

Attachment B
MAC Smarter FAME Field Test Frequently Asked Questions
May 17, 2021

1. Why should we participate in the Smarter FAME field test and what will our site get out of it?

Sites that have quality balanced assessment systems within their classroom settings, implemented with fidelity, have shown improved student learning and increased student achievement. The structures and resources created for the Smarter FAME field test will encourage field test participants to achieve these outcomes.

2. What is involved in the Smarter FAME field test?

Each site that participates in the field test will be expected to determine where they will enter into the learning about the components of a balanced assessment system. This could include learning about and learning to use the formative assessment process during instruction, the development and/or use of quality assessment evidence gathering tools both summative and formative within the classroom setting, the monitoring and verification of student learning through the periodic use of interim assessments and, ultimately, deepen participant understanding of how assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessments) can be used to effectively improve assessment balance at the classroom level and enhance student learning and achievement. In all instances, the quality of the data being collected and used, as well its alignment to the instructional outcomes and content standards, will be important considerations.

3. What professional learning supports will be provided to us through the field test?

Three strands of learning are planned for the field test. Learning Maps, with links to resources and suggested learning strategies, have been developed in these areas:

- D. Creating Balance in Classroom Assessment Systems: The Foundations;
- E. Bringing Balance to Classroom Assessment Systems with the Formative Assessment Process;
- F. Exploring the Ecosystem of the Smarter Balanced System of Assessment and Tools for Teachers

Sites that have little “prior knowledge” about these topics will be able to participate in planned learning sessions to be scheduled over the 2021-22 school year, as well as carry out local professional learning activities following these provided sessions. The combination of planned and follow-up learning activities will greatly enhance site member understanding of balanced classroom assessment.

4. What is required of a site that participates in the Smarter FAME field test?

Each site that participates in the field test will first complete an intake survey. This will allow site participants the opportunity to reflect on their level of past experience in learning about and using the formative assessment process, quality classroom summative and interim assessment, and the combined use of these assessment approaches to promote balanced classroom assessment.

Upon completion of the intake survey and with the assistance of a skilled Learning Facilitator, sites will develop an Assessment Learning Plan and an Assessment Implementation Plan (ALI & AIP) for use in the field test for 2021-22. In addition, a Site Coordinator may work with the Learning Facilitator to develop implementation plans for use in years beyond 2021-22.

Part of the planning that the Site Coordinator might engage in with the Learning Facilitator could include the sequencing of the specific learning activities needed by the site. There are planned activities and existing Learning Maps that the site can use in a facilitated manner, or the site can work with the Learning Facilitator to create a “choose your own adventure” approach to learning if that will better meet their needs.

5. How will a site participate in the Smarter FAME field test?

Participation is open to teams of educators (from across a district or within a school building) who wish to work on improving their use of balanced approaches to assessment in a classroom setting. We suggest that the site team should be between 6 to 12 members and should include building administrators, teacher leaders and classroom teachers. Others, such as district/school instructional support personnel, can also be added.

6. Who leads the site team that is participating in the Smarter FAME field test?

Each site selected for the Smarter FAME field test will be asked to indicate one person who will serve as the Site Coordinator. This individual will complete an intake survey and then work with the provided Learning Facilitator to develop the site's ALI & AIP.

The Site Coordinator will organize the team and convene meetings of the team, assure access to the learning resources provided by the project to site team members, and help monitor and evaluate the ALI & AIP.

7. Should the site team be from just one school, from multiple schools, or from the district as a whole?

It is possible for a field test team to come from more than one school, especially in smaller school districts. In larger school systems, the site team chosen might come from just one or two schools that are to be used as "lighthouse" schools for others that might participate in parallel outside of the field test. The challenge of a "Noah's Ark" approach of staffing a site team with one or two persons from several schools, is how poorly site team learning may be translated into learning activities that lead to action due to insufficient interest and support. Thus, selecting a team with one site in mind may be most effective.

8. Who are the Learning Facilitators and what support might they provide to the field test sites?

Learning Facilitators are highly skilled and deeply understand the components of a balanced assessment system (both assessment for and of learning). The Learning Facilitator will be assigned to your site will be determined based on the needs indicated in the intake survey.

Learning Facilitators are familiar with the Learning Maps created to support staff learning about balanced approaches to assessment at the classroom level and the associated topics that will likely arise. They are equipped to advise about inter-session work if your district elects to follow the schedule of real-time webinar presentations during the year OR they can advise about independent use of the Learning Maps.

The Learning Facilitators likewise will be able to draw from and advise about MAC and FAME resources and events that can serve to support additional and deeper learning your site may elect to pursue. Each Learning Facilitator will be available for up to 24 hours of time to support the work of your site. It is beyond the scope of the learning facilitator commitment to provide ongoing professional learning presentations for your site.

9. How will the Learning Facilitator help us plan for the implementation of our customized professional learning plan?

Your Learning Facilitator will work directly with your Site Coordinator to create the ALI & AIP. We anticipate this would occur during the Fall of 2021, and will likely require three, 1- to 3-hour work sessions. As needed, the Learning Facilitator will provide consulting support to help plan successful implementation of the district's ALP & AIP through shorter scheduled appointments. These may occur as often as monthly and would be scheduled at a mutually-agreed upon times and within the scope of the Learning Facilitators' 24-hour time limit.

