

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

## NEWSLETTER *for Teachers*

### **Founder's Focus:** *Advancing Student Outcomes by Engaging Families in Learning*

At a time when discussions of the “[COVID Slide](#)” and significant projected learning loss are ubiquitous, evidence-based approaches where families accelerate student learning are a **bright spot**. They are a sign of hope for school systems that are engaged in the challenging process of planning for an unprecedented school year. And while families are getting extra attention now due to school closures, it is important to remember that parents play an impactful role when students are in and out of the classroom by reinforcing student learning. Indeed, families have always played a critical role in their child’s learning journey.



Today we are excited to share our [latest research findings](#) - especially at a time when understanding “what works” is so critical. Building on our existing evidence base in early elementary grades, a quasi-experimental study was conducted with third, fourth, and fifth graders in Baton Rouge, Louisiana whose families received FASTalk messages during the 2018-2019 school year. We compared the end of year literacy performance of students whose families received 8 weeks of ELA Guidebook-aligned text messages to similar students whose families did not. What we found: **FASTalk meaningfully advanced academic achievement** as shown by statistically significant higher spring assessment scores for FASTalk students. Furthermore, FASTalk students began the year scoring lower than their peers and ended the year scoring ahead.

Advancing student outcomes by engaging families in their child’s learning experience is truly a powerful approach. And importantly, 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. 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. Parents are a critical lever in boosting achievement and evidence-based practices that engage parents should be at the top of the list as schools plan for combating learning loss.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth O'Bryon  
Co-Founder, [Family Engagement Lab](#)

[View Blog Posts](#)

## In Case You Missed It



In a recent press release, Family Engagement Lab announced a new tool to compensate for lost learning time associated with COVID-19 related school closures, [FASTalk Summer](#).

FASTalk Summer is a simple, accessible, text message-based learning tool to support families with limited access to devices and the internet, as well as those facing language barriers.

[Read the full press release.](#)



FASTalk & FASTalk Summer  
Informational Session  
MAY 2020

Last month, Family Engagement Lab hosted an informational webinar followed by a live Q&A on FASTalk and FASTalk Summer.

The [webinar presentation](#) and [webinar recording](#) are now available on [our website](#).

Please contact [info@fastalk.org](mailto:info@fastalk.org) with questions.



PARENT & TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS  
May 2020

[www.familyengagementlab.org](http://www.familyengagementlab.org)

To ensure Family Engagement Lab continues to provide timely and impactful solutions that build parent-teacher partnership around learning, as well as parents' capacity to support learning at home, Family Engagement Lab conducted research with our educator and family users to learn more about their experiences, wants, and needs during this time.

[View the full survey results.](#)

[Sign Up for a Webinar](#)

[School's out. Learning doesn't have to be.](#)

## FASTalk Summer: Fun for Families, Results for Students



Get students ready for the new school year with FASTalk Summer.

- Mobile-based program does not require WiFi or a computer - only a cell phone
- Parents receive grade-level academic, social, and emotional at-home activities tailored for busy families
- 10+ languages supported
- 4-6-8 week schedules
- Customizable to support your district's academic goals

[Visit our FASTalk Summer page to learn more.](#)

## News You Can Use: Supporting the Needs of Diverse Families

- [Imagine Online School in a Language You Don't Understand](#) (NY Times)
- [Best Practices in Engaging Diverse Families](#) (Hanover Research)
- [Working With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families](#) (RTI Action Network)
- [Encouraging Family Involvement through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy](#) (Kela Goodman and Laura Hooks)
- [Six Steps to Partner With Diverse Families](#) (Karen Buchanan and Thomas Buchanan, NAESP)

## FASTalk Connection: Engaging Diverse Families

Interested in having your high-quality curriculum “speak parent?” FASTalk messages **break down key information for families** each week, helping them understand the key skills and content their child is learning while giving actionable tips to support that learning every day.



Here’s how FASTalk makes your curriculum accessible to diverse families:

- Parents can access FASTalk text messages through their cell phones. No WiFi or data plans are required.
- Tips and activities sent to parents are available in 100+ languages, enabling linguistically diverse families to play a powerful role in their child’s learning.
- Parents can easily adapt and incorporate activities into everyday routines, making FASTalk practical for busy families.

[Schedule a Demo to Learn More](#)

## Connecting to Curriculum

In this month’s Connecting to Curriculum, FEL shares [5 Best Practices to Engage Diverse Families in Curriculum](#).



### 1. Communicate with all families equitably with accessible technology

- Reach parents using preferred communication methods in their home language.

