

Focus on FAME

How can administrators support teacher learning about the formative assessment process and FAME?

What we know:

There is a strong research base about the impact of formative assessment on student achievement (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998; Ball et al, 2009; Grossman, 2012). In addition, formative assessment promotes the development of life-long learning skills, which are seen worldwide as a critical outcome of K-12 schooling. However, teachers struggle with various aspects of the formative assessment process (e.g., Webb & Jones, 2009; van Es & Sherin, 2008; Feldman & Capobianco, 2008). Fortunately,

professional development has been shown to help teachers improve their formative assessment practices (e.g., Popham, 2008; Wylie, Lyon & Goe, 2009).

Why is administrator support important?

Research from the FAME program indicates administrators play a critical role in supporting professional learning about formative assessment and participation in the FAME program. Research conducted by Supovitz, Sirinides, & May



(2010) lend support to the idea that administrators are critical in supporting teacher learning through collaboration and communication around instruction.

What do COACHES report about ways administrators support teacher learning about formative assessment?

The MAC FAME research and development team conducted surveys of FAME coaches who lead Learning Teams of teachers focused on formative assessment. The findings, listed in Table 1 (next page), highlight a number of ways administrators can support teacher learning about formative assessment and participation in the FAME program.



There are two main things that the process (formative assessment) has done. One, it has developed leaders within our district. All of our FAME coaches are becoming leaders of small teams that are becoming better at their craft in their classrooms.... Second, it has helped improve instruction and opened up the classroom doors.

– Superintendent of Corunna Public Schools



Table 1: Administrator Support for Teacher Learning about Formative Assessment

Type of support	Example
Learning about the formative assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My administrator viewed a webinar on formative assessment
Providing time for teachers to meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our building administrator has allowed at least 1 to 2 hours of PLC time each month for us to meet during the school day to work on formative assessment together.
Providing resources and support for learning about formative assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My administrator provided formative assessment books. • The administrator provides time, space, materials and a coach stipend for the coach to meet with the Learning Team several times throughout the school year. • My administrator encourages staff to join a team, participates in discussions during meetings when we ask him to come, and sends us helpful articles related to formative assessment when he sees them.
Providing support for training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My administrator supported my participation in training and continued support of the FAME group that I coach.
Participating in meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My administrator has participated in our team meetings... and helped me structure meetings with my team.
Inquiring about work and providing feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our building administrator has encouraged us and has asked us about our conferences and training sessions.
Allowing for coach discretion to determine learning team direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She has allowed us the ability to drive the team and determine our direction. • My administrator has asked what our team needs to be successful, and he is allowing us choices as to how we would like to move forward and learn as a group.
Supporting formative assessment in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building administrators have been supporting the teachers by letting them try out new strategies. • We may benefit from some time observing one another in classrooms as we utilize various tools and offer feedback in pairs or some other format.
Promoting FAME throughout the building and in other avenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been able to offer Formative Assessment training during staff meetings and through small sessions. • Questions are provided to the administrator by the coach to include in his Monday Memo to all staff regarding data analysis.

What do ADMINISTRATORS report about the ways they support and participate in formative assessment activities?

The MAC researchers asked administrators in the FAME program how they support teacher learning about formative assessment. Administrators reported several ways they support their teachers. On average, principals reported most often that they engaged

in learning about the formative assessment process and spoke with faculty — both FAME team and non-FAME team members — about formative assessment.

Principals also echoed the reported support activities mentioned by FAME Coaches. Administrators indicated they:

- provided release time for teachers to attend FAME launches or team meetings,

- provided additional formative assessment resources,
- facilitated sharing between FAME Learning Team members and other staff, and
- attended FAME meetings themselves.

Overall, administrators indicated that FAME integrated well into their schools’ overall efforts to improve.

Other studies have explored the important role of principal leadership in improving student achievement. Support for teacher learning of formative assessment is one way administrators have promoted quality learning experiences for teachers and students.

What are other ways administrators support teacher learning about formative assessment?

We would like to hear from you. Please share your experience by responding to our survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AdministratorSupport>

Please visit the FAME website at FAMEMichigan.org to view the case studies and videos for more information on administrator support of formative assessment.

REFERENCES

- Drago-Severson, E. (2012). New Opportunities for Principal Leadership: Shaping School Climates for Enhanced Teacher Development. *Teachers college record*, 114(3), n3.
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What is Formative Assessment?

Formative assessment is a process that occurs during teaching and learning to improve student outcomes. The following definition of formative assessment from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is used by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) in the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) professional learning program.

"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 FAST, 2017)

What is FAME?

Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) is a professional learning program in which teams of educators work on learning teams supported by coaches working collaboratively to learn about, implement, and reflect on the formative assessment process. The program involves educators in a multi-year commitment to promote significant change in professional practice, supported by internal and external resources. Since 2006, thousands of educators have participated in the FAME program to guide student learning and teachers' instructional practices across the state.



Resources to Learn More About Formative Assessment and FAME

- Heritage, M. (2007). Formative Assessment: What Do Teachers Need to Know and Do? Kappan, <http://tinyurl.com/Heritage-Kappan>
- Michigan Assessment Consortium. (2016). Learning Point: What constitutes a high-quality, comprehensive, balanced assessment system? Mason, MI: Author.
- Michigan Assessment Consortium. (2017). Learning Point: What do we mean by Formative Assessment? Mason, MI: Author.
- Popham, J. (2008). Formative Assessment: Seven Stepping Stones to Success. *Principal Leadership* 9(1).
- Swaffield, S. (2016). Multilevel Leadership for Assessment for Learning, and the Potential of Critical Friendship. *Leadership in Diverse Learning Contexts*.