

Summary of the MAC FAME R&D Team Activities for the 2018-19 FAME Program
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Introduction

During the 2018-19 school year, the Michigan Assessment Consortium's (MAC) Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) Research & Development Team (R&D) completed a number of activities, plus ended the school year with several other activities moving towards completion. All of these are 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 the use of the 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 assist them to better understand what FAME participants need in order to enhance their learning, how the FAME resources are used, and what resources might be useful to create in order to improve the FAME program for the future.

This report is divided into three sections – a summary of the research activities planned and carried out by the MAC FAME R&D Team; an outline of the new resources created by the MAC FAME R&D Team during 2018-19; and, finally, professional learning opportunities that were supported by the MAC.

I. Research Projects

Not only is the MDE providing extensive resources related to the use of formative assessment practices, the Department also seeks to understand how to improve educator understanding and practice via the research and evaluation studies it sponsors. The MAC R&D team carried out a variety of activities in support of the FAME program. This research work keeps Michigan at the forefront of research-based professional learning in formative assessment nationally.

A. Continue to investigate ways building or district administrators support or facilitate 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 carried out a survey with new FAME Learning Teams. This brief survey was designed to obtain information from Coaches about how administrators in their school or district provided support. 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.

Product – The R&D Team produced a *Focus on FAME* resource titled: *How can administrators support teacher learning about formative assessment and the FAME program?* (https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FocusOnFAME_v2.pdf) This document was written in easily accessible language in order to provide ideas and advice on how administrators might better support FAME participation, as well as how Coaches might seek to elicit such support.

B. Determine the strategies that school improvement teams use which are able to incorporate FAME with multiple other school improvement initiatives and implement all successfully

Question(s) for Investigation – The MAC R & D team sought responses to three questions: Are there schools in which FAME is used along with multiple other school improvement initiatives? If so, what is their “secret” to this success? Are there lessons from these schools that inform the reluctance of other schools to add FAME to the other school improvement activities they already have under way?

Investigation Strategies – These questions were studied in several ways: 1) a question was added to a periodic update survey of Coaches, 2) responses of new Coaches to questions regarding use of the formative assessment process in the annual Coach survey conducted in spring 2018 were reviewed, and 3) interviews with Leads and Coaches were conducted at FAME events such as Lead meetings and FAME events such as Cognitive Coaching.

Product – The R&D Team produced a *Focus on FAME* resource titled: *What strategies do schools use that are able to effectively work on FAME and other state, district, or school initiatives?* (<https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Focus2MultInitiatives.pdf>) This document was also written in easily accessible language in order to provide ideas and advice on how administrators might better support FAME participation, as well as how Coaches might seek to elicit such support.

- C. Support the use of the *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Source-Guide* by returning Coaches.** The MAC recorded an introductory webinar to support returning Coach and Learning Team member use of the *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Source-Guide*. Returning Coaches were informed about the resource and how to access it. However, only a few returning Coaches requested this resource. Thus, a planned study of the use of this resource did not occur.

Question(s) for Investigation – The R&D Team had planned to identify Coaches and Learning Teams committed to using the *Self-Reflection Guide* and ask several questions of them: Did these Learning Teams find the materials useful? What suggestions did Coaches and Learning Team members have for revising/streamlining the materials? However, because of the low participation rate, it was not feasible to conduct this study.

Investigation Strategies – The research questions were to have been studied in several ways: 1) returning Coaches would have been asked in a periodic update survey 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 about their use of formative assessment practices and overall view of the utility of the *Self-Reflection Guide*.

Study Results – Because of the low participation rate, it was not feasible to conduct this study.

- D. Review existing video to determine additional video and other resources needed and then plan how to obtain the video examples for FAME components and elements.**

Investigation Strategies – The MAC R&D Team planned to continue to collect examples of teacher use of the FAME Components and Elements and planned to review teacher clips available from online sites such as the Teaching Channel or 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).

In the end, the R&D Team chose to enlist the assistance of three Leads to review all existing on the FAME website to determine if the videos found there are suitable for use as exemplars of highly-effective use of a formative assessment practice or less-than-perfect examples of the use of these practices. All video was provided to Leads for their review. No new video was available for review, but the Leads did review all existing video and few exceptions, found that they would be good for FAME Learning Team use as examples of practice. After this review was conducted, the R&D Team developed a brief Survey Monkey survey for use to elicit new sample videos for consideration.

