

SY 2015-2016 Family Academic Support Team™

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Key words: Family engagement, systemic approach, educational technology, relationships

Funding Sources:

Private funding source.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

Funding covers incremental staffing needs.

Project Description:

The Family Academic Support Team (FAST) is a data-driven integrated student supports model focusing on family re-engagement in the K-12 virtual school setting. FAST uses a holistic and strengths-based approach to empower students to overcome challenges – be they academic, social, emotional, medical, or otherwise – to succeed in school and beyond. Students and families receive early intervention, support services, case management and connection to school and community-based resources.

Staffing Pattern:

A comprehensive Family Academic Support Team consists of the following roles and responsibilities:

- Family Engagement Administrators lead and manage the team. The Family Engagement Administrator oversees the services provided to build capacity within families and across the school. The Family Engagement Administrator promotes and enhances the school's academic mission by improving levels of parent and student engagement and ensuring that this increased engagement leads to improved academic achievement.
- Family Engagement Coordinators promote and enhance the school's academic mission by improving levels of parent and student engagement beginning with onboarding. The FEC coordinates Strong Start programming to effectively welcome, train, and onboard families to school. The FEC facilitates and develops in person and online opportunities for students to come together and work academically on regular basis, usually within specific regions and grade ranges. Additionally, the FEC ensures that increased engagement leads to improved academic achievement. Works in collaboration with school leadership and national teams on re-registration activities and sessions for families.
- Family Compliance Liaisons ensure that school age children are attending school by investigating causes of unexcused or excessive absences, communicating with families and assisting them in problem-solving, issuing warnings, and helping to represent the school if cases go to court.
- Family Resource Coordinators assists teachers and families in identifying and aiding students who are experiencing academic underachievement due to social, emotional, or behavioral issues by facilitating appropriate interventions from school and community resources. The Family Resource Coordinator maintains a caseload of students and families referred to Family Academic Support Team for welfare issues to provide intensive support to these families and coordinates with external agencies and community partnerships.

- Family Academic Support Liaisons lead new families through the Strong Start program and manages a caseload of referrals during the school year by supporting students and Learning Coaches who are disengaged and becoming non-compliant.

Role	Key Responsibilities
Family Engagement Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages team personnel • Oversee services provided • Align to school vision & mission • Integrate support with school model
Family Engagement Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong Start Program • Parental Involvement • Community Building • Enrichment Trainings
Family Compliance Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy • Attendance Tracking • School Policies • State Regulations
Family Resource Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources & Referrals • Community Partnerships • Crisis Prevention & Response • Professional Development
Family Academic Support Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized Student & Parent Supports • Intervention Plan • Action Planning • Accountability

Population Served:

Students enrolled in grades K-12.

Project Origination:

The project was modeled after an existing program, and similar programs, at schools within the K12 Managed Public Schools network. The program was developed organically and collaboratively throughout a cross-functional pilot year. Data drives decision making. Data is analyzed throughout the pilot year to monitor individual student progress, fidelity of implementation, and program efficacy.

Issues Addressed:

- Disengagement in school
- Low academic progress
- Lack of two-way communication
- Chronic absenteeism
- School withdrawals/drop-outs
- Barriers to school (family crisis; social/emotional/behavioral issues; training to skill-deficits)

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

Goals:

- Develop the capacity of students and families from a **strength-based** perspective
- Help students **stay on track** through early interventions, wrap-around supports and engagement strategies
- **Work through non-academic issues** with students and families in order to remove barriers to school success
- Creates a **positive, welcoming and supportive school climate** during **Strong Start** and throughout the year that allow a range of opportunities for parental involvement
- Develop **community partnerships** in order to better support students and families with social, emotional, and medical issues
- Foster student **connectedness** and nurture student **motivation**
- Improve **sustained enrollment** to **promote** students to the next grade level and achieve on time **graduation**

Measurable objectives:

- 10% active and appropriate student population referred to FAST representing all grade bands
- >90% individualized intervention implementation and weekly contact rate
- >90% referrals successfully exit program and remain engaged in school

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

Strategies and interventions are categorized within two key program goals 1) start students off strong and 2) keep students on track.

Strong Start:

- Comprehensive onboarding program with the goals of ensuring student and families are ready to learn, trained in navigating systems, and establish healthy schooling habits.
- Differentiated support indicators are predictive of a student's likelihood of remaining engaged in school and is used to drive support provided by school personnel beginning at enrollment continuing throughout the student's tenure.

Stay on Track:

- Family Engagement Protocol is an accountability-focused approach to student and family engagement. A protocol clearly defines engagement in a specific school setting. This protocol then sets a minimum level of daily expectation for students and families.
- Case management for student referrals, which is the method by which FAST becomes aware support is needed for students and families. FAST assists families in achieving and maintaining compliancy for those needing an additional layer of support through a tiered intervention process.
- Tiered support for engagement behaviors refer to the tier system that students are entered into once referred to FAST. Each tier clearly defines how to handle the compliancy or engagement issue.
- Individualized Back-on-Track plans outline the specific actions required by the student and parent to become successful with the goal of academic achievement. FAST, teacher(s) students and parent work together to develop the plan. The FAST member facilitates the process, monitors the plan, and provides regular follow up.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

Project Timeline:

The timeline of the project is ongoing. The program development and launch prior to the pilot year was limited (approximately one month). The pilot year was carried out during a full school-year. Extended program launch is in year 2 and we are currently planning for full launch in year 3.

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:

FAST individualizes support services relevant to the student's school and post-graduation goals and continually educates families on the benefits of earning a high school diploma. Additionally, FAST prioritizes referrals based on need and oftentimes dedicates additional resources to students nearing graduation but struggling to complete requirements.

Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:

A comprehensive training plan consisted of National Professional Development, Professional Learning Communities, and Asynchronous Training, including, but not limited to the following topics:

- FAST Program and Role Modules
- FAST Referral Process
- FAST Tracker Case Management Tool
- Strength-Based Perspective
- Motivational Interviewing
- Growth Mindset
- Data-Driven Decision Making

Current Status of Project:

The project has successfully completed a full school-year pilot program and has expanded in size and scope in year two.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

Program Manager, responsible for regional implementation and national program development and training.

Lessons Learned:

Particularly in our online schooling environment – if it isn't documented, it didn't happen. Buy-in is necessary for program implementation – include all stakeholders in key decision making.

Shifting culture takes time – be patient.

Educators prefer the Train the Trainer model – leverage subject matter experts and field leaders.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project: Avoid judgment; identify and address the underlying issues or barriers to family engagement. Never underestimate the power of relationships – take the time to build rapport and personalized connections.