

# Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools



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## Quick Links...

[Our Website](#)

## Looking for Past Issues?

All of our past issues are archived on our [website](#).

## Upcoming Events:

### USC Intern Orientation:

Sept. 4 at USC San Diego Academic Center, 16870 West Bernardo Drive, Suite 200

Questions, Comments or to Unsubscribe: e-mail us at [raastor@usc.edu](mailto:raastor@usc.edu)

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## Building Capacity Begins 4th Year

### Consortium Districts Show Significant Reductions in Substance Use and Violence Victimization in New California Healthy Kids Survey Data

As *Building Capacity* Consortium schools prepare for the final year of the grant, leaders will be focusing on how to sustain the many successful programs and practices that have been implemented over the past three years.

Several districts, for example, have hired social workers, which will assist schools in continuing the positive programs that improve school climate for military students--and all students who experience frequent transitions and other stressful circumstances.

With this new school year, districts will also be receiving the results of this year's California Healthy Kids Data (CHKS), allowing educators to compare those findings to the results from 2011. Officials will be able to determine whether their efforts have led to improvements in behavior and school safety and the areas in which more work is needed.

Overall, since the 2010-2011 school year, there have been significant and consistent reductions in school bullying and victimization behaviors and substance use for the Consortium as a whole. The detailed results are still being analyzed. The results will be presented this fall in the annual report. Each Consortium district and school will receive its own CHKS report as well.

### New Grant

Meanwhile, we are excited to announce that Chula Vista Elementary School District, in partnership with USC and four other districts, has received a new \$5 million grant from the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).

The new Consortium will focus on comprehensively addressing the transition needs of military students and their parents by developing and implementing tablet and smart-phone apps that can smooth the school transition process.

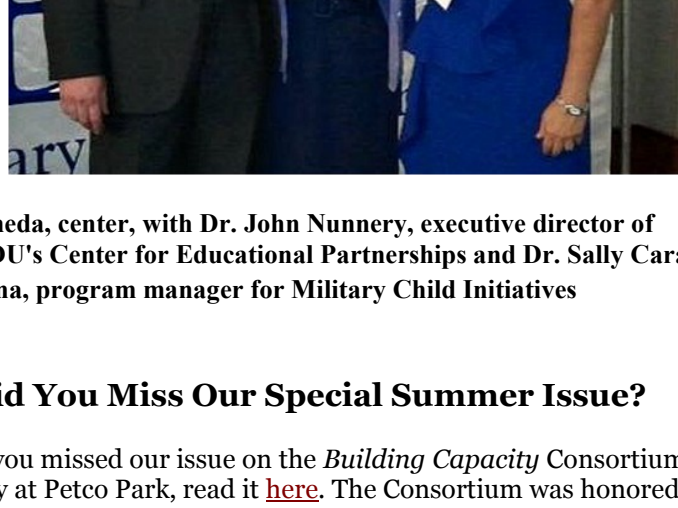
Professional development will also be provided so that districts can create effective transition teams and improve the academic achievement and well-being of military students.

We will provide more details on this new initiative in next month's newsletter.

### Becoming a Model

There are also growing signs that the efforts of all the non-governmental agencies, university partners, districts, and educators that are part of *Building Capacity* are inspiring similar efforts both in the U.S. and abroad to measure school climate and to improve services for military students. Here are a few examples:

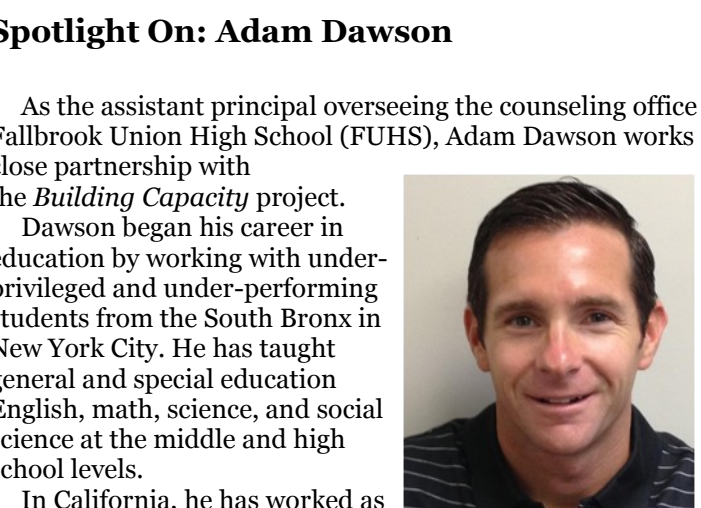
- At this year's Military Child Education Coalition National Training Seminar, attendees were aware of our four [guidebooks](#) and monthly newsletters. Dr. Ron Astor, who leads the project, also moderated a session on partnerships.
- Sen. Pineda (D-Wash.) has authored an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would create a student identifier for military-connected students so that schools can better support these students through school transitions, deployments and other changes in their lives. This is a provision that has been a priority for the *Building Capacity* Consortium. In addition, several states have moved ahead of the federal government by including such a data element in their own student information systems.
- DoDEA is interested in using the school climate aspects of the CHKS survey in all of its schools for military students both on U.S. bases and abroad. This data would allow for further comparison between military students in public schools and those in DoDEA schools.
- Diana Pineda, the San Diego project director for *Building Capacity* made a presentation on the project at Old Dominion University (ODU), where she provided materials to local teachers, administrators and community members and attended a change-of-command ceremony at Naval Station Norfolk.
- Pineda has also been invited to present to the University of Valparaiso in Chile to assist researchers in implementing a monitoring survey and process similar to the one used in the DoDEA project. "I am honored and thrilled about the opportunity to collaborate with the University of Valparaiso," Pineda says. "I plan to meet with educators in Santiago to learn about their new program and research done within schools and to share information about the programs *Building Capacity* has implemented in the schools."