Study Results – At the conclusion of the project year, existing video had been reviewed and only a few were deleted from the FAME website. No additional video was submitted for consideration by Leads or the FAME R&D Team.

E. How might videos of classroom instruction support teacher reflection and change in their use of formative assessment practices?

Question(s) for Investigation: During the review of video posted on the FAME website, the MAC R&D Team also considered how to describe the benefits of careful examination and reflection on their instructional practices by using video recordings of such instruction and then reviewing it alone or with a colleague

Investigation Strategies – The MAC R&D Team examined the research literature related to video-promoted reflections on instructional practices and interviewed a couple of experts in order to prepare a resource for use by Coaches and Learning Team members.

Product – The R&D Team produced a *Focus on FAME* resource titled: *Through the Lens: The Use of Video for Professional Development in FAME*. (<https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FoF-3-Video-use-for-PD.pdf>) This document was also written in easily accessible language in order to provide ideas and advice to FAME participants.

F. Study the optimal conditions for effective learning about formative assessment practices at the classroom level

Question(s) for Investigation: Margaret Heritage, the FAME program national advisor, provided a journal article that described insights about what teacher characteristics and classroom conditions contribute to them learning to use and then effectively use these practices to enhance student learning and achievement. The MAC R&D team sought to locate additional research-based practices that might suggest the ideal conditions for effective learning about formative assessment practices such as those found in the FAME program. R&D staff reviewed related research literature as well as material provided by Margaret Heritage.

Investigation Strategies – The MAC R&D Team reviewed an article written by Heritage and considered how it could be summarized and made available to FAME Coaches to understand how they could support teachers on their Learning Teams to use formative assessment practices effectively.

Product – The R&D Team produced a *Focus on FAME* resource titled: *What are the optimal conditions for implementing formative assessment (and the FAME program) in the classroom?* (<https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FoF-4-Optimal-conditions-for-formative-assessment.pdf>) This document was also written in easily accessible language in order to provide ideas and advice to FAME participants.

G. Observe the work of a FAME Learning Team

The MAC R&D team speculated that the new *FAME Learning Guide* and accompanying *Coach Edition* would constructively facilitate and sustain discussions within a 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 one or more Learning Teams, either live in person or from video recordings submitted by the teams to the MAC. The MAC R&D team selected to observe recordings of a statewide online virtual school (the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy) which the Coach provided access to.

Investigation Strategies: For the second year, the virtual team from the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy volunteered 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. The R&D Team first applied discourse analysis to the recorded dialogue and then coded the interactions of Learning Team members according to learning team rubrics created in the past when the R&D research work was conducted at MSU.

Product – The R&D Team produced a summary of its analyses of the work of the MGLVA over the past two project years. A summary of it is part of the complete project report.

H. Develop documentation of the value of learning formative assessment practices

One key question that is often asked is whether there is any evidence that formative assessment practices, when implemented well by a teacher and his or her students assists the students to learn more and be more positively inclined to the hard work of learning. While the MAC FAME R&D Team did not collect such information, there is ample effectiveness data to be found in the research literature on formative assessment.

Product – Drawing from this research literature, with the addition of perception data collected from the FAME Coaches, the R&D Team assembled evidence that formative assessment practices do indeed positively impact student learning. The R&D Team produced a *Focus on FAME* resource titled: *What are the benefits of using the formative assessment process?* (<https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FoF-6-Benefits-of-formative-assessment.pdf>) This document was also written in easily accessible language in order to provide ideas and advice to FAME participants.

Drawing from this research literature, with the addition of perception data collected from the FAME Coaches, the R&D Team assembled the evidence and presented it in a very accessible manner.

I. Develop criteria for identifying effective uses of formative assessment practices by individual teachers as well as schools and districts that support such effective uses more systemically

When the FAME leaders participated in a tour to two sites where formative assessment practices were being implemented well (see part III-G below), this raised the idea that Michigan should be able to identify classrooms, schools, and/or school districts where these practices could be readily seen by visitors. Labeled “hotspots,” these sites might serve to illustrate the use of formative assessment practices, and permit visitors to see for themselves formative assessment in action. By the end of the project year, the development of criteria was an unmet goal, although this likely will be remedied in 2019-20.

