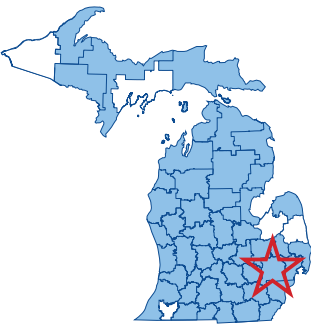




## Lakeland High School: A Close Look at a First-Year FAME Learning Team

Lakeland High School  
Enrollment: 1,400

[www.hvs.org](http://www.hvs.org)



**This case study looks at a first-year Coach and Learning Team at Lakeland High School—how they started and how their first year unfolded. Like other FAME case studies, Lakeland’s story describes the community, the school, and key creators of their FAME team. From there, the case study collects the reflections of Lakeland educators’ experiences in a question/answer format. Their reflections can answer questions posed by educators who want to learn more about FAME and what it might be like to start their own Learning Teams as part of Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators—FAME—program.**

Lakeland High School (LHS) is located in White Lake, Michigan. White Lake Charter Township is in Oakland County and is part of the Detroit metropolitan area. It is primarily a residential community of over 30,000 people. The economy includes a mixture of professional, management, retail, and light industrial sectors.

Lakeland High School is part of the Huron Valley School District, which includes 15 schools: three high schools, three middle schools, and nine elementary schools. LHS employs 86 faculty who provide an education to over 1,400 students.

### Coach background

LHS assistant principal Matt Hamill had been an educator for 17 years when he introduced FAME to the school. As a classroom teacher, Hamill was always interested in how he could become more effective as a teacher. This interest was

strengthened when he became a school administrator. He knew that formative assessment represented best practice. He did not, however, know how to bring it to a school and support its use in the classroom.

While attending a summer 2019 conference, he attended a presentation by teachers who participate in a FAME Learning Team. Their description of the formative assessment process reinforced some of his practices as a teacher, so it was comforting to have that level of familiarity. He also liked FAME’s student-centered approach, as he feels that education is about the students. FAME showed him how the formative assessment process could be introduced to a school, encouraged, and supported. He knew the value of professional learning communities (PLCs), and their connection with the use of a FAME Coach and Learning Team.



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Hamill took this information back to Lakeland, shared it with the high school faculty, and opened participation to volunteers. He wanted to have a team that represented a variety of content areas. He believed strongly this should be an initiative where teachers wanted to learn and implement formative assessment. There was definite interest, and he was able to start the first team with several members:

- Thomas Lock (mathematics teacher—17 years' experience)
- Richard Trice (English teacher—19 years' experience)
- Nick Peruski (business teacher and departmental chair—10 years' experience),
- Ann Bovio (special education teacher—11 years' experience),
- Laura Smith (science teacher—12 years' experience),
- Dave Demongey (social studies teacher—26 years' experience)
- Dan Ignagni (art teacher—17 years' experience)
- Nancy Fanfair (Spanish teacher--20 years' experience).

Once the Learning Team was formed, they attended a FAME Launch into Learning—the initial training for FAME, which provides a basic overview of the formative assessment process and the workings of a Learning Team. They then began meeting on a regular basis. They had specific tasks between meetings, but each meeting focused on what they had learned, what they had implemented, and a look at how it was working. It was crucial for members to be willing to share both their experiences and their feedback.

Through a series of questions and responses, this case study will reveal various aspects of a first-year FAME Learning Team, from the perspective of a school administrator serving as a Coach.

### Responses from the school administrator as a FAME Coach

**An important responsibility for school administrators is to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers. There are many school initiatives that might improve instructional practice in a district. Why did you select FAME?**

“It helps when one selects an initiative that takes advantage of existing practices and language. We had invested time in the understanding and use of learning targets and success criteria. FAME would allow us to look closer and examine our own practices and how we are sharing this information with our students.

*With so many initiatives being available, it was important to find one that would co-exist and reinforce our other work. Teacher time is precious, and combining our attention and energy into supportive programs and initiatives is a good use of time and more effective.”*

**Why is it important for an administrator to be actively involved in FAME?**

“Administrative tasks range from providing structure to assisting faculty and support staff. It includes creating an environment that is supportive and safe for students, providing them the opportunity to achieve. Administrators must also be able to represent the school to the community, as parental support is crucial.

