



## There's Always Something Good Happening in Corunna

Corunna Public Schools

Enrollment: 1,800

[www.corunna.k12.mi.us](http://www.corunna.k12.mi.us)



**Schools adapt best to societal change when their programs and policies provide teachers with needed training and resources to meet students' needs in an ever-changing world. In Corunna, a decision was made to implement a district-wide initiative to provide and support professional development for the faculty. Part of this support includes encouragement for educators to participate in the FAME professional learning model on formative assessment.**

"There's always something good happening in Corunna!"

It would not be surprising to hear these words being spoken by a community's local chamber of commerce president or elected political leaders. In this case, however, these words of invitation are shared by educators from Corunna Public Schools (CPS) in Corunna, Michigan. This is a bold statement, but these confident administrators and teachers mean it. Many factors have created this culture of optimism and pride for the schools and students. One factor is the high level of administrative and faculty participation in the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) program.

Corunna is located 40 miles northeast of Lansing in Shiawassee County. The county population is approaching 67,000, with Corunna being home to 3,500. The town and county are typical of other communities in this part of the state — a predominately rural area dotted with small towns, with an economy driven

by agricultural and industrial activities.

Corunna Public Schools comprises a total student population of 1,800 and employs about 220 employees.

Educators in Corunna have been involved with FAME since 2011, beginning with the desire of a few interested educators to learn more about formative assessment and the approach used by FAME. Due to the initial success and response, FAME has become a district-wide initiative having the potential to impact every school, every teacher, and every student in Corunna Public Schools.

### Coach Background

Dr. Kristy Walters has been in education since 2001, beginning as a classroom teacher. At present, she is the district formative assessment and early literacy coach. In 2017, she decided to take on the additional responsibilities of a FAME Lead working with coaches in other school districts. (See *FAME Professional Model* on back page.)



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In a recorded interview, Dr. Walters reflected on how she initially heard about FAME:



[Watch in Vimeo](#) (1:43)  
<https://vimeo.com/220364078/43e7d21988>

As Dr. Walters shared, she readily admits she did not know much about formative assessment before her involvement in FAME. She did, however, know it was something she wanted to pursue. It sparked her interest as a professional and believed it to be of tremendous benefit to her students.

Following a session at the Michigan School Testing Conference, Dr. Walters continued to gather more information. She describes that process in a recorded interview:



[Watch in Vimeo](#) (1:50)  
<https://vimeo.com/220365737/963414f9e8>

### District Approach

Once the decision was made to get involved, the work of building a FAME Learning Team began. As suggested by FAME, participation was to be voluntary. The initial invitation went to Corunna Middle School departmental chairs, and some decided to participate. They attended the FAME Launch into Learning, the initial training program for new Coaches and Learning Teams.

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*“When I come out of a FAME Team meeting I feel like I’m a better teacher. I have a better outlook. I’ve already reflected on some of my teaching and have a better idea of how to approach the next day.... I feel better about myself as a teacher, and for me, that keeps me going instead of getting in a rut and feeling [overwhelmed].”*

— CPS FAME participant

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The Launch is an opportunity for Coaches and Learning Teams to start the process of identifying as a team and building an environment to support their learning. In many instances, these individuals have not worked together in this manner, so it is important to invest time and energy in this process. The Launch is also a time for Coaches and Learning Teams to learn about formative assessment as presented in the FAME model of professional development.

Upon their return home, they began their work of studying formative assessment — including a close examination of their present knowledge and existing classroom practice. This is a time of reflection and a look at what they know, what they do, and determining its impact on student learning. It requires teachers to be very open and trusting with one another. The collective goal is to learn more about formative assessment, apply the learning to the classroom, and share their experiences with others. They expect to give and receive constructive feedback that will improve their instruction and have a positive impact on their students.

