

MAC FAME R&D TEAM ACTIVITIES FOR THE 2020-21 FAME PROGRAM

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Introduction

During the 2020-21 school year, the Michigan Assessment Consortium's (MAC) Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) Research & Development (R&D) team completed a number of activities for the FAME formative assessment professional learning program. It ended the school year with 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 several topics such as the use of the FAME resources and supports for FAME program participation.

The overall goal of these activities continues to be to provide information and resources to the FAME leadership team (MDE program manager and the FAME Leads) to assist them to better understand what FAME Coaches and Learning Team member need in order to enhance their learning, how the FAME resources are being used, and what new resources might be useful to create in order to improve the FAME program for the future.

This report is divided into two sections – a summary of the research and development activities planned and carried out by the MAC FAME R&D team, followed by more in-depth reports on several key FAME activities carried out by the MAC FAME R&D team. In addition, there are several attachments to this report.

Part 1 – Summary of MAC FAME R&D Team Activities

MAC FAME R&D Research Activities

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 use of the formative assessment process via the research and evaluation studies it sponsors through the MAC. 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 summary of this work is provided below.

1. Study ways in which school administrators support or facilitate participation in FAME.

Work Carried Out The MAC R&D team sought to investigate how administrators facilitate/support FAME work in their schools, as well as to identify school leaders who are effective in helping their teachers to learn about and use the FAP. The MAC R&D team also sought to develop new case studies that feature how school leaders support teacher learning of the formative assessment process (how administrators support FAME school-wide), describing the optimal conditions for effective formative assessment learning. The MAC R&D team sought to use these effective school leaders in outreach activities to other school leaders, perhaps through MEMSPA and other organizations, as well as to use the schools/districts of effective school leaders as locations for site visits.

With Denny Chandler's retirement, John Lane picked up the work on developing case studies. John Lane produced a case study featuring the work of Paul Robinson while he was employed by Genesee ISD. Plans for several other case studies were postponed because of the impacts of COVID on school districts throughout the state. These delays meant that the development of professional learning resources and opportunities were also not possible.

2. Identify teachers who effectively create a classroom culture to support use of the formative assessment process.

Work Carried Out – The MAC R&D team sought to identify teachers who effectively use the FAP and what we can learn from such effective teachers. MAC R&D team also sought to develop new case studies that feature effective teachers’ use of the formative assessment process, as well as to use these effective teachers in outreach activities to other teachers. Use the classrooms of these teachers as sites for visits

The MAC R & D team sought to identify exemplary teachers who could serve as observation sites for other educators. One step was to create a standard set of questions to ask teachers, identify teachers for observation in their classrooms, and then develop teacher case studies. While the COVID situation affected the ability of the R&D Team to observe classroom instruction, John Lane was able to work on a case study of one or more teachers at the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy (MGLVA), as well as poll the Leads for the names of educators they felt were exemplary users of the formative assessment process. An ALN case study featuring the formative assessment work of several teachers of students with disabilities was completed and added to the FAME Resource Library.

3. Develop resources related to the manner in which students engage (or should engage) in the formative assessment process.

Work Carried Out – The MAC R&D team sought to investigate student agency, especially how teachers can and do help students take more ownership of their learning, in order to investigate the formative assessment process from the student perspective. The MAC R&D team also sought to develop resources for educator use in promoting student agency.

John Lane drafted a comprehensive plan for work on student agency. As part of this work, the R&D team and others worked on a presentation for the NCSA annual conference. This provided an opportunity for the team to work with classroom teachers. Tara Kintz and John Lane put together a review of the literature on student agency. In addition, John interviewed a classroom teacher (who is a FAME Lead) on how she promotes student engagement and ownership in her classrooms. John planned to interview teachers from MGLVA, but the COVID situation prevented this from occurring during 2020-21.

4. Observe the work of a FAME Learning Team

Work Carried Out – The MAC R&D team sought to continue to observe a FAME Learning Team throughout the school year. It again observed the work of the MGLVA virtual FAME Learning Team, and it produced a summary of its analyses of the work of the MGLVA over the past two school years.

The MGLVA virtual FAME team has been observed during online Learning Team meetings for three years. Observation occurred via video recordings of their FAME Learning Team meetings provided to the MAC. Since the Learning Team meets virtually, and was willing to share FAME Learning Team meeting recordings, it is easy for the R&D team to observe and evaluate the meetings asynchronously.

John Lane first applied discourse analysis to the dialogue and then coded the interactions of Learning Team members, using learning team coding rubrics created when the R&D research work was conducted at MSU several years ago. John Lane observed and evaluated the MGLVA team’s work in learning about and using the formative assessment process. The key questions for which data is sought through observation of learning teams are how the FAME Learning Team used the resources provided to promote teacher understanding of the formative assessment process, and whether teachers begin to engage in reflecting on their own use of the formative assessment process, seeking to improve their use on one or more FAME formative assessment dimensions. The summary of observations of the MGLVA team is shown in Appendix 1.

5. Conduct periodic update surveys of FAME Coaches.

Work Carried Out – Tara Kintz of the MAC R&D team continues to administer periodic surveys of

Coaches five times during the school year in order to obtain information on their activities in ways that provides information for the Leads, as well as to indicate the types of needs and requests for resources Coaches have (some of which might indicate resources needs that the R&D Team might address). The goal is to provide ongoing support to the Coaches from the FAME Leads. An example of a periodic survey used in Fall 2020 is shown in Attachment A. The report that summarizes the findings from the periodic surveys of Coaches is provided Appendix 2.

6. Conduct annual survey of FAME Coaches

Work Carried Out – Tara Kintz and 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 used in the past, as well as new ones added to capture changes in the FAME experiences of Coaches, especially as a result of the COVID situation.

The complete survey used is shown in Attachment B. The summary of survey results is provided in Appendix 3 while a summary of the results of the open-response questions is shown in Appendix 4. The complete survey results is provided in Attachment C.

7. Suggest and help write articles for the *FAME News and Notes* periodic newsletter

Work Carried Out – Tara Kintz and Ed Roeber contributed articles to each edition of the *FAME News and Notes* periodical. Tara excerpted her work from the FAME Learning Guide as well as selected quotes from Coaches, while Ed contributed to a column on ‘myths and misunderstandings about formative assessment’ for each edition of the newsletter.

8. Write and submit articles for publication to describe the work and impacts of the FAME program for researchers and practitioners

Work Carried Out – Develop one research study for publication in a research journal and one article for publication in a practitioner journal. One article was written for publication in a practitioner journal, but was not accepted for publication. Instead, the R&D Team prepared it for publication and it was loaded to the FAME Resource Bank.

9. Building coach understanding of the formative assessment process

Work Carried Out – The MAC FAME R&D Team sought to evaluate the effectiveness/extent of Coach learning in the Coach learning programs, and to enhance and expand the Coach FAME learning program for new Coaches and for returning Coaches. The MAC FAME R&D Team sought to determine ways in which the FAME Coach understanding of formative assessment could be enhanced. For new Coaches, this could be an overview of the full process, so Coaches were aware of it as they began working with their FAME Learning Team. For returning Coaches (who presumably were aware of the full FAME list of components and elements, the goal was to deepen their understanding of the formative assessment process.

The impetus for this work was misunderstandings about formative assessment expressed in conversations or written remarks from returning Coaches. For example, there were returning Coaches who conflated formative assessments (which are actually interim assessments) with the FAME formative assessment *process*.

Two different learning programs were developed and provided to the Coaches. For new Coaches, FAME Leads offered a three-part program on formative assessment designed to orientate new Coaches to the FAME formative assessment definition as well as their work as a Coach of a Learning Team slated to work over the course of three or more years. For returning Coaches, a two-year learning program was designed, and the first year of that program was presented in four parts to returning Coaches. The latter program was developed and presented by the FAME national

formative assessment expert Margaret Heritage. Participation of new or returning Coaches in their respective learning programs was voluntary.

The MAC FAME R&D Team carried out a survey of the returning Coaches that participated in its learning program at the conclusion of the four-part program. A copy of the survey used is shown in Attachment D, while the data that the survey yielded is shown in Attachment E.

10. Revise key FAME publications such as needed to keep them maximally useful and current

Work Carried Out – The MAC FAME R&D Team sought to keep key FAME publications, such as the *Introduction to FAME for Coaches*, *FAME Learning Guide*, and the *FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition*, up-to-date as necessary. A table showing links to three resources on what policymakers, administrators or teachers need to know about formative assessment for FAME Coach use was added to the *Introduction to FAME for Coaches* resource, while tables showing additional videos added to the FAME resource library were added to the *FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition*.

11. Promote the use of the FAME *Self-Reflection Guide*

The MAC R&D Team planned to carry out several activities related to the revised *FAME Self-Reflection Guide*. These included research work, as well as the development and delivery of professional learning.

The major work on this topic was the completions of a major revision of *FAME Self-Reflection Guide*. The intent of this revision was to both more explicitly include strategies for Coaches to use with Learning Team members advocated for and demonstrated in *Thinking Collaborative's Adaptive Schools* and *Calibrating Conversations* sessions, as well as to simplify the language used in the document to make it easier for teachers to understand the concepts described. Denny Chandler led this effort, and with his retirement, John Lane took this over and brought it to completion.

Planning for the use of the resources also occurred during the year. Plans were made to re-record the recorded webinar that introduces the *FAME Self-Reflection Guide* to educators. This included a careful re-written script. However, the actual re-recording was not carried out during the year, but is planned for the upcoming year.

The FAME R&D Team hoped to study how teachers used the *FAME Self-Reflection Guide*. Because of COVID situation, this activity was not carried out. A couple of local educators did participate in reviews of current and proposed revisions of the *FAME Self-Reflection Guide*, but a more systematic pilot test was not conducted. The manner in which the *FAME Self-Reflection Guide* will be made available and whether this is a controlled pilot test or availability is more open approach by returning Coaches and their Learning Teams, is a decision yet to be made.

12. Pilot the new “Going Deeper” guides by classroom teachers

During the past school year, three new Guides intended to deepen educator understanding and use of the key formative assessment practices were developed. Guides were developed for providing formative feedback, as well as assisting students in self-assessment, and providing peer feedback. The list of the newly-developed resource guides is shown in Part 2E of this report.

The goal during this school year was to engage some local educators in using these guides. The COVID situation that led to much virtual teaching and limited in-person instruction, hampered this activity. It was not until the end of the school year that the self- and peer assessment guides were used somewhat by teachers in one school. The use of the formative feedback guide was more substantial since the virtual FAME Learning Team from MGLVA chose the topic of providing formative feedback as a theme for their work in 2020-21. Their discussions provided insights that helped to validate the ideas expressed in that guide. More work, with a larger group of teachers, is planned for the coming school year.

The list of the resource guides is shown in Part 2E of this report. The manner in which these FAME guides will be made available to returning Coaches and their Learning Teams, and whether this is controlled so as to limit their availability or made more widely available, is a decision yet to be made.

13. Create new “Going Deeper” documents

Because of the perceived value of the three original “going deeper” resources, the MAC R&D Team identified three additional “going deeper” documents to work, as listed in section 2E of this report. The new guides to be written include: planning in the formative assessment process; building Student Agency (pka going deeper on student agency); and, use teacher questioning strategies to deepen student understanding. Because of other activities engaged in during the school year, the major activities carried out this school year initial review of research in each area, development of draft resource outlines, and planning for initial preparation of document drafts. Much more work is anticipated in the coming school year.

14. Development of discipline-specific guides to the use of the formative assessment process in the disciplines

During this school year, three discipline-specific guides to the use of the formative assessment process were under development, one of which was completed, while the other two others neared completion. The complete list of discipline guides is shown in a table in Part 2F.

The guide in the area of science, written by Amelia Gotwals and Alicia Alonzo, was completed and has been produced. The other two – in the areas of the arts and early literacy – have been written and are now in editorial review prior to their production. The arts guide is especially complex since it is really four guides in one resource, with material for dance, music, theatre, and visual arts at the elementary and secondary levels used to illustrate the use of the formative assessment process in each discipline. There is a team of arts educators (Joni Starr, editor and theatre; Heather Vaughn Southard, dance; Cathy DePentu, music; and, Heidi Rhodes, visual arts). The early literacy guide was written by Jen Orton. Tara Kintz has shepherded all of these resources to completion.

It is anticipated that these three guides will be completed, produced, and available by the end of the calendar year. The manner in which these guides will be made available and whether this is controlled in some manner (such as being made available to FAME participants only or made available to returning Coaches only) so as to limit their availability, is a decision yet to be made.

Also, during this school year, an agreement was reached with representatives from the Michigan Council for the Social Studies for the creation of a new disciplinary guide for the use of the formative assessment process in social studies. Work on this guide should commence in the fall of 2021.

15. Selection of New Videos to Enhance the Collection of Videos Available to FAME Program Participants

As a result of the development of the formative assessment learning program prepared and delivered to interested returning FAME Coaches (see Activity 9 above), a number of videos not currently available in the FAME program were identified. These videos were first reviewed by John Lane to identify those that might be used to enhance the current collection of videos most in need of additional examples and exemplars. Then, the videos were reviewed by three FAME Leads, with two Leads rating each video (use or not use), and the third serving as a tie-breaker. After this review process, 19 new videos were selected and were added to the FAME secure site resource library. The links to these videos were added to the pertinent sections of the *FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition* so that Coaches will know what videos might be available for use with their Learning Teams next school year and beyond.

16. Add “Stages of Learning” to the Focus on FAME Principles of Formative Assessment Resource

This resource was created by the FAME leadership team after a deep examination of exemplary formative assessment practices in several elementary and secondary school classrooms out-of-state. While it describes a number of characteristics of teachers who are able to use the formative assessment process effectively, it does not describe the steps or “stages” that such a teacher went through to achieve the level of effectiveness they are now able to demonstrate. Thus, the MAC FAME R&D Team sought to describe the stages of learning and learning to use the elements of the formative assessment process so as to be able to help more novice users move their use of these formative assessment practices forward.

Because of the press of other R&D Team activities, work on this task did not occur, although R&D Team members did agree on the importance of doing this. It felt, however that before proceeding, that the list of principles needed to be refined so as to better organize them and through a careful examination of them, prune the list to the most important principles. It is anticipated that this work may take place in the upcoming school year.

17. Create Additional “Know About” Resources

During this school year, two additional “know about” resources were completed by the MAC FAME R&D team (see Section 2A for the links to these resources). Currently, there are now four such resources for the following audiences.

- What do Local and State Policymakers Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process?
- What do Administrators Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process?
- What do Teachers Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process?
- What do Students and Their Families Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process

The first three resources are now being made available to new Coaches through inclusion of information about them and their links in the *Introduction for FAME for Coaches* resource for new FAME Coaches. All of them are loaded in the FAME resource bank on the FAME website.

18. Develop New Publication Ideas

By the end of last school year, the MAC FAME R&D team generated several additional ideas for new publications. One of these resources had been created and published (*Learning Point: Formative Assessments and the Formative Assessment Process – What are they and how are they different?* <https://tinyurl.com/mtanvohmc>).

