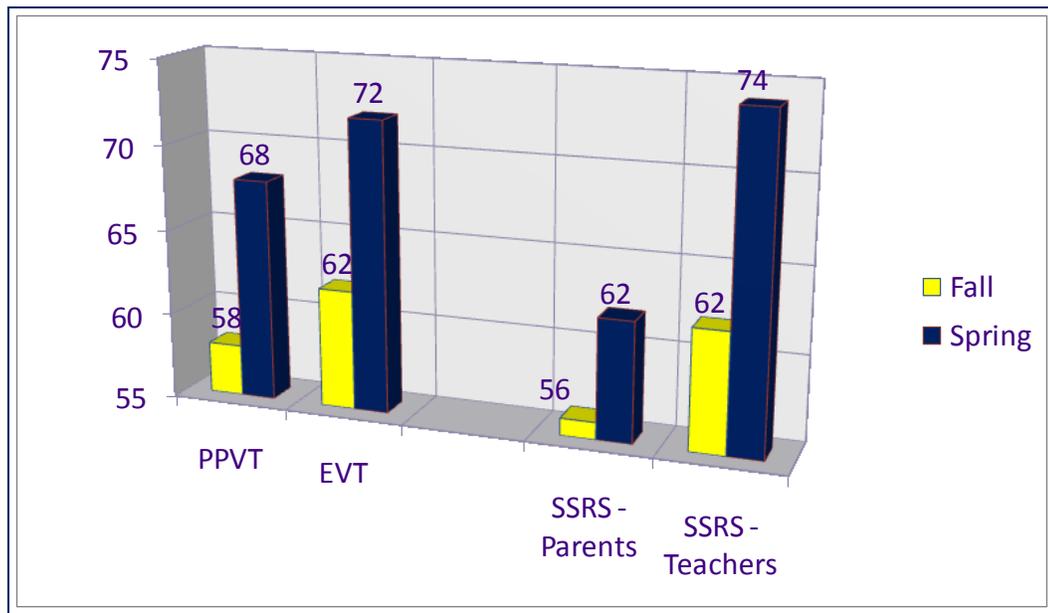


# Independent Research Outcomes-Based Evaluation of FasTrackKids and Three to Six year olds U.S. Sites



Conducted by National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)



