

NCPIE UPDATE



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The October NCPIE meeting featured the award winning program Families and Schools Together (FAST). Pat Davenport, CEO of FAST was our guest speaker.

FAST is an after-school program for the prevention of substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, school failure, child abuse and neglect and mental health problems. It is implemented by a trained, collaborative team that supports parents by developing support networks that include other parents, the school and the community. In addition, FAST increases parents' school involvement, enhances family cohesion, improves caring and attention about academics, and reduces aggression between students.

This is a well-researched, theory-based program for children and their families. It is designed to build protective factors for children and empower parents to be the primary prevention agents for their children. To date, FAST has been implemented in over 700 communities around the world. FAST has reached preschoolers through 15-year-olds in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

FAST applies family stress theory, family systems theory, social ecological theory of child development, and adult education and community development theory to achieve its four goals:

- Enhance family functioning
- Prevent the target child from experiencing school failure
- Prevent substance abuse by the child and other family members
- Reduce the stress that parents and children experience from daily life situations

Program evaluations show that after 8 weeks of FAST, parents and teachers indicate a significant increase in parents' involvement in school and increased contact with school. Parents report a significant improvement in their relationship with their child's teacher, and teachers report a significant improvement in their relationship with the parent. When asked whether they are involved in parent leadership in their child's school, parents report a significant increase. Prior to the FAST program, more than 46 percent of parents answered that they had never been involved in parent leadership at school, compared to 34 percent after completing the program.

By engaging stressed, socially isolated families into program participation and eventually into shared governance of the FAST program, the strengths and connections of the family, school, and community are enhanced. During a home visit, a FAST parent graduate invites the child's whole family to a meeting with other families from the same school. Ten to twelve families meet for eight weekly sessions for a family meal and a variety of social activities which include music, drawing, games and a parent group. The activities are fun, but are designed to facilitate communication to improve family functioning. Hopefully, after participating in FAST, students will have experienced fewer social or behavioral difficulties, which may also promote children's academic performance, and the FAST parents will have become friends and will offer social support for one another over time. Of those families that come once to FAST, 80% graduate in a formal ceremony.

Although FAST was founded in the US, it brings together local support resources to build protective factors around kids which has allowed for the FAST program to run successfully in 48 states and eight countries, which are Australia, Austria, Canada, England, Germany, Russia, Netherlands and of course, the United States. As kids of all ages and races, from all different countries, cultures, and walks of life face many obstacles, the FAST program offers adaptability in order to serve all populations.

Each of the five FAST programs conforms to one of the development stages in a child's life. In this way FAST can be used as a prevention or early intervention at any point in the family lifecycle.

Standard Programs are:

- [Baby FAST™](#)
- [Pre-K FAST™](#)
- [Kids FAST™](#)
- [Middle School FAST™](#)
- [Teen FAST™](#)

All FAST programs include:

- complete on-site team training and team/site certification
- site visits and support by trainer
- all manuals and forms

- activity components
- pre and post surveys for first cycle
- evaluation report for proof of effectiveness
- initial and ongoing technical support
- recruitment and PR collateral
- customer satisfaction guarantee
- FASTWORKS membership

To learn more about this program, go to their website: www.familiesandschools.org.