

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

NEWSLETTER *for Teachers*

Founder's Focus: *Engaging Families in Accelerating Learning for Diverse Students*

Effectively supporting the heterogeneous needs of diverse learners in the classroom can be challenging. This challenge is well documented: it is clearly communicated in national studies of teachers. I saw it firsthand when providing school psychological services, and I see it today as Family Engagement Lab works closely with teachers and schools.



Engaging and collaborating with students' parents and caregivers can help. Parents can play a big role in supporting the work you are doing in your classrooms by reinforcing classroom learning at home—and their engagement in a child's learning has consistently been shown to make a positive difference on student outcomes. Moreover, diverse learners have diverse needs, and parents know their children best. They know their child's motivators and their barriers; they help their children practice the skills outlined on their IEPs; they support their child's language development every day. Partnering with the "experts" who deeply understand their child's unique strengths and challenges can help them reach their potential.

As a school-psychologist-turned-family-engagement-advocate, I've had the unique opportunity to identify, design, and study innovative technology solutions like FASTalk that help teachers activate the power of families to support the success of diverse learners. It will take time and effort to accelerate the learning of all these students, but the process will be less challenging and more children will benefit when parents and teachers collaborate.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth O'Bryon
Co-Founder, Family Engagement Lab

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Educator Highlight: Jacqueline Duong, West Oakland, CA

As a first- and second-grade teacher in West Oakland, one of my biggest challenges is engaging parents. Because of extenuating circumstances with their home life, they're not able to show up to school much. About



half my parents speak Spanish, and due to language and communication tool barriers, there just wasn't two-way communication.

Two years ago, I started using FASTalk to communicate with parents as well as send literacy tips that they could do at home. It's connected to our attendance system, so it came loaded with all the parents' cell phone numbers. I use the online interface to send messages via text to all my parents and families, that are automatically translated into the language the

parent speaks.

The parents I've talked to like getting messages about how they can help at home because it's always a struggle. Either they don't have time, or they're not sure exactly what their kids are learning in school. The literacy activities we assign only take a few minutes, and parents feel like they're an accessible way to communicate with their kids and continue their education at home.

Family Engagement Resources: Engaging Families to Support Diverse Learners

- [What to Do If Your Child Struggles In School](#) (Exceptional Lives)
- [Parent Guide to Special Education Services](#) (Exceptional Lives)
- [Understanding Your Child's Differences](#) (Understood.org)
- [5 Ways to Engage Parents of EL Students](#) (Room 241)
- [Learning Together At Home: A Bilingual Site for Educators and Families](#) (Colorín Colorado)
- [Free Language Services for Refugee or Displaced Students](#) (NaTakallam)
- [Practical exercises to support raising caring, compassionate, courageous kids](#) (Greater Good Science Center)

FASTalk Tip of the Month: Break Down Language Barriers



Accelerating student learning is hard. Especially when they have special needs or speak a different language from you. It takes a lot of work and support to help these students learn and master the skills they need to be successful in your grade. But you don't have to do it alone. Engaging these students' families in classroom learning at home will not only help reinforce the content, but will create meaningful, lasting partnerships that you can leverage throughout the school year.

FASTalk helps breakdown language barriers with your EL students' families by delivering curriculum-aligned tips and activities to them via text messages in their preferred language. You can also use the Chatbox to send direct, translated messages to parents that keep them informed of how their child is doing. Here's a [quick video](#) on how to change messages to go to the parent in their native language.

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.



Accelerating students with diverse needs can be challenging. But with @FamilyELab's tool FASTalk, I am able to engage parents in at-home, curriculum-aligned, literacy activities that can speed up student learning. www.familyengagementlab.org



Parents, it's important to talk openly with your child about their learning differences so that they are comfortable thinking or learning differently from their peers. Here are some tips to guide this convo: <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/understanding-childs-challenges/talking-with-your-child/how-to-talk-to-your-child-about-learning-and-thinking-differences>



Parents, the holidays are a perfect time to teach kids about compassion. This "pleasant events" calendar is a great activity to do with your child during the Christmas break. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/pleasant_events_calendar_for_kids

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.