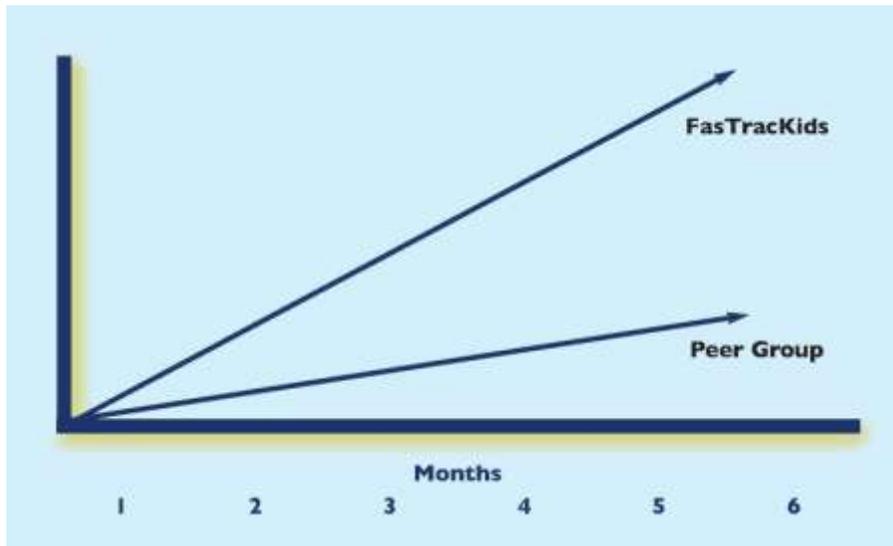


## Independent Research

### Outcomes-Based Evaluation of FasTrackKids and Three to Six year olds U.S. Sites

#### **The Results**

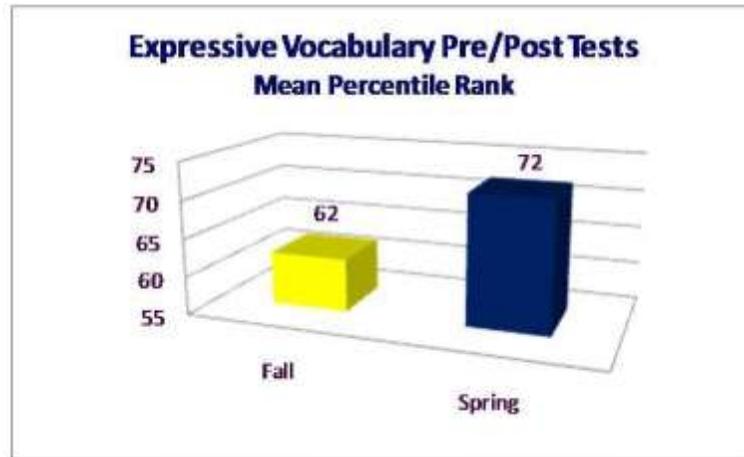
Independent testing demonstrates that a significant number of three to six year old children enrolled in FasTrackKids improved their vocabulary and social skills at a rate 100% to 150% times faster than their peers not enrolled in the program. All children in the study improved – those who were kindergarten-aged advanced as much as one grade level and some of those students improved up to two grade levels.<sup>1</sup> All of the children attended FasTrackKids classes for just two hours a week for a period of six months. Research shows that how children perform on these tests prior to entering school is a direct link to how they will perform in school throughout their academic careers.<sup>2</sup>



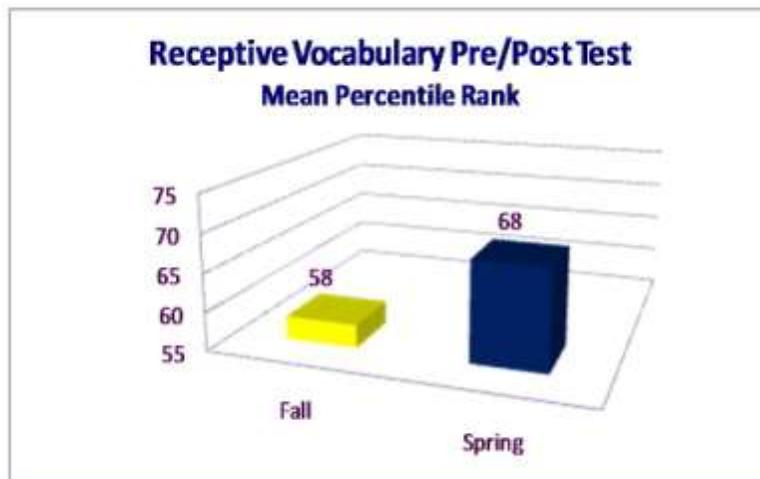
#### **Additional Significant Study Findings:**

1. FasTrackKids' unique curriculum helps students of all skill levels achieve greater success.<sup>3</sup>
  - a. Results confirm that students who enrolled in FasTrackKids with lower - than - average skills demonstrated significant improvement in their receptive and expressive vocabulary skills.
  - b. High - performing children, those who entered FasTrackKids with above average skills, also demonstrated significant positive growth during the test period.

- Children increased their expressive (speaking) vocabulary by 10 percentile points in a six-month time period. Because children’s results are compared to children their own age, children typically don’t change their percentile ranking from pre-test to post-test without significant intervention. FasTrackKids improved their expressive vocabulary at a rate faster than their age peer group.<sup>4</sup>

