

May 2011

We're taking a break.

This is our last issue of *Building Capacity* for the school year. We will resume monthly issues in August. If you have ideas for future issues, please contact Linda Jackson at linda.jackson@usc.edu

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Project Featured at National Conference in Chicago



The *Building Capacity* team presented a workshop at the Department of Defense/Department of Agriculture Military Family Resilience conference in Chicago last month. Educators, social service professionals, researchers, and military service members interested in the education of military children attended the session.

"Building Capacity: Research and Application" outlined the consortium's vision, the creation of the military module, and using data to match schools with the best social and academic interventions. Participants were also given informational materials about *Building Capacity* and a chance to ask questions on how to improve the climate of military-connected schools in their own communities.

First Lady Michelle Obama, who has helped launch the Joining Forces campaign to support military families, could not attend the conference, but sent this [letter](#) to the attendees. Pictured above, from the left are Diana Pineda, Kris De Pedro, Dr. Ron Astor and Dr. Hazel Atuel from USC and Dr. Gary Bowen from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

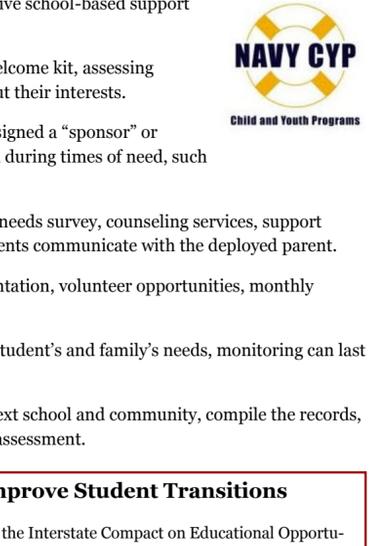
-By Kris De Pedro

'Family Readiness Express' Brings Support to Military Families in San Diego

Members of the *Building Capacity* team were treated to an inside look at a new resource that delivers support to military families—wherever they are. The year-old Family Readiness Express is a luxury RV equipped with resources for military families. It travels to military housing communities, usually staying for a month at a time, to provide support, information and answers to family members' questions.

Currently the only unit of its kind in the country, the RV was put into service in 2010.

"The Navy bought it, but we're there for everyone—for all branches," says Dana Ross, the program operations manager.



One area of the vehicle is stocked with books and activities for children, another provides resources related to employment and another area focuses on deployment support. By partnering with community organizations, this "traveling billboard," as education services coordinator Tammie Pontsler calls it, can provide a variety of workshops, such as parenting or financial seminars, as well as one-on-one advice.

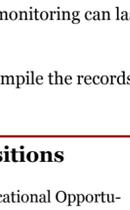
A future goal is to work with school districts that serve large numbers of military children. Parking the eye-catching mobile support unit at a school—which is now being scheduled for schools that are part of the *Building Capacity* consortium—would be another way to reach military families in addition to creating awareness among school staff about the needs of military children.

"Maybe we could spend a day at the school," Pontsler says. "That's the next layer."

FEATURED RESOURCE

Inspired by efforts to improve transition experiences for military students in Hawaii schools, the Navy has released a new publication featuring best practices for welcoming military students and their families.

According to [Connections: Navy School Based Programming Guidebook](#), the following components should be part of a comprehensive school-based support program for military families:



School Entry: This includes providing a welcome kit, assessing academic needs and surveying students about their interests.

Youth Sponsorship: New students are assigned a "sponsor" or mentor to help them become acclimated and during times of need, such as deployment.

Deployment Support: This can include a needs survey, counseling services, support groups, peer lunch groups, and helping students communicate with the deployed parent.

Family Component: Includes parent orientation, volunteer opportunities, monthly activities, and workshops.

Ongoing Monitoring: Depending on the student's and family's needs, monitoring can last up to a year.

Exit Process: Gather information on the next school and community, compile the records, contact the next school and conduct an exit assessment.

Interstate Compact Aims to Improve Student Transitions

California is one of 36 states that has adopted the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. In general, an interstate compact is a contractual agreement entered into by two or more states in areas that are traditionally protected by state sovereignty, such as education.



The purpose of this compact is to reduce or eliminate "barriers to educational success" for children from military families as they transition between schools and across state lines.

The compact also provides for individual state councils and an interstate commission. While the responsiveness of the states to the compact is a positive development, implementing the compact at the local level has been challenging. Some states, for example, have not informed district superintendents or school personnel of the compact's policy provisions.

School officials can help to raise awareness about the compact by learning more about it, its policy implications and the resources that are available. For more information, visit [Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission](#).

-By Monica Esqueda

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:

[Oceanside School Helps Kids Cope with Deployment:](#) KPBS featured our project in this story on what schools are doing to support military students.

[Students Make Hero Packs for Military Children:](#) This story by YNN featured a military awareness project at Potsdam High School in central New York as part of AmeriCorps Week.

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