### 2. Help parents understand key academic skills

- Use simple language to regularly share what their child is supposed to learn to meet unit goals.

### 3. Empower parents to support learning in their home language

- Prompt parents and caregivers to share family stories that connect to the lesson content.

#### 4. Encourage families to talk about topics relevant to the instructional materials

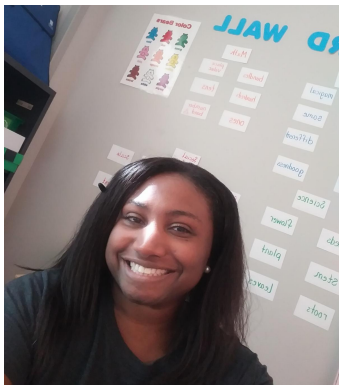
- Providing question stems can take the guesswork out for parents and encourage dialogue

#### 5. Focus on creating meaningful moments for families

- Promote a positive school-home partnership by keeping information simple and fun.

Visit [www.familyengagementlab.org](http://www.familyengagementlab.org) to learn more.

### Educator Highlight: Oneka Griggly, Second Grade Teacher, Lafayette Academy in New Orleans



Oneka Griggly is a second grade teacher at Lafayette Academy in New Orleans. She uses FASTalk to help her engage diverse families in learning, especially during school closures.

“Being faced with the unexpected challenge of distant learning, FASTalk was an immediate communication tool that I could use to reach out to my second grade ELA families,” shared Oneka. “I love FASTalk because it evens the playing field!”

Oneka supports equity in education and uses FASTalk to tackle inequality in educational outcomes by sending text messages with curriculum-aligned and standards-aligned learning activities to support academic, social and emotional skill development.

“The weekly messages are sent in each student’s native language,” said Oneka. “This gives my students and their families equal access to academic information without language being an obstacle.”

While the weekly messages help Oneka as an educator, she adds that they are equally crucial for families of diverse learners.

“Parents have expressed to me that they are thankful for the messages because they help them to feel connected to what their child is learning in ELA,” said Oneka. She added, “FASTalk is truly a beneficial link from school to home, especially during this time of remote learning.”

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

*“Que la maestra nos deja saber lo que nuestros hijos hacen en clase y asi poder preguntar a Los niños (The teacher lets us know what our children are doing in class and so we can ask the children.)”*

-Parent of Transitional



*“The different activities help me never run out of ideas to do with my kids.”*

-Parent of first grade student  
Oakland Unified, California

## Family Engagement Resources

- Teachers, [explore these resources](#) to help you work with parents from diverse cultures to support their child's academic performance, become more informed decision makers about their child's education, and improve home-school communication and partnership.
- [The Parent's Guide to Teaching Kids About Cultural Diversity and Inclusion](#): Help parents develop a deep appreciation for the enriching differences they'll encounter throughout their lives with these strategies and multicultural books.

## FASTalk Tip of the Month: Share your feedback in the Teacher Survey!

Family Engagement Lab relies on teacher feedback to help us ensure that we are providing the most relevant and impactful resources for educators and families during this challenging time and moving forward!



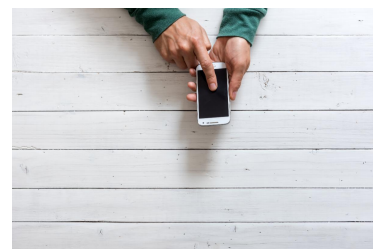
We heard from FASTalk teachers in our recent survey and are excited to announce that effective Tuesday, May 26, 2020, FASTalk will now send teachers ***an immediate email notification*** if parents/caregivers respond to the text messages instead of consolidating a daily report the next morning. We hope that this teacher-led change will help enhance parent-teacher communication and family engagement going forward into the fall.

As we're nearing the end of the school year, would you be willing to share your experiences about the **COVID-19 school closures** and **your opinion about FASTalk** in a brief, 10-minute voluntary survey? We take your feedback seriously and the more we hear from teachers, the faster we can respond to your needs. Thank you!

[Yes, I'd Like to Share My Feedback](#)

## 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.



Calling all #teachers: Explore these resources to help you work with parents from diverse cultures to support their child and improve home-school communication and partnership.  
<https://www.pacer.org/cultural-diversity/resources-for-parents.asp>

#ICYMI: In this month's Connecting to Curriculum, FEL shares 5 Best Practices to Engage Diverse Families in Curriculum:  
<https://vimeo.com/417026696>  
#FELfamilies #FASTalkMinute  
#familyengagement

#FELfamilies #familyengagement

## 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.

