Social Work intern at USC that is part of the *Building Capacity* project, started a "Pride Club" at Wolf Canyon Elementary School in Chula Vista, Calif., to support military students, give them a place to play games, and talk about their military experiences.

Forty-students responded to the invitation, so she divided up the groups into kindergarten through 2nd graders and 3rd through 6th graders. She asked them what they wanted to get out of the group, which meets during the school day to avoid any transportation problems.

"They said 'I want to talk about how it felt when my mom or dad left. I want to talk about what my mom or dad does in the military,'" Truitt says. "It's not a stigma because it's a pride club."

Activities have included creating a deployment journal, creating a "where I have been" collage or video, and Bring-a-Parent-to-School Day.

But perhaps the most enthusiastically received project was when the students collaborated to create a "pride board" that includes family photos and handmade flags expressing pride in their parent's service to the country. A photo of their creation is above. "The way I look at it, when we are proud of who we are, we are more resilient," Truitt says. "I want military children to be proud of who they are, it will make the sacrifices easier to bear."



Education Week Publishes Commentary by Dr. Astor

In its June 8 issue, *Education Week* newspaper published a commentary article by Dr. Ron Astor on the struggles that military children face when they frequently change schools and the policy changes that could be made to address their needs.

"Many students from military families fall behind in school following multiple moves because there is no funding for tutoring services, or they struggle emotionally because of the roller-coaster of deployments," he wrote.

Education Week is widely read by policymakers, researchers, leaders of professional organizations and practicing teachers and administrators, reaching subscribers through both its print and online versions.

Earlier this year, the paper ran a [story](#) on the impact that a parent's extended deployment can have on the academic and social well-being of military children.

FEATURED RESOURCE: Students at the Center

"[Students at the Center](#)" is both a website and a resource guide designed to inform military families, public school officials and military leaders about the needs of military students attending civilian schools. Each

section speaks to a different audience.

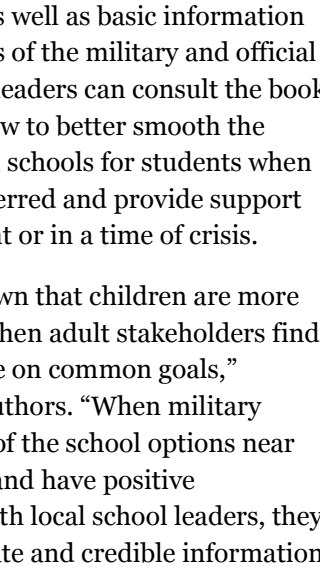
The guidebook, which will be made available to all principals in

the *Building Capacity* consortium, is part of the Military-K-12 Partners initiative of the Department of Defense Education Activity.

The book informs families about choosing schools and their rights in the U.S. education system. School officials learn about the challenges students face when they grow up in military families as well as basic information about the branches of the military and official protocol. Military leaders can consult the book for guidance on how to better smooth the transition between schools for students when families are transferred and provide support during deployment or in a time of crisis.

"Evidence has shown that children are more likely to succeed when adult stakeholders find ways to collaborate on common goals," according to the authors. "When military leaders are aware of the school options near their installation, and have positive communication with local school leaders, they can provide accurate and credible information for service members and installation personnel. Likewise, when schools and parents partner with the military, the children under their care are provided a greater level of support and advocacy."

The book covers topics such as school funding, school choice, special education, governance, and the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Training opportunities are scheduled for this fall in the San Diego and Riverside areas to equip both educators and MSW students working in *Building Capacity* schools with the skills to respond to needs in their schools.

Drs. Ron Astor and Marleen Wong from USC will lead a workshop on **school safety**. The first half will provide promising programs and interventions on bullying and school safety, based on results of the 2010-11 California Health Kids Survey. The second half will focus on psychological "first aid" and handling trauma. The session will run from 8 a.m. until noon.

Dates and locations:

Oct. 3: Oceanside Unified School District Board Room

Oct. 24: Temecula Valley School District Conference Center

Nov. 7: San Diego Academic Center, Rancho Bernardo

In the second workshop, Kevin Cameron, an expert on traumatic stress, will conduct a session on **Violence Threat Risk Assessment**, combining school shooting prevention with the practice of general risk assessment relating to other forms of violence. It will also be held from 8 a.m. to noon.

Dates and locations:

Nov. 4: Temecula Valley School District Conference Center

Dec. 5: San Diego Academic Center in Rancho Bernardo

Dec. 6: Oceanside Unified School District Board Room

To RSVP, email raastor@usc.edu. For questions, email Diana Pineda at dianapin@usc.edu.

What the Interstate Compact Says About: Student Records

When students change schools, the timely transfer of their records is a top priority and can pose obstacles for military families who frequently move between states and even around the globe. The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children provides a recommended policy for how receiving schools should handle the issue of official student records.

First of all, if official education records cannot be released to the parents, the sending schools should prepare and give the child's parent or guardian "a complete set of unofficial educational records containing uniform information as determined by the Interstate Commission." The receiving school should then enroll and appropriately place the student as quickly as possible based on the information that is provided in those unofficial records.

Meanwhile, the receiving school should request the student's official education records or transcripts from the school in the sending state. When it receives the request, the sending school should take no longer than 10 days to provide the official records to the child's new school. For more information on specific topics addressed by the Compact, visit [Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission](#).



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.

This [story](#) from KFBB News in Virginia features the Defense Department's grant to the New Great Falls School District to support its Transition Resource Opportunities Offered to Parents and Students (TROOPS) program.

Also of interest is this [new report](#) from the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* about the possible mental health impact on children with parents deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Questions, comments or to unsubscribe, E-mail us at raastor@usc.edu