Another set of resources, designed to assist school administrators to understand how educator observations required under Michigan’s educator evaluation law can be related to teacher use of the formative assessment process, is under development. This resource, which was requested by the MEMSPA Executive Director, is designed to support school administrators in their work with teachers in the use of the formative assessment process. The first of these guides is under development (*Capturing the Formative Assessment Process: An Administrator Guide to Cross-referencing the FAME Components and Elements with the 5D+ Observation Protocol*). Comparable guides for other educator observation schemas and rubrics will be developed during the upcoming school year.

19. Formative Assessment Resources for Parents

Because of the shift from in-person to virtual learning from home for most students, the MAC FAME R&D Team felt that the development of resources to assist parents in monitoring the learning of their children from home would be useful. Of course, such resources could still be useful when their children return to in-school instruction.

By the close of the school year, the R&D team had created a list of key questions that a parent might ask of their child and corresponding key questions parents might ask of their child's teacher(s) related to each element of the FAME formative assessment process. This led to the creation of a draft resource for parent that highlighted a few of the most important key questions of their child and of their child's teacher(s). The next step in this work is to create some example handouts with appropriate explanatory materials that can be piloted with voluntary teachers and parents in the next school year

20. Integrating FAME with the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments and the Smarter Tools for Teachers

Early on in the school year, the MAC identified a need to assist MDE in promoting the use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium interim assessments (its Comprehensive Interim Assessment, Interim Assessment Blocks, and Focused Interim Assessment Blocks) and Tools for Teachers resource. This effort was combined with the FAME formative assessment process in a pilot of promoting balanced assessment at the classroom level.

A survey was conducted of educators who had access to the Smarter Tools for Teachers. The goal was to identify exemplary users of the Smarter interims and Tools for Teachers to feature in case studies. However, few teachers accessed the Tools site so no teachers were identified for case study development. A summary of the findings from this survey, prepared by John Lane, is shown in Appendix 5.

Ellen Vorenkamp and Terri Portice created three learning maps on balanced assessment, the formative assessment process, and the Smarter interim assessments and Tools for Teachers. A small number of school sites were recruited to pilot these materials. Their work was supported by learning facilitators who worked one-on-one with each site to assist the sites to learn about balanced assessment and put their learning into practice. Six online sessions, two per learning map, were used to introduce sites teams to the concepts described in each learning map.

The work of the site team was evaluated (directed by Kathy Humphrey and John Lane) and used to improve both the learning materials and the processes. An expanded project, now called the Creating Balance in Classroom Assessment, has been planned for implementation in the 2021-22 school year. Some of the pilot sites, and several new ones will participate in this field test of creating awareness of assessment for and of learning in the classroom. A learning facilitator will work with each site to create and then implement an Assessment Learning and Implementation Plan (ALIP) customized for the site. The ALIP will assure that the professional learning activities needed by the site will be designed and delivered.

21. Attend and Present at FAME Lead Planning Meetings

The FAME R&D team provided materials needed for each FAME Lead periodic planning meeting. In some cases, resources created for other purposes were shared with the Leads for their review and improvement. In other cases, resources specific to the Lead meeting were created and presented.

22. Participant in and Prepare Resources for the ALN Session on the Use of the Formative Assessment Process with Students with Disabilities

The MAC chose a NCEO monograph, written by Susan Brookhart and Sheryl Lazarus, as the basis for a presentation to the MAC's Assessment Learning Network on April 21st. The topic of the session is how the formative assessment process can be used with students with disabilities. In preparation for the session, FAME teachers who instruct students with disabilities were invited to contribute to the session and provide information that could lead to a research paper or a case study.

Teachers who identified themselves as special education teachers were first surveyed, and then those willing were interviewed, both by John Lane. The result was the preparation by John Lane of an ALN resource available at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/y4a33yf8>. The teachers who participated in the

survey, interviews, and the preparation of this resource also provided “local color” to Susan Brookhart’s ALN session.

23. Develop Trajectories of Learning About and Use Formative Assessment in the FAME Program

The MAC R&D team identified several research ideas and considered them in the context of how participants in the FAME program continue their learning, especially after the first couple of years participating in the program. This led to questions such as these:

- How do teachers participating in the FAME program learn to use the formative assessment process? What learning pathways are used?
- What helps them to learn to use formative assessment?
- Which FAME resources are most or least effective?

Based on these investigations, the MAC R&D team prepared a draft of a resource that describes the trajectories for learning about the formative assessment process from initial participation in the FAME program to continued learning beyond the initial three-year period FAME Learning Team members typical spend in the program. The FAME program manager and the FAME Leads reviewed the resource and provided useful feedback on it. Work will continue on the trajectory document during the coming school year .

If such a resource is implemented, this may involve a more comprehensive “advanced FAME learning program,” building on and expanding the current returning FAME Coach learning program.

24. Summarize What Research Has to Say About Elements of the FAME Formative Assessment Process

A request was made of the FAME R&D team by two FAME Leads to summarize the research on each of the 13 FAME Elements. They wanted this research summary to be provided in two ways: as an annotated bibliography of the research supporting the use of each FAME Element, as well as brief narrative summaries of the research.

The goal of this effort is to collect the research citations already present in FAME publications or in common formative assessment research articles. By the end of the school year, the R&D team had begun this effort, starting with the FAME Elements related to teacher questioning. The goal is that this work will provide both an illustration of what these resources might look like (thus, permitting users such as Leads to verify that the draft resources are what they were looking for), as well as serving as a mini review of the literature useful in developing future “going deeper” documents (see activity 13 above).

Part 2 – Summary of MAC FAME R&D Team Resources Created/Available

The following tables provide the titles and links to the various resources has created during the past year or earlier. They are summarized here to provide easy access for readers of this annual report of the activities of the FAME R&D team. Note that this list contains resources produced this contract year, as well as in past contract years.

- A. Why the Formative Assessment Process Matters** – These resources are for FAME participants who wish to share the nature and advantages of using the formative assessment process with others. Audience: Students and their families, teachers, school administrators, local policymakers – anyone who is not familiar with FAME or the formative assessment process.

Resource	URL
What do Local and State Policymakers Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process?	https://tinyurl.com/yxnevon5

What do Administrators Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process?	https://tinyurl.com/y4zjspbf
What do Teachers Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process?	https://tinyurl.com/y685m9sa
What do Students and Their Families Need to Know about the Formative Assessment Process?	https://tinyurl.com/y4ddb6mj

B. Focus on FAME – These resources describe useful ideas for FAME participants based on research by the FAME R&D Team. Audience: FAME Coaches and Learning Team Members

	Resource	URL
1	How can administrators support teacher learning about formative assessment and the FAME program?	https://tinyurl.com/y6zplytx
2	What strategies do schools use that are able to effectively work on FAME and other state, district, or school initiatives?	https://tinyurl.com/y6ybytb9
3	Through the lens: The use of video for professional development in FAME	https://tinyurl.com/y4kd9m5r
4	What are the optimal conditions for implementing formative assessment (and the FAME program) in the classroom?	https://tinyurl.com/yydkh836
5	Principles of formative assessment?	https://tinyurl.com/y3gsqtyt
6	What are the benefits of using the formative assessment process?	https://tinyurl.com/y48jfojb
7	Virtual FAME Learning Team meetings – not the enemy, just a different way to meet!	https://tinyurl.com/y4kd9m5r

C. Case Studies – These resources describe innovative approaches to FAME participation that might inspire replication elsewhere. Explore these success stories! Audience: FAME Coaches and Learning Team Members

Resource	URL
The Springport FAME Learning Team – Support for Teachers, Growth for Students	https://tinyurl.com/yyja6aac
The Kingsley Story: A Principal Embraces Instructional Leadership	https://tinyurl.com/y5q8jafh
There’s Always Something Good Happening in Corunna	https://tinyurl.com/yyylgtjd
There’s STILL Always Something Good Happening in Corunna!	https://tinyurl.com/y6q689kp
The Muskegon Story: Building Trust, Raising Expectations	https://tinyurl.com/y4ykn27b
The Hesperia Story: The Focus is on the Students	https://tinyurl.com/y2k683n6
Those who can TEACH...and teach EFFECTIVELY!	https://tinyurl.com/yykza379
Think You Know About Formative Assessment ... Think Again!	https://tinyurl.com/y6hndd6m
Lakeland High School: A Close Look at a First-Year FAME Learning Team	https://tinyurl.com/yy35ff9k
Combined Lead case study	

D. FAME Learning Points and Related Resources – A number of FAME-related resources were produced for the MAC’s Assessment Learning Network to describe the overall formative assessment process, providing a brief, two-page overview of each FAME Element. Audience: Educators and others who wish to know more about the overall formative assessment process, the FAME definition of formative assessment, and the Elements included in the FAME program.

Resource	URL
What do we mean by formative assessment?	https://tinyurl.com/yad5w4an
What conditions are necessary for successful implementation of formative assessment?	https://tinyurl.com/y8amukep

1.1	<u>Planning: What role does it play in the formative assessment process?</u>	https://tinyurl.com/y88sqgkn
2.1	What are learning targets?	https://tinyurl.com/ybg4z7tc
2.2	What are learning progressions?	https://tinyurl.com/ybh4exqp
2.3	Models of proficient achievement - why are they important?	https://tinyurl.com/y6acqxed
3.1	Activating prior knowledge: Why is it important in the formative assessment process?	https://tinyurl.com/y3mw9dcm
3.2	What is gathering evidence of student understanding?	https://tinyurl.com/y4foqvxx
3.3	What are teacher questioning strategies?	http://tinyurl.com/wu5lzok
3.4	What is skillful use of questions?	https://tinyurl.com/y3zk3gbh
4.1	What is formative feedback? Why is feedback from the teacher important?	https://tinyurl.com/yvwwzzkx
4.2	What is feedback from peers?	https://tinyurl.com/y66mnzdx
4.3	What is self-assessment?	https://tinyurl.com/yxj68pff
5.1	What are adjustments to teaching?	https://tinyurl.com/y43tptff
5.2	What are adjustments to learning?	https://tinyurl.com/y32wdap3
LP	Overview of FAME and the formative assessment process	Being finalized
LP	What is learner agency?	https://tinyurl.com/y3lyznd9
TP	Deforming the formative: How a summative mindset thwarts the aims of formative assessment	https://tinyurl.com/y3zyqspj
LP	Formative assessments versus the formative assessment process - what's the difference and why does it matter?	Being finalized
	Program stickiness - Building and sustaining a lasting professional development program (A brief history of FAME)	https://tinyurl.com/y4owmnfc

- E. Going Deeper Guides** – These guides provide extensive information and ideas for FAME participants who wish to deepen their understanding and increase their use of selected formative assessment practices. Audience: Returning FAME Coaches and Learning Team Members

	Resource	URL
4.0	A Guide to Providing Formative Feedback to Engage Students in the Formative Assessment Process	https://tinyurl.com/yf69gct
4.3	A Guide to Self-Assessment – Activating Learners as Resources for Themselves	Completed
4.2	A Guide to Peer Assessment – Activating Learners as Resources for Each Other	Completed
1.0	A Guide to Planning in the FAME Formative Assessment Process	Under development
5.2	A Guide to Activating Students as Agents of their Own Learning	Under development
3.3/ 3.4	A Guide to Assisting Teachers' to Use Questioning Strategies Skillfully	Under development

- F. Content-Area Formative Assessment Guides** – These guides illustrate and describe how the use of the formative assessment process in content areas can both improve teachers' disciplinary understanding and use of the formative assessment process. Audience: FAME Coaches and Learning Team Members.

Content Area	Resource	URL
Science	The Formative Assessment Process in Science	In production
Arts	The Formative Assessment Process in the Arts	Being completed
Early Literacy	The Formative Assessment Process in Early Literacy	In production

Social Studies	The Formative Assessment Process in Social Studies	Starting
Mathematics	The Formative Assessment Process in Mathematics	Not yet started

Appendices

<u>Number</u>	<u>Title</u>
1	MGLVA Learning Team Meeting Analysis
2	Summary of 2020-21 FAME Coach Periodic Survey Data
3	Summary of 2021 Annual Survey of FAME Coaches
4	Summary of 2021 FAME Coach Annual Survey Open- and Closed-ended Questions
5	Policy Brief on Michigan's Required Administration of Interim Benchmark Assessments (P.A. 149, Section 104)

Attachments

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Title</u>
A	Fall 2020 FAME Coach Periodic Survey
B	2021 Annual Survey of FAME Coaches
C	Data from 2021 Annual Survey of FAME Coaches
D	Survey of Returning Coach Formative Assessment Professional Learning
E	Data from Survey of Returning Coach Formative Assessment Professional Learning

Appendix 1

MGLVA Learning Team Meeting Analysis

Overview

This report summarizes the Michigan Great Lakes Virtual Academy’s Learning Team meetings in the 2020-2021 along the following dimensions: activities, depth of content and focus, depth of discussion, probing and clarifying questions, and feedback. The four core meetings were each structured in a similar way. The LTM Coach (Lindsey Howe) would set the focal component or element for each meeting and the Team Members would discuss their efforts to enact the focal Component or Element in the context of their own classroom. Meetings were therefore dominated by sharing tools and examples from classroom practice in which Learning Team Members made connections between formative assessment (theory) and classroom instruction (practice). Thus, the team had greater “depth of content” than in previous years. However, other meeting characteristics from previous years remained the same. Namely, questions and feedback continued to be rare.

Activities

In the previous year (2019-20), reading, writing, examining, discussing information from a book or other source became the dominate activity type. However, during the 2020-21 school year, the Team changed its focus from a close study of the FLG to a meeting structure that focused on sharing an example or tool from classroom practice. In fact, sharing a tool or example from classroom practice crowded out all other possible activities with the exception of a brief discussion of unrelated topics in meeting three. Thus, the following potential activities were not observed in any of the Team’s meetings:

- Planning assessments
- Discussion of potential uses of Formative Assessment for student learning, teacher collaboration, and school-wide reform
- Presentation of information
- Reading, writing, examining, discussing information from a book or other source
- Analyzing and discussing examples of samples of student work or video of classroom teaching

A summary of this information is included in Figure 1.

