MAC FAME Research & Development Activities for the 2017-18 FAME Program - Abstract
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Introduction
During the 2017-18 school year, the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) Research & Development Team (R&D) carried out several activities in support of the FAME program on behalf of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). The MAC R & D team developed several key resources for FAME participants and gathered information from them on topics, such as use of the new FAME resources and supports for FAME program participation. The overall goal of these activities was to provide information to the FAME leadership team (MDE and the Leads) and to better understand what FAME participants need in order to enhance their learning, how the FAME resources are used, and what resources might be created to improve the program for the future.

This report is divided into three sections – an outline of the resources created by the MAC FAME R & D Team during 2017-18, a summary of the research projects planned and carried out by the MAC FAME R & D Team, and finally, summaries of the results of the MAC FAME R & D Team's work.

MAC FAME Resources
During 2017-18, the MAC R & D team developed several resources for use in the FAME program. These included the following resources:

A. *Introduction to FAME for Coaches* – The MAC R & D team created this Guide for use by new Coaches to inform them about the FAME program and to provide them information as they selected the members of their FAME Learning Teams. This Guide served to orientate the Coaches to the program to help them plan for successful work with their new Learning Team. It also informed new Coaches about the multi-year Coach Learning Program offered to FAME Coaches to enhance their coaching skills.

B. *FAME Learning Guide* – This Guide is a thorough overview of the FAME program for FAME Learning Team members. It provides an orientation to the FAME program, an overview of the definitions of formative assessment, a summary of the FAME Components and Elements, as well as detailed information about each of the five FAME Components and thirteen Elements. The intent of this Guide is to provide the materials that FAME Learning Teams need to launch their formative assessment work.

C. *FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition* – The Coach Edition is the companion piece to the FAME Learning Guide for the Coaches. The document contains the material found in the FAME Learning Guide, plus it provides resources for use by the Coach such as sample Learning Team agendas (for each FAME Component), lists of print and video resources to be found on the secure FAME website, and other documents such as protocols that Coaches can use to plan and conduct their Learning Team meetings.

D. *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Source-Guide* – This Guide was produced as a document for use by returning FAME Learning Teams. It provides rubrics for each of the thirteen FAME Elements and is intended for use by teachers who wish to examine and reflect on their use of any of the Elements in their daily instructional activities. The suggested strategy for using the resource is to video record one or more lessons and then to code and reflect on the coding with a colleague or alone.

E. **Secure FAME Website** – The MAC R & D team contributed a large number of resources for inclusion on the new FAME website that the MAC was tasked with building. In addition, the MAC R & D team carefully reviewed resources provided on the previous website and selected those for use on the new site. This activity included the tagging of all resources by key words so that users of the new site would be able to locate documents pertinent to their searches.

F. **Public FAME Website** – The MAC R & D Team also contributed resources to the new public FAME website. One key resource that occupied much time and effort of the team was the creation of a formative assessment overview module that Michigan Virtual is assisting MDE to produce. Additional modules, one for each FAME Component, were also created although their production was suspended so that the overview module could be completed expeditiously.

Results: During the early part of the school year, the MAC R & D team was occupied with writing, reviewing, editing, producing, and printing of new guides for the FAME program as listed above. In addition, the team spent considerable time finalizing the FAME website as well as FAME learning modules to be produced by Michigan Virtual.

Research Projects
Not only is the MDE providing extensive resources (as indicated above), but the Department also seeks to understand how to improve educator understanding and practice via the research and evaluation studies it sponsors. This research work keeps Michigan at the forefront of research-based professional learning in formative assessment nationally. The MAC R & D team carries out a variety of activities in support of the FAME program. A number of research projects were proposed by the MAC when it submitted its proposal to carry out activities in support of the FAME program:

1. **Continue investigating ways in which building or district administrators support participation in FAME**

    Question(s) for Investigation: The MAC R & D team sought responses to these questions: What supports do administrators provide to FAME coaches to support their work with their learning teams? Are there coaches who would like to participate in FAME who are hampered or prevented from doing so by an administrator in their school or district?