### Administrative Support

Dr. Walters reflects on the importance of a conversation with one of her administrators, John Fattal. Since 2015, Fattal has been Assistant Superintendent and Curriculum Director for Corunna Public School. He began his educational career as a classroom teacher in 1994, and his first administrative position was as an assistant high school principal in 2005. Being an

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### CONTACTS



**John Fattal** is the Assistant Superintendent and Curriculum Director for Corunna Public Schools.  
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**Dr. Kristy Walters** teaches special education at Corunna Public Schools, where she also serves as Instructional Coach, District Assessment Coordinator, FAME Coordinator, and FAME Lead.  
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administrator gives him a broad perspective on important educational issues. Being a curriculum director helps him focus on these same issues and how they have an impact in the classroom.

Over the years, discussions with FAME participants have always revealed the importance of administrative support. School and districts with knowledgeable and supportive administrators are more likely to become — and stay — involved in FAME. The level of participation varies from administrators wanting to be informed about the activities of their FAME Learning Teams to being direct participants as Coaches or Learning Team members. Fortunately for Corunna, Fattal was extremely interested in formative assessment and FAME. He realized this would benefit his faculty, and he supported learning more about it.

Fattal shares his thoughts on the importance of FAME in a recorded interview:



[Watch in Vimeo](#) (1:36)

<https://vimeo.com/220342563/5421607621>

Fattal sees participation in FAME as being important to the process of developing instructional leaders in the district. This, in turn, leads to greater levels of collaboration between teachers. This benefits instruction and has a positive impact on student learning.

Administrators have many responsibilities and must make a number of decisions concerning the programs and policies a school or district will adopt. Confronted with these difficult decisions, Fattal believes firmly that FAME is worthwhile and deserves his support.

Fattal chooses to play an active role, which he describes in a recorded interview:



[Watch in Vimeo](#) (1:17)

<https://vimeo.com/220339006/070b0b1f39>

### District Approach

The FAME program in Corunna started with one teacher and one administrator showing an interest in learning more about formative

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***“After participating in FAME, I found out that there is no magic bullet [in teaching]; but if there is, formative assessment might be it.”***

***— Dr. Kristy Walters, CPS teacher and instructional coach, and FAME Lead***

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assessment. They started modestly with one team, but they have continued to learn...and to grow. At the end of the second year, they had a “bring-a-friend-to-FAME” meeting in which others were invited to see how a FAME Coach and Learning Team works. Now, at the beginning of each year, all district administrators can describe what FAME is, what takes place at the Learning Team meetings, and why it can be a positive learning experience. Interested teachers are invited to sign up and, based on the number, new Learning Teams are created.

Adding more Learning Teams is important, but what is more important is what is happening with teacher thinking and practice. In the beginning, goals were rather modest. Team members wanted to continue what they had learned at the Launch by meeting on a regular basis and sharing their learning and their experiences. As time went on, there was a shift in their thinking as the conversations became deeper and led to looking and talking about the bigger picture of “education.” It represented a cognitive shift from “I taught it” to “they learned it.” Now, Coaches are excited about engaging in collaborative conversations that will help teachers think and reflect more deeply about their individual and group practices.

Professional development is often labeled by many educators, in unflattering terms, as the “Flavor of the Month.” The most common approach for years has been to bring in outside experts to share their knowledge and experiences with the faculty. There may or may not be some type of follow-up, but it is usually short-lived; soon another expert presents their ideas and the cycle repeats. FAME is different in that it asks for a long-term commitment of three years. It takes time to

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change the culture and climate in a classroom, in a school, and in a district. The work is serious, as it requires study, practice, sharing, reflecting, and practice again. If done effectively, it can have a profound impact on teacher instruction, student learning, and community awareness.

To get a better understanding of the impact of FAME, we visited with a group of CPS teachers who are active in the program. They share their experiences and the impact of FAME in a recorded interview:



[Watch in Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/220350314/ed0137dcc7) (2:33)  
<https://vimeo.com/220350314/ed0137dcc7>

### Progress Status

Formative assessment practices, strengthened by the work in the FAME Learning Teams, is an embedded and intentional part of education in Corunna Public Schools. As previously mentioned, administrative support is critical. But what are some of the other factors that lead to successful implementation? The biggest factor is the impact of FAME itself. Other teachers, not part of the program, have heard about the work being done and the impact it is having. The enthusiasm of FAME Learning Team members is contagious, and it is a major reason why it has spread and been sustained over the years.