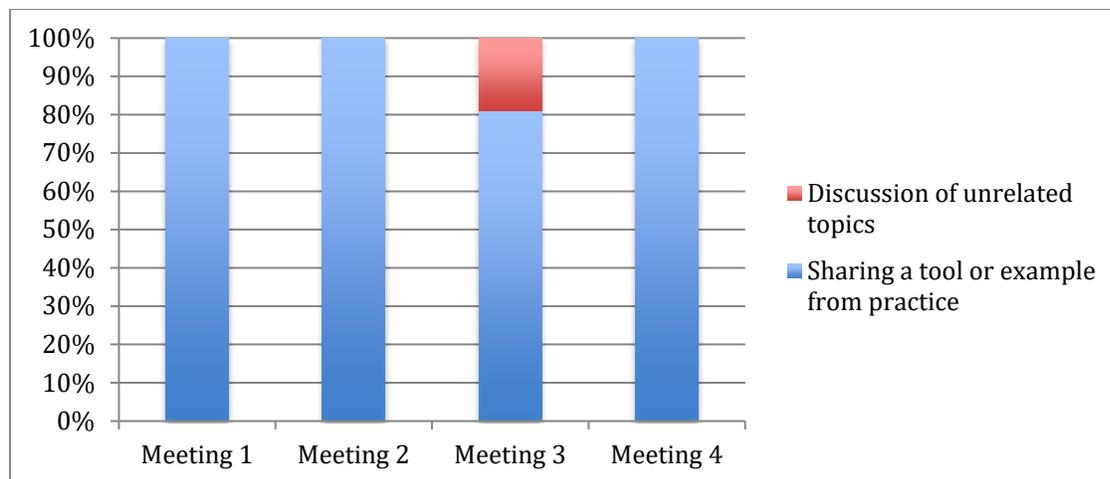


Figure 1. Activities by Coded Segment 2020-21

Depth of Content and Focus

Linking theory and practice (while sharing a tool or example from practice) was the dominant depth of content for the MGLVA team during the 2020-21 school year. None of the coded segments was dominated by abstract coverage of the formative assessment process coverage of practice only and incidents of no depth were observed only briefly. A summary of this information is included in Figure 2.

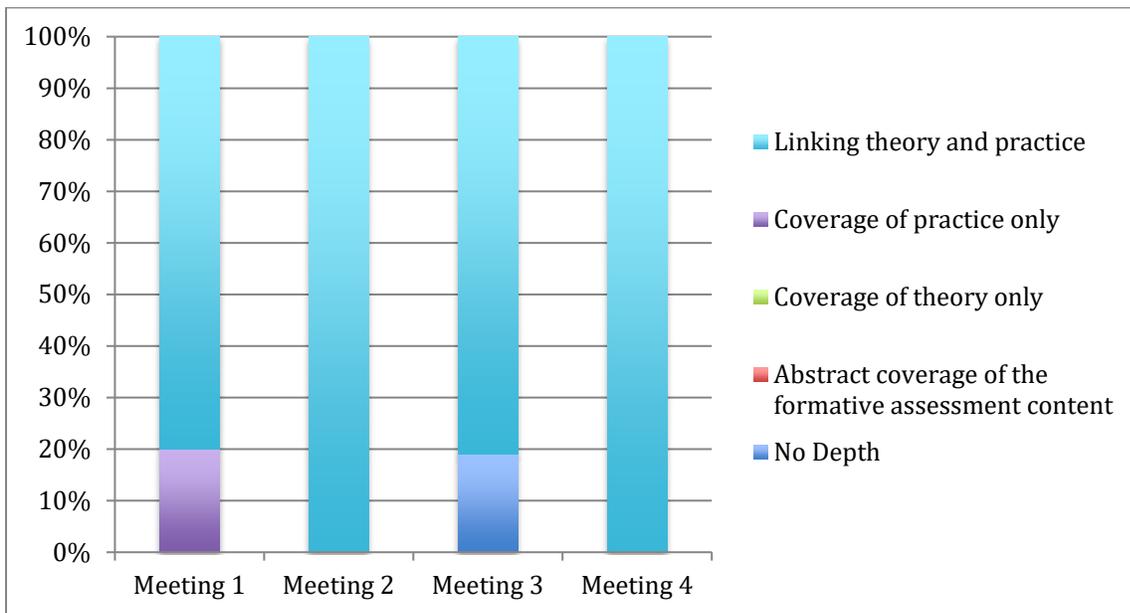


Figure 2. Depth of Content and Focus 2020-21

Depth of Discussion

The MGLVA team built on progress first observed in 2019-2020 as the group began to elevate its discussion from one-way sharing to linking to one another's ideas. In 2020-21, the MGLVA Learning Team meeting were dominated by discussions that built on one another's ideas without connections to both theory and practice (connections tended to focus on practice only). However, the team's third meeting of the year featured Learning Team Members building on one another's ideas AND pushing for greater understanding of theory and practice. A summary of this information is included in Figure 3.

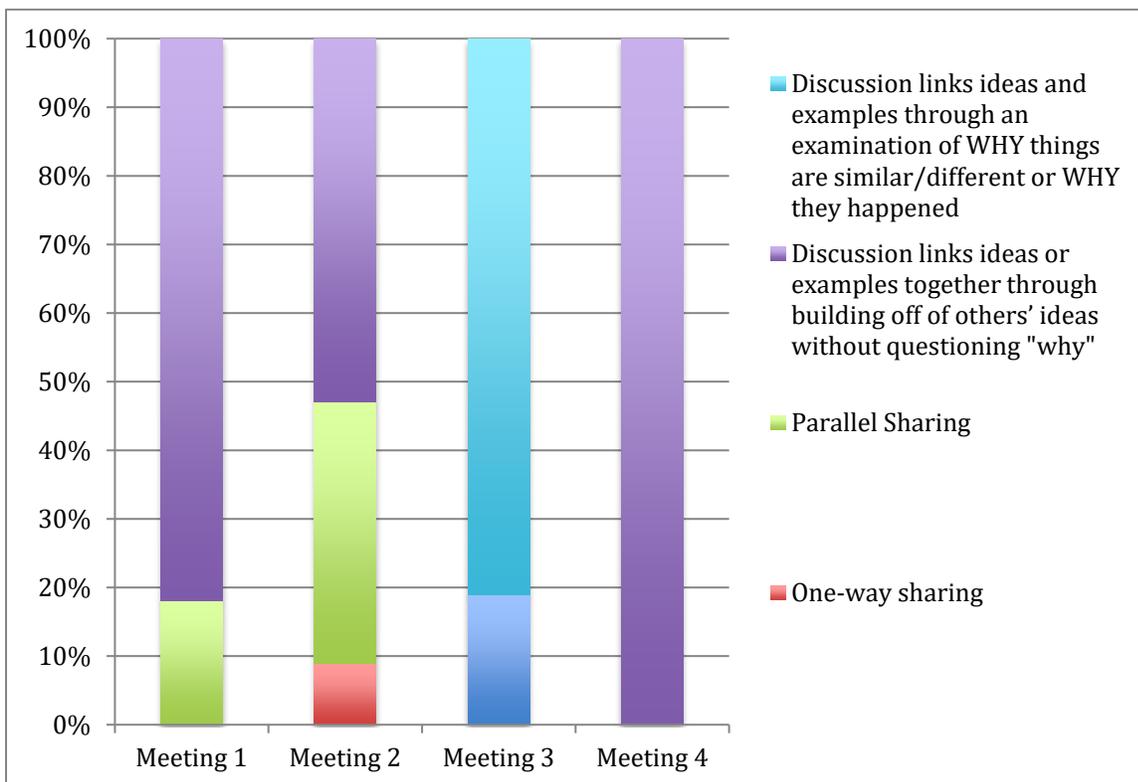


Figure 3. Depth of Discussion 2020-21

Probing and Clarifying Questions during Meetings

For this analysis, we counted all questions and categorized each question as either clarifying/information gathering or probing. We also noted the source of the question – either the Coach or another member of the Team. Overall, the historical trend continues – questions during Learning Team meetings remain uncommon. In 2018-19, we observed only 8 questions total across meetings (average of 2 questions per meeting). Of these questions, most (5 of 8) were clarifying/ information gathering. Only 3 were probing questions. Most of the probing questions (2 of 3) were initiated by Team Members. In 2019-2020, we observed 20 questions total across meetings (average of 5 questions per meeting). Of these questions, most (80%) were clarifying/information gathering. Only 4 were probing questions. Most of the probing questions (3 of 4) were initiated by a Coach. In 2020-21, we observed 21 total questions. Nineteen of these questions were clarifying questions and only one pushed for greater understanding of formative assessment practices. Furthermore, this past year, nearly all questions were asked by Learning Team Members. The information for 2020-21 is represented in Figure 4.

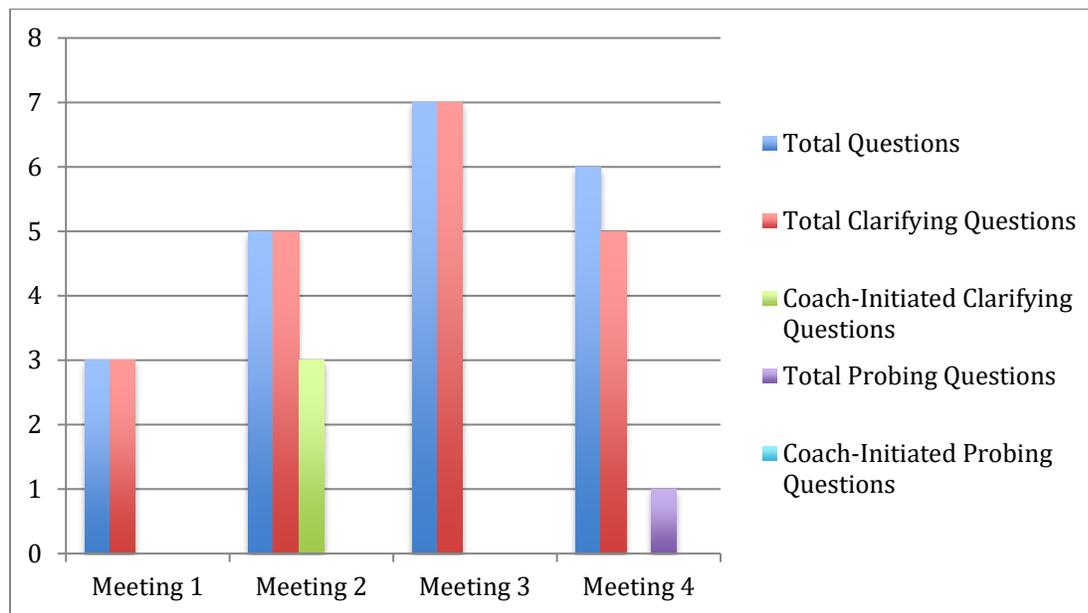


Figure 4. Probing and Clarifying Questions during Meetings

Feedback

During analysis, we coded meeting segments for the following types of feedback: redirecting, paraphrasing, commenting with moving practice forward, and commenting with the inclusion of ideas about how to move practice forward. We also distinguished Coach-initiated from Member-initiated feedback. Like in years' past, feedback during meetings was even more uncommon than questioning although there was a marked increase from 2018-19. In 2018-19, we observed only 2 instances of feedback, both of which were initiated by the Coach. In 2019-20, we observed 5 instances of redirection (all Coach initiated) and seven instances of general feedback (e.g., I really like what you shared) without ideas to move practice forward (4 Coach initiated, 3 LTM initiated). In 2020-21, we observed mostly feedback from Learning Team Members that did not push to move practice forward (16 total instances, only 1 initiated by the Coach). Feedback that moved practice forward was exceptionally rare and occurred on only one occasion (initiated by Coach).

Appendix 2

Summary of 2020-21 FAME Coach Periodic Survey Data

Background

Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) is designed and implemented by the Michigan Department of Education as part of a comprehensive and balanced assessment system. The project has developed a leadership model in which individuals with formative assessment experience have taken on the role of Regional Lead to provide the training and support for the Learning Team Coaches in the FAME project.

Michigan Assessment Consortium has provided support to the FAME project and continued to conduct research on the FAME initiative during the 2020-2021 school year. This summary outlines the results from the surveys administered to the coaches regarding their work with the FAME project over the course of the 2020-2021 school year. The goal of the survey data was to assist the FAME leadership team, especially the Regional Leads, to provide the support and resources coaches needed to make their FAME experience as useful as possible. The information was intended to help the Regional Leads know what the coaches and Learning Teams were working on as well as support and resources coaches needed to improve their FAME work. The survey responses were shared with the Regional Leads, MDE, and the MAC research and development team.

Survey

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, a monthly coach update survey was administered to coaches for each of the ten Regional Leads. Each month (or at times bi-monthly) the survey contained 6-8 questions focused on the Learning Team meetings, support received from the Leads, and any requests for additional support. Given the unique context of this year due to Covid-19, the survey questions were customized to gather information that was responsive to Coach experiences. The survey was administered to approximately 220 Coaches at 5 different time points over the course of the 2020-2021 school year. The last survey administration for April/May was replaced by the FAME Coach Annual Survey. The Annual Coach Survey was administered to all Coaches at the end of the school year. The survey data from the Periodic Coach Update Surveys was administered to groups of Coaches assigned to each of the 10 different Regional Leads and then the data was combined in the following summary for all of the Leads.

Overview

The Regional Leads have been responsible for the delivery of the initial professional development in the yearly formative assessment Launch into Learning for the coaches. In addition, the Regional Leads collaborate together and support Coaches and their professional learning communities in the FAME project throughout the school year. Each Lead is assigned to support a group of Coaches who are responsible for leading the FAME Learning Teams.

This summary provides an overview of the survey data collected over the 2020-2021 school year from the FAME Coaches on their work with their FAME Learning Teams. The analysis provides a summary of the main questions included in the Coach Update Survey. In addition, information is provided for additional questions that were added to the survey monthly. The survey inquired about questions such as: the frequency and focus of Learning Team meetings, format of Learning Team Meetings, hopes and concerns, and requests for further support.

The following section includes: frequency of meetings, primary formative assessment component discussed in learning team meetings, format of Learning Team Meetings, hopes and concerns, professional learning opportunities about FA, nuggets of formative assessment, most important factors for returning Coaches, and requests for further support. Further information about the Coach and Learning Team members' work on the FAME Learning Teams and the formative assessment process can

be found in the reports from the End of the Year Coach Survey 2021. The results are synthesized here from the complete coding and analysis of the data.

Summary of Monthly Coach Survey Data

Overall, the monthly coach survey data indicated that teams varied in the extent to which they met on a monthly basis and the topics they discussed. There were differences in the findings on many of the general themes in 2020-2021 than in the previous years.

Frequency of Meetings

On average, approximately 43% of the coaches reported they met one or more times during the 2020-2021 school year. This is less than the previous years when 72% of Coaches reported 1 or more times (2019-2020), 67% Coaches reported they met during the month they responded to the survey (2018-2019), and the year prior (2017-2018), when Coaches reported they met on average 68% of the time during the month they responded to the survey. There was considerable variation in the responses across the Coaches throughout the year. The percent of Coaches that reported they met with their Learning Team one or more times ranged from 0% to 100%. It is important to note that this year presented many more challenges for Coaches with many schools being online due to the pandemic. Therefore, it is understandable that the percent of Coaches that met was considerably lower this year than in previous years. Figure 1 below shows the percent of Coaches who reported their learning team met on the Coach Update Survey during 2020-2021.

