

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

NEWSLETTER *for Teachers*

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.

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.

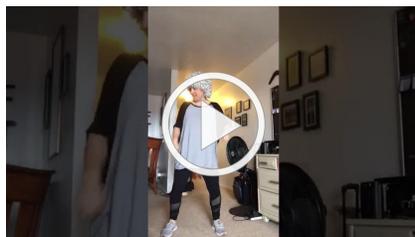
If you are a current FASTalk user and would like to switch from your curriculum-aligned content to the general ELA and SEL texts, please contact us at support@fastalk.org.

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."

Family Talk: What are parents saying about FASTalk? [Join the conversation](#) and [share their thoughts](#) with us.

FASTalk es una excelente medio para saber cómo mi hijo aprende.

(FASTalk is an excellent way to know how my child learns.)

-Parent of fourth-grade student
Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana



I like getting ideas of how to support my child's learning outside of the classroom. Even when I don't do the suggested activities, I still appreciate the reminder to think of other ways to support learning.

-Parent of transitional kindergarten student
Oakland Unified, California

How can we improve your FASTalk experience? [Let us know.](#)

Family Engagement Resources

- Teachers, help parents understand the importance of establishing warm and loving relationships with their children by [sharing this article](#) with them.
- Share this [short video](#) with parents to help them learn science-based strategies to guide their children toward caring, courageous choices that serve the greater good.
- [Raising Caring, Confident, Capable Children](#): What parents and caregivers need to know about social and emotional learning (SEL) and why it deserves your support in school and at home.

FASTalk Tip of the Month: Supporting Families Facing Language and Connectivity Barriers During School Closures

During the recent school closures, some parents may be experiencing a sudden deluge of information (and expectations), while other parents may not be receiving enough information. FASTalk's approach is to:



- help families feel valued and supported, especially during a time of stress when parents' are feeling overwhelmed regarding how to support their children's learning and emotional needs; and
- provide quick, easy, fun, interactive activities and conversation starters that build parents' capacity and confidence to reinforce important reading, writing, social, and emotional skills while building strong relationships with their children.

Current teachers now have the option to send more general, grade-level aligned learning texts. For example, teachers can share:

New routines can be hard (for all)! Talk about family routines that remain the same - consistency helps young children feel secure & safe.

OR

Help maintain your child's support system by finding ways to connect with friends & family through texts, calls, or by writing letters.

Current FASTalk users that would like to switch from curriculum-aligned content to the general ELA and SEL texts are encouraged to contact FEL at support@fastalk.org.

Join FASTalk's Teacher BINGO Challenge

FASTalk TEACHER BINGO CHALLENGE

Thanks to your participation in FASTalk, your students' families are receiving weekly SMS text messages with fun and easy tips to help your child's reading, writing, and social and emotional skills at home.

CIRCLE THE THINGS YOU'VE DONE BELOW!

Posted videos for students	Received encouraging messages on FASTalk	Shared resources with my FASTalk friends	Verified home language on FASTalk	Shared resources for distance learning
Learned a new skill	Made a solo dance party	Sent a gift FASTalk message	Encouraged families to talk in home language	Wrote a letter to a friend
Showed kindness to myself	Updated student code on FASTalk	FASTalk	Verified my own families on distance learning	Created a customized FASTalk playlist
Video called a loved one	Updated phone numbers on FASTalk	Toucher base with each of my students	Practiced learning strategies	Re-read a favorite book/library
Sent message to students' family haven't heard from	Played an online game	Logged into FASTalk account	Learned something new about my students	Called students' families on the phone

NOW TAG FELLOW FASTalk TEACHERS!

Questions? Contact us at support@fastalk.org

Thanks to your participation in [FASTalk](#), your students' families are receiving weekly SMS text messages with fun and easy tips to help your child's reading, writing, and social and emotional skills at home.

Get in on the fun! Circle what you've done on the board and tag fellow FASTalk teachers.

Have questions? Contact us at support@fastalk.org.

Share the Good News

As teachers, you can encourage parents to become more involved in their child's learning by providing them with quick tips on how to support learning at home. Here are a few social media posts to use this month to help build family engagement in your classroom or school.

Help parents understand the importance of establishing warm and loving relationships with their children by sharing this article with them.
[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_love_can_help_your_child_become_more_compassionate?](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_love_can_help_your_child_become_more_compassionate?_ga=2.93748116.889269085.1583519654-240181222.1579890602)
[_ga=2.93748116.889269085.1583519654-240181222.1579890602](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_love_can_help_your_child_become_more_compassionate?_ga=2.93748116.889269085.1583519654-240181222.1579890602)
#familyengagement

Did you know that [@FamilyELab's](#) #FASTalk tool helps families learn strategies to support learning through building critical academic skills, cultivating learning mindsets and habits, and practicing social and emotional skills? Learn more here:
<http://www.familyengagementlab.org/>
#familyengagement #FELfamilies

Contact Us

Have questions? Email us at 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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