



Those Who Can, TEACH ... and Teach EFFECTIVELY!

Bloomfield Hills Schools
Enrollment: 5,500

www.bloomfield.org



“Those who can, do; those who can’t, teach.” Many of us have heard this quote by George Bernard Shaw. Anyone who values an education and respects those choosing it as a profession are surely irritated, even offended, by it. When teaching is effective, we know it is due to the hard work and sacrifice of those who have decided to put the welfare of our students above all else. It is a profession not measured by monies generated or earned, but by the preparation of students to think, problem solve, and positively contribute to society.

One Michigan school district knows first-hand the fallacy of the Shaw quote. It is a district that recognizes the power of education when teachers are prepared and students are encouraged to excel. It is a district that looks at the successes of today and prepares for the challenges of tomorrow. It is a district that actually hosted a FAME Showcase to recognize the work of teachers and their positive impact on their students.

What were the reasons and factors that contributed to this taking place? Let’s take a closer look at Bloomfield Hills—the community and the school district.

The Bloomfield Hills Schools (BHS) is located in the southeastern corner of Oakland County and is part of the Detroit Metro area. The county population numbers over 1.25 million living in a number of towns, villages, and townships. The economy is diverse, with many employed in providing professional and business services, private and public education, health services, and limited industrial activity.

The BHS district serves portions of Bloomfield Township and parts of the city of Bloomfield Hills and West Bloomfield Township. There are eight schools in the district including one high school, three middle schools, and four elementary schools. The student population is over 5,500 with a faculty of 320.

BHS is a district that provides considerable resources for instruction. Students in the district do quite well on State and other summative assessments. Some might dismiss this story because of these factors; but because such a district—in which students achieve at high levels—



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seeks to improve instruction, student learning, and achievement, it is unique, serving as a model for other high achieving school districts.

Coach background

FAME (Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators), a statewide initiative to encourage and support teachers in the use of the formative assessment process in their classrooms, is typically introduced to a school or district because of the interest of one or two individuals who have heard about it and want to know more about the formative assessment process. District Assessment Coordinator Wendy Osterman introduced FAME to BHS. With 21 years' experience as a classroom teacher and an administrator and experience with FAME in a previous district, Osterman started coaching a FAME Learning Team in Bloomfield Hills during the 2017-2018 school year.

Her first team included the district's four core content teacher leaders and the two district learning specialists. They participated in the initial training provided by the Michigan Department

“The formative assessment process allows me to be who I am as a teacher who knows all of my students are smart. It allows me to look at my students as individuals. For teachers, it provides common tools which go across curriculum and grades.”

— **Kimberly Hempton, Director of Elementary Education**

of Education (MDE)—the Launch into Learning. The Launch provided an initial overview of the formative assessment process and the roles of Coaches and Learning Team members.

Kimberly Hempton was a member of the first Learning Team, and she remains firmly committed to FAME. Hempton has been in education for 21 years and, like Osterman, was a FAME participant while employed at another school. As an elementary school principal, she served as a FAME Coach for three years. Her initial Learning Team comprised one teacher from each grade level K-5. They focused on the use of learning progressions as a means for both self-assessment and progress monitoring of specific reading and writing learning targets.

Her present role as Director of Elementary Education puts her in a pivotal position to support elementary teachers and their work with FAME.

“We went into teaching because of our students, and the formative assessment process brings us back to the intended purpose. There is an artfulness to it, but there are a number of ways in which one can make it successful.”

— **Wendy Osterman**
District Assessment Coordinator

How it works

It is very common for FAME participants to know about formative assessment, and they often believe they've already used it, to a degree, in their classes. By reading more and working with their FAME Learning Teams, they come to realize there is much more to the process. To honestly influence instruction and improve student performance, all the FAME Components and Elements must be in place. In many instances, teachers did have evidence of student work, but it was not being used to inform them of next steps, and formative feedback about it was not being shared with students.

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Incorporating the formative assessment process into the classroom is hard work. A teacher must reflect on their own practices and identify areas in which they could be more successful. It takes time, so the recommendation is to go at a pace that works for you. There is nothing wrong with slow and steady—just stay on the course.

At first glance, it might seem like all this work is adding to a classroom teacher's already crowded plate. The reality, however, is actually the opposite. Once the formative assessment process is embedded in the day-to-day routine, it provides more time for teaching and learning—and more importantly—for *effective* teaching and learning. When the teacher plans, is intentional in its use, and shares with the students, the next steps become obvious. Students, realizing the positive impact, become more engaged and take ownership of their learning. This collaborative effort, and the communication between teacher and student, is the key to success in using the formative assessment process.

“FAME has taken us to a different complexity, encouraging us to look at the full picture. We need to slow down our instruction, be more purposeful in our actions. Everything we need to help us move forward is present in the classroom. We need to recognize and use it.”

— *Jenny Rossi, FAME Learning Team Member and Visible Thinking Coordinator*

Administrative support: the FAME Showcase

Knowing the importance of their work and the crucial role played by administrators in support, in 2019 FAME members at Bloomfield Hills decided to host the **FAME Showcase**. They wanted to share how it has impacted teaching and student performance, and how they are supporting this initiative within the district. From the beginning, the district has been a prime example of having administrators play a crucial role in the

“You know the pieces, and you do the piece, but not in a careful manner. It seems like success is often accidental, but it is based on the choices one makes in the classroom.”

— *Jen Teal, FAME Learning Team Member and Teacher Leader*

development, expansion, and continued support of teacher improvement. To validate this support, it makes sense to share their experiences, outcomes, and plans for the future.