Learning Team members at CPS talked about the specific ways FAME has impacted their instruction in a recorded interview:



[Watch in Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/220352768/dd37d4a930) (3:57)  
<https://vimeo.com/220352768/dd37d4a930>

One unique feature of the FAME model of professional development is the ability to work in tandem with other initiatives. Believing in the power and necessity of formative assessment practices, Corunna has stressed the importance of striving to have 85% of students earn 80% or better on common end-of-unit assessments before teachers move on to new material.

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***“We’ve made a conscious decision in our district — and we believe it’s been a good one — that we want to build collegiality and develop leadership among our teachers. We felt that if an administrator was in all the different FAME Team meetings, the conversation would change.”***

— *John Fattal, CPS Assistant Superintendent/  
Curriculum Director*

*[Note: CPS principals did participate in the first two-year FAME Team in order to get “up-to-speed” on formative assessment]*

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Classroom teachers participating in FAME are finding ways to incorporate their learning in reaching this student performance goal.

By 2017–18, CPS had six learning teams across the district. Five Coaches work with one elementary team, two middle-school teams, and two middle-school/high-school teams. Additional Coaches lead additional Learning Teams (one at each grade level: elementary, middle school, and high school). While all Teams are focused on formative assessment practices, each team and each teacher are at a different place in terms of their understanding and practice. The Coach is not viewed as a “formative assessment expert.” Rather, he or she is considered to be a Team facilitator and also a learning member of the Team. Learning Team meetings are a safe and comfortable place where teachers can share, not be judged, and receive feedback and support in their work. Each of Corunna’s Teams is in a different place, and all are doing well.

In addition to the support and enthusiasm provided by the teachers, students also have been a force in the FAME program’s implementation. Once again, Learning Team members shared the impact of this work on their students in a recorded interview:



[Watch in Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/220358347/107b022f55) (4:18)  
<https://vimeo.com/220358347/107b022f55>

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### Future Plans

The district's goal is to have 100% participation in FAME, and the emphasis on setting the stage has been to keep participation voluntary for the first seven years of this initiative. Teachers must truly recognize the need for change and be willing to reflect on their own practices.

As the district reflects on the progress made with FAME and looks to move forward, its direction has evolved into becoming more intentional with all teachers. A district-wide Launch is being planned for one of the district's five mandated August 2018 professional development days. The district has also worked with local union leadership to account for yet another mandated "day" of professional development by having six (6) one-hour after-school FAME meetings spread throughout the year for all teachers. This keeps formative assessment professional development ongoing and relevant. The high school is also planning to do quarterly FAME meetings during the school day by department, with Dr. Walters facilitating those meetings.

With the continued support of administrators, willingness of teachers to learn and share, and positive responses from students and parents, this goal is on a path of attainment. This is certainly defined and supported by the belief that "there is always something good happening in Corunna!"

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*"The Formative assessment process in our district has done two things. First, it's developed the leaders within our district.... Second, it's helped improve instruction by opening classroom doors.... [FAME] has allowed teachers the opportunity to see what other teachers are doing and have conversations about what is working in other classrooms."*

— John Fattal, CPS Assistant Superintendent/  
Curriculum Director

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How might a school and/or district support the wider use of the formative assessment process by classroom teachers?
- What type of support from administrators and district offices is needed to promote such collaborative practices?
- How might faculties of school(s) work together to provide the needed support to learn about and to use formative assessment practices with their students?

