

Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools



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DoDEA Grants Available

School districts have until April 13 to apply for the newest round of competitive grants designed to support military children in public schools. To be considered, a local education agency (LEA) must have a military dependent student enrollment of at least 5 percent and eligible schools must have a military dependent student enrollment of at least 15 percent. The LEA submits one application on behalf of its eligible schools.

The application package and instructions for "Promoting K-12 Student Achievement at Military-Connected Schools" can be found at this [website](#).

Family Readiness Express Visits Oceanside High

Oceanside High School gave the Navy's Family Readiness Express vehicle an enthusiastic welcome earlier this month. Over 300 visitors, including students, teachers, school administrators, staff, counselors and parents, toured the RV, which is run by the Navy Fleet and Family Support Center.

Materials on Internet safety, scholarships and community resources were distributed. One-on-one resume writing help was also provided.

The event went smoothly with the help of Principal Chris Hurst and Vice Principal Bob Mueller.

This was the last FRE visit for the year. In all, roughly 950 visitors have toured the FRE at consortium schools this year.

If your school is interested in scheduling a visit for next school year, contact Diana Pineda at dianapin@usc.edu.

Quick Links...

[Our Website](#)

Upcoming Events:

Coming Together Around Veteran Families:

The Family Resilience Center at UCLA, in partnership with Zero to Three, is sponsoring a special training opportunity April 5 for health care providers, early-childhood educators, mental health professionals and family support professionals.

The free workshop will focus on understanding how stressors associated with veteran life may affect babies and toddlers and how to support caregiver/child relationships.

The event will be held at the California Endowment Center for Healthy Communities. Click [here](#) to register online.

SDCOE Workshop: The San Diego County Office of Education will hold a workshop for those who want to learn more about how to support military children. The meeting will be held April 18, from 9-11 a.m. at the North County Regional Education Center, 255 Pico Ave. San Marcos, Calif. 92069. The event will be held in "Com Labs" 2-4.

For registration information, please contact Janet Ortega at (858) 292-3517 or by email at jportega@sdcocoe.net

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

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Gardens Helping Students Form Connections to Their School

Being the "new kid" at school can be tough for any child--but especially for military children who must frequently leave behind friends and work to fit in at a new place.

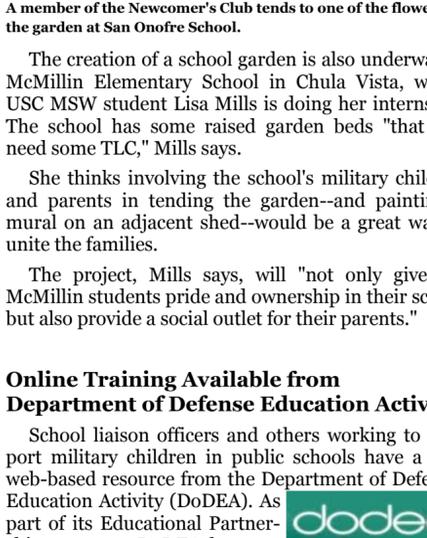
Newcomers at San Onofre School, however, now have a way to leave a lasting mark--even when they move on again.

USC Social Work intern Carolina Miranda, working with Principal Julie Hong, has created a Newcomers' Club to help incoming students understand that being in a new school doesn't have to be a lonely experience.

The participants are able to share their moving stories with other new students and learn skills to cope with the changes in their lives.

After the four group sessions, they are invited to plant a tree, flower or plant in the San Onofre Newcomer's Garden.

"When students plant their flower, I emphasize they are like the flower," Miranda says. "They have roots themselves that signify where they are from and they take those roots through their life's journey that help them grow."



A member of the Newcomer's Club tends to one of the flowers in the garden at San Onofre School.

The creation of a school garden is also underway at McMillin Elementary School in Chula Vista, where USC MSW student Lisa Mills is doing her internship.

The school has some raised garden beds "that just need some TLC," Mills says.

She thinks involving the school's military children and parents in tending the garden--and painting a mural on an adjacent shed--would be a great way to unite the families.

The project, Mills says, will "not only give the McMillin students pride and ownership in their school but also provide a social outlet for their parents."

Online Training Available from Department of Defense Education Activity

School liaison officers and others working to support military children in public schools have a new web-based resource from the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). As part of its Educational Partnership program, DoDEA has created "Keeping Students at the Center," a series of [online training modules](#) that provide information on issues affecting military students, relevant education policies, and various organizations.



