

The Impact of a Virtual Coaching Program to Improve Instructional Alignment to State Standards

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What is the virtual coaching program tested in this study?

Feedback on Alignment and Support for Teachers (FAST) is a virtual coaching program designed to help teachers better align their instruction to state standards and foster student learning. Key components of this 2-year program include collaborative meetings with grade-level teams, individual coaching sessions, instructional logs and video recordings of teachers' own instruction, and models of aligned instruction provided by an online library of instructional resources. During the collaborative meetings and coaching sessions, teachers and coaches use the logs, video recordings, and models of aligned instruction to discuss ways of improving alignment of their instruction to state standards. Teachers were expected to complete 5 collaborative meetings, 5 individual coaching sessions, 5 video recordings of their instruction, and 5 instructional logs per year.

How did we assess the impact of the virtual coaching program?

We assessed the impact of the FAST program on teachers' instructional alignment and students' achievement through a multisite school-level randomized controlled trial, which took place in 56 elementary schools spanning five districts and three states. We randomly assigned 29 of the 56 schools to the treatment group and 27 to the control group. The study focused on Grade 4 math and Grade 5 English language arts (ELA) and used the respective state test scores as student achievement outcomes. We used an instructional survey to measure teachers' instructional alignment. Teacher attendance, FAST coaching logs, teachers' instructional logs, and video recordings of

teachers' instruction were collected to describe the implementation of the FAST program.

What did we find?

Overall, 64% of math teachers and 69% of ELA teachers in the treatment sample completed at least one FAST activity over the course of 2 years. These teachers completed approximately half of the planned FAST activities on average and had overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the FAST program.

Despite the lower-than-expected participation, the FAST program improved teachers' instructional alignment for both math and ELA teachers, although the effect was statistically significant only for math teachers. However, contrary to expectations, the program did not improve test scores. In fact, we found negative effects in both math and ELA, although effects were small and only the effect on ELA achievement was statistically significant.

Although the sample spanned 5 districts and 3 states, the sample was purposive, and half of the schools were from a single district. Studies of the FAST program conducted in different settings may produce different results. Given low participation, we do not know what the results might have been had treatment teachers participated in the full set of planned activities. Finally, teachers' self-reports of their instructional alignment with state standards in this study may be less reliable than observational data on teachers' instructional alignment and may not be reflective of other important aspects of instructional quality.

For further information about the FAST program and the study, please visit: <https://www.c-sail.org/research/fast>

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