

Engage, Collaborate, and Counsel to Enhance Educational Capacity

The dynamics of military life place veterans and family members under great stress often resulting in academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioral issues, which in turn impact educational success. The College of Education is in a unique position to address the challenges faced by military and military-related students and families with professionals in the fields specializing in these areas. The project, Engage, Collaborate, and Counsel to Enhance Educational Capacity, will develop and implement engagement initiatives for college faculty, K-12 educators, college students, and Manhattan Boys & Girls Club (B&GC) to meet the needs of members of military connected families and students. Learning modules to earn a *Certificate of Competency in Counseling Military Connected Students* will be developed.

Need

Recent education research and reform efforts have not addressed the unique learning needs of military connected students and families (Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010). The RAND Report (2012) indicated a lack of educated and prepared academic and behavioral care support providers for children and adolescents for the millions of students currently being affected by military challenges. The Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) reports that since 2001 military deployments have impacted the lives of more than 2 million children. As of 2010, there were estimated to be 33,482 military connected children in Kansas. These children average moving and changing school districts six to nine times prior to high school graduation, three times more often than civilian families (Astor, Jacobson, Benbenishty, 2012; MCEC, 2012). Academic achievement and mastery of state standards are obvious concerns when a student transfers schools. Students who experience high rates of mobility, defined as changing schools a minimum of six times between 1st and 12 grade were 35% more likely to fail a grade than other students, and scored an average of four months behind peers on standardized tests (Astor, Jacobson, Benbenishty, 2012; Kerbow, 2003; Wood, 1993). The mobility issues can be a factor in transfer of credit policies, placement on extra curricular/co-curricular teams and activities, access to special education services, and personal and social (friendship) adjustments in new schools. Research conducted by Bradshaw (2010) reported findings that indicate adolescents experience additional stress in changing schools due to anxiety over friendships, acceptance in peer groups, and the ability to participate on sports teams and other select co-curricular opportunities. Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel (2010) identified risk factors for concern include deployment, risk of injury, mobility, academic disruption, loss of friendships and community, and barriers to peer conformance. One key to successful transition appears to be strong social support networks and the verbal and nonverbal messages reflecting attitude, sent by parents regarding the move (Astor, Jacobson, Benbenishty, 2012; O'Brien, 2007).

Educators and others providing academic programming and support often do not have a sufficient knowledge base in military culture and effective teaching and learning strategies to address the complex needs of these students. Another complicating factor for schools is the more than one million students with parents serving in the National Guard and Reserves (Astor, Jacobson, Benbenishty, 2012). These members of the military serve a critical role in service and security of our nation, however, their culture is somewhat varied from other military cultures presenting different challenges for educators attending to the needs of students and families. Astor, Jacobson, and Benbenishty (2012) reported a lack of research-based programs designed to assist military children achieve success in public schools.

Mental health concerns are a major issue for military connected students and families during the deployment and upon reintegration. For many military connected individuals, the concerns and issues grow to be hidden disabilities. Recent surveys rated concerns of anxiety, depression, hyper-vigilance, stress, PTSD, and sleeping problems as moderate or high concerns (Hamrick, Rumann, & Associates, 2013). The RAND research (2012) reported that the response of parents addressing the challenges of deployment impact the effects of deployment on students. Burnham and Hooper (2008) reported that because more students cited fears for their future due to recent wars and terrorist attacks, school counselors need to consider the effects of war and be prepared to address the impact on daily emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning of students. The Cozza concepts describe behavioral and psychiatric responses for graduated tiers of intervention. The responses include change in sleep, decrease in feeling safe, isolation, anxiety, PTSC depression, smiling, alcohol, reckless driving. The recommended intervention services include community support services, education, and self-help services with clinical intervention, psychoeducation skill building, and communication. The tiers of intervention for responding are resilience, disequilibrium, at risk, and illness (MCEC, 2012). Resilience is a key factor in students and families surviving and growing while experiencing military life. Rudd, Goulding, and Bryan (2011) reported the increasingly high rate of suicide and suicidal ideations among veterans. Living with family members who are suicidal or experiencing deep depression is often leads to family challenges. Between 2003-2008 the number of military connected children receiving outpatient mental health services doubled and inpatient care increased by 50% (Nansook, 2011).