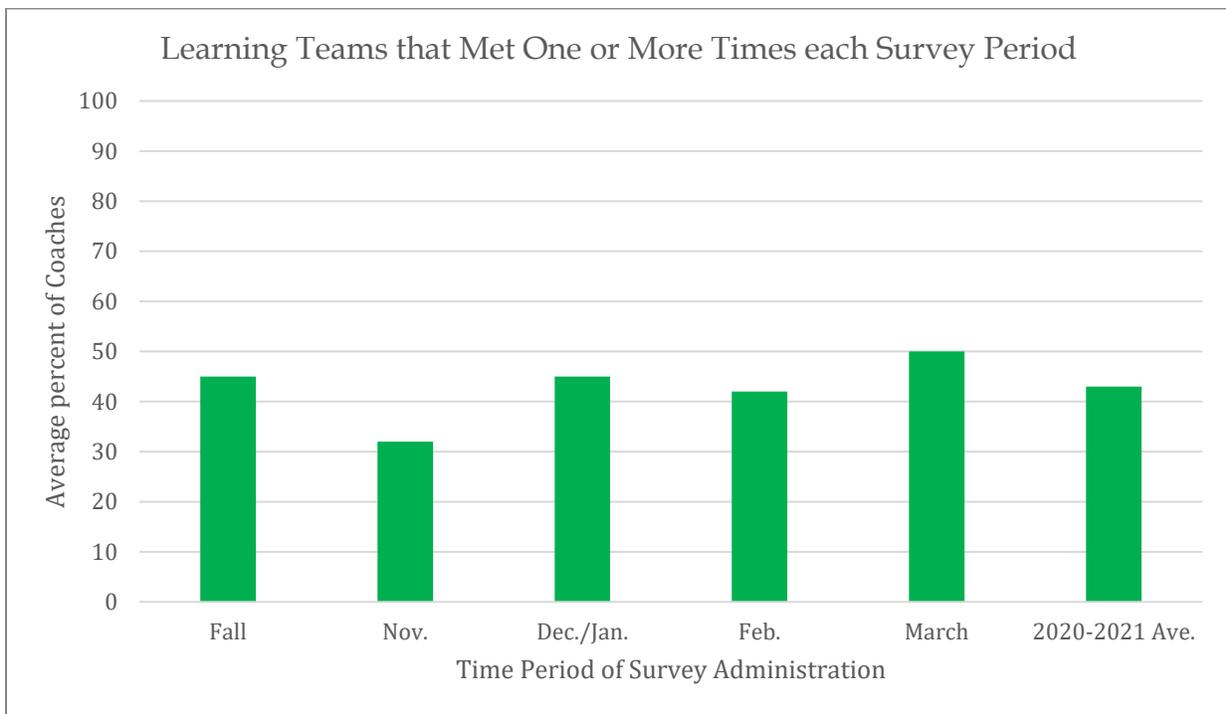


Figure 1: Percent of Learning Teams that Met One or More Times During the Survey Period 2020-2021

Figure 2 below shows the percent of Coaches who reported their learning team met on the Coach Update Survey during both 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

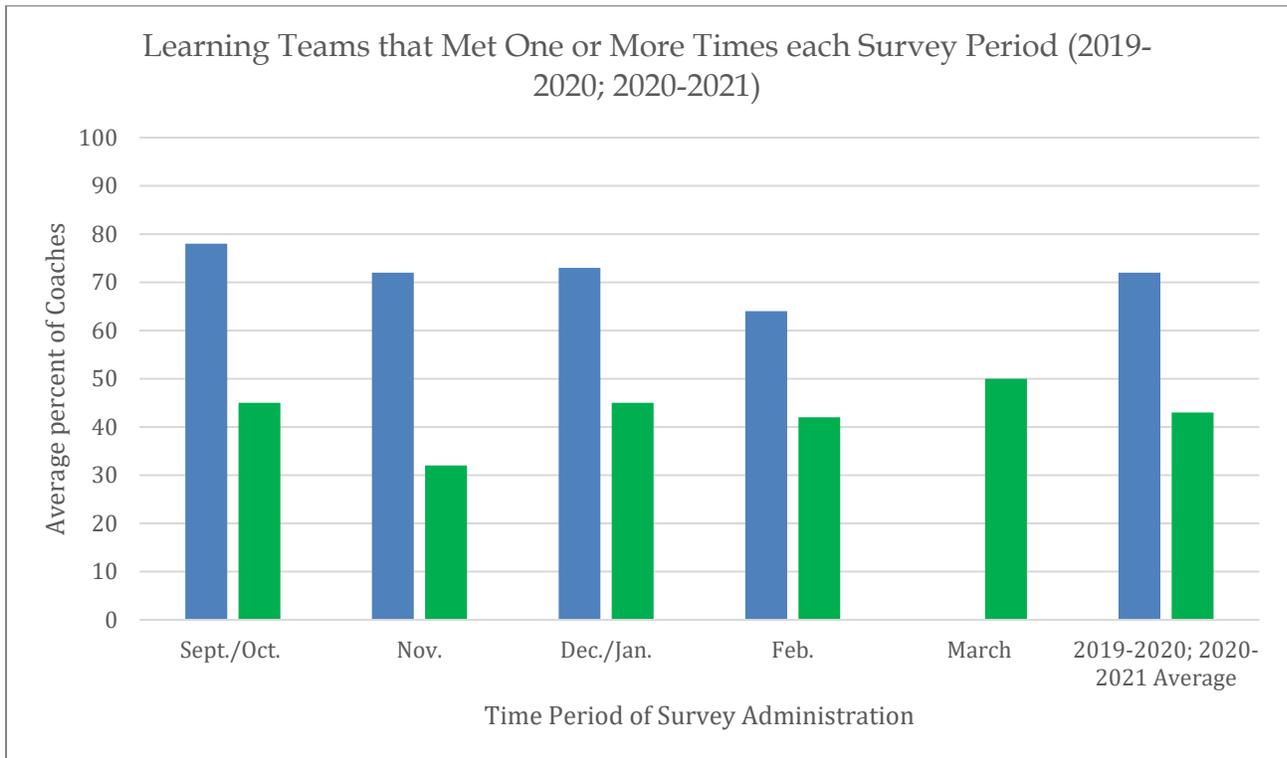


Figure 2: Percent of Learning Teams that Met One or More Times During the Survey Period for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

Format of Learning Team Meetings

During the 2020-2021 school year, one survey questioned inquired about the format of Learning Team Meetings. Many Learning Teams were not able to meet due to challenges with the demands of the pandemic. With a transition to online schooling for a majority of the schools, some learning teams met virtually. The survey question on all five of the surveys administered over the 2020-2021 school year asked about the format of the Learning Team meetings. On average over the course of the school year, 36% of Coaches responded that the format of their Learning Team meetings was virtual, 12% reported a face-to-face format, 8% indicated both virtual and face-to-face, and 42% responded to other and commented that there were not meeting, or not yet meeting with their Learning Team.

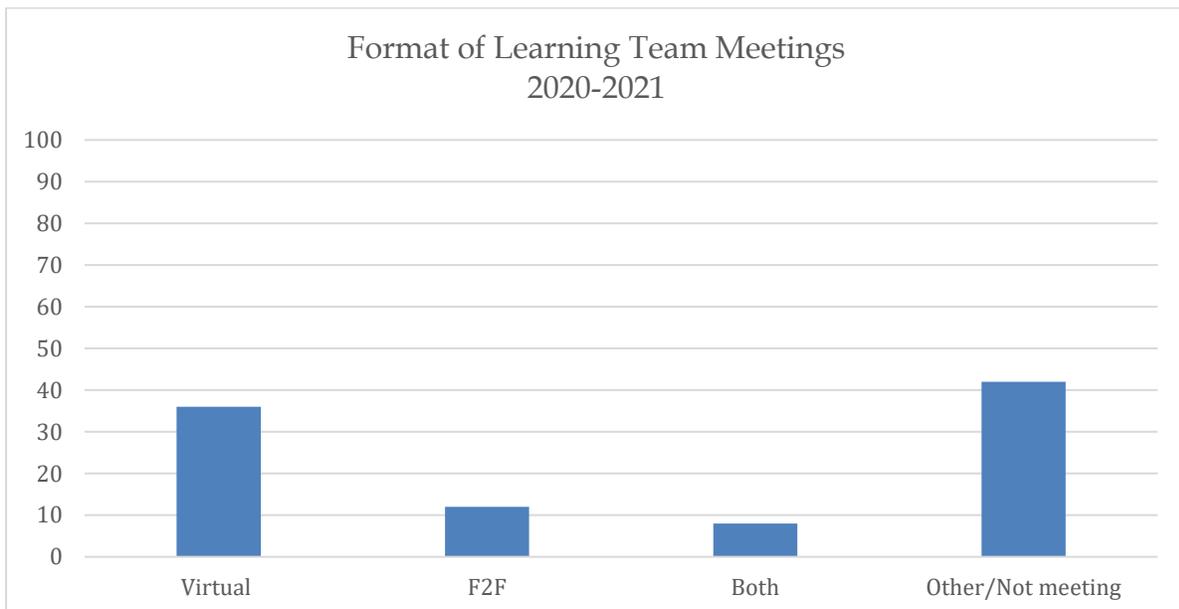


Figure 3: Format of Learning Team Meetings

Primary Formative Assessment Component Discussed in Learning Team Meetings

In addition, there was a range of topics the teams discussed during the meetings. When the responses were averaged across the entire year, the top most frequently discussed formative assessment component was Formative Feedback. On average over the course of the school year, 21% of Coaches indicated that they discussed formative feedback. This is a change from the previous year when Learning Targets was the most frequently discussed topic. During the 2020-2021 school year, the primary formative assessment component discussed in Learning Team meetings varied. On the different monthly surveys, Planning and Eliciting Evidence of Student Understanding were also the most frequently discussed FA component for a particular time period. The second and third formative assessment components that were most frequently discussed were Eliciting Evidence of Student Understanding and Planning. Learning Targets was the fourth most discussed topic, and Instructional and Learning Decisions was the fifth most discussed topic in the Learning Team Meetings. The Other category primarily included a response about the Learning Team not meeting, given the challenges of the pandemic. There were also a few specific responses, such as “Learner Agency,” or “We met to discuss next year’s plan and what we plan to focus on.” The information on formative assessment components discussed in learning team meetings is depicted in Figure 4 below for 2020-2021, and Figure 5 for 2019-2020.

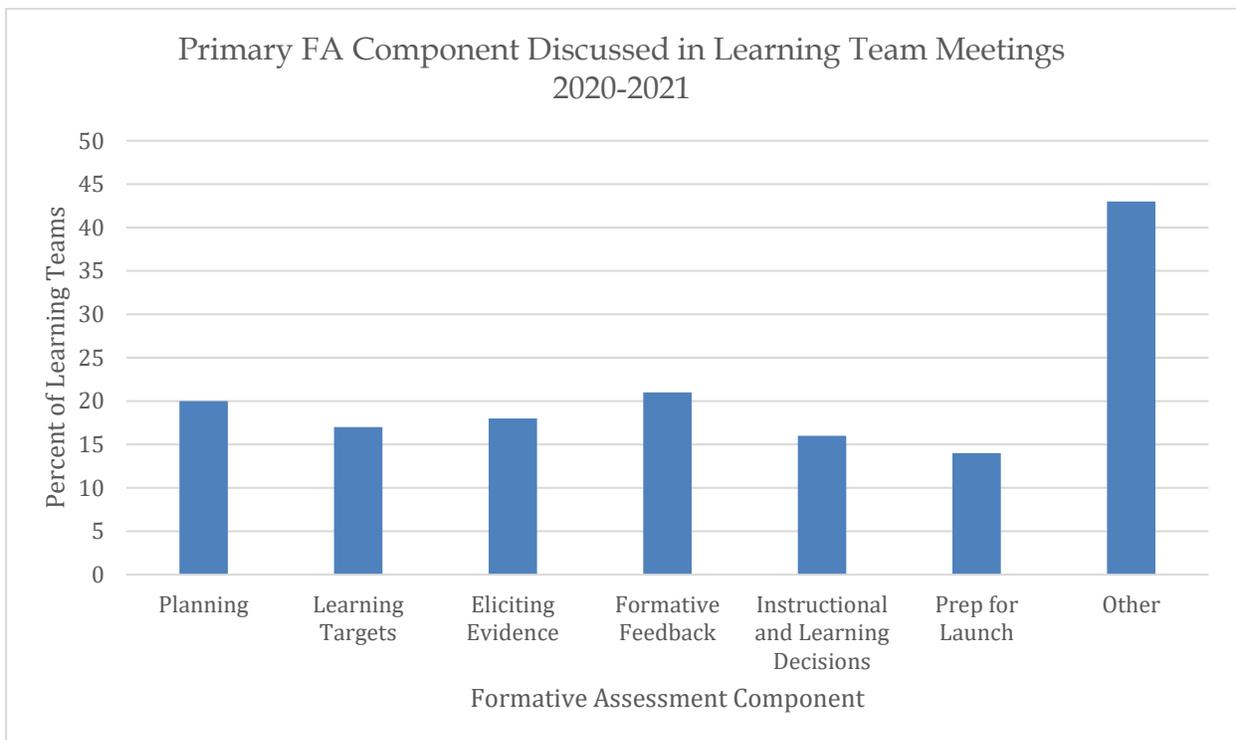


Figure 4: Primary FA Component Discussed in Learning Team Meetings 2020-2021

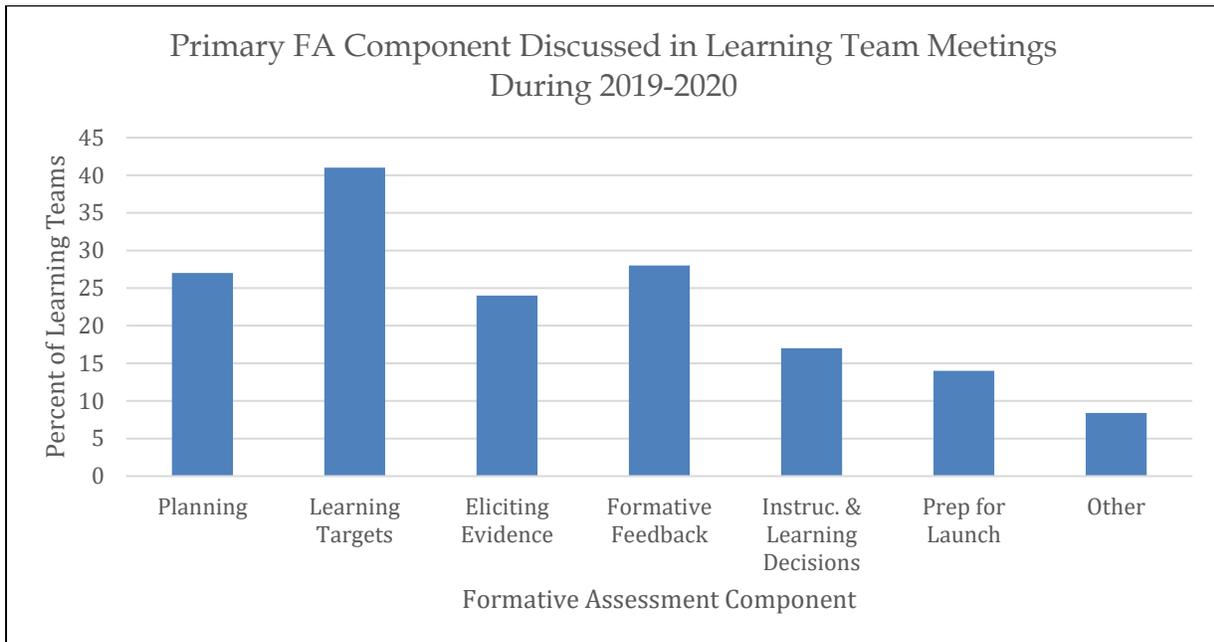


Figure 5: Primary formative assessment component discussed in Learning Team meetings 2019-2020

Hopes and Concerns for Learning Teams

The Coach Update Survey also inquired into Coaches’ hopes and concerns for their Learning Team. The majority of Coaches (42 responses) indicated they hoped to support Learning Team Members to deepen their formative assessment practice. For example, one Coach responded, *“We want our Learning Team to continue to strive towards getting to their learning targets by best practices in formative feedback. Feedback from the teacher, feedback from peers, student self-assessment which leads to adjustments to teaching and adjustments to learning.”* Other Coaches commented about ways to improve formative assessment practice, such as, *“We are using the formative assessment planning template and introducing it to our teams in baby steps,”* and, *“My hope is that my team is able to take the information learned and support teachers they are coaching with effective practices of the formative assessment process.”* There were 35 Coach responses about hopes to meet with their Learning Team and 24 Coaches hoped to promote quality teaching and learning in an online environment. There were 13 Coaches who described a hope for Learning Team Members to deepen their knowledge of formative assessment and 12 Coaches who shared their hope to build a strong Learning Team. Several Coaches (10) also mentioned their hopes to reengage with their team and were focused on next year. Figure 6 below shows Coaches’ hopes for their Learning Teams.

