

## An Innovative Model to Help Local Educators Learn to Use Formative Assessment Practices

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### National Council on Measurement in Education September 18-19, 2019 Boulder, Colorado

### Abstract

Several states engage educators to learn about formative assessment practices, providing workshops, print and video resources, online learning opportunities, and websites. Michigan's FAME program is different: it is based on the belief that significant change in professional practice requires several years of supported learning. No other state provides this long-term learning opportunity focused on formative assessment for teachers to improve their practice.

New FAME learning teams (comprising a coach and several teachers) begin each year. After attending a full-day *Launching into Learning* session, they meet regularly for the next three school years for collaborative inquiry about formative assessment practices. FAME work is supported by regional lead coaches; documents (e.g., *FAME Learning Guide*); public and secure FAME websites with substantial print and video resources; and Michigan Department of Education (MDE)- provided program direction, with research & development support provided by the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC).

### Presentation Summary

Several states engage educators in learning about and using formative assessment practices during instruction. These efforts typically include statewide conferences or workshops, preparation of print and video resources, online learning opportunities (some connected to micro-credentials), and websites that provide access to these resources

The Michigan FAME program includes these activities and provides resources, but it is also fundamentally different: Michigan FAME is based on the belief that significant change in professional practice requires several years of supported learning and work on the part of participants. No other state provides this long-term learning opportunity for teachers to change and improve their practice.

The Michigan FAME program is based on the CCSSO FAST SCASS (2017) formative assessment definition.

*“Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners.”*

Research by Sadler (1989), Hattie & Timperley (2007), and Gotwals et al (forthcoming) indicate that formative assessment practice may be divided around three guiding questions for teacher and student use:

- Where are we (teacher and students) going?
- What does the student understand now?
- How do we (teacher and students) get to the learning target?

Since 2007, over 800 volunteer Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) Learning Teams (representing thousands of Michigan educators) have learned to use formative assessment practice in their classrooms. Each year, new FAME teams form, comprising of a voluntary coach (a learning facilitator, not a formative expert) and several volunteer teachers. These learning teams first attend a full-day *Launching into Learning* session, and then meet regularly for the next three school years for collaborative inquiry about enacting formative assessment practice in their classrooms.

FAME learning team work is supported three ways. First, regional lead coaches (Leads) not only lead the kick-off *Launching into Learning* sessions, but also support coaches throughout the school year. Coaches are encouraged to tap Lead expertise and experience.

Second, coaches have access to documents such as the *Introduction to FAME for Coaches*; *FAME Learning Guide*; *FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition*; and, *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Guide*. These resources were created for FAME coaches by the FAME support contractor, the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC). A four-member Research and Development (R & D) support team investigate different aspects of the FAME program and develop new resources for learning teams.

Third, coaches and their learning teams are supported by two websites: a public site open to all and a secure site for coaches with substantial print and video resources designed to assist the coaches in conducting their Learning Team meetings and deepening their understanding of formative assessment practice.

Finally, MDE provides policy and program direction, while the Michigan Assessment Consortium provides research and development support to FAME.

## Resources for further exploration

FAME website: [FAMEmichigan.org](http://FAMEmichigan.org)

FAME Fact Sheet: <http://tiny.cc/FAMEfacts>