    Investigation Strategies: The MAC research team proposed to carry out a survey in the fall 2017 with new FAME Learning Teams. This brief survey (five or fewer questions) was designed to obtain information from new coaches about how the administrators in their school or district have supported or not been aware of the coach in signing up for the FAME program. In what ways has the work of FAME Learning Teams been supported? The MAC R & D team also conducted interviews of returning Coaches asking similar questions about how their work with their Learning Teams was supported, both when they signed up for FAME as well as subsequently.

    Findings: Coaches indicated a wide range of responses concerning the level of administrative support. Of the 26 Coaches, 24 described administrators in a positive (active, involved, and/or supportive) way. On average, principals reported engaging in learning about the formative assessment process and speaking with FAME team and non-member FAME team member faculty about formative assessment. Some principals provided resources on formative assessment, primarily print materials, to a FAME Learning Team.

2. Study how new FAME Coaches and Learning Teams use the newly developed resources (the FAME Learning Guide, FAME Learning Guide—Coach Edition, Introduction to FAME for Coaches) that reflect revisions to the FAME Components and Elements.

    Question(s) for Investigation: The MAC R & D team sought responses to these questions: Do the Coaches and Learning Teams find the resources to be understandable and informative, and has the material facilitated a substantive understanding of formative assessment more quickly and thoroughly?

    Investigation Strategies: These questions were studied in several ways: 1) interviews with Leads and Coaches conducted at FAME events such as Lead meetings and FAME events such as Cognitive Coaching, 2) a question on the periodic update surveys of Coaches, and 3) the responses of new

Coaches to questions regarding use of the formative assessment process in the annual Coach survey conducted in spring 2018.

Findings: All of the Coaches (new and returning) interviewed indicated the *FAME Learning Guide/FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition* was useful at the Launch and in helping the Coach work with his or her Learning Team. In the survey, 82% of the Coaches (both new and returning Coaches) indicated having used the FAME Learning Guide, with 21% indicating weekly, 42% indicating 2-4 times per month, and 37% indicating less than monthly. Coaches also responded very favorably to the resources provided as part of the FAME program.

3. **Because the revised FAME components and elements represent a shift or reorganization of the TFAP components and elements used by continuing FAME teams in the past, the MAC R & D team sought to better understand the extent to which returning Coaches and their Learning Teams understand the conceptual shifts inherent in the new FAME Components and Elements.**

   Question(s) for Investigation: The MAC R & D team sought responses to these questions: Do returning FAME teams request copies of the new materials? For those that do so, do they understand the shift in the components and elements from the TFAP Guide definition to those now being used? What questions might FAME Learning Teams have about the revised Components and Elements? Our goal was to find 1) whether the Coach and his or her Learning Team were using the new FAME Components and Elements and 2) if the Learning Team was basing its work on the revised FAME Components and Elements, did the Learning Team have any questions or concerns about them.

   Investigation Strategies: The MAC R & D team studied this through 1) a brief written survey of Coaches who requested the new resources and 2) brief in-person interviews of Coaches conducted by a MAC R & D team member at Cognitive Coaching Days 1-4 and Days 5-8 events.

   Findings: Because there were so few returning Coaches who requested and used the new FAME Learning Guide and other new FAME resources, these Coaches were sent the same survey as used in Study 2 and their results are included in the data reported there.

4. **Determine the needed revisions to the resource materials (the *FAME Learning Guide, FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition, Introduction to FAME for Coaches*)**

   Question(s) for Investigation: The MAC R & D team sought responses to these questions: Are the new materials understandable to new Coaches and their Learning Teams? Do returning Coaches find the new materials useful and have they transitioned their Learning Teams to them? Have any users found issues or have questions about the new materials.

   Investigation Strategies: These questions were studied in several ways: 1) the MAC R & D team collected feedback from the Leads, Coaches, or the FAME Program manager via a Survey Monkey survey that remained open from September 2017 through March 2018, 2) a question added to the periodic update surveys, and 3) additional questions added to the annual Coach survey using questions asked how useful the coach found the FAME materials provided at the Launching into Learning sessions.