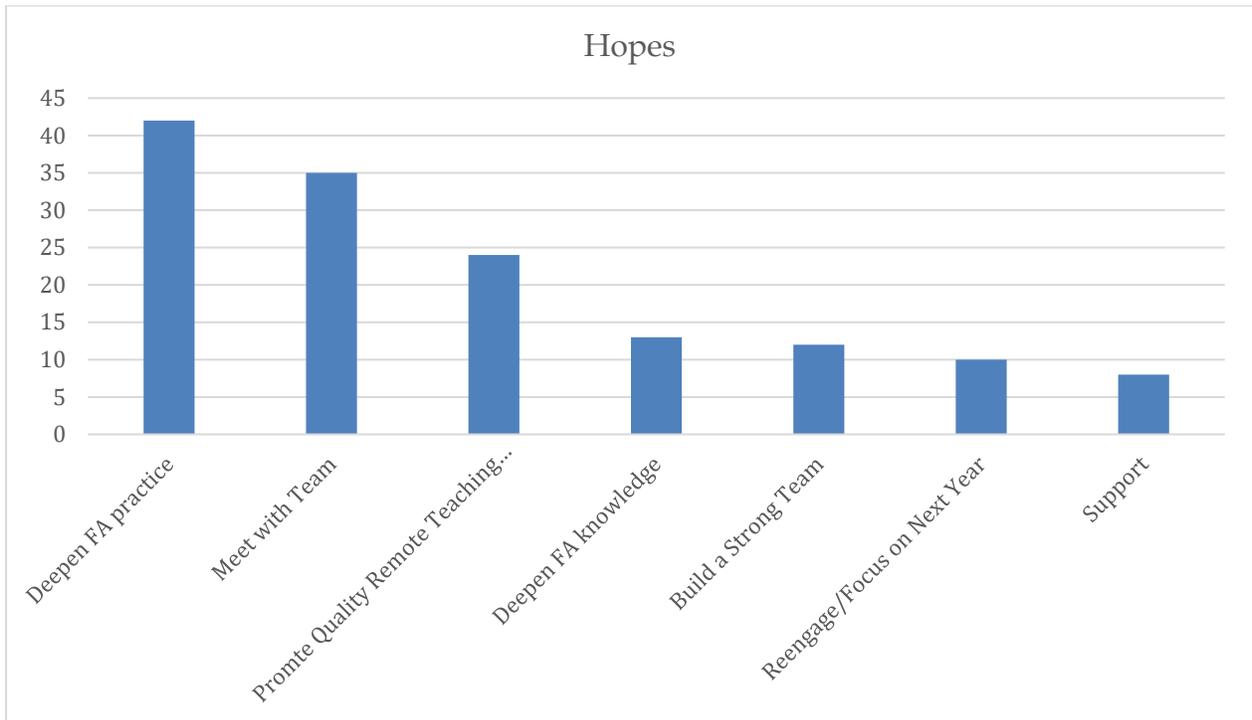


Figure 6: FAME Coaches' hopes for their Learning Teams

Coaches also mentioned their concerns amidst the challenges of the pandemic. Most of the Coaches commented about their concerns with Learning Team Members feeling overwhelmed and not wanting to add one more thing to their plate. A total of 35 Coaches described concerns of overwhelm and lack of investment from Learning Team Members. For example, one Coach commented, *"Our staff was very overwhelmed this year with switching instruction to online."* Another Coach responded, *"My team is very overwhelmed at the moment with teaching BOTH face to face and virtually."* Similarly, 12 Coaches commented about concerns of no time for the Learning Team Members with several other demands they were navigating. There were two Coaches who had concerns about not being prepared for their work with the Learning Team. Figure 7 below shows Coaches' concerns for their Learning Teams.

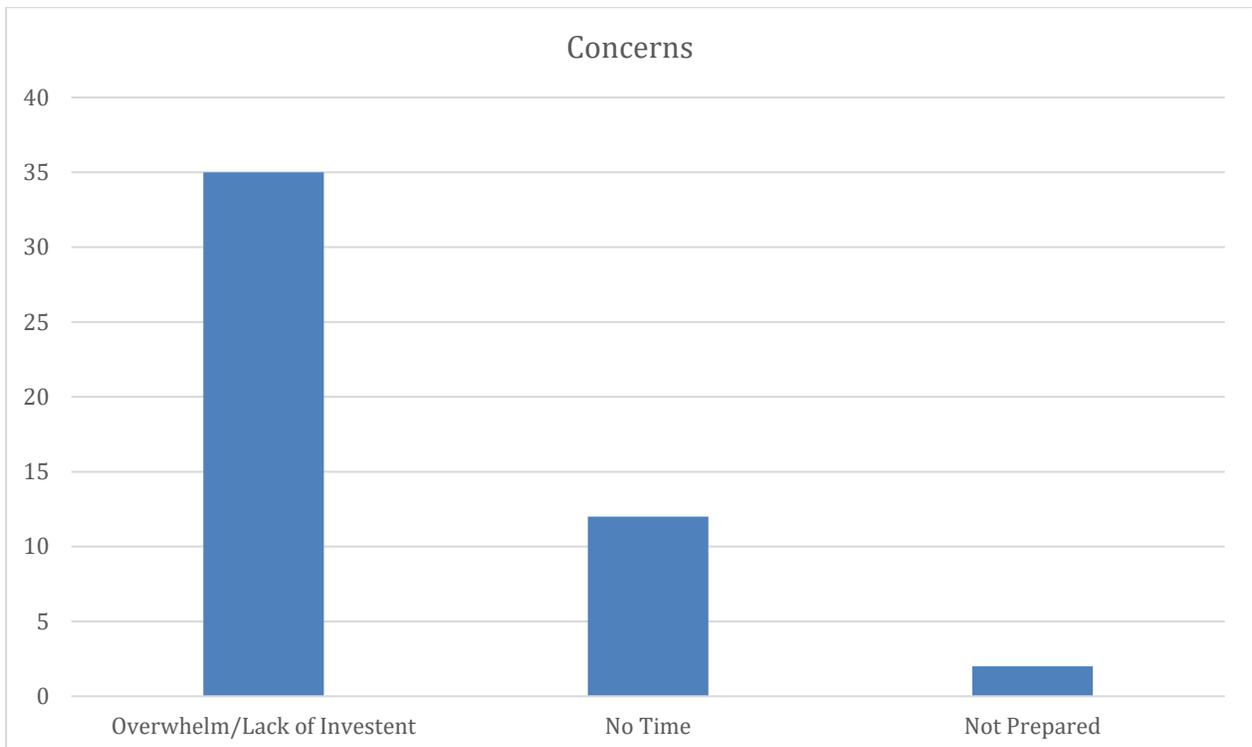


Figure 7: Coaches' concerns for their Learning Teams

Nuggets of Formative Assessment

Coaches also indicated that they were able to provide nuggets of formative assessment information to Learning Team Members. There were 24 Coaches who mentioned they provided nuggets of formative assessment information during meetings. Table 1 below shows the responses about nuggets of formative assessment information with the category, frequency of responses, and examples.

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	EXAMPLE
Meetings	24	Discussion during team meetings and collaborative planning of formative assessment use to guide pacing, monitor understanding, and scaffold instructional supports. Our team collaborated on ways to implement formative feedback.
Email	7	We have been collaborating on the best practices for engagement in virtual settings and have been brainstorming strategies to assess needs in that format.
Staff meetings	6	Our whole school address PD on Learning Targets and we have started applying them to our Power Standards.
Informal conversations and collaboration	5	Through co-teaching in our Zoom classes, so we can team teach to provide intervention remotely in the afternoons.
Work with students	4	
Virtual coaching	2	We are looking at ways to manipulate and change F2F formative assessment practices to a virtual practice.
Text	2	

Table 1: Ways Coaches provided nuggets of formative assessment information

Professional Learning Opportunities about Formative Assessment

There was also a question on the Coach Update Survey about professional learning opportunities to learn about formative assessment. An average of 29% of Coaches indicated they had participated in professional learning opportunities about formative assessment, not including FAME, and 71% of Coaches reported they had not participated in professional learning opportunities about formative assessment, not including FAME. Table 2 below includes the average percent of Coach responses as well as examples.

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	EXAMPLE
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Yes	29%	District wide professional developments and school wide professional developments Checking for Understanding FA Strategies PD within the District K-12 Hattie webinars, MASSP work and readings Solution Tree - PLC & Common Formative Assessments Macomb ISD PLC network Student Led Academic Teaming Roundtable Discussions
No	71%	

Table 2: Percent of Coaches who have and have not participated in additional professional learning opportunities about formative assessment beyond FAME

Most Important Factors for Returning Coaches

Coaches also responded to a question about the most important factors as they consider returning the following year. An average of 61% of Coaches who responded indicated the most important factor was continuing to work with the learning team. For example, one Coach commented, *“To continue to move forward with my team, but to begin to introduce our staff to what we have been learning this year.”* Deepen my understanding about formative assessment was the second most frequently chosen category, with 38% of Coaches choosing this factor. Figure 8 below shows the most important factors for returning coaches and the percent of Coach responses for each factor.

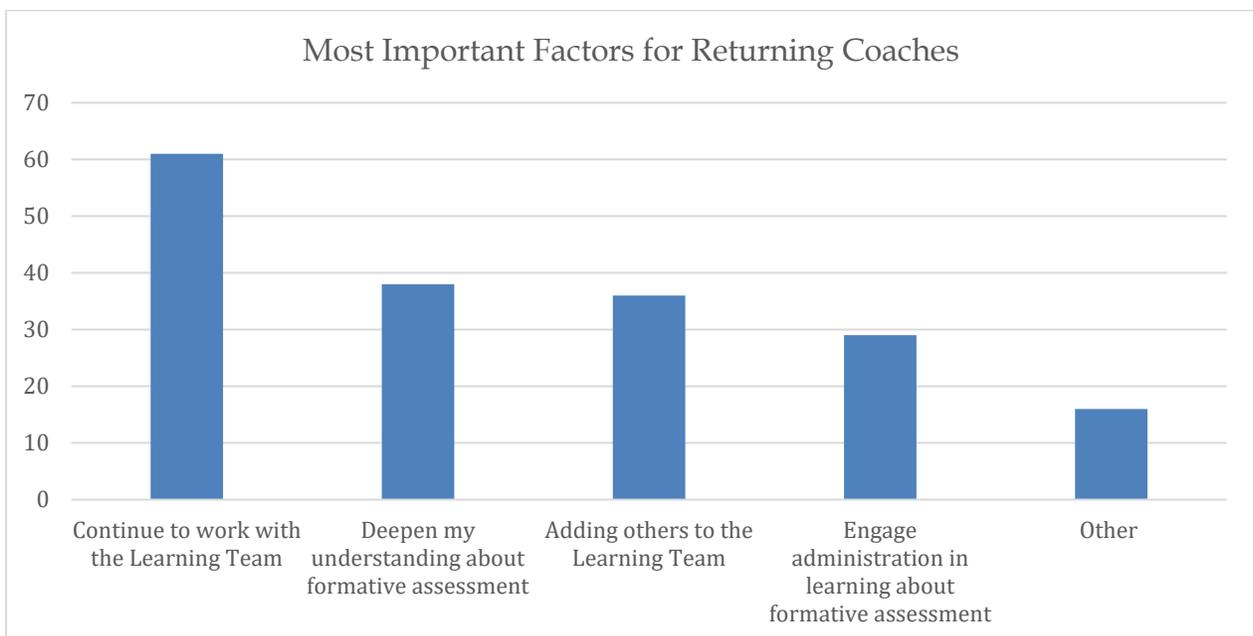


Figure 8: Most Important Factors for Returning Coaches

Requests for Further Support

The most frequent response to the question about coach needs for support was for a Planning Conversation with a Lead. There was a total of 81 responses in this category. For example, requests included, *“I would appreciate a conversation with my lead to help identify ways in which I can bring elements of FAME to our buildings despite the turmoil,” “Adapting to virtual needs,” “Best ways to identify success criteria -*

esp. while virtual,” and “We would like to share celebrations & inquiries.” It is important to note that many of the Coaches answered there was no further need for support. There were also many Coaches who expressed appreciation for the program and learning opportunities, such as, “Thank you for helping orchestrate a focus on the power of FA,” and, “The Professional Learning that you have been providing for coaches has been great! THANK YOU!”

