

To: Representative Gwen Moore
Representative Tammy Baldwin
Representative David Obey
Senator Herb Kohl
Senator Russ Feingold

From: Lynn McDonald, PhD
President, Board of Directors
Families and Schools Together, Inc.
2801 International Lane
Suite 212
Madison, WI 53704

Date: December 22, 2008

Re: Proposal to Include Evidence Based Prevention Program, Families and Schools Together (FAST), in the Economic Stimulus Package to Invest in Social Infrastructure

Families and Schools Together is a prevention program that was developed in Wisconsin and is implemented around the country. FAST™ works with families in groups to (1) connect parents and children to their schools and communities, (2) promote community service and voluntary participation, (3) build skills and change attitudes through experiential learning, (4) increase parental involvement in schools, and (5) assure that parents remain the primary agents of protection for their kids. FAST also provides jobs for parents while giving them leadership roles in their children's school and giving them equal voice with professionals who work with their children. In recent years FAST has contributed to the creation of jobs across the US with over 8,200 jobs. This is a very similar performance to those with traditional job placement through government agencies such as Private Industry Councils and Workforce development,

We propose creating 20,000 full time jobs for parents around the country with this proposal. In this time of deepening economic crisis, FAST can help families cope with the stress of economic uncertainty, job loss, relocation, and other daily stressors, while decreasing unemployment rates.

Given the existence of a nation-wide infrastructure including a national training and evaluation center, (Families and Schools Together, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit), 300 certified FAST trainers, and 1900 schools in low income communities who have done FAST, FAST could be expanded and implemented to create jobs for parents within a short time frame. Once a school district has applied to be part of this initiative, parents would be recruited and trained to be FAST group leaders, thus providing full time employment to approximately 20,000 individuals within two years. Further employment opportunities exist with the FAST program for trainers, supervisors, program coordinators, and community-based agency staff members. Therefore, total job creation from this proposal would achieve the 22,000 new jobs for parents. Our experience in creating and filling jobs in short periods of time is extensive. FAST can be a substantial contributor to helping improve the economy of our country

FAST currently has over 1,900 programs in 48 states. It has been successfully implemented in inner city schools in areas, such as Milwaukee, Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Antonio, Phoenix and New Orleans, and rural areas of Iowa, CA, MN, WI, and Indian reservations. However, much more could be done. Enclosed is a proposal to develop 20,000 jobs in 1000 schools.

FAST is recognized by the federal government, and other countries, as an evidenced based prevention program. Specifically, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention include FAST on their lists of exemplary programs. It has been thoroughly evaluated with randomized controlled trials through federal grants administered by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Findings include higher academic achievement, improved social skills and reduced aggression in schools, parent leadership and networks of empowered parents. In addition, parents participating in the program have gone on to participate in further education programs and obtain employment.

A detailed proposal is enclosed. Please contact me or Pat Davenport, Executive Director of Families and Schools Together, Inc., for more information. Thank you for your consideration.

Dr Lynn McDonald, Professor of Social Work
mrmcdona@wisc.edu

Pat Davenport
2801 International Ln Ste 212
Madison, WI 53704
pdavenport@familiesandschools.org

608.663.2382