

Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools

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Limited Time Offer

For a short time, Teachers College Press is offering free copies of Building Capacity's guidebooks for educators and military parents. Click [here](#) to request a copy. These books are essential resources for those who work with military-connected students.

Special Journal Issue Focuses On Military Children Attending Public Schools

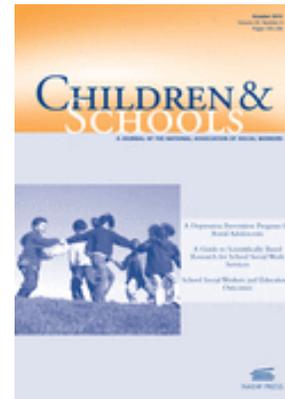
Lessons learned from schools in the *Building Capacity* Consortium are featured in a special issue of *Children & Schools*, a publication of the National Association of Social Workers.

Co-published by Oxford University Press, the journal features 10 articles describing current efforts to address military children's academic and social-emotional needs, as well as best practices that can be more broadly implemented in schools across the country.

While some of the articles are online now at this [link](#), the rest will be available at the site in early February.

The articles feature the different perspectives of parents, school administrators, teachers and community partners, reinforcing the belief that a comprehensive, community-wide approach is needed to help students be successful both in and out and school. Articles also describe how the master's students in the *Building Capacity* internship program have worked in partnership with Consortium schools to gain skills and support students.

"How these important professionals understand and support military-connected students in public schools is critical to how military families and students feel and thrive in those communities," says Dr. Ron Avi Astor, a professor of social work and education at the USC and the co-editor of the special issue along with Dr. Rami Benbenishty, a professor of social work at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.



Intern Leaves Lasting Impact on School

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Here's one example of how USC's MSW interns are making a difference at schools in the *Building Capacity Consortium* and leaving a daily reminder to honor military members and their families.

Frank Garcia, an intern during the 2012-13 school year, coordinated the creation of this mural at McMillan Elementary School in Chula Vista. The project is another example of how interns can work with school communities to make military children feel welcome and appreciated.



Parent Spotlight: Bernice Varela

Military children have an easier time coping with the frequent changes in their lives when their parents work together with educators to make sure children's academic and social-emotional needs are met.

Bernice Varela, whose daughter Calista attends El Camino High School in the Oceanside Unified School District, is an example of such a parent.

The wife of Navy Commander Gabriel Varela, the captain of the U.S.S. Kidd, Mrs. Varela donates time to



Bernice (L) and Calista Varela

help El Camino's Military Alliance Club because she says she knows how much it is supporting 14-year-old Calista when her father is deployed.

"For this age, it is priceless. I believe it's preventing a lot of deep emotions kids can go through," Mrs. Varela says about the club, which was created by USC MSW intern Eric

Henderson.

The club gives her daughter, who is also on the school's cross country team, a chance to share concerns and experiences with other military children. Meanwhile, Mrs. Varela has been giving back by helping out during club activities, such as a community Veterans Day ceremony and collecting holiday gifts for local military families.



Calista and her father, Commander Gabriel Varela

"Parents need to be involved," she says. "Anyway that I can possibly help, I step in there."

Henderson calls Mrs. Varela a "prime example of how parents can support their children in and out of school while managing the challenges of deployed military life."

Upcoming Event: Supporting Military Children Through School Transitions

The [Military Child Education Coalition](#) is holding a two-day professional development institute entitled "Supporting Military Children Through School Transitions: Foundations."

The training will take place Feb 19-20 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Carlsbad, Calif. Click this [link](#) to register and look for the Carlsbad announcement. The institute is open to school counselors and other educators from area public, private, and parochial

schools, as well as military installation and community leaders, transition specialists and military parents.

"Foundations" focuses on the military child's experience with transition and connects educators and others to professional networks, technologies, resources and support 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 *Scranton Times-Tribune* ran this [story](#) on a bill in the Pennsylvania legislature that would expand the state's Military Family Relief Assistance Program by creating a state income tax refund checkoff for taxpayers. The program was created in 2005 to help military families facing emergency situations.
- [Preventive Medicine](#) features a new study by USC Assistant Professor Dr. Tamika Gilreath showing that school transitions and coping through a parent's wartime deployment can increase the risks that military children are victimized by other students and are carrying weapons to school. Click [here](#) for the press release.
- This upcoming [article](#) in *Research on Social Work Practice* examines school-based interventions to support military students.

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