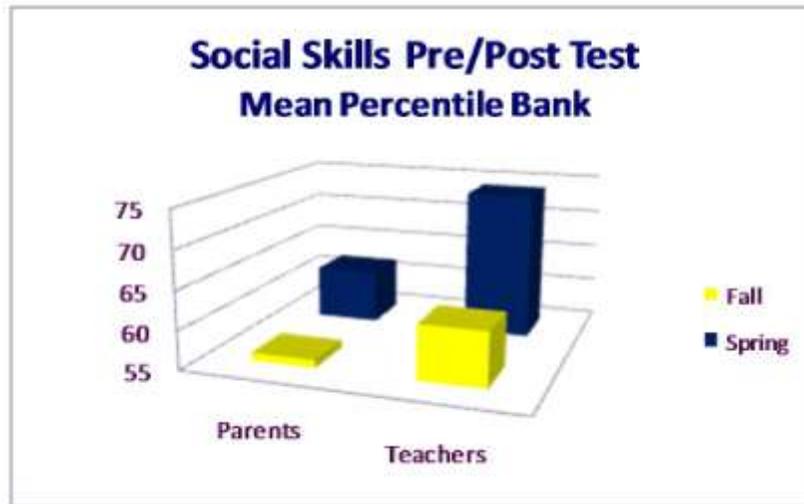


- Children increased their receptive (or hearing comprehension) vocabulary by 10 percentile points in a six-month time period. Because children’s results are compared to children their own age, children typically don’t change their percentile ranking from pre-test to post-test without significant intervention. FasTrackKids improved their receptive vocabulary at a rate faster than their age peer group.<sup>5</sup>

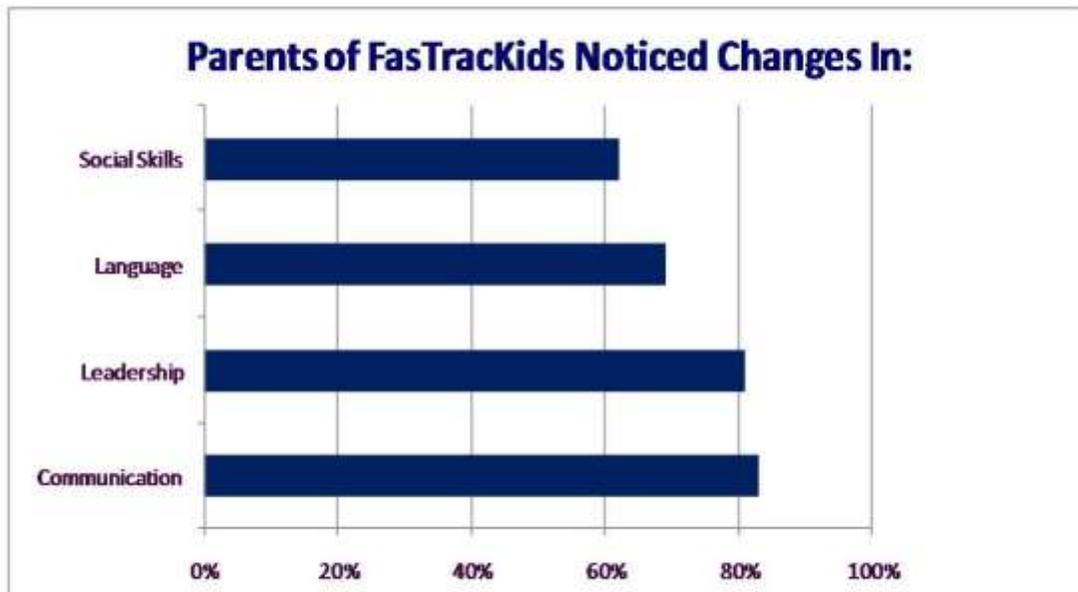


- FasTrackKids is proven to be effective within a population of children who come from homes in which English is a second language (ESL). ESL students exhibited significant improvement in all three learning categories that were studied: receptive vocabulary, expressive vocabulary and social skills.<sup>6</sup>

5. FasTrackKids children exhibited improved social skills measured by their level of cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control. <sup>7</sup>



6. A survey accompanying the social skills assessment survey found that 76 % of parents report being very satisfied with their child's experience at FasTrackKids. A majority of parents noted their children improved most in communication (83 %), leadership and initiative (81%), language (69 %) and social skills (62 %). <sup>8</sup>



7. Children from a variety of environments – dense urban, urban residential, suburban center, and suburban residential – and with different family characteristics showed significant improvement in all three skills: receptive and expressive vocabulary; teacher-assessed social skills; and parent-assessed social skills.<sup>9</sup>

