

Focus on FAME

Principles of Formative Assessment

This document presents twelve principles that undergird formative assessment practices. They were developed by leaders of the *Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators* (FAME) team after a deep examination of exemplary formative assessment practices in several elementary and secondary school classrooms.

Michigan has adopted the definition of formative assessment articulated by the FAST SCASS committee of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). You can find that definition on the back page of this document under, "What is Formative Assessment?"

Further clarification is offered by authors Christine Harrison and Margaret Heritage in their forthcoming book. They describe formative assessment as "... a range of practices that encourage both teachers and learners to seek evidence of the ways in which students are developing their knowledge, skills and understanding with the intention of using the evidence to

inform ongoing learning. Formative assessment requires a dynamic approach to assessing learning with assessment opportunities embedded into the ongoing learning activities and interactions in the classroom. Evidence of learning for both teacher and student use is generated from these classroom activities, is explored, and then acted upon during the learning" (Harrison & Heritage, forthcoming).

The practices of formative assessment will vary according to the discipline within which they are enacted, the grade-level of the students, and the funds of knowledge that students bring with them to the learning context. It is useful to think about the principles that undergird formative assessment practices so that there "is consistency of principle, not uniformity of practice" (Harrison & Howard, 2009, p.3).



Focus on FAME is meant to help FAME program Leads, Coaches, and Learning Team members learn from the ideas and suggestions collected from their peers in the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) program. Each issue describes a specific set of findings and suggestions that result from the work of the Research and Development Team of the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) FAME Project. *Focus on FAME* issues are archived in the FAME Resource Bank, available exclusively to FAME participants, at www.FAMEMichigan.org.

Principles

1 Process embedded in on-going practice

- Is not an adjunct to practice
- Does not “sit on top” of practice
- Is not a test or an event
- Is embedded in the ongoing flow of activity and interaction within the lesson
- Is how teachers and students do business in the classroom

2 Collaborative culture

- Safe environment established where students are willing to share their thinking
- Students know they are responsible for their own and other’s learning
- Routines, expectations and structures for collaboration are established

3 Careful consideration of what you want students to learn

- Planning based on current evidence of learning
- Consideration of current learning within a longer trajectory of learning

4 Clarity of learning (student & teacher)

- Clear learning goals and success criteria for the lesson
- Communicated to or co-developed with students

5 Intentional evidence gathering from multiple sources

- Teachers plan formative opportunities (what students say, do, make or write) within a lesson
- No single way to obtain evidence
- Several sources are needed to inform next steps
- Self- and peer assessment is a source of evidence

6 Meeting the students where they are

- Teachers respond immediately or near immediately to a student’s current learning status based on evidence
- Response is intended to take students from where they are to where they can go next
- High quality feedback is provided to students

7 Involving students in learning & assessment

- Sharing learning goals and success criteria with students
- Providing feedback that students can use to advance their own learning
- Teaching peer and self-assessment skills
- Helping students set goals

8 Discourse-based learning environment

- Student engage in discourse to learn with and from each other as they explore ideas and build on each other’s thinking
- Teacher engages in discourse with students to support the development of thinking
- Discourse is used as a source of evidence

9 Students using each other as resources

- Teaching skills of peer feedback
- Providing opportunities for peer feedback
- Asking each other questions, clarifying ideas, building on each other’s thinking

10 Giving students the tools

- Provide tools to support self-assessment and peer feedback (e.g., templates, sentence stems)
- Predictable classroom structures and routines

11 Flexibility

- Adapting instruction based on evidence
- Willingness to change course based on evidence of student learning
- Nimble teaching
- Students are responsive to feedback and to their own self-assessment

12 Continually engage in reflecting on and improving current practice

- Reflecting on effectiveness of practice individually and with colleagues
- Strive to keep improving

Learn more

Please visit the FAME website at **FAMEMichigan.org** to find additional resources that can support formative assessment practices in the classroom and the FAME Program.

REFERENCES

Harrison, C., & Heritage, M. (forthcoming). *Assessment for learning: 20 years of impact in U.S. and U.K. classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Harrison, C., & Howard S. (2009). *Inside the primary black box: Assessment for learning in primary and early years classrooms*. London: GL Assessment.

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*.