Project Description

The principle investigator of this proposal, Dr. Judy Hughey was selected in May 2012 to participate in one of the few research-based programs, MCEC Public Engagement, addressing the needs of military connected students and families. Dr. Hughey represented the College of Education and Counselor Education during the project. Participants were requested to create action plans to meet expected outcomes for the purpose of enhancing the educational experiences of military connected children. Following the project meetings, Dr. Hughey developed three action items: (1) form a multidisciplinary

team to educate pre-service and in-service school counselors and counselor educators about military issues, (2) secure a grant to educate and enhance the skills of school counselors and counselor educators in areas of concern specific to military students, and (3) provide staff development to educators and support service providers, including current and future teachers, on effective academic, behavioral, and social interventions. This proposal is intended to address these action items by engaging local stakeholders in discussions of the needs and strengths of military related P-12 students and the preparation or staff development of school counselors to provide services for the students.

Multidisciplinary Team

Faculty in Special Education, Counseling, and Student Affairs
Faculty in Curriculum and Instruction
Professional staff from Manhattan Boys and Girls Club

Participants

Candidates in Counselor Education
Undergraduates in Curriculum and Instruction
Student staff, mentors, and student counselors from Manhattan Boys and Girls Club
Community behavioral healthcare providers

This project is an effort to engage a multidisciplinary team of select KSU College of Education (COE) faculty from the Departments of Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education, Counseling, and Student Affairs, and the Boys and Girls Club (B&GC) in designing and providing professional development and instructional interventions to current school counselors, COE faculty, P-12 classroom teachers, community behavioral healthcare providers, and staff from the B&GC that will better prepare them to work with members of military connected families and students. Military connected students comprise approximately 30% of the 1,819 K-8 members of B&GC in the home club or 9 school-based programs located in Manhattan and Clay Center public schools. The content of the professional development material will also be taught to undergraduate students in professional education course work including Educational Psychology and to graduate students in the Master's in School Counseling Program and PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision Program in multiple courses, specifically Counseling Practicum. Candidates in counseling will have the opportunity to earn a Certificate of Competency in Counseling Military Connected Students. The team will engage students, families, educators, and key stakeholders in the community to provide research based best practices through professional development and instructional activities. Following the evaluation and analysis process, materials will be revised for existing teaching and counseling curricular to include these practices.

The MCEC and the AACTE developed principles to guide the education of graduates to meet the academic, social, and emotional learning needs of military connected students. These principles, encouraging courage, acknowledging positive attributes, promote resilience, respect children as grievers, prevent victimization, and respect for cultural traditions, belief systems, and privacy for each child, will serve as a foundation for the goals, objectives, and tasks of this proposal. Specifically, the six elements for quality teaching as identified by the Department of Defense Education will serve as the foundation for research based instructional practices. In addition, project participants will be given instruction on how to nurture resilience and develop healthy coping skills to manage change.

Faculty, teachers, and B&GC staff will be asked to refer a select number of military students and families to the project for personal, career, academic, and social support and counseling services. The challenges of a military life can greatly impact the academic success and personal adjustment of students and families. Symptoms of stress include change in sleep, isolation, fear, anxiety, depression, excessive use of alcohol, and illegal drugs. These symptoms impact the individual and also the family members of the individual. If the symptoms are not addressed, unhealthy coping mechanisms can result in exacerbated problems. The project will include a licensed mental health counselor and candidate in the Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision program to provide counseling services to students and families. The counselor providing these services will have advanced education and preparation for addressing the diverse needs of military students and families. Also, school counseling master's students enrolled in Counseling Practicum provide counseling services to children at the B&GC where a significant percentage of children are military connected. These master's candidates will participate in the professional development activities to prepare for working with the children. This preparation includes advanced skill development in individual and group theory and interventions specific to military trauma, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, communication challenges, and family distress. Successful completion of the five learning modules addressing the above issues will result in counseling candidates earning a Certificate of Competency in Counseling Military Connected Students.

The project will engage collaborators across disciplines to teach and promote best practices to facilitate the educational needs of military connected students and families in schools and community. Project activities will engage professionals across disciplines to enhance the capacity and success of military connected students. This engagement will bring greater awareness and foster connections within schools and the community for more successful educational experiences. Cross-disciplinary professionals in academics, B&GC staff, and behavioral healthcare community providers will be involved in this collaborative effort to address the academic, personal, social, and behavioral issues facing these students and families. Data will be collected to evaluate project effectiveness.

