

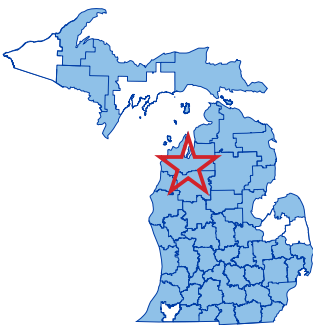


The Kingsley Story: A Principal Embraces Instructional Leadership

Kingsley Middle School
Enrollment: 450

Kingsley Area Schools
Enrollment: 1,500

www.kingsley.k12.mi.us



When a new principal recognized the need to address achievement gaps, he used state and local assessment data to draft a school improvement plan that included Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME). After the first year, two teacher-leaders emerged and took part in Adaptive Schools and Cognitive Coaching training. In year 2, these leaders achieved a goal to saturate the school with FAME professional development. They took long-term commitment seriously, and incorporated FAME into additional instructional strategies used at the school. This blended approach resulted in moving Kingsley Middle School from the mid-range of state assessment performance to one of the top scoring schools in their county.

In 2012, educators at Kingsley Middle School in Kingsley, Mich., joined the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) Project. Kingsley Middle School is in the Kingsley Area Schools District, which also includes a high school and elementary school. At that time, there were approximately 1,500 students in the district with 450 enrolled in the middle school.

Coach background

Vaughn White was the school's newly appointed principal and the person responsible for introducing FAME to the school. Mr. White had been an educator for 24 years and was introduced to FAME while serving as principal of the Shelby Middle School in West Michigan. He brought with him his enthusiasm, training, and experience as a FAME Coach when he

came to Kingsley Middle School.

As the new building administrator, he realized a strategy was needed to improve student achievement. After a review of the school's achievement data, a school improvement plan was created that included the implementation of a first-year FAME Learning Team. Leaders from this first Team would go on to receive training to Coach additional Learning Teams.

District approach

In year one, White worked with a voluntary team of teachers representing all four grade levels (5–8) in the middle school. Their initial goal was to create an understanding of the formative assessment process and the FAME approach of using a Coach and Learning Team model (see last page for more information on the FAME



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professional learning model). Based on the initial success of this Team, the Learning Team model expanded and evolved into three additional Learning Teams (starting in 2015–16), in addition to the original Team in the program. All teachers at Kingsley Middle School were now on Learning Teams, and FAME became integrated into daily practice to the benefit of teachers and students.

While the addition of new teams is a desired outcome and welcomed part of FAME, the continuation of the first Learning Team in its original format is unusual. Usually, members of the first Learning Team move on to start and coach new teams, and if the original team continues, it is with the addition of new members. These blended teams (new members with experienced members) seem to be a “perpetual” first-year team. At Kingsley Middle School, the first Learning Team continued to grow and develop as a unit, thereby accomplishing two of the important directions of FAME — expansion and sustainability. More educators were being involved, but the initial group members continued to share with and learn from one another.

How it works

Research has shown administrative support is critical to the success of an initiative such as FAME in a school. However, in most instances, this has simply meant administrators are kept informed of the activities of the FAME Learning Teams. Kingsley is unique since the principal



Kingsley Middle School U.S. History teacher Lauri Bach consults with FAME research and development specialist Theron Blakeslee.

was the original Coach. When asked about this, White simply stated that it was part of his role as an instructional leader. He felt strongly that this is more than just a catchy title; rather, it is a leader-driven commitment to improve the quality of education with a shift of focus from teaching to learning. Key to his success as a Coach and Team member was the identification of his role with the Learning Team. When the principal is a FAME Coach, s/he is part of the Team and a facilitator for their meetings. This is a different skill set than what is typically used by a principal. The other Kingsley Team members were aware of this distinction and were very comfortable working with him as a member of the Team and willingly shared their own learning, experiences, and ideas.

The formative assessment process is one that takes time to implement effectively in a school. Educators need to become comfortable with this working model of professional learning, and both educators and students need time to fully comprehend the impact of the formative assessment process. It is recommended teams make an initial commitment of three years. In too many instances, professional learning initiatives are introduced and disappear or are replaced by the next “flavor of the month.”