Of those who made requests for support, there were 52 Coaches who made specific requests for formative assessment resources. These requests included online and virtual teaching resources to support the transition to remote instruction. The responses included comments such as, “Any materials that are evidence-based for assisting in distance learning would be appreciated,” and “We are open to all materials that will serve the urban/online demands of 2020.” Many requests included student exemplars, examples of success criteria, developed modules, and the Going Deeper Resources. Some of the requests were: “More materials to help us discuss student self-assessment. I’ll be seeking them out on my own, too,” “We are still grappling with setting up a good way to track and report formative assessment and standard-based grading in PowerSchool,” and “We are interested in doing a book study next year around formative assessment. Book recommendations would be great as well as the books themselves once we decide which one we will use.” There was also a request for new teacher materials as well as more advanced materials, “We have a lot of teachers who are familiar with the principles of assessment - more advanced activities and specific directions for praxis would be welcome.” In terms of support, one Coach commented, “We are all so overwhelmed right now-teachers in our school district are responsible for both online learners and face to face learners. As a FAME coach, I want to support the team without making meeting "one more thing to do" with a plate that is already more than full. Any suggestions as to how I can be that support would be appreciated. Thanks!”

There were 11 Coaches who requested more Cognitive Coaching and Adaptive Schools training. There were several other areas for further support that can be seen in Figure 9 below.

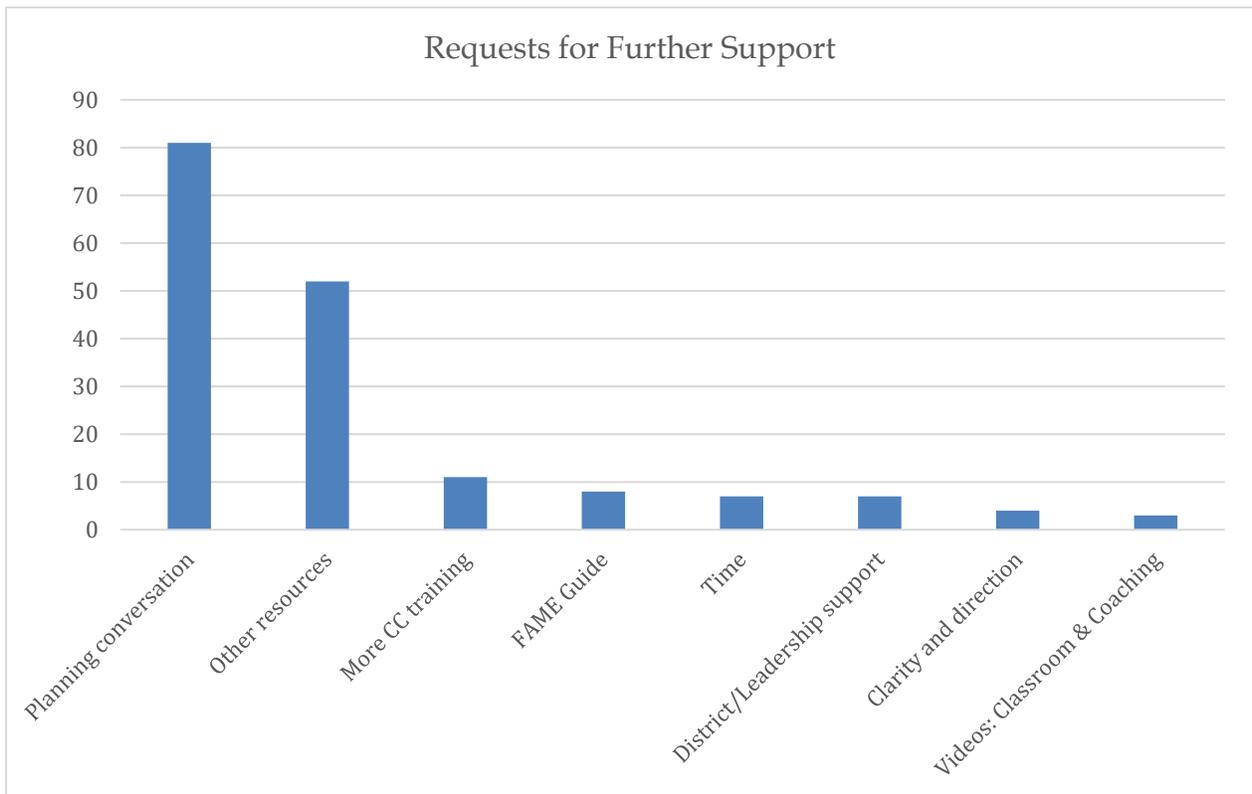


Figure 9: Requests for Further Support

Summary and Recommendations

Based on these findings, the recommendation is to continue to deepen the work with the existing resources and structures of support to build Coach knowledge about the formative assessment process. It

is notable that many teams have the resources they need and may need time and support to use the resources. In addition, it will be beneficial to focus time attention on specific resources requested by coaches. The responses indicate that there are some common requests and areas of need that are common for many coaches across all of the Regional Leads.

In addition, there continue to be many comments about support Coaches have received, and appreciation for the support provided by Kim Young, the Regional Leads, and the FAME program. Coaches comment on the value of the program overall, as well as specific aspects of FAME.

The Coaches demonstrate a strong commitment to the FAME program and formative assessment. They requested specific materials for the Components and Elements of the formative assessment process and discipline specific content. Some Coaches also made requests about how to plan and clarity on the direction for their work. There were also responses from Coaches about challenges with time, convening and scheduling Learning Team Meetings, and competing demands a sense of overwhelm. A few Coaches made comments about the need for additional support, including District and leadership support.

The FAME program and R & D team have developed and continue to develop resources that can support Coaches as they learn about the formative assessment process, the structure of Learning Team meetings, the scope and sequence for the year, and sustaining the work over time to benefit these Coaches. In general, there were fewer comments about facilitating the meeting and building agendas.

This year, Coaches commented on their hopes to strengthen FA knowledge and practice in their Learning Team. They also mentioned concerns about Covid-19 and challenges with virtual teaching and learning. Coaches found different creative ways to share about formative assessment, including through their different roles and avenues of working with others. This year highlighted the need to support educators with best practices for gathering evidence of student understanding in a virtual learning environment. A few other topics that emerged included, ideas about creating consistency for planning, a virtual refresher at the start of the school year, and videos. Overall, Coaches show appreciation for the continued learning opportunities and demonstrate a strong commitment to support teachers amidst the challenges they faced during the 2020-2021 school year.

Build on Learning and Reengage Coaches. Many Coaches consistently engaged in valuable learning about the formative assessment process over the past year. There are many opportunities to continue to build on the collaboration and learning that has taken place for Learning Teams. In addition, as schools return this fall it is an opportune time to reengage in the value and potential of the formative assessment process to support student leaning.

Address the use of the Term *Formative Assessments*. There continues to be a need to address the use of the term formative assessments. Many Coaches refer to *formative assessments* rather than the formative assessment process on the survey. For example, "*Resources that provide further details on how to provide effective formative assessments in a lesson, for both lower and upper el classrooms,*" and "*Ways to engage my team, who is departmentalized, when developing formative assessments.*" Continued focus on the formative assessment process and distinguishing the use of terms will be beneficial.

Follow-up System for Requests for Further Support. There continue to be requests from Coaches on the surveys throughout the year. The requests are in response to the last question on the survey: What further support would be most useful? While the survey responses were sent to each Lead, it may be beneficial to have a system to follow-up on Coach requests to ensure their needs were met and they receive the support needed. Some Coaches made requests that may be useful to develop for the program. A review of these requests can be helpful for FAME Leadership as well as Coaches to identify which resources meet certain requests and which resources are under development.

Review Requests for Further Support. It will be valuable to continue to review requests for further support to identify possible further areas for resource development. Coaches can learn about new resources and support provided in response to their feedback. In addition, the review of requests can inform priorities for future resources and support.

Continue to Support Coach Learning about Formative Assessment. Many Coaches identified the importance of deepening their learning about the formative assessment process and several mentioned participation in the Deepening Understanding about the Formative Assessment Process series with Margaret Heritage. Participants will benefit from the continued support of Coach learning about formative assessment knowledge and the study of the factors that support educator formative assessment knowledge and skill.

Overall, many coaches indicate engagement in the work with the formative assessment process and appreciation for the FAME program. They acknowledge the active involvement and support they receive from FAME and the Regional Leads. At the same time, the past year presented many challenges. Despite these challenges, Coaches continued to provide support to Learning Team Members and deepen knowledge about the formative assessment process. It will be beneficial to continue to explore how the different resources provided by the FAME program can support Coaches to deepen their formative assessment knowledge and practice and reengage in the work with their FAME Learning Teams.

Appendix 3 Summary of 2021 Annual Survey of FAME Coaches

The MAC R&D team conducted the end-of-the-year survey of all new and returning FAME Coaches in April-May, 2021. The survey included 26 questions designed to gather feedback on the FAME Coach experiences regarding formative assessment, as well as their work with the Leads. A total of 103 Coaches responded to the survey. Note: The FAME Learning Team member survey, which was also administered in past years, was once again not administered in 2020-21.

Survey questions were developed in several topic areas. These are:

- Learning Team Information
- Formative Assessment Professional Learning
- Use of FAME Resources
- FAME Website Use and Preferences

The survey of all new and returning Coaches contained some of the same questions used in comparable surveys of Coaches from 2011-12 through the 2020-21 school years. In addition, some new questions, mostly related to the impacts of COVID, were added. It is important to note that the composition of the respondents surveyed varies significantly from year to year, as well as that respondents each year are not a representative sample of the total group of new and returning Coaches, so year-to-year comparisons are not technically sound. Thus, such year-to-year comparisons are not shown in this summary.

The results from the survey are summarized below; the complete survey is shown in Attachment A1 and the PDF of the responses to open-response questions, is shown in Attachment A3.

The first question on the survey asked respondents about what year Learning Team that they coached during the 2020-21 school year. Table 1 reports these results.

Table 1. Year of the FAME Learning Team Coached
Percentages

Year	Percent
First Year	32.4
Second Year	10.8
Third Year	8.8
Fourth Year	6.9
Unsure	4.9
Other	36.3

These results show that about a third of the Coaches who responded were first-year Coaches coaching new Learning Teams that had not previously participated in the FAME program. The “Other” responses included teams that did not form or meet, teams with experienced members who had been joined by new team members in subsequent years, or other team configurations.

A similar question asked the Coaches how many years that they had served as Coach of a Learning Team. The responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Years as a FAME Coach
Percentages

Year	Percent
First Year	36.9
Second Year	24.3
Third Year	15.5
Fourth Year	7.8

More Than 4 Years	15.5
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Although a majority of Learning Teams are relatively inexperienced in FAME, the Coaches themselves are a bit more experienced. About a quarter of the Coaches have coached a FAME Learning Team for four or more years.

The third question asked Coaches how many times their Learning Team will have met by the end of the school year. A summary of their responses is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of Learning Team Meetings in 2020-21
Percentages

Number of Meetings	Percent
None	31.1
1-2 Times	20.4
3-4 Times	14.6
5-6 Times	20.4
7-8 Times	5.8
9 or more times	7.8

As might be expected in a school year so significantly affected by the COVID virus' impacting on schooling, about a third of the FAME Learning Teams did not meet during the 2020-21s school year and another third met only four or fewer times. However, around a third of the teams met five or more times, an especially noteworthy accomplishment given that schools were closed for in-person instruction during much of the school year.

The fourth question asked Coaches how long their typical Learning Team meeting was. Their responses are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Average Length of Learning Team Meetings
Percentages

Meeting Times	Percent
Less than one hour	30.9
1-2 hours	42.2
Up to 3 hours (half day)	1.0
Up to 6 hours (full day)	0.0
Other	26.5

About three-quarters of the Coaches reported that their Learning Teams met for 2 hours or less. Other responses included many Coaches who indicated their Learning Teams did not meet.

Coaches were then asked if this amount of meeting time will continue in 2020-21. Their responses are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Anticipated LT Meeting Time in 2022-22
Percentages

Meeting Time Continuing in 2020-21?	Percent
Yes	43.1
No	14.7
Don't know yet	42.2

Interestingly, less than half of the Coaches plan that their future Learning Team meetings will last as long as they did in 2020-21, while over 40% of the Coaches indicated they don't know yet, a realistic response to the

uncertainties of in-person school in the 2020-21 school year. Many of these Coaches, while uncertain about whether their Learning Teams will resume meeting, are not certain that members will choose to do so.

Question 6 was added to ask Coaches about how their Learning Team learning about formative assessment was impacted by the changes from COVID-19. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. FAME Learning Teams Conducted Online
Percentages

Response	Percent
We have not been able to meet or move our learning forward	45.1
We have made some progress	33.3
We have continued our learning similar to in the past	5.9
We have accelerated our learning this year	4.9
Other	10.8

As of the time of the survey (April-May 2021), about three-quarters of the Coaches indicated that their FAME Learning Teams had not met or had met and made some progress. However, there was about 10% of the Coaches who indicated that their teams continued or even accelerated their learning this year, a remarkable feat given the impacts of the virus on schooling.

Question 7 asked respondents to share an example of the progress they were able to make with their personal goal as a FAME Coach in 2020-21. Virtually every Coach (n = 102) responded to this question. Their responses are summarized in [Appendix 4](#).

Question 8 asked Coaches about their knowledge of key formative assessment strategies. These results are shown in Table 7. Coaches' responses are displayed graphically in [Appendix 4](#).

Table 7. Coach Knowledge of Key Formative Assessment Strategies
Percentages

Formative Assessment Strategy	Unsure	Not at All	Somewhat	Very
Planning	1.1	0.0	42.9	56.0
Goal Setting with Students	1.1	2.2	50.6	46.1
Using Learning Targets	1.1	2.2	29.7	67.0
Eliciting Evidence of Student Understanding/ FA Tools & Strategies	2.2	1.1	51.7	45.1
Activating Student Prior Knowledge	1.1	1.1	26.4	71.1
Using Various Teacher Questioning Strategies	2.2	2.2	41.8	53.9
Providing Descriptive Feedback to Students	1.1	3.3	44.0	51.7
Facilitating Student Peer Assessment	4.4	14.3	51.7	29.7
Helping Students Self-Assess	2.2	7.8	51.1	38.9
Making Adjustments to Teaching Based on Evidence of Student Understanding	2.2	3.3	30.8	63.7

Coaches indicated that they had considerable knowledge about key formative assessment strategies. Notable exceptions are less knowledge marked for facilitating student peer assessment and student self-assessment.

Question 9 asked Coaches about their actual use of these key formative assessment strategies. Their responses are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Coach Use of Key Formative Assessment Strategies
Percentages

Formative Assessment Strategy	Never	Monthly	1-2 Times/ Week	3-4 Times/ Week	Daily	N.A.
--------------------------------------	--------------	----------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	--------------	-------------

Planning	4.4	12.1	11.0	6.6	30.8	35.2
Goal setting with students	7.7	25.3	15.4	7.7	6.6	37.4
Using Learning Targets	5.6	4.4	7.8	8.9	35.6	37.8
Eliciting Evidence of Student Understanding/FA Tools Strategies	4.4	8.8	12.1	14.3	24.2	36.3
Activate Student Prior Knowledge	3.3	5.5	5.5	15.4	33.0	37.4
Using Various Teacher Questioning Strategies	5.5	2.2	4.4	12.1	38.5	37.4
Providing Descriptive Feedback	3.3	8.8	17.6	18.7	15.4	36.3
Facilitate Student Peer Assessment	14.3	24.2	12.1	4.4	2.2	42.9
Helping Students Self-Assess	12.1	14.3	18.7	12.1	6.6	36.3
Making Adjustments to Learning Based on Evidence of Student Understanding	3.3	5.5	8.8	4.4	39.6	38.5

Coaches indicated that they used goal setting only periodically (e.g., monthly), used learning targets and activated student prior knowledge frequently, but provided descriptive feedback, facilitated student peer assessment, and helped students to self-assess less frequently.