   Findings: Coaches knew to use the included information (the URL to the Survey Monkey survey) to provide edits and/or suggestions. Some of the Coaches did share some minor edits. Feedback from Kim Young (FAME Program Manager), the Leads, and from Margaret Heritage (national formative assessment expert) led to revisions that included an introductory section on classroom culture, a rewrite of Element 2.2 on Learning Progressions, and revisions for Element 3.2 to include the Keys to Assessment Quality.

5. **Support the use of the *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Source-Guide* by returning Coaches.**
   The MAC proposed to conduct an introductory webinar to support returning Coach and Learning Team member use of the *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Source-Guide*. The MAC R & D team

planned to devote one of the online webinars to this topic to make sure that returning Coaches were aware of this resource and how to access it. However, this webinar was not held. Only a few returning Coaches requested this resource. Thus, this planned study did not occur.

Question(s) for Investigation: Following the webinar, we had planned to identify Coaches and Learning Teams committed to using the *Self-Reflection Guide*. Did these Learning Teams find the materials useful? What suggestions did Coaches and Learning Team members have for revising/streamlining the materials?

Investigation Strategies: These questions could have been studied in several ways: 1) returning Coaches would have been asked in the periodic update surveys if they have chosen to use the *Self-Reflection Guide*, and if so, would they be willing to answer some additional questions posed by the MAC R & D team, 2) conduct a brief telephone interview with the Coaches who agreed to be interviewed to determine the extent of use of the *Self-Reflection Guide*, and 3) determine if Coaches agreed to be interviewed would be amenable to having Learning Team members interviewed by a member of the MAC :R & D team – either using the formative assessment practices or to provide their overall view of the utility of the *Self-Reflection Guide.*

Findings: This webinar was not held nor did many of the returning Coaches know about and thus request this resource. During interviews, Coaches were not aware of its existence, purpose, or use. However, in the surveys, the *Self-Reflection Guide* was mentioned by Coaches as a useful resource.

6. **Review the utility of the legacy resources that have been made available to FAME Leads and Coaches to determine which ones to continue to offer.**
   The MAC has proposed the use of two or more of the FAME Leads to review and recommend approval of selected resources to the FAME Program Manager, who will make the final decision on which resources are to be posted on the FAME website and made available to FAME participants.

   Question(s) for Investigation: The MAC R & D team sought responses to these questions: Are the resources selected and approved those that the Coaches (and their Learning Teams) are seeking? Do Coaches find the selected and approved resources useful to address the issues that led the Coaches to seek the resources in the first place? Is this review process an effective and efficient one – how could it be enhanced/improved?

   Investigation Strategies: These questions were studied in several ways: 1) a question on the current annual Coach survey asked about the utility of resources provided on the FAME website, 2) another question on the annual Coach survey asked about what additional resources Coaches might find useful, 3) a new question could be asked of the Coaches specific to whether they accessed the resources found on the new FAME website, and if so, did they find the resources they were seeking and did the resources meet their needs, and 4) feedback from the Leads (and the FAME Program Manager) on the review/vetting process used and how it could be improved/streamlined.

   Findings: Coaches were asked how often they visited the FAME.org secure website. 12% reported never, 16% once, 39% less than once a month, 31% 1-2 times per month, and 2% at least once a week. Coaches reported going to the website for many reasons. Overall, Coaches felt very favorably about the FAME project website. Eight-five percent of Coaches found the website easy or somewhat easy to use and 86% of Coaches reported have good or very good experiences with the website.

7. **Determine additional video and other resources needed and plan how to obtain the video examples for FAME components and elements.**
   The MAC research team planned to continue to collect examples of teacher use of the FAME Components and Elements. We planned to review teacher clips available online from sites such the Teaching Channel and provided by states participating in the CCSSO SCASS FAST project. If these sources did not yield useful examples, the MAC R & D team planned to recruit volunteer Michigan teachers and seek to video record their instruction (after parents and guardians provide their permission for the MAC to use the video). All video obtained or created was to be provided to Leads

for their review. Those selected by the Leads were to be provided to the FAME Program Manager for approval before posting. However, due to the press of other activities (such as the creation of FAME Component overviews and other unplanned activities), this proposed activity has been postponed.