Pineda, center, with Dr. John Nunnery, executive director of ODU's Center for Educational Partnerships and Dr. Sally Caradonna, program manager for Military Child Initiatives

## Did You Miss Our Special Summer Issue?

If you missed our issue on the *Building Capacity* Consortium's day at Petco Park, read it [here](#). The Consortium was honored as part of Military Social Work Awareness Day.



## Spotlight On: Adam Dawson

As the assistant principal overseeing the counseling office at Fallbrook Union High School (FUHS), Adam Dawson works in close partnership with the *Building Capacity* project.

Dawson began his career in education by working with underprivileged and under-performing students from the South Bronx in New York City. He has taught general and special education English, math, science, and social science at the middle and high school levels.

In California, he has worked as an educational specialist serving primarily students with social-emotional disabilities at the high school level. Later he accepted a position as an assistant principal overseeing state testing, after-school programs, student discipline and supervision, and the counseling program.

*Building Capacity*, he says, "has increased our awareness and has kept the academic, emotional, and social needs of our military students and their families a high priority."

The project has allowed the high school to access additional resources for students, such as counseling support, school materials and curriculum that focuses on strengthening students' confidence, sense of social justice and leadership abilities, Dawson adds.

Being part of the *Building Capacity* consortium has also helped to improve the school's overall climate by focusing more attention on the school's diverse population. Students are encouraged to become leaders and student ambassadors of "concern for one another," Dawson says.

"Many of our students are balancing daily hardships associated with adolescence and high school with a parent deployment or other personal situation," he says. "I can absolutely see positive changes and culture shifts in our students' character and capacity for leadership."

## Focus On: Transition

As our Consortium districts prepare to welcome both new and returning students this fall, we wanted to highlight some school district practices that can help to ease the transition process for military students and for all students who are entering

new schools. Many more strategies can be found in our four [guidebooks](#) on supporting military students in public schools.

- Assign someone at the district level to be in charge of monitoring enrollment of new students in the district, particularly military children. This person can help direct additional counseling and other support to schools with the highest mobility rates.
- Use the district website to welcome new families. Devote a prominent spot on the homepage to enrollment forms, information on extra-curricular programs, district-provided tutoring and links to community organizations serving military families, including school liaison officers. List a name and phone number of someone that new families can contact even before their children enroll.
- Create a brief questionnaire for new families--posted on the website and available at all schools--that asks some basic questions about incoming students, including their favorite subjects, the areas where they might need help and the sports or activities they enjoy outside of school. Also ask whether a parent is deployed or returning soon. Encourage families to complete these forms before school starts so district and school staff can address students' needs or refer families to the right contacts.
- Evaluate whether incoming students are facing any issues addressed by the [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#), such as credit for completed courses, appropriate educational services and eligibility for sports or other extracurricular programs.

## Featured Resource: Staying Strong

[Staying Strong](#) is a new website from the Red Sox Foundation and the Massachusetts General Hospital Home Program that provides guidance to military families and offers resources to educators so they can better support military students and parents in their schools.

The parent section of the site features short videos of family situations followed by parenting guidance offered by Dr. Paula Rauch, the program director of the Home Base Family Team.

The section for educators includes a 25-minute documentary about two military families, showing how their school community supported the families during the fathers' deployment and return. Teachers, school nurses, guidance counselors and administrators collaborated to support the resilience of the military-connected children in their civilian community.

Tool kits for teachers and school nurses can also be downloaded.

## Headlines and Resources

We regularly feature stories, reports and resources related to military children on our [website](#). Follow our news updates on [Tumblr](#) for additions, such as these:

- Dr. Justin Cunningham, superintendent of the Bonsall Union School District, has been chosen as the 2013 winner of the Charlie Binderup Outstanding Superintendent of the Year award from the Small School Districts' Association (SSDA). SSDA is a statewide organization representing over two-thirds of the small school districts in California. Read [more](#) on this *Building Capacity* superintendent's honor.
- A presentation on *Building Capacity* made at the American Psychological Association's annual convention in Honolulu this month received attention in a conference [blog](#).
- Members of the *Building Capacity* research team recently published an article entitled "[The Promotional Role of School and Community Contexts for Military Students](#)," which appeared in *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*.
- A recent [study](#) in the journal *Pediatrics* urges pediatricians to pay attention to the mental health needs of children whose parents have been deployed to war zones. According to the findings, about one in four children of parents deployed during wartime experience depression and more than a third worry "excessively" about their deployed parents.
- Click [here](#) for the July/August issue of the Academic Anchor, the newsletter of the Navy Region Southwest's school liaison officers. Click on the Academic Anchor tab.

