

BRIEF PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an internationally acclaimed parent engagement program shown to help youth succeed at school by building stronger, more supportive relationships at home. Built on evidence-based practices and rigorously tested, FAST empowers parents to become more effective family leaders, connects families to schools and creates a community engaged in youth well-being and education.

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

Improve the quality of children's lives

- Better parent/child relationships
- More positive relationships with peers
- Fewer emotional symptoms and better conduct
- Better school performance with fewer problem behaviors
- More positive interactions between parents and teachers
- Increased parental school involvement
- Fewer emotional symptoms and behavior problems among FAST Children
- Improved relationships among parents
- Improved community relationships and knowledge of community resources

Specific Tobacco Control Lessons and Outcomes

- Specific Lessons:
During the fifth week of the program (chosen because parents and families have now developed trust and respect for each other and the FAST Team), there is time set aside during the standard program for discussion around a special topic. This topic (often related to alcohol and/or substance use) can be specified to meet needs of a particular organization and guides discussion for parents. The community partner (representative from a local community organization) works with parents to create a lesson plan – combining a presentation with family table-based activities or discussion. Families will receive information, have a chance to discuss as a group and as individual families. Further discussion may take place during Parent Group (dedicated time where parents are able to discuss topics of their choosing).

Tobacco Control Outcomes:

- Better knowledge of the impact and management of drug and alcohol use
 - 28 percent of parents report a better understanding of the negative effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use



- 31 percent of parents report improvement in their ability to recognize addiction
- 33 percent of parents report improvement in knowing where to get help if addicted

AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS

Age Range: 11-14

Grades: 6-8

Gender: Male and Female

PROGRAM DETAILS

Type of Program: Prevention

Min/Max Class Size: Five to 15 families

Number of Program Lessons: 10

Minimum Lessons Required to Achieve Fidelity: All 10 sessions required to achieve fidelity. Families must attend at least six sessions to graduate from the program.

Length of Each Lesson: Two hours, plus 30 minutes for a meal

Frequency of implementation: Once per week

Duration of Implementation: 10 weeks of structured programming, followed by two years of monthly, unstructured gatherings

Recommended Intervention Site(s): Typically school, but can be held in community or other settings

HOW IT WORKS

In a FAST cycle, typically eight to 12 families (the whole family unit is encouraged to attend) meet for 10 weeks, followed by two years of monthly FASTWORKS® meetings. The weekly sessions follow a prescribed format of activities, the effectiveness of which has been demonstrated through research. FAST Sessions are led by a team that empowers parents, connects families to school and the community and is representative of the families being served. The FAST Team facilitates the program with the families, guiding them through the program components utilizing a method of table-based parent coaching. FAST Activities are designed to strengthen family bonds, empower parents, increase positive communication and improve the youth's overall academic performance, mental health and emotional functioning. Program components include a family meal, parent/youth one-to-one time, family communication games and peer group time (parents and youth in separate groups), among other activities that reinforce the importance of the family unit, reciprocity and ritual. Each session lasts for 2.5 hours and is typically held during evening hours.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

To Replicate with Fidelity:

- **Staff:** The FAST team consists of some core, required roles, which include: a Parent Partner (a parent with a child at the school running the program); a School Partner (a teacher or counselor/social worker at the school); Community Partners (representatives from local community organizations that serve the same area as the school with mental health and/or substance-use prevention backgrounds); a Youth Advocate (a school employee who ensures the youth perspective is heard); and Youth Partners (a middle- or high-school-aged youth).
- **Training:** A certified FAST trainer conducts a comprehensive training with the team, including a two-day initial training, three site visits throughout the cycle and a final, one-day wrap-up training. All team members must be present for each of the stages of training. Training must be conducted by a certified FAST trainer.
- **Evaluation:** Evaluation is required for each FAST cycle as a way to continue monitoring results and to provide support to sites/schools. Evaluations are administered by the FAST Team to the required parties; data is analyzed by Families & Schools Together Inc. to create a comprehensive report for FAST Teams to review, as well as schools, funders, stakeholders, etc.
- **Activities:** All program components are required, but some variation is allowed within the activity to adapt

to a particular community. Program components are covered in team training and included in training materials like the Team Member Handbook and Quality of Implementation Checklist. FAST sessions must be facilitated by the FAST team using table-based coaching.

- **Program Evaluation Tools Available:** Yes. Evaluations are administered by the FAST Team to the required parties; data is analyzed by Families & Schools Together Inc. to create a comprehensive report for FAST Teams to review, as well as schools, funders, stakeholders, etc.

MATERIALS AND TRAINING

Required Materials and cost

- **Evaluation:** \$1,000 for initial cycle with training (includes all materials needed to complete evaluation, surveys for parents and youth and evaluation report); ongoing cycles cost is \$1,125.
- **Family Flag Activity:** \$15 per family (includes supplies for each family to create a family flag).
- **Family Connections Board Game:** \$40 per family. (One per family is required, as each family plays this game as a family unit each FAST Session.)
- **Family Meal and Supplies:** Amounts vary depending on number and sizes of families. (\$125/session x 10 sessions is an estimate for 10 families). Need to budget enough to feed all families each night of the program, plus any necessary supplies (plates, napkins, etc.)
- **Raffle Baskets:** \$50 per basket is an estimate. Need to budget enough for each family to receive one basket. Each basket has at least one individual item for each family member.
- **Kids Time Supplies:** \$150 per cycle. Budget for activities for siblings while parents are in Parent Group and middle school youth are in Youth Group
- **FASTWORKS:** \$100 per meeting for supplies, food, etc. is a recommended amount. After completing the 10 weeks, parents and families will continue to meet in a more informal setting, once a month to maintain social networks and connections for two years. These meetings often include families meeting at the park for a picnic or going bowling or may include an educational component. Budget can also include stipend for FASTWORKS coordinator (\$50 - \$75/meeting) but this is not required.



Training (Required)

- **Training Cost:** \$5,045 plus trainer travel costs to site
- **Training Duration:** Two-day initial training, three debriefing sessions following FAST Sessions on weeks 1, 3, and 8, as well as one-day wrap-up training following completion of FAST Cycle
- **Min/Max Number of Training Participants:** Minimum is six; maximum is 10.

Availability in Spanish: Yes. Because the program is primarily experiential, as long as there is a team member or translator available, the program can be run in any language and/or in multiple languages at once.

PROGRAM REPLICATIONS CONTACT INFORMATION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Website: familiesandschools.org

SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs & Practices (NREPP) Review Documents:

legacy.nreppadmin.net/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=375