

Building Capacity and Welcoming Practices In Military-Connected Schools

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New Name

Our new name,
Building Capacity

Development Under Way for *Welcoming Practices* App and Website

On-the-Ground Student 2 Student and Parent 2 Parent Program Will Interact With App

Using technology to smooth the school transition process for families is a major component of the new *Welcoming Practices* partnership grant to USC and a Consortium of five school districts.

And developing that technology has become a widespread, cooperative effort that is involving multiple partners across Southern California.

The *Welcoming Practices* team in the School of Social Work is collaborating with web and mobile app design experts in the Viterbi School of Engineering to develop both an online student enrollment system as well as an app that will provide families with the resources their students need to successfully transition between schools.

Transition teams in the Consortium districts are also actively participating by collaborating on the website and app design as well as helping to provide links to resources that will be available from the app. Transition teams from the districts also recently participated in Student 2 Student training sessions held by the Military Child Education Coalition to create welcoming, on-the-ground programs for each of their districts (See the story below). This fall, these teams will play a vital role in using the student, educator and parent apps at each of their schools. Parent 2 Parent groups are



and Welcoming Practices in Military-Connected Schools, reflects both grants from the Department of Defense Education Activity that focus on improving educational experiences for military children in public schools.

Resource Guide Corner

If you are interested in receiving a free copy of one of our military resource guides for educators and parents, please click [here](#) to request a copy.

If you have already provided us feedback on the books, thank you. If you haven't we still want to hear from you. Click this [link](#) to answer a few questions, and use a computer or a laptop instead of a smart phone.

Quick Links...

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raastor@usc.edu

being created within the district transition teams.

"I love the fact that there is this greater purpose to the project--helping students across the board," says Trina Gregory, a senior lecturer for USC's Information Technology Program (ITP), where she teaches technology, programming, and mobile classes. Gregory is overseeing the technological side of the project.

Team Effort Involving Multiple Partners

Undergraduate students in ITP 460, a project-based course, are also supporting the project by helping to design the website. The site will be customized to fit the templates of each of the five school districts--Bonsall Union, Chula Vista Elementary, Fallbrook Union High School, Oceanside Unified and Temecula Valley.

Team members both at USC in Los Angeles and at the USC San Diego Academic Center are also working with district personnel to collect and organize information on vast numbers of school, community and military resource programs that will allow families to receive information tailored to where they live and suited to their child's needs and interests. As parents fill out the registration form, they will be prompted by several questions about resources or programs that might fit their needs. Parents, students and educators will be able to access the app on their phones and tablet computers to stay on top of the latest services available.

Gregory added that the team has really been "focusing in the customers that are going to use the system."

While the new registration process and mobile app are being designed with military families in mind, the service will be available to any family transitioning between schools.

Prototypes of the website and the app are expected by this summer.

Dr. Ron Astor on CBS Sunday Morning



Dr. Ron Astor appeared on CBS Sunday Morning this week as part of a feature on the mental health needs of military and veterans' children. He stressed that it is important for the children of veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to have support services. Watch the program [here](#). Links to resources are available at the end of the story.

Los Angeles Unified to Ask Families about Military Connection

District's Action Paves Way for Bill in California Legislature

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) will begin identifying children of active duty military and veteran families this fall in an effort to ensure that military-connected students receive the services and support they need.

The district has added a box for military parents to check on their child's Student Emergency Information Form. The question asks whether a parent is on active duty, a veteran or a member of the National Guard or reserves. The form also asks in which branch the parent serves and whether he or she is currently deployed.

Asking for this information is a major step toward raising more awareness of military students among educators in the second largest school district in the country, with over 700,000 students. This step also serves as an example to other large school districts in the nation. LAUSD is the first large urban school district to ask for both military and veteran status.

The question was added as a result of the collective efforts of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti's office, the USC *Building Capacity* project, the [USC Center for](#)

[Innovation and Research on Veterans and Military Families](#) and the Military Childrens Collaborative Group, a Los Angeles-area organization of over 20 partners interested in supporting military children and families.

Having the data will help the district apply for grants, receive Impact Aid funds and better serve military-connected families that are relocating to the Los Angeles area after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Military Student Identifier Bill Introduced in Assembly

The district's example also helps to pave the way for the state legislature to take action on a bill creating a statewide military student identifier.

California Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva has introduced a bill that proposes to begin the process of creating a unique student identifier for military-connected children.



Assembly Bill 2341, entitled Education Data Systems: Military Children, "proposes legislative intent" to create and implement a data collection system that would provide better information on military children attending California's public schools.

Members of the military community, including military school liaison officers, the Military Child Educational Coalition, regional non-governmental organizations, and the *Building Capacity* project, have been working with state legislators to consider the military child identifier.

"Teachers and school districts should work toward fostering supportive environments for our children of military families; the first step toward achieving this goal is to be able to identify those students within our schools," said Quirk-Silva, who represents the 65th district and serves as the chair of the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs. "Identifying military-connected students and eventually providing data on their attendance and educational outcomes can assist various collaborating entities in developing policy, supportive services, and military child education initiatives."

A former classroom teacher, Quirk-Silva says she understands how being separated from a parent

during a deployment can have a "negative impact on the child's ability to learn and overall academic performance."

