

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

NEWSLETTER *for Champions*

Founder's Focus: *Expert Tips for Welcoming Families Back to School This Fall*

To all of you who work in education, we know you are working day and night right now to figure out how to help our kids feel a sense of security, connectedness, and stability so they are ready to learn this fall.

No matter where you are in the world, this fall will be unusual. Many of the rituals of fall that provide families, students, teachers and school staff an important touchpoint during the start of the school year are going to have to be reimaged. “Back to School Nights,” welcome events, and home visits are being adapted as I type this to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to heal from trauma together, while forging the important new bonds needed between teachers, students, and parents.



We have heard from many families eager to redefine relationships between school and home during the upcoming school year. To support a strong start this fall, we are curating relevant family engagement research and emerging best practices to help school leaders and educators welcome families into a new school year in a living report “[Back-to-School 2020: Expert Tips to Support School-Family Partnership in Flexible Learning Environments.](#)” We will continue to add new tips that promote parent-teacher collaboration to support student learning.

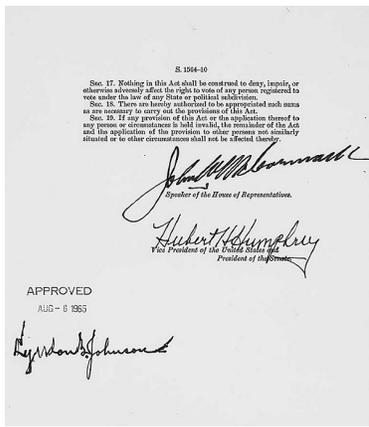
We are adding new resources and innovative practices to this document regularly. To contribute to this resource, complete this [brief survey](#).

[Through this survey, you can recognize a teacher or administrator who is doing something extraordinary this fall to connect with families. Share their story with us, and we will send them a \\$10 gift card for the first 20 we receive.](#)

Sincerely,

Vidya Sundaram
Co-Founder, [Family Engagement Lab](#)

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This month's Monumental Milestones in Education focuses on the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Act was [signed into law](#) on August 6 by President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) and suspended literacy, knowledge, and character tests designed to keep African Americans from voting in the South. It also authorized the appointment of Federal voting examiners and barred discriminatory poll taxes.

At Family Engagement Lab, we are committed to supporting and studying efforts to create a just and equitable educational system built on partnership and engagement with families. We envision a future where communities of color are treated with compassion, dignity, and respect as individuals.

FASTalk Connection: New Updates to Support a Strong Start to 2020-2021

With the support of our partners and donors, we're empowering families to ensure student success in any environment, from distance learning to in-person. FASTalk is launching new features this fall including:

- Flexible standards-aligned and curriculum-aligned content options
- Direct-to-parent message playlists, in addition to teacher-parent two-way messaging
- Middle school support



We're excited to build upon our award-winning and evidence-based model to support more families.

[Schedule a Demo](#)

FASTalk Family Feature: How FASTalk Families Engage Their Children in Learning



In this month's FASTalk Family Feature, LaTondria White—parent of a fifth grade student at Luling Elementary in St. Charles Parish—shares her experience with FASTalk.

Visit www.familyengagementlab.org to learn more.

Educator Highlight: Peter Limata, First Grade Teacher, Emerson Elementary,



Peter Limata—first grade teacher at Emerson Elementary of Oakland Unified School District—was recently recognized on the Ellen Show for his continued dedication to his students during distance learning through his popular and interactive read alouds.

He began using FASTalk for the first time during the 2019-2020 school year and found FASTalk’s two-way chatbox to be helpful, especially during school closures.

“I got more responses from parents than before. It was nice not to be bombarded on my phone,” said Mr. Limata. “I made sure that if I received a message, I would follow through and complete activities in class so I wasn’t just sending a random piece of information home with my students.”

Mr. Limata appreciates FASTalk’s ability to increase family engagement through strengthening the relationship between teachers and parents.

“For me, it was important that parents knew the messages were coming from me. Parents wouldn't say, ‘Oh, I got the message from the app.’ They would say, ‘I got your message,’ and it allowed for building more buy-in and participation from the parents,” said Mr. Limata.

He plans to continue using FASTalk for the 2020-2021 school year as a way to engage families in their child’s learning. He shared the following FASTalk tip for teachers:

“Look at the FASTalk prompts, review your FASTalk account, and consider acknowledging the parents who have responded by sending them a ‘thanks for your feedback’ message so they know that it's appreciated and something that the teacher is looking at.”

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](#) co-founder [@vidya_sundaram](#) shares relevant family engagement research and emerging best practices to help school leaders and educators welcome families into a new school year. Read the full blog post: <http://www.familyengagementlab.org/learning-series.html> #FELfamilies

More engagement, more impact: Active engagement through #FASTalk is related to 1.9-2.1 months of accelerated learning, as well as statistically significant literacy assessment growth. Learn more: http://www.familyengagementlab.org/uploads/1/0/0/1/100109266/1718_fastalk_eval_findings_brief_.pdf #FELfamilies #familyengagement

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.

