1. Describe the major activities initiated as part of the pilot project during the last three months?
   - Four sites started a second 8-week FAST cycle (Wayne 1/29, New Hanover 2/28, McDowell 2/6, Charlotte 3/13).
   - A Phase 3 training was conducted at 7 sites to review the evaluation reports (New Hanover 1/23, McDowell 1/25, Charlotte 1/30, Rowan 2/12, Durham 2/7, Asheville 3/1, Wayne 2/26).
   - A retraining was conducted at four sites (Wayne 1/24, McDowell 1/25, Charlotte 1/30, New Hanover 2/23).
   - A total of fifty-eight families were recruited and enrolled in the Spring 2001 programs.
   - Home visits were made to 70 individuals in January and February.
   - Pre-tests were administered to 70 families in January and February.
   - Ongoing retention efforts of families happened throughout the 8-week cycle, (i.e. Home visits, phone calls, letters).
   - Post-tests administered to 21 families (April).
   - FAST graduation ceremonies were held in Wayne on 3/19 and McDowell on 3/27.
   - Project Director made 3-4 visits per site during February, March and April.
   - A FAST Trainer visited and evaluated the Wayne site on 1/29, 2/19, 3/19.
   - FASTWORKS monthly meetings were held at 6 sites.
   - Local support and collaboration for FAST has been established in three new communities including Charlotte, Brunswick and McDowell.

2. How many individuals has your pilot project served during the last three months?
   - Our pilot project has served 183 parents and 383 children from 159 families in the last three months.
3. Briefly describe the outcomes observed for these individuals.

- Parent and children engaged in one-on-one quality time.
- Parent and children engaged in healthy communication.
- Family bonding through structured activities.
- Peer bonding through the parent support group.
- Parents feeling more connected with the school their children attend.
- Parents and children feeling more involved in the school.
- Children’s behavior has become more positive and less disruptive at home and in school.
- Parents are empowered to advocate for their children.
- Parents are respected and valued by the FAST team.
- Parents are feeling more comfortable being in charge of their family unit.

4. Describe how these outcomes are in line with the goals and objectives of your pilot project.

- One-on-one quality time with parent and children addresses the goal to enhance family functioning.
- Parent and children communicating in a healthy way and bonding through structured activities address the goal to enhance family functioning.
- Children’s behaviors have improved in school and at home which addresses the goal to prevent the target child from experiencing school failure.
- Parents are more connected to the school, which assists with the prevention in the target child experiencing school failure.
- Parents are empowered to be advocates for their children, which will prevent the target child from experiencing school failure.
- Parents are respected and valued by the FAST team, which helps to build that relationship and link the family to the appropriate people to assist with the goal of prevention of substance abuse by the child and family.
- Parents are bonding with their peers through the parent support group, which address the goal of reducing stress of the parents in daily life situations.
- Children watch their parents in charge of their family and respected by the team, which reduces the stress of their daily life situations.

5. List any changes or modifications to the services you provide or the manner in which services are delivered as the result of these outcomes.

- To avoid burnout by team members, implement only one 8-week cycle per site per school year.
- Provide additional “parents as partners” training for FAST teams.
• CISNC will work with local CIS programs to establish stronger FAST collaborative teams, which will result in more participation from families.
• Conduct 2 trainer visits per certified site to maintain program integrity.

6. What percentage of your project funds have you expended during the last three months?
   • The project has expended 11 percent of the combined project funds during the last three months.

7. How many individuals has your pilot project served during the last year?
   • Our pilot project has served 324 parents and 604 children from 274 families in the last year.

8. What percentage of your project funds have you expended during the last year?
   • The project has expended 31 percent of the combined year one and year two project funds during year one.

9. First Year Work First Pilot Project Summary

The Families and Schools Together (FAST) project has been successfully implemented in seven counties throughout North Carolina. Even though there have been many success stories, there have also been challenges and lessons learned from this past year. The parents have become empowered, families have been strengthened and key relationships have been built through the FAST process. Although families attended somewhat regularly, recruitment and retention of families has been an issue. The support of FAST and the repositioned staff from local agencies in seven counties has been a challenge. We did receive the results we anticipated, but the evaluation instruments and reports were not satisfactory.