CONTACTS



Lauri Bach
Kingsley Middle School teacher-leader



Andrew Sias
Kingsley Middle School teacher



Vaughn White
former Kingsley Middle School principal and current Hesperia Community Schools superintendent

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www.hesp.net

available at: www.kingsley.k12.mi.us

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Progress status

Kingsley Middle School took the longer-term commitment seriously, and actually incorporated FAME into other instructional strategies used at the school — specifically, Spencer Kagan’s cooperative learning structures and Robert Marzano’s teacher evaluation and instructional essentials models. Dr. Kagan’s work is designed to increase student motivation and engagement by the effective and structured use of cooperative learning. Dr. Marzano’s studies have identified ways in which teacher assessment is connected with student performance.

“Going through the FAME training for the last three years, as well as the process of reflecting on and coding my instruction via video, has transformed my teaching.... I observed that...many students are adapting to the shift to focus on learning in relation to targets and scales rather than a focus on the accumulation of points.”

— Andrew Sias, FAME Team Member and Classroom Teacher, Kingsley, MI

While the focus of the school on these three initiatives was divided — 20% of the time on Kagan, 30% of the time on Marzano, and 50% of the time on FAME — according to White the initiatives actually blend together and reinforce each other. Dr. Kagan’s work provides tools teachers use in the classroom, and Dr. Marzano’s strategies provide a way for leaders and teachers to work together to improve instruction and learning. FAME provides a safe environment for educators to learn about the formative assessment process, share classroom experiences, and receive constructive feedback from their peers. It is a way of continuing their own professional learning and creating a positive experience that enhances the continuation of the learning and the practice. As White says, “Full-school training...has melded all of

these approaches into an impactful learning environment.”

Kingsley Middle School teacher Lauri Bach, an educator for 20 years, was one of the first teachers involved in the FAME program at Kingsley. In her third year of the program she indicated that FAME was an important part of the school culture. Initially, she was somewhat apprehensive, since so often teachers are bombarded with new ideas and programs that divert attention and drain energy with limited benefits.

“FAME, and the other initiatives introduced by Mr. White, have made me a better teacher,” said Bach. “I am a much better planner and focus on what is important for me professionally and for my students.” As is so often the case, Bach was already doing some formative assessment practices before her involvement in FAME, but she wasn’t intentional in using them. Without purpose and thought, the benefits were not being fully realized. As an experienced FAME Coach, she enjoys sharing the learning and practice with others.

Administrative support

While having an administrator so involved as a Coach of a FAME Learning Team might be intimidating to some, Bach thought it was a fantastic experience. Vaughn White understood their needs, and his commitment meant they would have the time, money, and resources necessary to succeed. He provided the example of an educator who wanted to learn to be better at his profession.

Another factor that has had a positive impact on FAME at Kingsley Middle School is the training received by the Coaches. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) provides the initial training for Coaches about FAME, coaching, and the formative assessment process via webinars and other learning activities. White indicated that FAME’s one-day *Launching into Learning* workshop for Team members and Coaches, followed by additional training for Coaches, are critical in the development

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of effective Coaches and successful Learning Teams. FAME also provides a rubric that Learning Teams may use to gauge their growth in the understanding and practice of the formative assessment process (see back page for details on the FAME professional learning model).

Impact to date

While it might be difficult to isolate the complete impact of FAME, there seems to be no disagreement over its positive influence. In February 2015, Schools to Watch® (an initiative launched in 1999 by the **National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform**) identified Kingsley Middle School as a School to Watch. The National Forum identifies schools across the United States that are well on their way to meeting the Forum's criteria for high performance: academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable. According to the National Forum's Dr. Mary Alice Krajenta, "The review team for Kingsley was highly impressed with the degree to which strategies for academic excellence were



Kingsley Middle School teacher Andrew Sias puts FAME training to work in his social studies classroom.

embedded in instruction.... Many aspects of formative assessment were evident, including the use of essential questions, clear learning targets, the use of scales (rubrics), and self-assessment."