II. MAC FAME Resource Development Projects

During 2018-19 project years, the MAC R&D team revised several resources and also produced several new ones for use in the FAME program:

- A. ***Introduction to FAME for Coaches*** – The MAC R&D team updated this Guide for use by new Coaches to inform them about the FAME program prior to enrollment, as well as to provide them with information they can use as they select the members of their FAME Learning Teams. This Guide serves to orientate the Coaches to the program to help them plan for successful work with their new Learning Team. It also informs 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. This Guide did not require updating this year.
- 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 provides resources for use by the Coach. This document was updated this year, adding one or more sample Learning Team agendas for each of the FAME 13 Elements. In addition, it contains 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 Guide*** – This Guide, available from the MDE program manager on an on-request basis, was not revised this year. The document was produced for use by returning FAME Learning Teams. It provides rubrics for each of the 13 FAME Elements. It 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. One suggested strategy for using the resource is to video record one or more lessons, for the teacher to co-code the lesson with a colleague, and then reflect on the coding alone or with the colleague.
- 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. There was constant development work and inclusion of new materials on the website this year. 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 new resources by key words so that users of the new site would be able to locate documents pertinent to their searches, as well a review of all video on the FAME website by three FAME Leads under the direction of a FAME R&D Team member.
- F. ***Public FAME Website*** – The MAC R&D Team also contributed resources to the new public FAME website provided on the initial landing page. 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. In addition, one R&D Team member undertook development of two-page descriptions of each FAME Element, drawing material from the FAME Learning Guide, an effort that will continue into the next project year.
- G. ***Continue work on the Going Deeper in Student Self- and Peer-Assessment, the resource intended to provide definition and support for student self- and peer-assessment activities in support of teachers who wish to employ these formative assessment processes with their students.***
Our goal in 2018-19 was to move along in the development of two *Guide* resources. Several iterations of this document were produced and reviewed internally, followed by the development of a “final draft” version of the resource, which was sent to the MDE FAME Project Manager. At her advice, the

MAC R&D team sought Lead, Coach, and Learning Team reviews in order to assure that the text was perceived to be accessible and useful for potential future users of the resource.

These teachers were asked to review the materials to better understand both student self-assessment and peer-assessment. These educators provided very useful feedback to the MAC R&D Team, which is now being incorporated into the final resource. This is slated for production during the 2019-20 project year, and made available to returning Learning Teams

H. Continue work on *Going Deeper in Providing Descriptive Feedback to Students*, the resource for helping teachers to provide useful descriptive feedback to students

Our goal in 2018-19 was to move this resource development. Several iterations of this document were produced and reviewed internally, followed by the development of a “final draft” version of the resource, which was sent to the MDE FAME Project Manager. At her advice, the MAC R&D team sought Lead, Coach, and Learning Team reviews in order to assure that the text was perceived to be accessible and useful for potential future users of the resource.

These teachers were asked to review the materials to better understand both student self-assessment and peer-assessment. These educators provided very useful feedback to the MAC R&D Team, which is now being incorporated into the final resource. This is slated for production during the 2019-20 project year, and made available to returning Learning Teams

I. Development of discipline-specific guides to the use of formative assessment practices

Recently, in national meetings on classroom assessment, several prominent researchers have speculated that teacher learning about generic formative assessment practices such as in the FAME program is only effective if the participating teachers already have deep disciplinary knowledge and related pedagogical understandings. The MAC R&D Team strongly disagrees. It is our belief that understanding of general formative assessment processes and deep disciplinary understanding are synergistic: as teachers plan and deliver lessons with formative assessment practices incorporated, the attention to whether or not students are understanding what they are being taught will help teachers learn typical students misunderstandings and areas of lack of understanding, as well as which adjustments in instruction or student learning overcame these barriers are successful and those that are not. Thus, teachers will become both more skilled in understanding how to nudge student learning along – a teacher with deeper disciplinary and pedagogical understanding – and using formative assessment process in doing so.