10. Is there a structured professional learning program for the Smarter FAME field test?

Yes, there is a structured professional learning program for the Smarter FAME field test. This is a resource that the Learning Facilitator and Site Coordinator will consider as the site's ALP is being developed and implemented.

Each site will determine which parts of the structured professional learning program it wishes to engage in. Redundant sessions could be skipped, or the site might choose to engage with these as "refreshers." The site will pick the sessions that best meets the site's learning needs.

11. Do we have to use any of the Smarter Balanced interim assessments to be part of the field test?

No, although it is strongly encouraged that field test sites use the Smarter Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) or Focused IABs throughout the school year, even if the site uses a different *comprehensive* interim assessment (e.g., i-Ready, MAP, and Star) at the start and conclusion of the school year. The two types of Smarter Interim Assessment Blocks are designed to be used flexibly before, during, and after instruction and thus can be helpful to teachers to support and verify the learning they believe students have evidenced. Both types of Smarter Interim Assessment Blocks are available at no cost to the site, regardless of which *comprehensive* interim assessment it uses.

12. How do we integrate this into our ongoing continuous improvement initiatives such as MTSS?

One critical component of a successful implementation of a comprehensive multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is the ongoing use of evidence of student learning to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction as well as additional interventions. This is done in order to determine the next step in instruction and/or intervention to support learning. Helping staff to understand that using assessment for and of learning can help support the work of implementing an effective multi-tiered system of support will be beneficial.

Other continuous improvement initiatives also require monitoring and ultimately evaluation of the impact on student learning as part of the continuous improvement process. Learning to use assessment for and of learning will support this monitoring throughout implementation.

13. How would we include this initiative in our MICIP plan for the 2021-2022 budget year? Are there additional resources in that platform to support our work?

As noted above, this initiative could be included in your continuous improvement plan. Within the MICIP platform in the Mi-Strategy Bank, you will find additional resources to support your implementation efforts. Strategy Implementation Guides to specify the critical components for the implementation of a balanced assessment system in the classroom, as well as the formative assessment process in a classroom, have been developed to help communicate the critical components of these initiatives.

In addition, suggested activities for each of the phases of implementation – Get Ready, Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate – are provided on a Planning Tool for Formative Assessment in the Classroom. Additional resources are also planned to continue to support this work.

14. Is there follow up professional learning available that will help to support our team as we move toward implementation of a balanced assessment system?

As your ALI & AIP are developed, you and your team may determine action steps for implementation during the next 2 – 3 years, after the conclusion of the 2021-22 field test. This may require outside additional coaching and/or professional learning, such as involvement in the Michigan FAME program. Thinking about how to identify ongoing staff involvement and a strategic plan for professional learning will help to increase the capacity throughout the building and district to sustain the change beyond the field test and create the leadership and knowledge throughout the building and district to strengthen implementation. It would be important to continue to include this initiative in the continuous improvement plans at the building and/or district level, and to allocate the needed funding to support the implementation beyond the field test.

The MAC will continue to provide support in the area of assessment literacy and formative assessment, and it will work to determine content that is needed by districts throughout the state as has been the case for the past 15 years.

15. How will the Smarter FAME field test project be evaluated? What role will each site play in the field test evaluation?

Each site's ALI & AIP will be used by project staff to determine the extent of the site's learning activities and to collect data on how the learning activities have impacted instruction and student learning. The project will also seek to determine the impacts of the Learning Facilitators on the site's professional learning programs, and how the site used the project's planned learning resources, plus whether these were well-received by the site teams and the Learning Facilitators. The project team will also examine the extent to which site teams engaged in the FAME program and used either of the two Smarter Interim Assessment Blocks. Finally, the project will look at how each site used the project's resources in its MICIP plans for 2021-22 and beyond.

This means site participants will be occasionally be asked to fill out surveys, and perhaps, volunteer to be interviewed on some aspects of the field test. The project team may also wish to observe site team meetings or teachers' instruction.

In all cases, such participation will be voluntary, and active steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of participants, but should this not be possible (such as video recording a site team meeting), an informed consent procedure will be used.

16. Is there a cost for our site to participate in the Smarter FAME field test?

There is no registration cost for participating in the field test. However, sites might need to reimburse participants for their time spent in professional learning activities and time, such as those designated in site

participant work agreements and articulated in the district Comprehensive Plan. Due to the limited availability of the Learning Facilitator to lead professional learning, Site Coordinators may need to plan for additional costs.

17. Is there funding to help to support work time outside of the contract day? If not, how might this initiative be funded?

This field test project could be included in your continuous improvement plan as an activity within an overarching goal and strategy to implement a balanced assessment system. You might also state the goal and strategy more specifically as something similar to: “Staff will implement the formative assessment process in all classrooms” and designate a timeline (e.g., by June 2024). This would allow you to then designate specific activities in your plan and align funding resources to those activities.

Possible funding sources might include Title II, Title I, General Fund, or other grants that have been designated to support professional learning to improve student achievement.

18. From whom can I request more information or ask questions not covered in this FAQ?

Potential field test sites can address questions to Ellen Vorenkamp at (810) 923-0327 or vorenke83@gmail.com, or Terri Portice at (616) 889-7303 or terri.portice@gmail.com.