Question 10 asked Coaches about what aspects of their use of the formative assessment process that you like to improve. A total of 67 Coaches responded to this question and a summary of their responses is shown in Appendix 4.

Question 11 asked Coaches to rate the success of their Learning Team in using the formative assessment process. Their responses are summarized in Table 9. Coaches' responses are displayed graphically in Appendix 4.

Table 9. Extent of Learning Team Progress in Using Formative Assessment Practices
Percentages

Nature of Learning	Small	Moderate	Significant
Implementing formative assessment practices	30.4	52.2	17.4
Modification of classroom practices, based on collaboration with Learning Team members	44.8	34.5	20.7
Sharing learning targets in student-friendly language	13.5	21.6	64.9
Providing descriptive feedback	40.0	55.0	5.0

As can be seen, Coaches reported some of Learning Team progress in using several of the aspects of the formative assessment process. The stark exception to this was providing descriptive feedback to students, which is not surprising given Coaches' lower knowledge about and use of this reported in earlier questions.

In question 12, Coaches were asked which three formative assessment features that they spent the most time discussing with their Learning Teams. These results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Three Formative Assessment Features Discussed by the Learning Teams
Percentages

FA Features Discussed	Percent
Planning for the Use of Formative Assessment	31.9
Using Learning Targets with Students	27.5
Gathering Multiple Sources of Student Evidence	22.0
Activating Prior Knowledge	12.1
Providing Descriptive Feedback to Students	19.8

Asking Students to Use Teacher Feedback	9.9
Helping Students to Use Self-Assessment	7.7
Helping Students to Use Peer Assessment	2.2
Making Instructional Decisions Based on FA Evidence	17.6
Using student evidence for student and teacher analysis	14.3
Student Goal Setting	8.8
Other	7.7
We did not meet as a Learning Team this year	30.8

Less than half of the Learning Teams discussed any of the formative assessment features during the 2020-21 school year, even after removing the 30% of the Learning Teams that did not meet in 2020-21. Given that many teachers were instructing students virtually, this represents a real missed opportunity to improve student learning using the formative assessment process.

Question 13 asked Coaches to share any ideas or practice examples that their Learning Teams might have shared about ways to engage student in the formative assessment process. About a third of the respondents (n = 34) shared an example. These responses are summarized in [Appendix 4](#).

The next question, number 14, asked Coaches to select all of the ways the formative assessment process impacted students. Their responses are shown in Table 11. Coaches' responses are displayed graphically in [Appendix 4](#).

Table 11. Ways in Which the Formative Assessment Process Affected Students
Percentages

Impacts	Percent
Improved student work	32.5
Increased ownership and self-regulation	39.0
Effective use of feedback	26.0
Focused goal setting	28.6
Stronger peer relationships	10.4
Increased metacognition and self-regulation	23.4
Improved student engagement	33.8
Overall positive impact	40.3
Impact not yet seen; it takes time	15.6
No impact observed	9.1
General negative impact	0.0

Coaches reported moderate impacts in most of the ways listed in the survey. None were reported for a majority of the schools, but also, no negative impacts were reported. All of this is reasonable given the manner in which the virus affected instruction during the 20-21 school year.

Question 15 asked Coaches to indicate all of the most beneficial aspects of their Learning Team meetings. Their responses are summarized in Table 12. Coaches' responses are displayed graphically in [Appendix 4](#).

Table 12. Most Beneficial Aspects of Learning Team Meetings
Percentages

Aspects of Learning Team Meetings Most Beneficial	Percent
Sharing ideas about formative assessment	70.4
Reflecting on the use of formative assessment	59.3
Learning about formative assessment components and elements	49.4
Planning to use the formative assessment in the classroom	38.3

Receiving feedback about implementation of formative assessment	16.1
Exploring formative assessment resources	35.8
Other	13.6

Many of the Coaches were able to identify beneficial aspects of their Learning Team meetings. This included those who were still able to meet, as well as expressed in the thoughts of those unable to do so, but hoping for a change in the coming school year.

Question 16 asked Coaches about their use of several FAME resources. Their responses are summarized in Table 13 below.

Table 13. Use of Key FAME Resources
Percentages

Resource	For Prepare for LT Meetings	Own Professional Use	Share With Colleagues	Did Not Use
<i>FAME Learning Guide</i>	56.3	37.9	12.6	26.4
<i>FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition</i>	58.6	41.6	14.6	23.6
FAME Resource Website	49.4	47.2	20.2	25.8
<i>FAME Self-Reflection Guide</i>	25.3	44.8	9.2	40.23

Coaches reported considerable use of the *FAME Learning Guide*, the *FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition*, as well as the FAME website. Given that the distribution of the *FAME Self-Reflection Guide* was limited, the lower reported use of it was not surprising.

Question 17 asked a somewhat related question about the helpfulness of several FAME resources. Coach responses are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14. Helpfulness of FAME Resources
Percentages

Resource	Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Very Helpful	Did Not Use
FAME Learning Guide	1.1	15.9	56.8	26.1
FAME Learning Guide-Coach Edition	1.1	15.7	60.7	22.5
FAME News and Notes	2.3	25.0	40.9	31.8

This chart shows that the resources provided in the FAME program were considered to be somewhat to very helpful.

Because in-person Thinking Collaborative professional learning programs were not offered in 2020-21, staff pivoted to offering Cognitive Coaching refresher sessions for past attendees in this activity. In question 18, those who attended were asked to rate the usefulness of these sessions.

Table 15. Utility of the Cognitive Coaching Refresher Modules
Percentages

Response	Helpfulness
Very helpful	28.8
Somewhat helpful	6.9
Not helpful	0.0
Did not attend	63.0
Other	1.4

Among those who viewed the Cognitive Coaching refresher modules, most rated them as very helpful.

In question 19, Coaches were asked how often they visited the FAMR website during 2020-21. Their responses are shown in Table 16 below.

Table 16. Frequency of Coach Visits to FAME Website
Percentages

Frequency	Percent
Once or more a day	0.0
Once or more a week	3.3
Once or more a month	35.6
Once or more a quarter	42.2
Never	18.9

As can be seen, a little more than half of the Coaches reported visiting the FAME website once or more per quarter or never. This may be realistic when considering the number of FAME Learning Teams that did not meet during 2020-21.

Question 20 asked Coaches which aspects of the FAME website were most useful. They could check multiple responses. A summary is provided in Table 17 below.

Table 17. FAME Website Resources Most Useful to Coaches
Percentages

FAME Website Resources	Percent
Events	25.5
<i>News and Notes</i>	18.9
Coaching Resources	72.2
Components & Elements	50.0
Research & Development	20.2
Videos of Classroom Practice	51.1
None	6.7
Other	3.3

Coaches were asked about their current position or role in the district in question 21. Their responses are summarized in Table 18. Respondents could check multiple responses.

Table 18. Current Position or Role in the District
Percentages

Current Position	Percent
Teacher	36.7
Principal/Assistant Principal	12.2
Department Chair/Instructional Leader	15.7
ISD Administrator	1.1
District Administrator	15.6
Retiree	1.1
Other	25.6

A little more than a third of the respondents indicated that their current position is that of a teacher. Less than half are an administrator at the school, district, or ISD levels. "Other" responses included curriculum coaches, school improvement facilitators, or literacy coaches.

In question 22, Coaches were asked about the compositions of their Learning Teams. These results are shown in Table 19. Coaches could check multiple responses.

Table 19. Composition of Learning Team
Percentages

School Level	Percent
Elementary teachers	56.8
Middle School teachers	25.2
High School teachers	30.7
Building Administrator	17.1
District Administrator	11.4
Other	10.2

The percentages shown in Table 19 add to more than 100% because of the mixed composition of some Learning Teams. The Learning Teams are comprised mainly of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers.

In question 23, Coaches were asked to think about their involvement in the FAME project in the 2021-22 school year. Their responses are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20. Coach Plans for FAME Involvement in 2021-22
Percentages

Planned FAME Involvement in 2021-22	Percent
Continue coaching the same team	56.7
Coach a new team	14.4
Participate as a LT member, not Coach	2.2
Unsure	18.9
I don't plan to participate next year	7.8

As can be seen, over half of the current Coaches plan to continue serving as a Coach in 2020-21, mostly of their current teams.

Question 24 asked Coaches who indicated that they did not plan to continue to participate in FAMW in 2021-22 the reasons for that decision. Seven Coaches responded to the question. One indicated lack of district support, two stated because it conflicted with another initiative, two said they no longer were interested, and one said that their team was exhausted.

Question 25 requested that Coaches respond about the value of the FAME program to them. A summary of the open-ended responses is provided in [Appendix 4](#).

Finally, question 26 asked Coaches if there was anything else the Michigan Department of Education could provide to support their work with their Learning Teams. A summary of the open-ended responses is provided in [Appendix 4](#).

Appendix 4

Summary of 2021 FAME Coach Annual Survey Open- and Closed-ended Questions

The following data summary includes questions that were selected from the FAME Coach 2021 Survey for the FAME Lead Retreat to support the outcome for Leads to build confidence in supporting Coaches during changing times. The review of the FAME Coach 2021 Survey Data was also prepared to support FAME Leads in their activities in the 2021-22 school year.

The following questions from the Coach 2021 Survey provide information about Coach learning.

- Q7 Please share an example of progress you made toward your personal goals as a FAME Coach this year (2020-21)?
- Q8 How knowledgeable are you about each of the following aspects of the formative assessment process?
- Q10 What aspects of your use of the formative assessment process would you like to improve?
- Q11 Please rate your team's level of success in using formative assessment practices. (
- Q13 Please share any teaching examples of ideas/practices that your Learning Team Members might have shared about ways they have been able to engage in the formative assessment process this year.
- Q15 What are the most beneficial aspects of the Learning Team meetings? (Check all that apply.)
- Q14 In what ways has the formative assessment process impacted students? (Check all that apply.)
- Q25 Please comment on the overall value of the FAME program to you and for your Learning Team.
- Q26 Is there anything else the Michigan Department of Education could provide to support your work with your Learning Team and the formative assessment process?

The tables that summarize the data for each question are included below.

Q7. Please share an example of progress you made toward your personal goals as a FAME Coach this year (2020-21)?

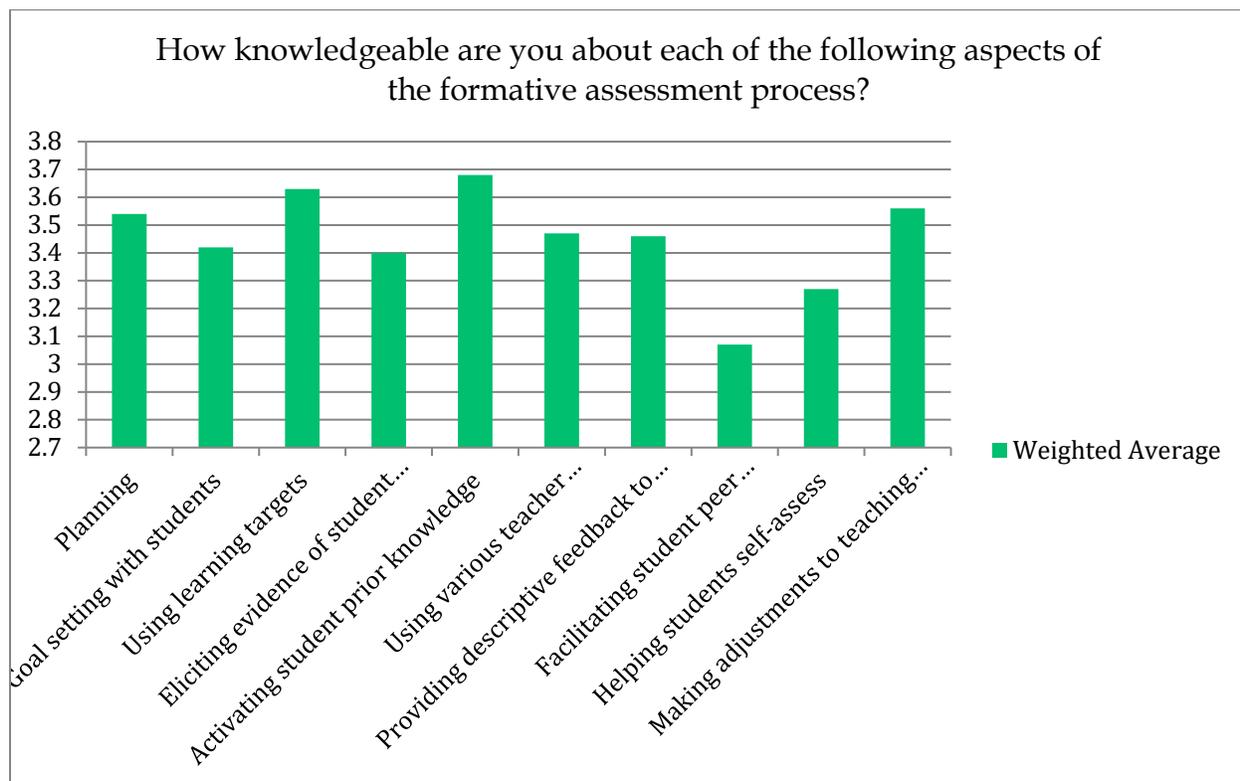
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	EXAMPLE
Increased FA knowledge, skill, and implementation (Also embedding formative assessment in teaching, training, coaching...)	34	This year I really focused on growing my knowledge of formative assessment by participating in the sessions with Dr. Heritage and Susan Brookhart, as well as ANYTHING that FAME had to offer. THANK YOU!
Little or no progress especially due to COVID	18	We made a plan for the year, but then had a retirement and a long term illness, and Covid did not "go away" as we thought so people were re-assigned to different roles, so we "paused."
Support of learning team (FA, members, agendas, observations)	14	I successfully held monthly FAME meetings each month. I used resources from the FAME site. We made a goal, we collaborated as a team, and looked at student evidence and teacher examples. We have a new goal for next year that felt like a natural transition into next year piggy backing off what we did this year as a team. I also had teacher buy in. Most teachers came to all meetings and collaborated.