*One responsibility that is sometimes overlooked is being an instructional leader. I wanted to be involved. I wanted to know what the teachers are working on and showing they have our support. Working*

#### CONTACTS



**Matt Hamill**  
Lakeland High School  
assistant principal  
FAME Learning Team Coach  
[matt.hamill@hvs.org](mailto:matt.hamill@hvs.org)

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*alongside the Learning Team helps build the collective and common understanding of these educational best practices and how they will be implemented and used through the classes in the building. ”*

### **What were your initial goals for FAME? Have your goals changed?**

“*As an administrator, I wanted to provide the time and support for Learning Team members to participate in the training. I also wanted to make sure they had the opportunities to meet on a regular basis to learn and share. I also wanted to encourage them to try to put their learning into practice. There may be times when it doesn’t quite work as anticipated, but they should learn from those situations and try again.*

*As a Coach, I worked to provide meetings that were organized and focused, and that provided them with the resources to do their work. I’m not only the facilitator, but I’m also a learner. I’m learning about the formative assessment process, and I’m learning about my faculty. I also want the team members to develop their own leadership skills to be used in the intended expansion of FAME.*

*I wanted the learning part to be teacher-centered—they are the ones making the connections between old learning and new learning. They are taking ownership and, based on their success, motivating others to become involved.*

*I’ve found that it is important to be deliberate in our approach. Learning about and using the formative assessment process takes time. Knowing it is good practice and effective, I want them to use it in their classrooms and expand to the rest of the faculty. This, however, is not possible unless they are comfortable in their use of it and in their ability to share with others. There is nothing wrong with slow and steady. ”*

**The Launch into Learning is the initial training for a FAME Learning Team. FAME Coaches also get additional training and support from Michigan Department of Education (MDE), FAME Leads, and the resources posted on the FAME website. How important is the additional support and training provided by FAME?**

“*The Launch, and preparation for the Launch, helped us get started as a team and learning more about the formative assessment process. As a Coach, I do not have the time to gather the resources that are needed to plan and facilitate the meetings. The website provides a variety of resources that can easily be adapted and used by our Learning Team.*

*The coach trainings provide me with the skills to work with my team as a whole and to provide attention to individual team members. The resources from FAME are thorough and varied. After we determine our next steps, I use the resources to plan for the meeting. ”*

### **How would you describe the impact of FAME? How do you plan on moving forward?**

“*For the Learning Team, it has allowed a heterogeneous group to work together to learn, and it has encouraged thoughtful reflection on their classroom practices. They are growing as informed teachers and becoming more confident in their use of formative assessment practices in the classroom.*

*As a coach, I’m excited about continuing with this group and deepening our understanding and practice. The team’s response and willingness to learn and implement encourages me to expand and offer this to other faculty members. We are going to use a bottom-up approach, as the experiences of this first team will, hopefully, encourage the formation of more teams. We would like for these team members to become coaches and continue to ask for volunteers to populate the new teams. ”*

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## Responses from Learning Team Members

### The Formative Assessment Model (Coach and Learning Team)

#### How did participation in a FAME Learning Team impact educator understanding of formative assessment and classroom practices?

“The Learning Team concept is very important to us as educators, and it provides a model to what we want to bring to our classrooms. In the Learning Teams, we have a safe environment to learn about the formative assessment process, share ideas, and be encouraged to use them in our classrooms. We bring experiences back to the Learning Team, and we discuss what took place and how we might be more successful.

In the classroom, we also want a safe environment where students are willing to share their ideas and provide feedback to their peers and are prepared to use the feedback they receive to improve their learning. In the Learning Team meetings and in the classroom, we realize effective implementation takes time, but the response and positive impact on students is a constant reinforcement.”

#### What were your initial goals/expectations as a FAME participant? Have they been met? Explain.

“We wanted to learn more about the FAME formative assessment Components and Elements. We wanted to grow as teachers and wanted this growth to benefit our students. We wanted to understand each component and element and how they are connected. We wanted to use this to gather evidence and better understand our students.

Recognizing this is a process, we realize it takes time for us and time for our students. We are making progress towards these goals, but we still have much work to do. We’re encouraged by the results, and we want to be more competent and efficient as we can see how it helps students.”

#### What are your goals/expectations as you continue as a FAME participant?

“The formative assessment process is complex, but it makes good sense. It just takes time to learn and feel comfortable using it. As we learn more about it, we can see the different methods that can be used and seamlessly embed them into our day-to-day routines. We want to continue to work with our peers since it is such a valuable learning experience. We not only learn, but also are encouraged to continue learning and implementation.”