In addition to educators within the district, they also invited guest educators from outside the district to the event. One such person was Kathy Dewsbury-White, President and CEO of the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC), a professional association of educators who believe quality education depends on accurate, balanced, and meaningful assessment.

“When Bloomfield hosted their first showcase, it struck me that each team in the district had the latitude to figure out a sensible tie to a current district focus,” Dewsbury-White said. “That feature, in addition to Wendy Osterman convening each team’s Coaches in a central collective, seemed like an important strategy to employ as this district scales support to develop formative assessment practice capacity across the entire district.”

The Showcase gave attendees an overview of FAME and the impact of formative assessment practices on their learners. They showcased their growth—their triumphs, their challenges, and the ways they address the challenges. They recognized the administrators and teachers who formed the FAME Learning Teams, with a focus on building capacity throughout the district around formative assessment practices. They also recognized the importance and impact of administrative support.



Kathy Dewsbury-White,
President and CEO of the
Michigan Assessment
Consortium (MAC)

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The event was a huge success, especially amazing since FAME was introduced to the district only three years ago. How did all of this take place in such a short period of time? Let's look at the beginning.

District approach

From the beginning, BHS has planned to support, continue, and expand FAME in the district as a response to an identified need for using formative assessment practices. Several original Learning Team members have become FAME Coaches and new Coaches are on-boarded each year, with a plan to continue this expansion. Osterman's current team is composed of FAME Coaches throughout the district. Her overall goal is to "develop a support system for the FAME coaches throughout BHS as we learn about and use the formative assessment process through the FAME program."

Since their start in 2017-2018, BHS has grown to 11 Coaches and almost 60 Learning Team members located throughout the district. One unique feature, however, is the formation and continuation of a FAME Coaches Learning Team—which still includes members of their very first team. They felt it was important for them to continue to work as a team and learn from each other. They use this experience as they work with each of their own Learning Teams. In addition to Osterman and Hempton, other members of the first Learning Team still active with FAME are Noelle Collis (20 years in education) and Kristein Vigier (18 years in education).

The decision on how to add teams is left to the administrators and potential coaches. Wendy works with potential Coaches to examine the needs of their faculty and their readiness to do the work. Some schools are forming Learning Teams by grade level and others are forming by content area. Still others have a mix that ties to their School Improvement Plans.

It is up to the administrators and potential Coaches as to whether or not they recruit volunteers or determine that a certain group of teachers (by grade level, content, or other need) will be on a team.

Progress status and future plans

In addition to the FAME Showcase, another indication of the BHS program's support and growth is the district's decision to hold its own "Mini-Launch" in October 2019. The Mini-Launch had the same goals and purposes as the MDE-led Launch, but it was geared specifically towards educators in the BHS district. They had 30 people in attendance, including administrators.

In addition to the growth of FAME, district leaders are also committed to sharing their experiences with other educators throughout the state. They are working with MDE, FAME, and the MAC Research & Development Team in providing data on their work, sharing information about their learning and teaching experiences, and encouraging visitations to their classrooms. They realize all of this supports the work they are doing and will continue to do in the future.

One of the more fascinating aspects of using the formative assessment process in the classroom is the change in students' attitudes.

Impact to date

Working on a FAME Learning Team has contributed to teachers' understanding of and willingness to plan and implement the formative assessment process in the classroom. A prepared and confident teacher is a more effective teacher. However, those who benefit the most are the students.

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One frequent complaint from teachers everywhere is about student apathy—students simply do not care about their own learning. Once students realize that changes that come with the use of the formative assessment process will benefit them, they take ownership of their own learning. It must be noted, however, this takes time as it is often a major shift from their prior experiences in the classroom. Students are individuals, so their response time will vary; but teacher after teacher has been encouraged by students' reactions.

Message for others

It is important to recognize the work that needs to be done to bring the formative assessment process to the classroom. As stated before, it takes time and commitment. There will be obstacles, but they can be met and overcome. Recognizing how the formative assessment process can affect students makes the work worthwhile. The message from the FAME participants at Bloomfield Hills Schools is simple—“Take the plunge!”

“Students figure out what it means to them. As they receive and give feedback, they see the connections. Once it clicks, it takes off! Some students will even ask, why doesn't everyone do this?”

— *Noelle Collis, FAME Learning Team Member, BHS science teacher leader and high school science teacher*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How might a school and/or district support the wider use of the formative assessment process by classroom teachers?
- What type of support from administrators and district offices is needed to promote such collaborative practices?
- How might faculties of school(s) work together to provide the needed support to learn about and to use formative assessment practices with their students?

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.**

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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).

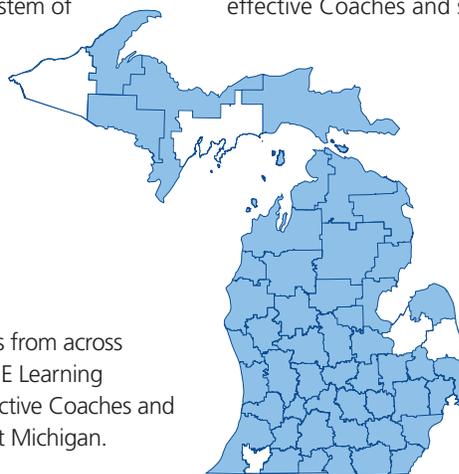
“Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners.” (CCSSO 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 manager since 2006. Contact her at youngk1@michigan.gov.



Shaded areas illustrate the influence of FAME Teams and Coaches throughout Michigan.

“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.