### **Why Is Vocabulary Important?**

Years of research have shown that preschoolers' oral language achievements are critically linked with short- and long-term reading, academic and social/relational achievements. Vocabulary acquisition is an important indicator of a child's linguistic and cognitive development, and readiness for formal schooling. Vocabulary bridges the word-level process of phonics and cognitive processes of comprehension. The connection with cognitive ability is that children with larger vocabularies are more likely to read widely, can learn more readily through verbal instruction in a wide range of domains or have a larger store of verbal concepts to call on as tools of thinking.<sup>10</sup>

The early years are the time of making connections – critical connections for pre-school-age children. Research shows that there is a reciprocal relationship between language development and early literacy. Children acquire important early literacy skills beginning at birth, and their success in 1<sup>st</sup> grade is largely dependent on how much they have learned before they start school.<sup>11</sup>

Studies have also shown a strong correlation between how well children perform on the EVT and PPVT in preschool years and their performance in 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades – five and eight years later.<sup>12</sup>

### **Why Are Social Skills Important?**

Traditionally, there has been a focus on cognitive test scores - IQ, standardized tests, grades – to determine intelligence. Current research shows that noncognitive abilities are required for success in school and in life. Motivation, sociability, the ability to work with others, the ability to focus on tasks, self-regulation, and self-esteem all matter, and may be more important than cognitive “smarts” to predict success.<sup>13</sup>

### **About the Research**

For years, FasTrackKids parents, teachers and directors have seen firsthand the impact of FasTrackKids programs on children. We've seen children become more skilled at communication, build their vocabulary and develop their self-confidence. We've watched them creatively solve problems and master challenges. We've seen how our children have demonstrated positive leadership behaviors within the classroom, at home and on the playground. We wanted quantitative analysis to support these findings.

The primary goal of this research project was to conduct an outcomes-based study that measured the improvement in children's vocabulary scores and social skills scores through their participation in FasTrackKids. The reason that these areas were chosen is that research shows that basic skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and communication are prerequisites to learning success for young children.

The integrity of this research was of paramount importance to FasTrackKids. Therefore, we engaged the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College in Massachusetts to conduct the study. NIOST is a leading international center for research, evaluation, and training focused on the out-of-school hours.

The tools used in the study were standard assessment tests that have been used with thousands of children. Our children's results were compared to same aged students (age-normed) who had previously taken the tests. We administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and the Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT) to each of the children in the study. The PPVT is the leading measure of receptive vocabulary and a screening test of verbal ability and the EVT is a test of expressive vocabulary and word retrieval. Parents and teachers completed the Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS). The SSRS provides a comprehensive picture of social behaviors that can affect relationships, peer acceptance, and academic performance.

Children were given pre-tests in the Fall of 2007 and post-tests in the Spring of 2008, approximately a six-month span. Each of the tests is designed to measure the change within the children taking into account the natural growth and development that occurs within a child during the six-month time frame.

Seven FasTrackKids sites participated in the study in the United States. These sites represented a range of demographics and socio-economic factors. As an example, family incomes ranged from \$20,000 to more than \$200,000. Among parents, 55% had reported that their highest level of education was a Bachelor's degree, 31% had completed advanced degrees.<sup>14</sup>

References:

- 1 Addendum to Outcomes Evaluation of FasTrackKids Final Report: Grade Equivalents, 2008
- 2 Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development, 1987 - 1995
- 3 Addendum to Outcomes Evaluation of FasTrackKids Final Report: Low/High Performers (PPVT and EVT), 2008
- 4 Outcomes Evaluation of FasTrackKids - Final , 2008
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- 9 Outcomes Evaluation of FasTrackKids - Final ,2008
- 10 Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Baumann, Kam'enui & Ash, 2003; Becker, 1977; Davis, 1942; Whipple, 1925
- 11 Carroll, 1993; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Beginning Literacy with Language, Dickson & Tabors, 2001
- 12 Beginning Literacy with Language, Dickson & Tabors, 2001; Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development, 1987-1995
- 13 Schools, Skills, and Synapses, Heckman, 2008
- 14 Outcomes Evaluation of FasTrackKids – Final, 2008

Supporting Research

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