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**Formative Assessment in the Classroom****How did participation in FAME change teacher use of formative assessment in the classroom?**

“We thought we understood and used formative assessment in our classrooms, but we didn’t. We now see its complex nature and multiple layers. If we use it daily, we will become more comfortable and our students will be more successful. There is an immediate benefit to students, and it is important to use these strategies and change our lessons to help students succeed. The more we do it, the easier it becomes, and our students are doing more work as it benefits them.”

**How did the use of formative assessment in the classroom change student engagement and learning?**

“It did not take my students very long before they were able to see how the formative assessment process benefits them. Keeping them informed has encouraged them to be more engaged and take ownership of their learning. They are more interactive with me and with the other students. This also allows us the opportunity to address individual needs. Feedback is critical—feedback from us, feedback from other students, and feedback to themselves. Time must be provided for them to take advantage of the feedback.

Even though the benefits are obvious, the use of the formative assessment process does not magically change all students. With some, it may take more time for them to realize how it can impact them in a positive way. For many students, it has been a repetitive pattern of teacher providing information, students taking tests, students receiving grades, and all moving on to the next assignment. Now, in this collaborative setting, it is the teacher

and the student understanding the learning expectations. The teacher sets the stage and provides opportunities for the student to show evidence of learning; students give and receive feedback, and have time to include changes in their work.”

**What were your initial goals/expectations for your students? Have they been met? Explain.**

“We wanted our students to put forth greater effort in their work. The key is for them to be informed as to the expectations and progress, and how this learning benefits them. The more students are invested, engaged, and interactive, the more learning will take place. It also makes for a more comfortable environment for the teacher and the students.

As we continue, we are making progress toward these goals. As we learn to be more competent in the use of the formative assessment process, students are learning how much it can help them. Some of these strategies are either new or have been used poorly in the past. They need to learn how to give and receive feedback. They need to learn how to honestly look at their own work to see how they can improve. It takes time, but we’re encouraged by the increase in student participation and performance.”

**What are your goals/expectations for your students as you continue to practice formative assessment in the classroom?**

“We want them to continue to learn about the value of using the formative assessment process in the classroom. As we improve in its use and provide more opportunities, we want them to continue to take full advantage of these. We want them to become more comfortable in what is expected, be willing to take risks, and learn from the provided feedback.”

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**Messages to others who may not be familiar with FAME and the formative assessment process****Why should educators participate in FAME?**

“Our work in FAME has helped us see the power of using formative assessment in our classrooms. There is tremendous benefit to teachers and to students as we work and learn from each other. This is true in our Learning Team meetings and in our classrooms. It helps teachers become more reflective in their practice and able to identify strengths and areas in which they may improve. ”

**What are the challenges educators should consider before participating in FAME? What are some suggested ways to meet these challenges?**

“Teachers are bombarded with new ideas all claiming to have incredible results. In this case, the more we learned, the greater the impact on teachers and students. A strong lesson plan is critical for success, for it provides and is an encouragement to include formative assessment opportunities. The more work put into it, the greater the benefits.

Time is always an issue. Time is needed for self-study, Learning Team meetings, working on lesson plans, reviewing the data, and making informed decisions. Initially, there is a feeling it might be too much; but as one becomes more comfortable, there is actually a saving of time. The key attributes needed are commitment and patience, but we encourage others to try it and stay the course. The results will become obvious. ”

**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](mailto:dtchandler@fuse.net).**

Editor: Linda Wacyk, Communications Management – Michigan Assessment Consortium; [lwacyk@michiganassessmentconsortium.org](mailto: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 manager since 2006. Contact her at [youngk1@michigan.gov](mailto: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

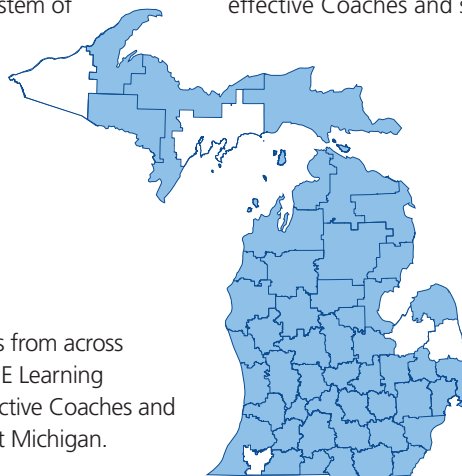
New FAME teams start in a similar manner. An individual learns about the FAME program from a conference presentation, a publication, or current FAME participant, and then shares it with others. A group of educators decides to become involved in FAME. One person agrees to take on the additional responsibilities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



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