

Save the Children & Families and Schools Together (FAST)

A new parental engagement,
community strengthening programme in the UK

Giving children living in poverty aged 3–5 a fairer chance at school



“Ask a primary school teacher with a class of five-year-olds which ones are likely to be in trouble with the law in five or ten years' time – the chances are, the teacher will be able to tell you with total accuracy. So, given this, why do we wait until kids are ten or 15 before we try to intervene?”

David Cameron, Local Government Association, 2007

“There are still too many parenting interventions being used that are simply ineffective.”

Professor Stephen Scott, Ex-Director of Research, National Academy of Parenting Practitioners, 2009

Need

- During the early years, interactions and experiences determine whether a child's developing brain architecture provides a strong or a weak foundation for their future health, wellbeing and development
- As early as 19 months there is a difference between the cognitive development of children from more privileged backgrounds and those from more deprived backgrounds
- By age three, children from privileged families have heard 30 million more words than children from underprivileged families

Need

- 39% of children aged 3 living in the 10% most deprived areas in England in 2009 reached the expected levels in the Early Years Foundation Stage compared to 52% of children on average
- 94% of children who achieve a good level of development at age five in England go on to achieve the expected levels for reading at Key Stage 1 (age 6/7), and they are five times more likely to achieve the highest level
- The highest early achievers from deprived backgrounds are then on average overtaken by lower achieving children from advantaged backgrounds by age five
- By age 6, a child's brain 'architecture' is almost complete

Parental engagement

85% of a child's success at school is based on factors outside the classroom

Providing parents with the support they need to be able to effectively interact with their children's learning & development early on in the home has been proven to support raise children's educational achievement at school



Parental engagement

- Our research shows that there is a gap in local transition services, from pre-school to primary, that focus on the whole family and have a proven track record of effective parental engagement practice
- We believe that this is a critical gap; one that must be addressed to prevent children from falling behind at school
- FAST was the only programme that fitted our long list of values and programme principles (proven to coach parents to help their children do better at school, to be delivered in and with any community, to engage low income and isolated families, to be sustainable and to leave a lasting legacy)

FAST in five minutes

Is award winning, US / UK Government and UN endorsed...

- Parental engagement and community strengthening model
- Developed in the USA in 1988 by Professor Lynn McDonald, Professor of Social Work Research at Middlesex University
- FAST is preventative; the programme was designed to support families before problems occur or get worse

It's universal...

- Any family, and all family members can volunteer to attend — no targeting
- No lectures, it's parent-led and anyone of any ability can participate
- Highest published retention rates of any parenting programme in the UK: 94% compared to the usual averages of 40 — 60%

FAST in five minutes

It's proven...

- Model of community recruitment, weekly sessions and 22 monthly sessions, which has shown consistent impact for 20 years
- In 8 countries, 2000 schools, from urban communities in the US, indigenous communities in Australia, to ethnically diverse and white working class communities in the UK
- Supports parents to help their children do better in reading, writing and maths
- Children to live in supported and strengthened families
- Children and families to live in stronger communities with increased trust, participation and social inclusion
- Proven impact after only 8 weeks and improvement in child outcomes have been sustained years after FAST has finished

It's systemic...



child



family



school



neighbourhood



FAST in five minutes

It's sustainable...

- FAST always trains a local multi-agency team, including parents, school and strategic representatives to be part of unique co-facilitation
- This embeds skills within the community needed to continue to deliver FAST in the future
- Also ensures that local decision makers are part of the FAST journey from the start

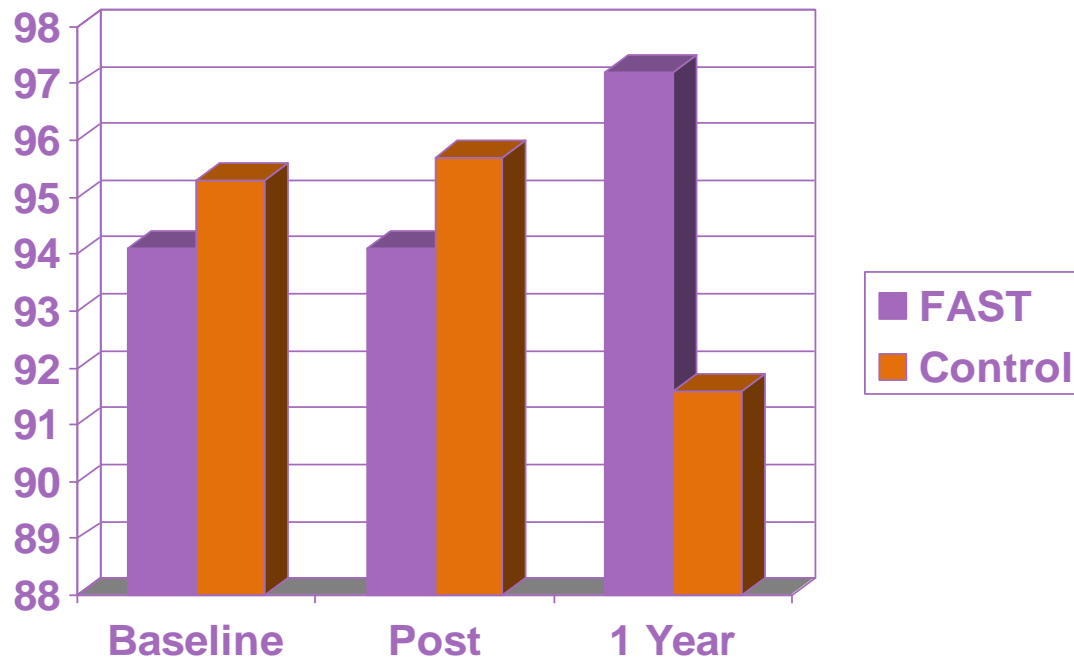
Evidence base of FAST

- Every FAST group is evaluated to measure impact on outcomes in each local community
- FAST has had large 4 randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and 2 more are ongoing (focussed on test scores in the U.S)
- Save the Children is intending to fund the first ever FAST RCT in the UK in 2011

Research from the US found the following amongst 9,500 children surveyed from 2004 to 2008:

- 84% of teachers reported improvements in students' academic performance
- 67% of families reported an improved relationship between themselves and their children
- 75% of parents said they got more involved in the local school

Educational Achievement



OERI Study of FAST in rural American Indian schools

What is our role?

To innovate...

- We are bringing FAST to families with children aged 3 – 5yrs across the UK for the first time
- We are adapting a non-core component to pilot Philosophy for Children (P4C) during children's time in FAST sessions
- P4C is an approach used to support children to discuss and debate ideas and give their opinions, to take turn, to listen and to respect each other
- P4C has been proven to enhance children's achievement, communication, critical thinking & reasoning skills

What is our role?

To advocate...

- By 2014, we will have established over 430 new FAST groups and will have worked with over 50, 000 children and their parents
- By 2014, will have trained over 8, 000 new FAST and P4C practitioners
- Build up local constituencies of support by developing a compelling evidence base of impact and cost effectiveness in a large number of diverse communities across the UK

What is our role?

To replicate...

- In the 1930s, a Save the Children campaign demanded that the government improve the diet and health of children living in poverty. This led to the 1944 Education Act enshrining, “Free School Meals” into legislation
- Just like we did with Free School Meals, we will call on duty-bearers to improve access to FAST so that millions more disadvantaged children can have a fair chance in life
- By giving children in poverty a fair chance to succeed at school by raising their attainment levels and, a greater opportunity to gain good qualifications and of obtaining a well-paid job with prospects as they grow up, we can break the cycle of poverty, for good