8. **Investigate non-responses to the periodic Coach update surveys to encourage improved response rates to the monthly surveys.**
   The Leads and the MAC R & D team are concerned when Coaches repeatedly fail to respond to the periodic update surveys. The concern is a logistical one.

   <u>Question(s) for Investigation</u>: The MAC R & D team sought responses to this question: are the update surveys getting through to the Coaches or is district spam or firewall practices and software blocking the surveys? The Leads have been concerned about why these Coaches not only are not responding to the update surveys but also not responding to their attempts to interact with them (sent via e-mail or telephone calls not returned).

   <u>Investigation Strategies</u>: The MAC R & D team proposed to contact the Coaches individually by e-mail and telephone using data provided by Coaches when they registered for the FAME events (Launching into Learning or Cognitive Coaching). If the issue was district software, the MAC R & D Team planned to obtain another e-mail address that would permit it to communicate directly with the Coach. In the case of having received the survey and not responding to it, the MAC R & D team planned to seek whether the individual remained the Coach of an active Learning Team.

   <u>Findings</u>: Individual surveys were sent to 117 Coaches. By the conclusion of the survey period, 35 Coaches (29.9%) responded. Overall, the results indicate that many Coaches are not receiving the survey. One primary reason seems to be that the survey is blocked from some email accounts or school email systems because it is delivered from a bulk email source. One option to assure delivery would be to mail out the link to the survey from a personal email account, but then it is difficult to track individual responses by their email address. In addition, there are several Coaches who are no longer participating as a FAME Coach, are no longer in their district, or feel they no longer have administrative support.

The following are longer-term activities that the MAC proposed to carry out as well:

9. **Continue work on the *Guide to Student Self- and Peer-Assessment* intended to provide definition and support for student self- and peer-assessment activities to support teachers who wish to employ these formative assessment processes with their students.**
   Our goal in 2017-18 was to create two draft *Guide* resources – one for teachers and a companion piece for students. The MAC R & D team then planned to seek Coaches and Learning Teams to agree to pilot test these two pieces in their classrooms (starting with the teams who worked with us in creating the *Self-Reflection Guide*). These teachers would be asked to use the materials designed for them to better understand both student self-assessment and peer-assessment. They would also be asked to provide their students with the materials that the MAC created for their elementary and secondary students. We planned to seek the permission of the school principals, participating teachers, and the parents/guardians of the students to video record classroom instruction as students are introduced to self- and peer-assessment, as well as to video record interviews with students (to ascertain their perceived self-assessments) and peers providing advice to one another on the work assigned by the teacher.

   The production of this set of resources was delayed by other priorities for the MAC R & D team, so that these resources remain under development at the conclusion of Year 1 of the MAC's work on the FAME program.

   <u>Question(s) for Investigation</u>: Key questions investigated were: 1) what parts of the teacher and student *Guides* did teachers and students find useful and informative, and 2) what parts of the *Guides* did teachers have questions or concerns about, and 3) what revisions to the *Guides* did participating teachers have?

Investigation Strategies: During the pilot, the MAC R & D team planned to seek to video record teachers providing directions to students in their classrooms, video record students providing peer feedback to other students, and interview students about their self-assessment feedback.

Results: This resource is still under development.

10. **In what ways does the FAME professional learning model as well as the FAME Components and Elements support (or not) local educator work on other state, district, or school initiatives related to school improvement, educator evaluation, and so forth.**
    The MAC R & D team has studied schools and districts that are exemplary participants in the FAME program. Yet, these schools and districts do not carry out FAME work in a vacuum. They work to fit the FAME work into other work that results from state requirements, state program improvement initiatives, district and school improvement work, and other related programs. We proposed to study how these schools have negotiated this multiplicity of programs and yet successfully implemented FAME. We felt that this is an important study to initiate because we have found that low performing schools often choose to not participate in FAME (despite evidence that their low-performing students might benefit most by the participation of their teachers in the FAME program) because of a fear of "yet one more initiative." Low-performing schools are more likely than others to be pressed by policy mandates and accountability pressures, accompanied by numerous instructional and management reform efforts, and feel that these preclude FAME participation. There may be strategies that the successful schools use that could be used by low-performing schools to successfully participate in FAME and other initiatives.