### RELATED LINKS

**Additional Research:** From the beginning, conducting research has been one important FAME activity. Data is collected from FAME participants and is used to determine the effectiveness of FAME training and resources. Over the years and based on the responses, the FAME Research and Development Team has created and improved resources to benefit Coaches and Learning Teams. Often, classroom teachers pilot this work, and teachers at Corunna have been willing participants. For example, they worked extensively with the FAME Research and Development Team in the creation of the "**Formative Assessment Self-Reflection: A Source-Guide for Developing Formative Assessment Practices.**" The team currently is creating new materials, and Corunna has once again volunteered to participate in the work. Additional information will be written and posted to [FAMEmichigan.org](http://FAMEmichigan.org) about new resources and the vital role played by Corunna teachers.

**Video Clips:** In addition to the video clips included in this case study, additional videos created with CPS educators are available for viewing. Refer to Figure 1 for participants, content, length, and Vimeo link (see next page).

NOTE: This case study references FAME implementation and school/district staffing from 2011–2018.

The Corunna case study is an ongoing project. FAME researchers will continue to follow the district's work in expanding and sustaining the FAME program and to study its impact on teachers and students.

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**Video Clips:** In addition to the video clips included in this case study, additional videos created with CPS educators are available for viewing. Refer to Figure 1 for participants, content, length, and Vimeo link.

**Figure 1. Additional video interviews with Corunna Public Schools educators**

Participants-Title	Description and Length
<b>Dr. Kristy Walters</b> — Teacher, Instructional Coach, FAME Coordinator for District. FAME Lead	Dr. Walters responds to questions about FAME in general and in Corunna.
What were your expectations for you and your expectations as a FAME coach?	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220367365/11c9fc5522">https://vimeo.com/220367365/11c9fc5522</a> 1:44
What were your expectations of FAME as a classroom teacher?	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220369055/946a3e3786">https://vimeo.com/220369055/946a3e3786</a> 2:12
What were the expectations for your students?	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220371154/e86656df22">https://vimeo.com/220371154/e86656df22</a> 2:01
What is your role in your district?	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220373272/4c94b03dd8">https://vimeo.com/220373272/4c94b03dd8</a> 3:58
Your district has taken a certain approach to the expansion and support of FAME. Would you describe this approach?	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220376899/4a9598121a">https://vimeo.com/220376899/4a9598121a</a> 10:37
Wrap-up	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220385922/3ab8dfd7b5">https://vimeo.com/220385922/3ab8dfd7b5</a> 2:51
<b>FAME Teachers Discussion</b>	
Sara Golab Diane Jacobs Mindy Dunn Rachel Hannah Kerri Himm Amy Feinauer Candice Rivette Sheryl Bauman	Middle School FAME learning team members respond to questions and talk about the impact of FAME.
Impact of FAME on parents	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220356692/35adc7fd8a">https://vimeo.com/220356692/35adc7fd8a</a> 1:38
<b>John Fattal</b> — Assistant Superintendent and Curriculum Director	From an administrator's perspective, John responds to questions about FAME in general and in Corunna.
Getting Started in FAME	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220341186/ce49e76632">https://vimeo.com/220341186/ce49e76632</a> 1:23
Administrators and FAME Training	<a href="https://vimeo.com/220340359/6d418c55e5">https://vimeo.com/220340359/6d418c55e5</a> :46

### About FAME Case Studies

The FAME Research and Development Team members **Denny Chandler**, **Tara Kintz**, and **John Lane**, led by **Ed Roeber**, connect FAME participants to best practice and a growing set of formative assessment resources. They gather detailed information on FAME approaches with the potential to be replicated in districts across

Michigan. The FAME Project will share these stories through online resources, publications and media platforms. **To inquire about how your FAME Learning Team can be featured in a future case study, contact [dtchandler@fuse.net](mailto:dtchandler@fuse.net).**

Editor: Linda Wacyk, Communications Management – Michigan Assessment Consortium; [lwacyk@michiganassessmentconsortium.org](mailto:lwacyk@michiganassessmentconsortium.org)

## About FAME

[Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators \(FAME\)](#) is a joint effort by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan Assessment Consortium. FAME is designed to reach all Michigan teachers and administrators with training in formative assessment. When applied to classroom instructional practice, the formative assessment process can become a vital part of improving teacher practice and positively impacting student achievement. In fact, the formative assessment process used by students and teachers in an effective and intentional manner connects to [Michigan's Top 10 in 10 Strategic Goals and Strategies](#) (Goals 2, 3, and 4).

