

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

NEWSLETTER *for Champions*

Founder's Focus: Bending the Arc of Social Progress

This new year I've been reflecting on the passing of my dad, Dr. Panchanatham Naga Sundaram, in 2019. Born in pre-independence India in 1939, his sharp intellect and tenacity as a researcher yielded him a personal invitation from halfway around the world—UC Berkeley—to study Civil Engineering. A lot changed in his lifetime that made it possible for him to settle in the US with his family. For example, the 1965 Immigration Act finally opened the United States' doors to Asian immigration. Furthermore, while my great-grandparents' generation considered travel across oceans a strict religious taboo, my grandparents proudly encouraged my father's scholarship abroad.



During our period of mourning, I was contacted by relatives and friends offering condolences and occasionally sharing information about how to navigate the heavily codified rituals of Tamil Brahmin Hindus in modern times. One relative aptly described us as being part of the “transition generation”—one that remembered an era of arranged child marriages (my father's mother married at 12) and limited educational opportunity for girls. Thankfully, these practices have been curbed by sweeping Indian laws in support of women's rights only in the last few decades.

Perhaps it is not so remarkable that I am sitting here in Alameda, California as the co-founder and CEO of an education nonprofit organization focused on educational equity and increasing opportunity for under-served students. After all, a series of discrete societal shifts and policies in India and the United States are what brought me here. But when I reflect further on my own story in the broader context of racial and gender equity, I know that policies alone cannot bend the arc of social progress. It also takes educators, leaders, and other champions of equity engaging in radical unconventionality on a daily basis.

To help kick start the new year, we've listed some of our favorite resources in this January 2020 edition of the Learning Series that support equitable student outcomes, including clear descriptions of the skills students should be developing each year.

How will you bend the arc of history towards equity in 2020 and beyond? Drop us a line on Twitter [@FamilyELab](#). We'd love to be unconventional with you.

Sincerely,

Vidya Sundaram
Co-Founder, Family Engagement Lab

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Family Engagement Lab in the News

- Family Engagement Lab is **happy to announce support in 2020** from the following organizations: **Carnegie Corporation of New York, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation.**
- Starting early this year, **FASTalk will begin to pilot text messages being sent in Mam**, a Mayan language primarily spoken in Guatemala, in select kindergarten classrooms in Oakland Unified School District to better meet the needs of their growing linguistic diversity.
- **Family Engagement Lab is looking for a new sales manager.** Details are available on our [job openings page](#).

News You Can Use: Engaging Families to Reduce Equity Barriers

- [Study shows students with more engaged parents have higher academic achievement and miss fewer days of school](#) (Nellie Mae Education Foundation)
- [Centering Equity: Authentic Family Engagement is Bi-Directional: Engaging in Meaningful Family Partnerships](#) (New America)
- [The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down and How to Fix It](#) (TNTP)
- [New framework for communication about family engagement](#) (NAFSCE)

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.



@ FamilyELab's Co-Founder @ vidya_sundaram reflects on 2019 and her 2020 resolutions in the



Regardless of where students and their families come from, all schools should welcome them

January edition of the Learning Series and how she hopes to convince school leaders that meaningful progress toward educational equity is dependent on meaningful partnership with families.

<http://www.familyengagementlab.org/blog/being-the-arc-of-social-progress>

and give them the tools they need to succeed. Partnerships between orgs like @FamilyELab and @OUSDNews make this possible. #equityinschools #familyengagement www.familyengagementlab.org/learning-series.html

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.