    Question(s) for Investigation: The MAC R & D team sought responses to these questions: How many initiatives do principals report that their schools are engaged with? What strategies do principals whose school or district report that enables them to successfully engage in these initiatives and the FAME program? What implications are there from the feedback of principals for others?

    Investigation Strategies: The MAC R & D team proposed to request Coaches to indicate the school administrator who supported their participation in the FAME program. Coaches provided the administrators' e-mail addresses. The MAC R & D team then sent a brief survey to these school administrators seeking responses to a small number of questions related to school improvement initiatives and participation in the FAME program.

    Findings: The survey of principals indicated that their schools were engaged in numerous initiatives: 9% indicted two, 17% indicated three, 26% indicated four, 17% indicated five, and 31% reported six or more initiatives. When asked whether they felt that another initiative or FAME had the greatest impact on student learning, 67% reported another initiative had the greatest impact.

11. **Continue work on** *Providing Descriptive Feedback to Students***, the resource for helping teachers to provide useful descriptive feedback to students**
    This topic, along with helping students to self- and peer-assess, are ones that coaches and learning team members identify each year both as activities they are less likely to be able to do well and areas that they don't understand.

    The production of this resource was delayed by other priorities for the MAC R & D team. This resource remains under development at the conclusion of Year 1 of the MAC's work on the FAME program.

    Question(s) for Investigation: This work started with a review of the research literature as well as practice literature, followed by a determination of the type(s) of resources most useful to teachers. We used the national formative assessment consultant to help locate suitable existing resources and to plan for the development of the most useful resources. The R & D team sought to answer these

questions: 1) given the MAC's understanding of the topic, derived from the review of the research and practices literatures, what type(s) of resources (e.g., guides, print materials, videos) would be most helpful to Coaches, 2) what resources does the FAME program currently possess, and 3) what additional resources should the MAC create to support the Leads and FAME Coaches and Learning Team members?

Investigation Strategies: The MAC R & D team conducted reviews of the research literature as well as practice literature. We sought to understand from the research literature the types of ways that constructive feedback can be given to students. The review of the practice literature was carried out to determine if useful materials to help teachers to provide descriptive feedback are currently available to be used as is or could be adapted for use in the FAME program. From these reviews, discussions among FAME R & D team members and consultation with the FAME Program Manager led the MAC to prepare a tentative plan for the development of resources for teachers to provide descriptive feedback to students.

Results: This resource is still under development.

12. **Observe the *use* of the new FAME Learning Guide (and the supporting FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition) by new FAME Learning Teams**
The MAC R & D team speculated that the new FAME Learning Guide and accompanying Coach Edition) would facilitate and sustain discussions within the Learning Team, so much so that the Learning Team would not seek and use other resources during their first year of discussions.

Question(s) for Investigation: The MAC R & D team felt that this could be observed from watching the interactions of a select number of Learning Teams, either live in person or from video recordings submitted by the teams to the MAC. The MAC R & D team was prepared to either record the Learning Team meetings itself or to provide the equipment to the Learning Team for it to record its meetings and submit the recordings to the MAC.

Investigation Strategies: The MAC R & D team sought to select several Lansing-area new FAME Learning Teams to video record their learning team meetings in order to study how the teams made use of the FAME Learning Guide (and how the Coach used the Coach Edition of the FAME Learning Guide). However, none of the selected teams agreed to participate. A virtual team (from the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy) did volunteer to submit recordings of their learning team meetings to the MAC for the MAC to observe how the FAME Learning Guide was used as well as to code the interactions among the members of the Learning Team.

Results: The MAC R & D Team was able to observe via recordings the work of one new FAME Learning Team, in this case, a virtual one. The MAC R & D Team will code the meetings this summer.

There were several other areas where the MAC R & D team carried out work. Some of these were planned at the outset of the year, and others arose from needs that became apparent during the year.

