

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

## NEWSLETTER *for Champions*

### Founder's Focus: *Families on the Front Line of Education*

On behalf of the Family Engagement Lab team, we would like to extend our appreciation for the educators and families that are working tirelessly to rethink how we all support the needs of our children through the COVID-19 crisis. Families are now on the front line of our education system, especially for our younger learners. Parent-teacher collaboration in learning is needed now more than ever.

To support our partners during the COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures, we are offering FASTalk to teachers across PK-5, along with a new service, FASTalk Direct. In addition, we have created new at-home learning activities and tips to help families support healthy emotional response during the crisis and provide a strong foundation for continued learning. These new services are described below.

We have appreciated the opportunity to connect with many of you over the past few weeks to learn more about how you have been affected by COVID-19. If we have not yet connected, we would love to chat with you. In the meantime, please stay safe, healthy, and hopeful.

Warmly,

Vidya Sundaram and Elisabeth O'Bryon  
Co-Founders, [Family Engagement Lab](#)

[View Blog Posts](#)



### In Case You Missed It

Family Engagement Lab's co-founders Vidya Sundaram and Elisabeth O'Bryon were recently featured as Inspirational Women in STEM and Tech: "There is a misguided fear that immigration is a threat to values and culture; But as a society, we gain so much from the co-existence and celebration of diverse cultures." [Read the full article here.](#)

## FASTalk is offering new, free multilingual texts to support at-home learning PK-5.

### FASTalk Direct: Engaging Families in At-home Skill Development During School Closures

Family Engagement Lab recognizes that schools may need additional support to reach and engage families in at-home learning during school closures. In particular, families with limited access to devices and the internet, as well as those facing language barriers are likely to need simple, accessible options to support learning at home over the coming weeks.



To support rapidly evolving priorities related to family communication and learning at home, FEL is offering resources to all preschool–fifth grade families in our partner school systems.

[Get My District's Custom Signup Link](#)

## Support for Schools and Families During COVID-19 School Closures

### Q. How is FASTalk supporting schools and PK-5 families facing language and connectivity barriers during school closures?

A. To help families stay engaged in learning throughout a school closure, FASTalk is offering a new, direct-to-parents texting program free-of-charge for current partners:

- FASTalk will send parents weekly tips and activities aligned to state ELA learning standards across preschool through fifth grade.
- Activities will be sent by text message. Parents do not need to have a smartphone or download an app to benefit.
- Text messages will be available in 100+ languages.
- Parents will also receive tips to support social and emotional learning, including managing stress and anxiety.

FASTalk can also send links to high-quality online learning resources recommended by your district or state department of education.

### Q. Will current FASTalk teachers be able to continue using FASTalk?

A. Current teachers and families already using FASTalk can continue with the current curriculum-aligned text messages to families. Teachers also have the option to switch to more general grade-level aligned learning texts.

If you are a current FASTalk user and would like to switch from your curriculum-aligned content to the general ELA and SEL texts, please contact us at [support@fastalk.org](mailto:support@fastalk.org).

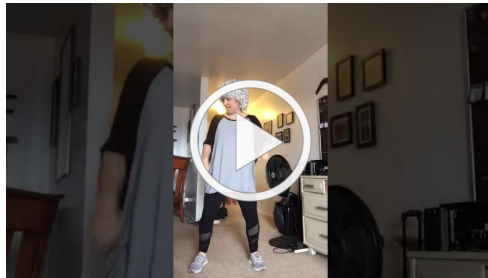
### Q. How can I inform families about the new service?

A. We have set up online signup forms for each of our partners so that families can enroll directly in the FASTalk service. We recommend that you share the information detailed on our [COVID-19:](#)

[School Closures: Support for Schools and Families webpage](#) with your community on district and school social media, websites, newsletters, FAQs, notification systems, and more.

Learn more

## Educator Highlight: Rachel Tabar, Kindergarten Teacher at Manzanita Community School, Oakland Unified School District



View Rachel's count and exercise video—**Granny Tabar counts to 100** (a remake/parody of Jack Hartmann-style videos)—that she created to help her students practice their counting skills during school closures.

Rachel Tabar, Kindergarten teacher at Manzanita Community School in Oakland Unified School District, has been using FASTalk to communicate with her students' families during the school closure and is sending customized daily messages to share resources and guidance.

"I am loving FASTalk for many reasons! FASTalk enables me to:

- **send text messages to my entire class in their preferred language.**
- **send messages as texts. *This is helpful because not all families have email.***
- **receive the FASTalk messages that I send to my class so I can preview how they look."**

FASTalk assigns phone numbers for teachers using local area codes to send the text messages. Rachel is receiving more responses from families through FASTalk than other formats and credits this feature for the noted increase. In addition to this, Rachel is able to review which parents have unsubscribed and has been encouraging them to re-subscribe to continue receiving resources through FASTalk during the school closure.

"FASTalk has really helped me communicate with my families and provide learning activities for my students at home during this uncertain and difficult time."

## Share the Good News

As champions of family engagement, we encourage you to become a part of the conversation by sharing one of the following posts on social media, or using them as inspiration for your own unique post.

In this month's Learning Series, [@FamilyELab](#) discusses the importance of parent-teacher collaboration in learning and shares activities and tips to help families support healthy emotional response during the COVID-19 pandemic.  
<http://www.familyengagementlab.org/learning-series.html>

[@FamilyELab's](#) vision is for every student to have access to meaningful at-home learning opportunities that promote their social, emotional, and academic skill development. Learn more at <http://www.familyengagementlab.org/>.

## Contact Us

Have questions? Email us at [felcommunications@fastalk.org](mailto:felcommunications@fastalk.org).  
Don't forget to **follow us on social media** for the latest tools and resources to support family engagement.



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