

Low Data Evaluation Report

plus considerations for learning and improvement

Survey requirements

Graduate parents **must complete both online surveys** for the FAST level, which typically includes a Parent Pre Survey and a Parent Post Survey. A pre- and post-survey completed by the same graduate parent (the one who participates in the special one-on-one time with the FAST child) are considered a **survey set**, which allows FAST to measure progress toward goals.

In addition, there may be surveys from other raters who participate directly or indirectly. Information from these surveys helps to create a well-rounded picture of the FAST cycle. Other raters include teachers (elementary school level), youth (middle and high school level), or team members. There are no specific requirements for these surveys, but everyone is encouraged to participate. More data makes for a clearer picture.

The impact of a low-data cycle on a site

In order for a training cycle to be certified, the site must submit **five (5) complete survey sets** for a minimum of **five (5) graduating families**. If this does not occur, the site may not be granted certification and will have to work with their trainer on next steps to ensure they are successful moving forward. Once a site is certified, it is not decertified for low data; however, the team may want to consult with Families & Schools Together about how to improve low data in future cycles.

Learn from a low-data report

If a site collects some data but not enough to meet the minimum threshold of five complete survey sets, it is considered a **low data report**. This may occur if the cycle has five graduate families, but some parents do not complete one or both surveys, or they submit a survey but leave most of it blank.

You can still review this data, but be cautious about drawing conclusions or making decisions based solely on the numbers. An outlier score (much higher or lower than the rest) can have an oversized effect on a small data sample. For example, you might see the average for a scale decline rather than improve over the course of FAST. While this is concerning, it is best to evaluate it in light of the whole report, using any other data or practical experience you possess.

The effect of low data on an evaluation report

Evaluation scales, which represent program goals, are made up of interrelated questions that have been tested for their effectiveness. Numbers are used to respond to questions and then averaged to get pre- and post-program numerical scores. Ideally, a successful program will show a statistically significant positive change in scores.

A clear picture of program results is less likely to emerge from the data when there are fewer surveys. For example, an average of three data points may result in the same number as the average of thirty data points, but the latter is more reliable since more participants contributed to the average. Also, an outlier score will have a much smaller affect on the average of thirty data points than on three.

Even if the critical number of five survey sets is not met, Families & Schools Together will still generate a report on the available data because it is important that respondents who contributed surveys are heard. However, we may limit what is shown on the report to preserve confidentiality or to avoid misleading information. We will not show statistical significance for aggregates less than five.

Improve future survey participation and completion

- Ensure team members in charge of surveys know how the surveys work and can support parents.
- Regularly check the results links provided by FAST staff to identify parents who have not yet completed surveys and contact those parents to offer support.
- If your site is running in-person, consider doing surveys as part of an extra session.
- Contact Families & Schools Together to discuss survey options for families unable to complete surveys on their own. Teams can remove barriers by doing surveys as part of a home visit - bringing devices and/or hotspots, reading the survey and inputting answers for parents who have literacy issues, providing a translator to assist with language barriers, etc.

Other ways to evaluate low data

- Look at responses to individual questions (in FAST at Home, these are in Appendix 1; in other online reports, these are tracked in the graphs). *Did every respondent answer all the questions within a scale or did they skip some? Are any questions scored lower, especially on the post-survey? Does this surprise you?*
- Read comments - they give participants an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. *Are they positive or negative? Do they match the team's program experience?*
- Review the parts of the report completed by team members, especially the ranking of activities, challenges and successes, and comments.
- If site or national averages are available, compare them to this cycle's scores to get a better picture.