The modules are based on "Students at the Center," a handbook for military parents, school leaders and members of the military community.

The new resource includes videos, downloadable presentations and briefings, fact sheets and links to useful websites and resources.

For more information on the DoDEA Educational Partnership, visit this [site](#).

Featured Resource: MilitaryKidsConnect.org

[MilitaryKidsConnect.org](#) is a new Department of Defense-sponsored website for kids impacted by the deployment of parents and caregivers.

The site features psychologist-developed content customized for three age groups--children, tweens and teens--as well as resources for parents and educators.

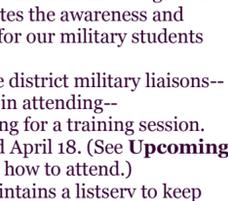


Military children can support one another and learn coping and resilience-building skills through interactive features. Activities on the site include moderated message boards, videos featuring military kids, and games incorporating cultural information about common military deployment locations.

Spotlight on Mara Madrigal-Weiss

As the daughter of a retired Air Force major, Mara Madrigal-Weiss knows what it's like to attend multiple schools, say goodbye to friends, and constantly adjust to new classrooms and circumstances.

That's why she was more than happy to become the military liaison for the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE). As a project specialist in the Student Attendance, Safety and Well Being unit--part of the Student Support Services Department--Madrigal-Weiss works to provide resources and information to all 42 districts in the county.



While most of the districts with large military student populations were already working to meet the needs of military families, the SDCOE wanted to expand those services.

"We have military children across our county," Madrigal-Weiss says.

In just two years since her position was created, every one of those districts has identified someone as a military liaison.

"The fact that we got 42 school districts to give us a point of contact demonstrates the awareness and dedication this county has for our military students and families," she says.

The SDCOE brings those district military liaisons--and anyone else interested in attending--together every fall and spring for a training session.

The next one will be held April 18. (See **Upcoming Events** for information on how to attend.)

Madrigal-Weiss also maintains a listserv to keep the military liaisons informed of new opportunities and services. In working with the Department of Defense school liaison officers, she would also like to create a "cheat sheet" with essential information on grants that are available to schools or districts to support military children.

Her office's [website](#) is still relatively new, but it provides a listing of school liaison officers, has links to resources for families and will serve as a place to post information about new programs and services.

Madrigal-Weiss is glad that awareness of the needs of military students is growing across the county, but she also wants schools to see military students as an asset.

"They have so many gifts to offer," she says, calling them "truly global citizens." "I want to make sure that we are highlighting the positive."

Building Capacity Guidebook Preview: Celebrating Special Months for Military Families

Schools that have never done anything to recognize military students or families can begin by celebrating the Month of the Military Child in April. Sponsored by the Department of Defense, this month is used to show appreciation for the role that children play in the military community. Recognizing this month is one of the recommendations made in our forthcoming guides for educators.

Events often include picnics, parades, or spring festivals, but can also be as simple as having students make cards for each other or posters to hang in the school hallways.

Another opportunity to honor these members of the school community is Military Family Month, held in November. This month gives families a chance to feel proud of their service. Holding workshops for military families on education topics, recognizing a family that has made an important contribution or sponsoring an art contest are a few of the activities that schools can organize during Military Family Month. Check out this [video](#) on how one school in our consortium recognized military families.

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:

-This month's issue of *Educational Researcher*, a journal of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), includes an [article](#) by members of the *Building Capacity* team. "A Call to Duty: Educational Policy and School Reform: Addressing the Needs of Children From Military Families" outlines the need for further educational reforms to support students from military families. The article focuses on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and notes that while most states have now adopted it, implementation varies widely at the local level. The article is the first on the Compact to appear in an education research journal. *Educational Researcher* is distributed to 25,000 university education professors through the AERA.

-This latest [report](#) from the National Council on Family Relations is entitled "Family Focus on Military Families." It features a variety of articles on successful models of working with military families.

-This [press release](#) from the Department of Defense highlights a new children's book being written by Dr. Jill Biden to raise awareness about the effects of deployment on military children.

-An [article](#) in the *Aiken Standard* focuses on the progress that South Carolina has made in supporting children with parents in the military. The state's education data system, for example, counts children who have parents on active duty or on deployment.