

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

NEWSLETTER *for Champions*

Founder's Focus: *Providing Families with an Academic Barometer for Student Success*

Across the country, parents are eager for more information about what happens inside the schools and classrooms where their children spend a significant amount of time each week. Limited time, resources, and language barriers can all inhibit regular two-way communication between schools and families, and relying on children to be the key messengers for school-related information can introduce other challenges. I know my three-year-old is unlikely to give me a detailed response to a very specific question about his day, much less a comprehensive recounting of all the week's events!



Despite the limited weekly intel that I receive from my son, I do get a unique vantage point into his “preschool life” because parents at the school regularly assist or “co-op” in the classroom. When I co-op, I have the opportunity to immerse myself in the classroom activities and actively engage with my son’s classmates, as well as his teachers. I’m having an elaborate tea party in the dramatic play area one minute, leading a sorting activity the next, and then quickly transitioning to help children manage the strong feelings associated with a block tower having been knocked down. In addition to feeling *exhausted*, I end the day feeling empowered as I come away with a much richer understanding of my child’s experience at school. I have a lot more information about what skills they are practicing that week in his classroom, what the behavioral expectations are, and how my son is getting along with the other children. I feel like I have a better sense of whether he’s “on track” and what I can do to support him.

Parents want to help their children thrive socially, emotionally, and academically and they need key information from schools and teachers in order to be effective. While co-oping in the classroom is not often feasible, the experience highlights the type of information that parents are looking for in order to understand and support their children’s educational needs. Information about what is being taught and how their child is doing – information that can be communicated in ways that are accessible and feasible for families and teachers. We know this is possible because we do it with FASTalk. Through weekly text messages from the teacher, parents are empowered with knowledge about what their child is learning and how they can help at home, and all messages come in families’ home languages.

Before traveling to California next week to meet and gather feedback from families who are using FASTalk in Oakland, I’m scheduled to co-op in my son’s class. He calls co-oping “being the helper,” and what he doesn’t know is how much it helps me.

What can you do to encourage school districts to communicate better with parents on how well students are on track? Tag [@FamilyELab](#) on Twitter with your ideas.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth O'Bryon

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

[View Blog Posts](#)

FEL and FASTalk News

- Co-Founder, Elisabeth O'Bryon will present at the [National Association of Schools Psychologists](#) conference February 18-21 in Baltimore, MD on effectively promoting modern family engagement practices.
- FASTalk will be at the [Louisiana Association for School Administrators of Federally Assisted Programs](#) March 2-4 in Shreveport, LA.
- Family Engagement Lab will be presenting research findings at UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center's "[Raising Caring, Courageous Kids](#)" convening on March 15-16.
- Co-Founder Vidya Sundaram will attend the [Accelerate Global Good Conference](#) in San Francisco, CA on March 16. Email her at vidya@familyengagementlab.org if you will be there too and want to connect.
- Family Engagement Lab is offering an exciting opportunity for K-5 ELA educators—in Jefferson and Orleans Parish in Louisiana—interested in improving equitable outcomes for students by igniting the power of families to get their children excited about learning. [Learn more about the 2020 Family Engagement Lab Teacher Pilot Grant Program.](#)

News You Can Use: Engaging Families in Assessing Student Learning

- [Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education Part 4: Engaging all in data conversations](#) (U.S. Department of Education/McREL International)
- [How Parent Involvement Leads to Student Success](#) (Waterford.org)
- [Parents 2018: Going Beyond Good Grades](#) (Learning Heroes)
- [Engaging Families Through Better Communication Systems](#) (Matthew Kraft)

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 the February edition of the Learning Series, [@FamilyELab's](#) co-founder [@elisabeth_cady](#) discusses #FASTalk and shares how this tool provides parents with key information about what children are learning in class, while building their capacity to gauge whether their child is on track.

Engaging families in understanding how aligned standards, curriculum, and assessments work together to improve student outcomes is critical in education. [@FamilyELab](#) provides resources and tools needed to help increase #familyengagement and accelerate #academicachievement.

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.