Objectives To Address Needs and Provide Sustainability

1. Address student academic needs.
 - a. Enhance the knowledge base of current and future educators regarding military culture and its impact on the learning needs of military connected students.
 - b. Provide resources to support learning needs and increase academic achievement of students.
 - c. Promote to current teachers, future teachers, and B&GC staff, innovative, research based and developmentally appropriate strategies to enhance the academic performance of military connected students.
 - d. Promote policies and programs for effective school and family communication and partnerships.
 - e. Implement evaluation tools and designs that are linked to the strategies and provides project feedback important for meaningful discussions and decision-making.
2. Address emotional and behavioral health needs.
 - a. Enhance the knowledge base of current and future school counselors on the mental health needs of military connected children and adolescents.
 - b. Develop five learning modules with counseling content, skill development, and assessment tools.
 - c. Provide to school and community key stakeholders, including and B&GC staff, information on military culture.
 - d. Provide professional development for the purpose of skill enhancement to current school counselors, community mental health professionals, and graduate candidates in counseling on issues of concern to military connected families including academic, emotional, and behavioral health issues.
 - e. Upon successful completion of the five learning modules, graduate students in counseling will be presented with the *Certificate of Competency in Counseling Military Connected Students*.
 - f. Provide services to military connected students/families in Advanced Counseling Practicum.
 - g. Implement evaluation tools and designs that are linked to the strategies and provide project feedback important for meaningful discussions and decision-making.

Activities and Benchmarks

1. Develop electronic and print research based professional development materials and five counseling learning modules to be shared with the project participants and graduate candidates in counseling. Upon mastery of learning modules, candidates will be presented with a *Certificate of Competency in Counseling Military Connected Students*.
2. Present at the Kansas Counseling Association (KCA) Spring Convention to be held in Manhattan, March 3-5, 2014. The purpose of the session will be to provide interventions and strategies specifically for military connected families. KCA is the state organization for mental health and school counselors in Kansas. The conference is also attended by master's and doctoral candidates in counseling graduate programs from all the Regent institutions. In addition, presentations will be made at national counseling and educators conventions. The project PI is the Post Secondary Vice President of the KCA.
3. Present a professional development session at the Manhattan Discovery Center. The session, designed for teachers and counselors, will be focused on demonstrating active learning strategies in a contextual environment by integrating national/Kansas counselor standards and common core academic standards.
4. Present professional development sessions for the B&GC specific to curriculum and strategies appropriate for before and after school programming and consistent with the program objectives of the B&GC. The project PI serves on the B&GC Board of Directors and on the programming subcommittee.
5. Provide counseling services to referred military connected students and families. Services will be delivered from a licensed mental health counselor and candidate in the Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision program. Clients will be seen in the COE counseling department's counseling suite located in Bluemont Hall. Dr. Hughey, a nationally certified counselor and faculty member in counselor education, will supervise and provide feedback to the candidate.
6. Conduct professional development to provide current teachers, future teachers, and B&GC staff innovative, research based and developmentally appropriate strategies, resources, and recommendations for implementation to enhance the academic performance of military connected students. Integral to the academic success are policies and programs that promote demonstrate an understanding of military culture and its impact on learning and effective school and family communication and partnerships. Exemplars in this area will be promoted.
7. Implement evaluation tools and designs that are linked to the strategies and will provide project feedback important for meaningful discussions and decision-making.

Timeline

July: Meet with partners to discuss research and best practices with military connected students; plan and develop professional development agendas, five learning modules to address the needs as described above, referral process for counseling opportunity and develop research tools and design plan.

Aug: Conduct initial professional development and course content material with select educators, faculty, and students; collect assessments and review. Make needed revisions to materials.

Sept-May: Conduct professional development activities and engage counseling candidates in the learning modules.

March: Present at professional conventions: Kansas Counseling Association, American Counseling Association, and National B&GC.

May-July: Present graduate students who have completed the learning modules with Certificate of Competency in Counseling Military Connected Students; review collected data for curriculum revisions.