***“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.”*** (CCSSO SCASS, 2017)

FAME began in 2008 in order to address MDE’s goal to provide different approaches to reach high school students who were low achievers. MDE partnered with Measured Progress to develop and implement the FAME program. According to Kim Young, who directs FAME for MDE, *“The formative assessment process is an essential part of a comprehensive assessment system. By financially supporting and endorsing FAME, the Michigan Department of Education is sending a strong message of the importance of formative assessment.”*

Today, this initiative continues as a collaborative endeavor of the MDE and the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC). The mission of MAC is to improve student learning and achievement through a system of coherent curriculum, balanced assessment, and effective instruction. MAC’s role in FAME is to coordinate trainings, maintain an extensive online library of resources, and conduct research on professional development using the Coach and Learning Team model and its impact on teacher practice and student achievement.

By 2018, more than 800 FAME Coaches from across Michigan had been trained to lead FAME Learning Teams. At present, approximately 250 active Coaches and Learning Teams are working throughout Michigan.

**Kimberly Young**, Michigan Department of Education Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability, has served as the FAME manager since 2006. Contact her at [youngk1@michigan.gov](mailto:youngk1@michigan.gov).

***“Working collaboratively, educators will learn, implement, and reflect on the formative assessment process in order to guide student learning and teachers’ instructional practices.”***

FAME Project Goal

## FAME professional learning model

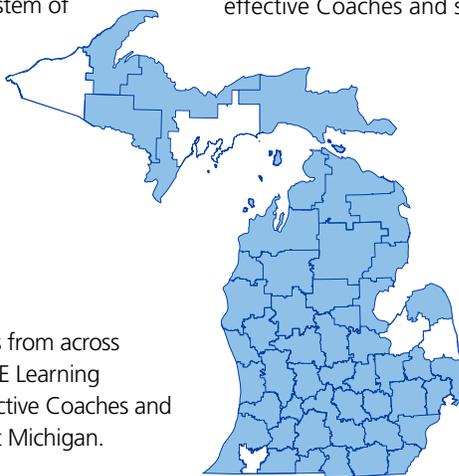
New FAME teams start in a similar manner. An individual learns about the FAME program from a conference presentation, a publication, or current FAME participant, and then shares it with others. A group of educators decides to become involved in FAME. One person agrees to take on the additional responsibilities of being a Coach, and then submits an application to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to form a new Learning Team. The number of new Learning Teams each year is influenced by available state and local finances and applicant location (MDE seeks to have active Learning Teams located throughout the state).

Once accepted, new Learning Teams are ready to start FAME training. Coaches complete their initial training via webinar and other learning sessions. In the fall, the Coach and Learning Team members participate in a session of *Formative Assessment: Launching into Learning*. This one-day training session provides information about the FAME program, the formative assessment process, and the Learning Team model. Teams complete the Launch prepared to begin their work.

Over time, Coaches have the opportunity to receive additional MDE-sponsored training — Cognitive Coaching Foundation Seminar® (Days 1-8) and Adaptive Schools Foundation Training® (Days 1-4). These trainings are critical in the development of effective Coaches and successful Learning Teams.

An additional layer of support is provided to each new and returning Coach through Regional Leads — former FAME Coaches who provide support for a group of Coaches. The Leads serve as a nearby resource person and valuable asset to Coaches, who learn — along with their Learning Teams — that they do not exist in isolation. Leads also schedule meetings with Coaches to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas.

Learn more at [www.famemichigan.org](http://www.famemichigan.org).



**Shaded areas illustrate the influence of FAME Teams and Coaches throughout Michigan.**