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Study Shows FASTalk Meaningfully Advances Academic Achievement, Significant Literacy Gains Observed

Quasi-experimental research demonstrates FASTalk's effectiveness

BATON ROUGE, La. -- In a recent quasi-experimental study, FASTalk was found to meaningfully advance academic achievement as shown by statistically significant higher spring assessment scores for FASTalk students.

The study evaluated the impact of Family Engagement Lab's implementation of FASTalk in Redesign Schools Louisiana (RSL) in Baton Rouge during the 2018-19 school year. Using weekly text messages with tips and activities aligned with the school's ELA curriculum, FASTalk helped families learn strategies to support third, fourth, and fifth grade literacy development. An [impact snapshot from the study](#), comparing the achievement of students whose families participated in FASTalk to those who did not, shows FASTalk students made the largest literacy gains.

"FASTalk provides an opportunity for our families to really engage with their children's curriculum, which has led to a noted increase in academic achievement," said Angela Beck, superintendent of RSL. "We are excited to continue offering FASTalk in our classrooms next school year to support us as we prepare our students for learning in any environment."

[View the full findings brief.](#)

FASTalk is an award winning program recognized by leading academic institutions, including Harvard Graduate School of Education, J-PAL at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley. Since launching in 2017, families of more than 22,000 students are receiving FASTalk messages to support their child's learning at home. Through multiple studies, [FASTalk has been shown to accelerate student learning across elementary grades](#), with the largest gains achieved for students who began the year scoring lower than their peers.

"We've seen some of the greatest benefits of FASTalk for students who are the furthest behind, students from low-income backgrounds, and students from linguistically diverse backgrounds," said Dr. Elisabeth O'Bryon, co-founder of Family Engagement Lab. "In our recent study, more than 90 percent of the student sample was eligible for free or reduced price lunch. In a previous study, we found that FASTalk's most powerful impact on learning outcomes was for students whose families did not share a common language with their child's teacher."

An overview of FASTalk research findings includes the following key takeaways:

- **Advanced learning gains for English Learners** - Kindergarten FASTalk students whose families did not share a language with their child's teacher demonstrated 1.6-2.8 months of additional literacy gains when compared to similar students who did not participate in the program.
- **Boosted kindergarten literacy achievement, especially for students furthest behind** - When exploring the literacy growth of kindergarteners who recognized less than 25 percent of their letters and sounds in the fall, FASTalk students were 4x more likely to meet midyear literacy benchmarks than similar non-FASTalk students.
- **Improved literacy outcomes in later elementary grades** - FASTalk students had statistically significant higher spring literacy assessment scores than non-FASTalk peers, despite

starting the year scoring behind. With FASTalk, students made 2.6x the literacy gains of similar non-FASTalk students.

- **Powerful when paired with high-quality instructional materials-** When teachers implemented EL's curriculum for the first time and families received EL-aligned FASTalk messages, students' literacy performance improved. The number of students scoring 'below proficient' on a measure of oral reading fluency dropped from 32 percent to 24 percent from the fall to the winter.
- **More engagement, more impact** - FASTalk is more effective for students whose families are actively engaged and send five or more messages on the platform. Active engagement is related to 1.9-2.1 months of accelerated learning, as well as statistically significant literacy assessment growth.

"The simplicity of FASTalk is a major part of why it is ultimately effective at improving student outcomes," said Vidya Sundaram, co-founder of Family Engagement Lab. "Families can easily integrate the activities into their daily routines and sustain their involvement in their child's learning journey."

FASTalk messages provide accessible, timely information from a trusted source in parents' home language. The program reduces the most significant barriers parents experience when trying to engage in their child's learning and provides them with a vehicle for starting meaningful conversations with their child about what they know and should be able to do.

About Family Engagement Lab

Family Engagement Lab is a national nonprofit organization that increases student learning at home through FASTalk, a text-based tool for teachers that sends curriculum aligned messages to families in their home language. FASTalk's model was developed through innovative partnerships with Oakland Unified School District and the Louisiana Department of Education.

Family Engagement Lab's vision is for every student to have access to meaningful at-home learning opportunities that promote their social, emotional, and academic skill development.

At-home learning supported by families is critical to student success. Parent involvement at home has more than twice the effect on student test scores than parents' education level or socio-economic status (Melhuish, et al., 2008).

Family Engagement Lab is committed to supporting high-need families and communities. 82 percent of students served qualify for free or reduced-price lunch compared to 51.3 percent national average. FASTalk helps families learn strategies to support learning, including: Building critical academic skills, cultivating learning mindsets and habits, and practicing social and emotional skills.

To learn more about Family Engagement Lab and FASTalk, visit

<http://www.familyengagementlab.org>.

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