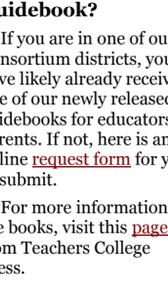


Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools

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Did You Receive Your Guidebook?

If you are in one of our Consortium districts, you have likely already received one of our newly released guidebooks for educators or parents. If not, here is an online [request form](#) for you to submit.

For more information on the books, visit this [page](#) from Teachers College Press.

Quick Links...

[Our Website](#)

Looking for Past Issues?

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

Upcoming Events:

Student Video Contest:

The California Mental Health Services Authority is challenging high school students across the state to create a 60-second public service announcement to prevent suicide and change opinions about mental illness. Winners of the Directing Change Student Video Contest will receive \$1,000, a matching cash prize for their school, and be recognized at an awards ceremony. Submissions are due **March 1**. Visit the [Directing Change](#) website for contest rules and information.

Questions, Comments or to Unsubscribe: e-mail us at raastor@usc.edu

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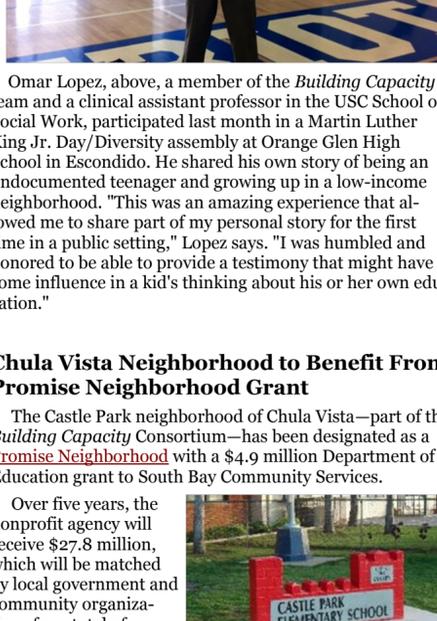
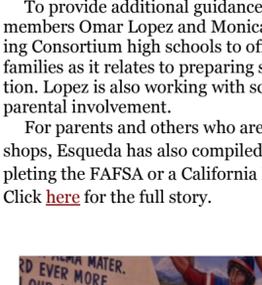
Families in Consortium Schools Receive Guidance on Financial Aid

As part of their ongoing efforts to support students in their journey towards higher education, many of our *Building Capacity* Consortium schools are hosting information nights and completion workshops on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for students and families.

El Camino High School, for example, in partnership with the Concerned Parent Alliance of San Diego and College Bound Oceanside, has started the Operation FAFSA Completion initiative with the goal of having at least 70% of seniors complete the FAFSA.

To provide additional guidance, *Building Capacity* team members Omar Lopez and Monica Esqueda have been visiting Consortium high schools to offer support to schools and families as it relates to preparing students for higher education. Lopez is also working with schools on ways to increase parental involvement.

For parents and others who are not able to attend workshops, Esqueda has also compiled some useful tips for completing the FAFSA or a California Dream Act application. Click [here](#) for the full story.

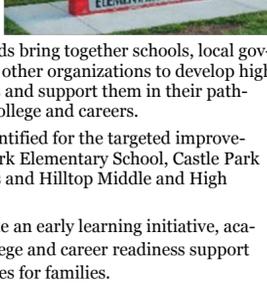


Omar Lopez, above, a member of the *Building Capacity* team and a clinical assistant professor in the USC School of Social Work, participated last month in a Martin Luther King Jr. Day/Diversity assembly at Orange Glen High School in Escondido. He shared his own story of being an undocumented teenager and growing up in a low-income neighborhood. "This was an amazing experience that allowed me to share part of my personal story for the first time in a public setting," Lopez says. "I was humbled and honored to be able to provide a testimony that might have some influence in a kid's thinking about his or her own education."

Chula Vista Neighborhood to Benefit From Promise Neighborhood Grant

The Castle Park neighborhood of Chula Vista—part of the *Building Capacity* Consortium—has been designated as a [Promise Neighborhood](#) with a \$4.9 million Department of Education grant to South Bay Community Services.