In closing, Vaughn White states: "I wholeheartedly recommend FAME as valuable learning and teaching experience which benefits educators and students. Having administrative support (superintendents and principals) is a key factor in the success of the program."

Kim Young, FAME director from MDE's Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA), says: "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."

Future plans

In 2016, Vaughn White became the superintendent of Hesperia Community Schools near the border of West Michigan's Oceana and Newago Counties. Based on his experiences as a Coach and administrator, he has introduced FAME and the subsequent supports of Kagan and Marzano in a similar fashion to the Hesperia district.

Lauri Bach continues her work as a Kingsley Middle School teacher. Due to work with other initiatives, Kingsley Middle School is no longer active in the FAME Program. According to Ms. Bach, the learning and practice of formative assessment is still very much a part of her instruction. This is a view shared by many who did participate in FAME

NOTE: This case study references FAME implementation and school/district staffing from 2012–2015.

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Questions for Reflection

- How might a school administrator balance the many functional responsibilities (budget, program, and policy) with being an instructional leader?
- Why is it important for a school administrator to be considered an instructional leader?
- How might an administrator show support for introducing and sustaining a school initiative to learn about and use the formative assessment process with their students?

Related links

“Accentuate the Formative: Michigan teachers use rubrics and video to improve their practice,” by Theron Blakeslee, Denny Chandler, Edward Roeber, and Tara Kintz. *The Learning Professional*, October 2017 Vol. 38 No. 5 (Learning Forward). Available at: <http://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Reflecting-on-Practice-Oct-2017-Learning-Forward.pdf>

“Necessary Conditions for Successful Implementation of Formative Assessment,” by Margaret Heritage, Nancy Gerzon and Marie Mancuso. Prepared for the Dell Foundation Formative Assessment Project. Available at: <http://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Necessary-Conditions-for-Successful-Implementation-of-Formative-Assessment-Final-1.pdf>

Dr. Spencer Kagan is world renowned author and keynote speaker in the field of education and psychology. His main belief about behavior is that it should be established by using structures in order to prevent and redirect misbehavior. He developed the popular brain-based, cooperative learning, and multiple intelligence structures like “Numbered Heads Together” and “Timed Pair Share,” which are used in classrooms worldwide. Kagan’s research focuses on establishing harmonious classrooms, promoting responsible behavior, improving students’ social skills, character qualities, and academic achievement. For additional information: www.kaganonline.com

Robert J. Marzano is cofounder and CEO of Marzano Research in Colorado. A leading researcher in education, he is a speaker, trainer, and author of more than 30 books and 150 articles on topics such as instruction, assessment, writing and implementing standards, cognition, effective leadership, and school intervention. His practical translations of the most current research and theory into classroom strategies are internationally known and widely practiced by both teachers and administrators. Additional information: www.marzanoresearch.com

Dr. Mary Alice Krajenta, Krajenta & Associates, also works with the Institute for Excellence in Education as a Systems and Operation Coach. She served on the KMS review team from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. Additional information: <http://middlegradesforum.org>

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.**

Editor: Linda Wacyk, Communications Management – Michigan Assessment Consortium; 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 state director since 2006. Contact her at 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

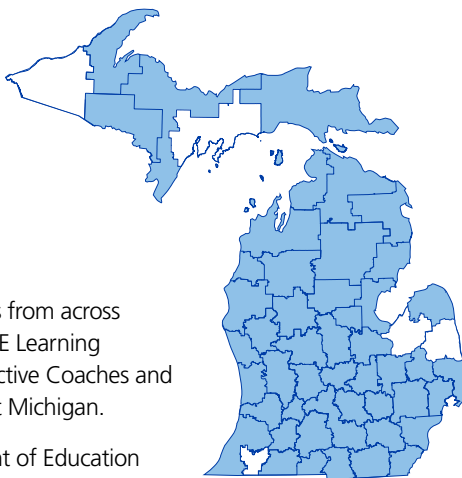
New FAME teams start in a similar manner. An individual learns about the FAME program from a conference presentation, a publication, or current FAME participant, and then shares it with others. A group of educators decides to become involved in FAME. One person agrees to take on the additional responsibilities 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.



Active FAME Coaches and Teams are located throughout Michigan.