With this in mind, the FAMR R&D Team selected three disciplines in which to do this work:

- Mathematics (Valeria Mills & Ed Silver)
- Science (Amelia Wenk Gotwals & Alicia Alonzo)
- Arts (Heather Vaughan Southard, editor, with lesson writers in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts)

This work is progressing at a deliberately slow pace, given the novelty of the underlying basis of the work. Plans have been drafted in each area. Teams are being assembled. Completion of these resources by the conclusion of the 2019-20 project year cannot be assured at this point. However, what is known is that all three teams are committed to developing resources that will show how typical lessons can provide invaluable information about the learning of students to teachers so they can grow in their understanding of their discipline and formative assessment practices.

J. Develop new case studies of effective learning about or use of formative assessment practices

For the past three project years, the FAME R&D Team has invested in seeking out examples of effective support for learning about formative assessment practices, as well as teacher use of such practices in their classrooms. During the 2018-19 project year, the prior case studies were produced in an attractive and accessible manner and placed on the public FAME website. Two additional case studies were developed. One is an update and extension of a case study already created (Corunna, showing the transition of a key administrator to the superintendency of the district) https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CaseStudy_Corunna_6.19.pdf. This was joined by a new case study (Hesperia), which follows the transition of a middle school principal from Kingsley to superintendency in Hesperia. https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CaseStudy_Hesperia_6.19.pdf.

III. Professional Learning

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.

A. Conduct periodic update surveys of FAME Coaches

The MAC R & D team continues to administer periodic surveys of Coaches several times during the project year 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.

B. Conduct annual survey of FAME Coaches

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

C. Conduct annual survey of FAME Learning Teams

The MAC R & D team once again 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.

D. Participate in and evaluate virtual Launches into Learning

Because not all potential FAME Learning Teams are able to attend an in-person Launching into Learning session, MDE piloted a trial of a virtual one. Using the Zoom software, the presentation could stop for a bit while sub-groups met and discussed topics in rooms separate from one another. Then, all participants returned to a large group session. This field test did demonstrate that it is feasible to launch teams virtually and to do so in a manner roughly comparable to in-person meetings. The R&D Team took part in the online session, and also served to evaluate it.

E. Consider the development of a program of advanced study for experienced FAME Learning Teams

We have known for some time that there are experienced Learning Teams meeting in their fourth, fifth, or higher number of years. As R&D staff pondered the development of a learning program for second and especially third year teams, the R&D staff wondered if there would be merit in polling all Coaches with a question asked on a periodic survey, in order to build a pool on potential survey respondents for the follow-up questions in which they express reluctance to participate, or the Learning Team members might be skeptical about any attempt to add more to their workloads. Although the follow-up survey was planned for use this project year, such did not occur. Hence, this area needs to be completed in the coming project year.

F. Consider methods for deepening Coaches' personal understanding of formative assessment practices

Over the years, one pillar of the FAME program is that Coaches did not need to be experts in the field of formative assessment in order to sign up to coach a team. While the criteria for identifying new Coaches has not changed, the FAME national consultant and several FAME leaders believe that once in the program, especially in year 2 and beyond, Coaches need to begin to grow in their understanding of formative assessment practices so that as Learning Team members deepen their understanding of the principles that guide FAME they can keep up with the pace lead their teams

G. FAME Learning Tour

One unique activity was for the FAME leadership to travel out west to see formative assessment practices in action. The Team visited Chandler High School, Chandler, AZ and the UCLA Lab School in Los Angeles. Seeing the work live and in person was very impactful to the Michigan group. It also provided time for the various leaders to meet and support one another. At the conclusion of the visits, the FAME leaders generated a set of principles that it had seen in the school visited.

(<https://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FoF-5-Principles-of-formative-assessment.pdf>) These principles will form the basis of future professional learning for the FAME leadership, and might also be used by educators in Michigan to identify exemplary classrooms, schools, and districts that can inspire visits from Michigan educators so that they can see firsthand formative assessment practices being used effectively.

There are several additional activities that the MAC R&D Team engages in:

- **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, the CCSSO National Conference on Student Assessment, and the NCME Classroom Assessment Conference.
- **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 representatives to plan website development and enhancements, publications, and event management, as well as R&D activities.
- **Conduct regular MAC R&D Team meetings to plan and develop R&D Team work**
The MAC R&D met monthly with the MDE contract representative to delve more deeply in planning R&D activities to be carried out.

Summary

As in the past, the MAC R&D Team addressed a number of questions, developed a number of useful resources for FAME participants and considered how its ideas and resources could be used to promote the learning of FAME teams. The prime goal is for its activities 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.