All the FAST evaluation instruments and reports were provided by FAST International. The evaluation instruments addressed family functioning, social isolation, parent involvement, and the child’s behavior. The final reports, were difficult to comprehend and present and not very user friendly. There were trends towards the desired outcomes, but the way in which the outcomes were presented in the reports was not useful. We are working with FAST International to devise a better reporting system. We will work together to develop appropriate instruments that measure the various outcomes that directly link to FAST goals. FAST International has done a good job providing the materials and evaluation tools, but some adjustments must be made to provide accurate reports for the future.

We shared the evaluation reports with all seven local Communities In Schools (CIS), the local school site and community agencies. It was the responsibility of the local CIS to collaborate with the local elementary school, mental health agency, substance abuse
agency, recreation center and various other local groups. Since the local CIS built the collaborations it was difficult for the Project Director to maintain a high level of quality control. The Project Director would be in constant contact and travel to the local communities, but it was not her job to build the relationships of the local agencies and get the support for FAST. Most local agencies were supportive of the FAST program and made the commitment to participate.

The challenges came when the actual person who was assigned to participate in FAST was not aware of the entire commitment he/she had made. Some local agencies were supportive of the program on paper, but when it came time to reposition a person to be a part of the FAST team they were unable to follow through with their commitment.

Some counties do not have a large number of mental health professionals, which resulted in a challenge to recruit those team members. One community recruited team members who worked in the community, but did not live there. As a result of team members not living in the FAST community, the program suffered due to the lack of interest in the specific school and support for the community. In the future, team members must live, work and care about the school community FAST will be implemented.

Most team members were on a team for two eight-week cycles. Two eight week cycles in one year is difficult to implement if team members do not change. Although parents were motivated about FAST and interested, team members were tired and unmotivated, which resulted in program drift. In the future, if two eight week cycles were to be implemented in one school year the team should change. Due to bad weather, the second eight week cycle should run in April and May, not January, February or March.

Inclement weather did effect retention efforts for many FAST teams this past winter. The teams, especially the parent partners did an excellent job with consistent phone calls and home visits to the families they worked with throughout the eight weeks. The FAST program and incentives retained many of our families. The FAST International retention rate is eighty percent.

Our retention rate may have been lower than that of FAST International due to the TANF grant requirement. Retention and recruitment of families for FAST were big challenges. School sites had difficulty in the identification and recruitment of families who received TANF funds. Families who have received TANF funds are faced with challenges and hard times in their life. At times it was difficult for the teams to keep consistent contact and build relationships with parents who were skeptical of the “system”, worked two jobs and did not have a phone.

FAST is a program that will benefit all family’s not just needy families. FAST connected families to community resources, built relationships with community agencies, school personnel and other parents. FAST empowered parents to advocate for their children and strengthen the relationships within they’re families. This past year, the increase in the parents’ self-esteem was very evident. Some parents went back to work, entered college
and became leaders in their community. After the eight-week cycle was complete, families continued to meet once a month in FASTWORKS. For example, families have gone bowling, roller-skating, hosted special dinners at the school and attended a nature center with the FASTWORKS group. The relationships families have made in FAST continue long after the eight-week cycle has ended.

Here are a few comments from FAST parent graduates:
“F.A.S.T. gave me the support and helped me gain self-confidence to continue in my hope of raising very independent, intelligent, well-rounded children.”
“Our family enjoyed F.A.S.T. because we had quality time to be together talking and expressing ourselves.”
“F.A.S.T. has taught me to listen to my child.”
“F.A.S.T. has reinforced the bond between me and my child.”

In eight-weeks the families went through a phenomenal transformation and continue their journey together. The FASTWORKS groups in New Hanover, Wayne, Charlotte, Rowan and McDowell will continue to meet every month. FAST will continue to be implemented statewide, which includes two sites in McDowell county, two sites in Charlotte-Mecklenburg county, one site in Wayne county, one site in New Hanover county and one site in Brunswick county. Ten eight-week cycles will be conducted in the 2001-2002 school year.

We will continue to provide the local CIS sites with FAST trainer support, technical assistance and resource development assistance. In August a Pre-Certification Seminar (PCS) training will be provided for FAST team members who would like to become FAST certified trainers. Approximately two team members from each FAST site will attend the PCS and will serve their local community as a FAST certified trainer in the future. To create further sustainability for FAST, collaboration training for every local community will be conducted in the Fall of 2001. We will invite all the local agencies and the local CIS Executive Directors to discuss FAST and further strengthen their support for the program.