

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

## NEWSLETTER *for Leaders*

### **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 are you doing to help teachers 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](#)

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## 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)
- 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.](#)

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

FASTalk keeps me informed about what my child is learning in school. The information provided helps me continue teaching my child at home the information she is learning in school.

-Parent of 3rd grade student  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana



FASTalk reminds me to do little things, often things I can do without being home. They help me connect with her on the go and be in touch with what I should support at home.

-Parent of 1st grade student  
Oakland Unified, California

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## Featured Partner: [EdNavigator](#)

### [The Savvy Parent's Guide to Testing Season](#)

In the coming months, students across the country will sit down to take annual, end-of-year state tests. While this is an important opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned throughout the year, it can also be a stressful time. And kids are not the only ones who are anxious. As a parent, knowing how to help your child prepare for testing season isn't always easy. Should you buy extra #2 pencils? Create flashcards of some kind? Allow extra screen time just to get them to chill out for a few minutes? There's a lot you can do to help your child get ready without adding to the test season insanity. This article lays out strategies to help parents create personal test prep plans that work for their families.



## 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.



Calling all #teachers: How do you #communicate with families during testing season? Share your #TopTips with us!



#Familyengagement is linked to improved student outcomes. By using [@FamilyELab's](#) tool #FASTalk in your classroom, you are able to informally assess student learning and work with parents to increase academic achievement. #teamwork

## 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.

