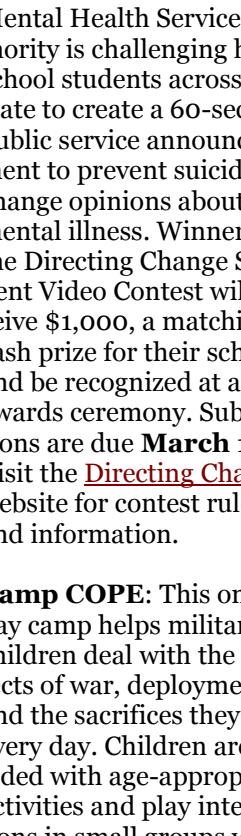


Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools

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Temecula Students Learn that Being 'Nice Matters'

The Temecula Valley Unified School District is implementing a new districtwide anti-bullying program that was in part inspired by training workshops offered by the *Building Capacity* project.

Called "Because Nice Matters," the initiative originated at Great Oak High School and is named for a slogan that Assistant Principal Judy Stapleton first saw on a plaque in a catalog.



Students helped to paint a bus with a purple and black design, the official "Because Nice Matters" colors.

But it wasn't until Stapleton and other staff in the district attended workshops organized by *Building Capacity* on threat assessment and the [school-based, skill-building version of the FOCUS program](#) that they understood how to adapt the program to meet the unique circumstances of military students.

"The USC *Building Capacity* workshops helped to improve our program," Stapleton says. "Many folks who work in education are not familiar with the military, military life and the stressors that children of military families have. The insight provided help to enlighten those of us that are unfamiliar with military culture so that we can address those needs."

"Because Nice Matters" encourages and recognizes kind behavior and involves symbolic activities, such as wearing purple and black to remind everyone that bullying can cause physical and psychological damage or wearing white to signify making a fresh start.

Painting a large school bus with the slogan was also an eye-catching way to make the statement.

Stapleton says that even though student enrollment at her school is growing, "confrontations and behaviors related to bullying have decreased. It is working." Because of the impact of the program at Great Oak High, TVUSD officials decided to take "Because Nice Matters" districtwide and are also sharing the idea with other districts.

Temecula Mayor Chuck Washington even signed a proclamation, saying that the bullying issue needs to be "addressed by not only the youth in our community, but the citizenry at large. Everyone should make an effort to be nice to one another and acknowledge that bullying is wrong and can only be effectively addressed collectively."

Spotlight On: Superintendent Candace Singh

Candace Singh is the Superintendent of Fallbrook Union Elementary School District (FUESD), one of eight *Building Capacity* Consortium districts.

A graduate of Escondido High School and a San Diego State University alumnus, Mrs. Singh began her educational career in 1985 and has since served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, district office administrator and university instructor.

As a consultant, she has worked with schools and districts throughout California on improving instructional and leadership practices to raise student achievement.

Mrs. Singh has served with distinction as a lecturer in the College of Education at California State University San Marcos for over 10 years, teaching future school leaders about instructional leadership and developing school cultures focused on student achievement.

Since her appointment as Superintendent in August 2011, FUESD has worked to enhance the instructional program for students through focused goals and professional development for teachers and the implementation of new, research-based instructional strategies, materials, and technology for students.

Being part of *Building Capacity* is another vehicle for improving educational experiences for students, she says.

"It is such an honor and privilege to serve the military community through our schools knowing the sacrifices they make on a daily basis," she says. "The *Building Capacity* project greatly supports FUESD's efforts to provide an outstanding education for our military families. By planning and working collaboratively, our students are connected and engaged in school as never before, and are supported in making the sometimes challenging transition to a new learning environment when families move to Camp Pendleton."

Spotlight On: Superintendent Justin Cunningham

With a 37-year career in elementary through university education as a teacher, coach, administrator, and adjunct professor, Dr. Justin Cunningham brings a wealth of experience to his current role as Superintendent of the Bonsall Union School District, one of our eight *Building Capacity* Consortium districts.

He has also worked in rural, suburban, and urban schools. He was the Chair of the Writing Committee for the 1993 Health Framework for California Public Schools, and in 1999 the California Department of Education identified him as a Distinguished Educator for his work in improving student learning in low-performing schools.

Raised in San Diego County, Dr. Cunningham is a graduate of San Diego State University, California State University Bakersfield, and United States International University, where his doctoral work focused on the application of brain research to classroom practice.

Dr. Cunningham is sought internationally as a speaker in the areas of brain research, integrated curriculum, health, school improvement, and strategic planning.

"*Building Capacity* in Military-Connected Schools has provided such needed support for students of families that have given so much to our country that I'm amazed it wasn't done before," Dr. Cunningham says. "The coordination of these services helps schools and the military to become more effective."

Featured Resource: Video on Common Core State Standards

With the [Common Core State Standards](#) now adopted in 45 states and D.C., the Military Child Education Coalition has prepared an informative [video](#) explaining how these academic standards can benefit students from military families.

An initiative of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, the Common Core includes standards in mathematics and English language arts. Many districts are already implementing the standards and phasing new Common Core-aligned assessment systems.

Headlines and Resources

We regularly feature stories, reports and resources related to military children on our website. Check back often for new additions, such as these:

- The Center for Mental Health in Schools at the University of California Los Angeles has released a new [policy brief](#) on the support teachers need in an age of new evaluation systems that link their job performance to student test scores.

- The *Southern Illinoisan* [profiled](#) Marion, Ill., high school English teacher Shelly Dwyer for founding Operation Strong, an effort to increase awareness among her students of men and women serving in the military.