She also recognized the *Building Capacity Consortium* and said she looks "forward to working with these stakeholders during the development of substantive language and policy" related to the bill.

April is the Month of the Military Child

As we did last year, we will be using our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages throughout April to highlight the lives and contributions of military children.

Post on our page or send us a tweet to let us know what you're doing to honor military children in school or the community.

Student 2 Student Training Workshops Continue Next Month

Trainers from the [Military Child Education Coalition](#) will return to Riverside and San Diego counties next month to continue preparing students and school staff members to implement the Student 2 Student (S2S) program this fall.

Participants from Temecula Valley High School will gather April 24-25, and students and staff from Oceanside High School will meet May 1-2.

S2S is a student-led program in which both civilian and military students develop and maintain programs to support students when they are transitioning between schools. While the website and app described in the story above is the technology aspect of *Welcoming Practices*, S2S will be a major on-the-ground component of the Consortium. Transition teams in the districts will work through the spring and summer to align both the virtual and the in-person aspects of the initiative.

With support from adults, the students participating in S2S develop procedures that help newcomers navigate their new surroundings and form positive relationships. In addition to the high school version, there is also Junior S2S for middle schools and the new Elementary S2S, which is led by adults in the schools. See our [February newsletter](#) for more details.

These upcoming sessions follow the three training opportunities that have already been provided in

Consortium districts and were attended by teams from the Temecula Valley Unified, Oceanside Unified, Chula Vista Elementary and Bonsall Union districts.

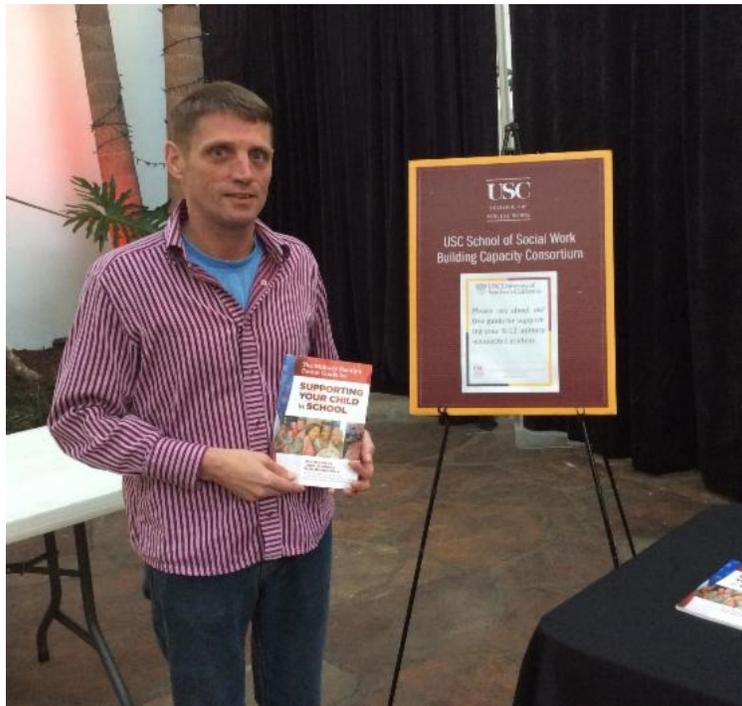
More details on those sessions will be coming in next month's issue.

***Building Capacity* Featured at Serving Those Who Serve Wellness Fair**

The *Building Capacity* team participated in the Serving Those Who Serve Wellness Fair earlier this month.

Sponsored by the California Mental Health Services Authority, the National Alliance on Mental Illness San Diego and the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, the March 4 event was open to veterans and active duty members and their families. The theme of the evening was reducing the stigma associated with mental illness to make sure service members receive the help they need.

Jonathan Alfonso, a *Building Capacity* project assistant at the San Diego Academic Center, provided information about the Consortium and distributed our resource guides.



Allan Robinson, a Navy veteran, received one of our guidebooks during the Wellness Fair.

Featured Resource: Parenting for Service Members and Veterans

This free [online training course](#) is designed to assist military parents who are returning home after a deployment or transitioning out of the military.

The course, from the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veteran Affairs features six modules covering topics such as "Promoting Positive Parent-Child Communications" and "Positive Approach to Discipline."

The site also features a link to resources and includes videos of real families.



***Building Capacity* Consortium Presented At SAMHSA Implementation Academy for States**

Fifteen states learned about the work and accomplishments of the *Building Capacity* Consortium this month at the Military and Veterans' Families Implementation Academy in Baltimore.

Dr. Ron Astor presented successful practices being used in Consortium schools as part of a plenary panel at the event, which was sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Service Members, Veterans and their Families Technical Assistance Center.

Astor, along with experts from across the U.S., served as a "content matter expert" over the two-day academy on issues of community-school collaboration, ramping up on a large scale, sustainability, and integrating or adapting evidence-informed programs.

The 15 states represented were Arizona, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Texas, and Virginia.

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 [story](#) from Illinois Public Media discusses the challenges faced by military students, particularly those in high school.
- Click [here](#) for articles on supporting military-connected children in a special issue of the journal *Children & Schools*, published by the National Association of Social Workers and Oxford University Press.

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Building Capacity in Military-Connected Schools, University of Southern California, Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services | 1149 S. Hill St. | Suite 360 | Los Angeles | CA | 90015