Over five years, the nonprofit agency will receive \$27.8 million, which will be matched by local government and community organizations for a total of more than \$60 million.



Promise Neighborhoods bring together schools, local government, businesses and other organizations to develop high expectations for students and support them in their pathways toward success in college and careers.

The neighborhood identified for the targeted improvements includes Castle Park Elementary School, Castle Park Middle and High Schools and Hilltop Middle and High Schools.

The project will include an early learning initiative, academic interventions, college and career readiness support and "wraparound" services for families.

Spotlight On: Superintendent Jennifer Walters

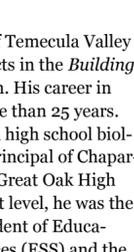
Jennifer Walters is superintendent of Escondido Union Elementary School District, part of the *Building Capacity* Consortium.

She has served in public education for 31 years as a teacher, a teacher coach, a principal, an assistant superintendent of instruction, and for the last six years, as EUSD's superintendent.

She considers her best days to be those spent observing quality teaching and learning in classrooms at one of Escondido's 23 elementary or middle schools.

An Escondido resident for 11 years, she received her doctoral degree at the University of California at San Diego.

As a public school system leader, Walters is committed to providing students with a sound academic foundation and important 21st century skills including collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and working seamlessly with technology. The district's teachers, students, parents, and support staff strive to consistently provide the highest quality instruction in order to meet the social-emotional and learning needs of our young citizens. Universal student achievement is the districts' top priority and Jennifer believes "It begins with her."



Spotlight On: Superintendent Timothy Ritter

Timothy Ritter is the superintendent of Temecula Valley Unified School District, one of eight districts in the *Building Capacity* Consortium. His career in education spans more than 25 years.

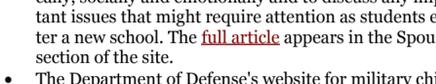
He has served as a high school biology teacher and as principal of Chaparral High School and Great Oak High School. At the district level, he was the assistant superintendent of Educational Support Services (ESS) and the deputy superintendent of ESS before becoming superintendent.

As part of *Building Capacity*, he has welcomed new and continued positive relationships with teachers, support staff, parents, and the community for the goal of transforming military-connected schools into supportive learning environments for military students.

California Healthy Kids Survey Administration Continue

Districts in the *Building Capacity* Consortium, as well as those across the state, are now in the process of administering the California Healthy Kids Survey and encouraging staff and parents to respond to the surveys intended for them.

See [last month's newsletter](#) to learn more about the importance of gathering this information. Below is the remaining schedule for the Consortium districts.



CHKS Schedule

Week of Feb. 25:

-Escondido Union High School District; Contact Barbara Gauthier, gauthier@euhsd.k12.ca.us

-Temecula Valley Unified School District; Contact Diana Damon-White, ddamon-white@tvusd.k12.ca.us

-Fallbrook Union High School District; Contact James Yahr, jyahr@fuhsd.net

Week of March 4: Fallbrook Union Elementary School District, Contact Bill Billingsley, bbillingsley@fuesd.k12.ca.us

Week of March 11: Escondido Union School District, Contact Tracy Schmidt, trschmidt@eusd.org.

Week of March 18: Chula Vista Elementary School District, Contact Melissa Minas, melissa.minas@cvesd.org

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:

- [Military.com](#) recently asked *Building Capacity* for an article on a practice suggested in our book, *The Military Family Parent's Guide for Supporting Your Children in School*: the exit interview. Similar to any parent-teacher conference, this is a chance for educators, parents and the child to review exactly where students are academically, socially and emotionally and to discuss any important issues that might require attention as students enter a new school. The [full article](#) appears in the Spouse section of the site.

- The Department of Defense's website for military children, [MilitaryKidsConnect.org](#), has added new features to help parents and educators explain difficult topics related to being a military child. Military culture videos and lesson plans, mini documentaries created by military children, and modules on handling grief, loss and physical injury are a few of the new resources provided.

- The Health Behavior News Service covered the release of a [new study](#) by members of the *Building Capacity* research team on drug and alcohol use among youth with deployed family members.

- The American Psychological Association's website featured an [article](#) on the social and emotional needs of military-connected children and youth.