13. **Conduct periodic update surveys of FAME Coaches**
The MAC R & D team continued to administer periodic surveys of Coaches in order to obtain information on their activities in ways that would provide information for the Leads as well as to indicate the types of needs and requests for resources Coaches have. The goal is to provide ongoing support to the Coaches from the FAME Leads.

Findings: In the 2016-2017 school year, the most requested category for support was Direction and Guidance. In contrast, in the year 2017-2018 Direction and Guidance was the sixth category with the most frequent requests. In addition, there were significantly *fewer* requests for resources and guidance overall. The top ten requests were different from the top ten requests for support in the 2015-2016 and the 2016-2017 school year, as shown below.

2015-16 Coach Requests	2016-17 Coach Requests	2017-18 Coach Requests
Direction and Guidance	Direction and Guidance	No Request for Further Support
Articles and Research	Articles and Research	Resources (quick updates)
Resources	Resources	Time/Scheduling
Videos	Videos	Resources (Examples of FA and Secondary)
FA Tools and Strategies	FA Tools and Strategies	FA Practices for Gathering Evidence
Information on Feedback	Information on Feedback	Direction and Guidance
Online Resources	Online Resources	Video Examples of FA
Collecting and Analyzing Data	Collecting and Analyzing Data	Further Professional Learning
Time/Scheduling	Time/Scheduling	Grading Practices
Coaching Support	Coaching Support	District Support for FA

Table 13-1: Most Frequently Indicated Categories of Support Needed by Coaches

14. **Develop and produce case studies on the impacts of the FAME program**
The MAC R & D team had completed several case studies in past years. This year, those case studies (Corunna, Kingsley, and Muskegon ISD) were produced in an attractive, standard format. New case studies were undertaken (Hesperia and enhanced Corunna) and are being considered in other situations (e.g., Monroe ISD/special education; high school; CTE team).

15. **Conduct annual survey of FAME Coaches**
The MAC R & D team carried out its annual survey of all first year and returning FAME Coaches, using many of the same questions as used in the past.

Results: The end-of-year surveys indicated once again that the Coaches felt that participation in the FAME formative assessment learning activities was of high value, helping them to learn more about the uses of such practices in their classrooms, to use formative assessment practices more frequently in their classrooms, as well as helping Learning Team members to do so as well. They appreciated the support provided by the Lead assigned to them. Coaches spoke to others about the program frequently, another sign of its value and importance to them.

16. **Conduct annual survey of FAME Learning Teams**
The MAC R & D team also carried out its annual survey of all first year and returning FAME Learning Team members, using many of the same questions as used in the past.

Results: The end-of-year surveys of Learning Team members indicated once again that those who participate in the FAME program are energized by their work on their Learning Team. Many see the payoff in higher student achievement and engagement, and thus feel once again the spark that led them to seeking teaching as a career. Learning Team members report greater understanding of formative assessment, increased use of the components of formative assessment in their classrooms. Learning Team members frequently spoke to others about the FAME program, another sign of its value and importance to them.

17. **Participate in national formative assessment meetings**
Representatives of the MAC R & D team participated in national meetings where formative assessment was presented and discussed. This included the CCSSO SCASS FAST group and the CCSSO National Conference on Student Assessment.

18. **Participate in project planning meetings with the Department and with the Leads**

Representatives of the MAC R & D team participated in monthly project management meetings with MDE contract representative to plan website development and enhancements, publications, and event management, as well as R & D activities. In addition, the MAC R & D met monthly with the MDE contract representative to delve more deeply in planning R & D activities to be carried out.

The MAC R & D Team sought to address these questions and activities through its work so as to contribute to the success of the FAME program among Michigan educators, and through this, to the national research program on formative assessment practice. These research and development studies set MDE apart from other states offering professional learning activities in formative assessment to educators in their states. Not only is the MDE providing extensive resources (as indicated above), but the Department also seeks to understand how to improve educator understanding and practice via the research and evaluation studies it sponsors. This research work keeps Michigan at the forefront of research-based professional learning in formative assessment nationally.