Increased competence CC skills (Planning conversations, action plans, goal setting, and reflection conversations, Coach vs. consultant, pausing, paraphrasing)	9	With a new coach in our building (COSA) I have been able to expand my Coaching skills and incorporate more FAME coaching in daily activities with the teachers and my modeling practice. She allows me to bounce ideas back and forth and together we hash out better ways to incorporate formative assessment without it being 'taught'.
Build capacity, awareness, and FA understanding in district/region	8	Because of the conditions put on this year we really analyzed the structure we were using to ensure more teachers really understood the formative assessment process. This caused us to plan to have four different teams this upcoming year that will include building leadership from across the district. This way we can really make an impact as we deliver the vision and learning throughout the system.
Increased confidence and competence in leading the Learning Team and facilitating meeting	4	Facilitating and guiding the conversation was a fear during this trying times. The team was supportive and with positive protocols we had reflections that modeled each individual's goal to grow. Virtual meetings were a success with planning.
OTHER	11	As a team we started looking at what assessments we already have and what standards we are missing or lacking good assessments on. We have built some new assessments and are talking a lot more about data together.

Responses: 97

Table Summary: Increasing knowledge and skill in implementing the formative assessment process was the most common answer (34 responses). Participants also improved their support of learning teams (14 responses), increased their capacity in cognitive coaching (9 responses), built awareness of formative assessment more broadly in their school or district (8 responses), and increased their confidence in facilitating adult learning (4 responses). Unfortunately, respondents' progress was negatively impacted by the COVID pandemic, and 18 respondents indicated that they may have little or no progress as a FAME Learning Team Coach.

Q8 How knowledgeable are you about each of the following aspects of the formative assessment process?



Responses: 91

In summary, FAME Coaches indicate being most knowledgeable about activating prior knowledge. Other aspects of the formative assessment process that Coaches report being knowledgeable in order of highest percent include: using learning targets, planning, and making adjustments to teaching. Coaches reported a similar level of knowledge for several other aspects. Coaches indicate they are least knowledgeable about facilitating student peer assessment.

Q10 What aspects of your use of the formative assessment process would you like to improve?

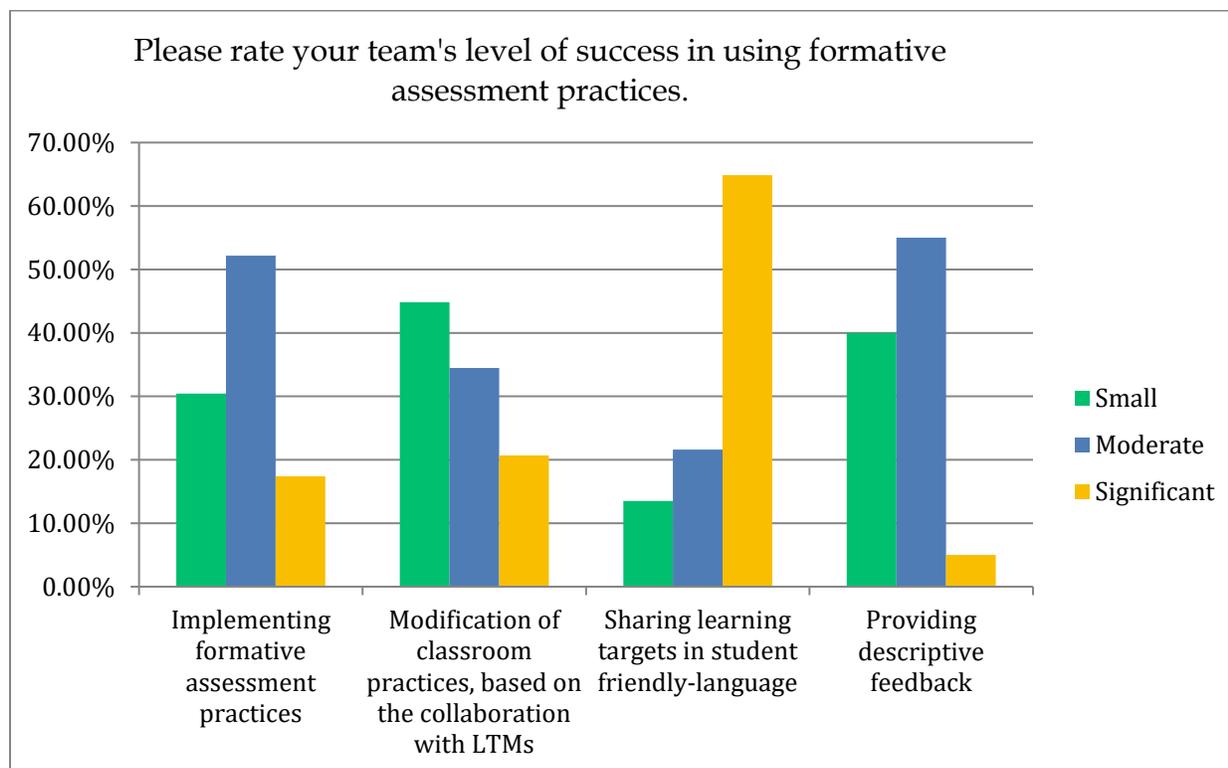
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	EXAMPLE
Build teacher/ district wide capacity, understanding, and fidelity	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a CO administrator, I would like to use this process more when I work with my teacher and leadership teams to build district-wide understanding. Encouraging all teachers to use the formative assessment process with fidelity.
Planning	2	Teachers sharing data and planning instruction together based on the data.
Learning target use	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Learning Targets Writing an appropriate learning target that effectively ties in the scope of learning taking place that day/hour.
Eliciting evidence of students understanding	5	I didn't feel like the year one FAME Coach training focused much on formative assessment at all, however I am familiar with it from previous training and a prior FAME team I was on. I would like to improve the process of collecting formative assessment data and then using that with students to help them self-assess. It seems like time is often an issue and virtual has made this much more difficult.

Formative feedback	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback to students. • Peer to peer feedback and teaching students more self-assessment strategies • Self-assessment
Adjustments to teaching and learning/ goal setting with students	3	Student goal setting
OTHER	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning progressions • Cognitive coaching • Baseline knowledge of formative assessment as it applies to other content areas. • Standards Based Grading • Return to the use of formative assessment • Documentation • Student interaction • Collaborating with Sped for student class work

Responses 67

The majority of Coaches (30) indicated that they would like to improve their use of formative feedback in the formative assessment process. In this category, most Coaches focused on self-assessment, and peer assessment was the next most frequent response. Many Coaches (11) also indicated they wanted to support other teachers with the formative assessment process.

Q11. Please rate your team's level of success in using formative assessment practices.



Responses: 81

Chart Summary: A majority of respondents (65%) indicated significant successful use of learning targets among their Learning Team members. In contrast, only about 12% of respondents indicated small success with learning targets. Roughly 20% of respondents indicated a moderate success with learning targets. Success in the other three domains was much more modest. These domains include 1) modification of classroom practices based collaboration; 2) implementing formative assessment practices, and 3) providing descriptive feedback. Even so, a majority of respondents indicated that their teams had made moderate to significant progress in each domain. Nevertheless, the final domain, providing descriptive feedback, presented the greatest challenge. Only 5% of Coach respondents indicated that their team had significant success in enacting this formative assessment practice.

Q13. Please share any teaching examples of ideas/practices that your Learning Team Members might have shared about ways they have been able to engage in the formative assessment process this year.

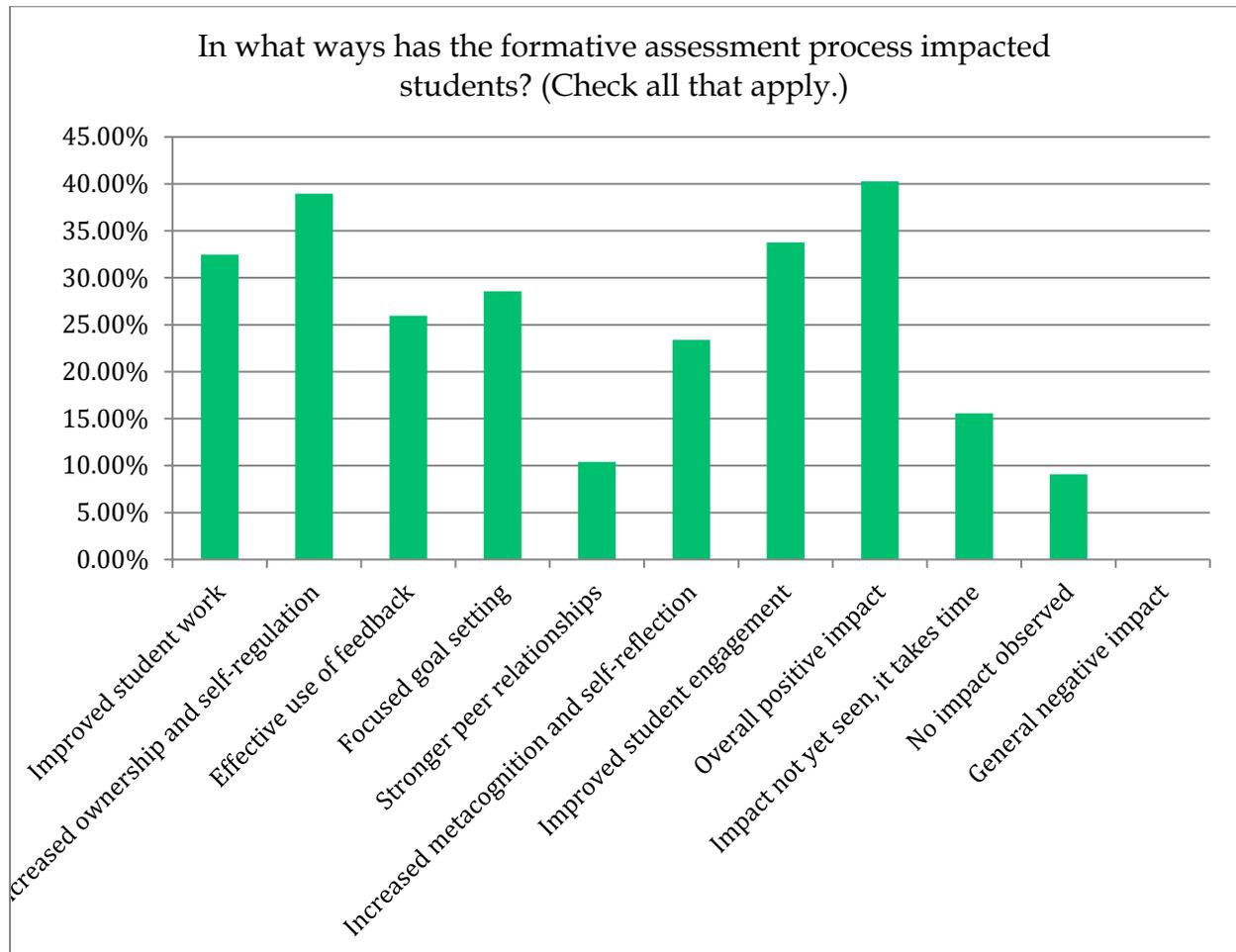
CATEGORY	FREQUENCY
Online formative assessment tools to collect evidence of student understanding and/or provide feedback from the teacher	10
Having students discuss learning targets and make connections across lessons (including learning progressions)	4
Adjustments to teaching based on evidence	2
Developing a more balanced assessment system	1
Student self-assessment and adjustments to learning	1
Use of Exemplars	1
OTHER	2

Responses: 21

Table Summary: Using online formative assessment tools to elicit evidence of student understanding or to provide teacher feedback was the most common response. Nearly half of the responses (10 of 21)

indicated that these tools were the focus of Learning Team member sharing. Other categories with multiple responses include having students discuss learning targets and make connections across lesson (4 responses) and making adjustments to teaching based on evidence (2 responses).

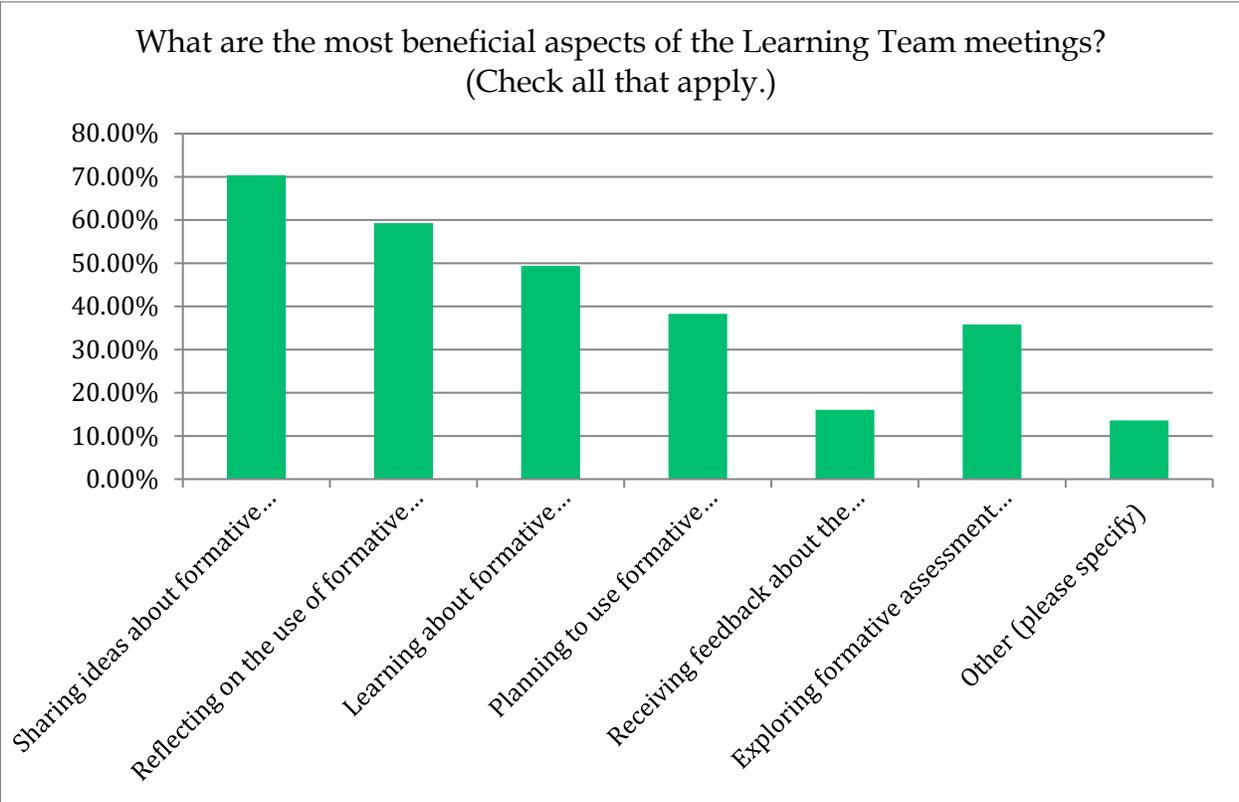
Q14 In what ways has the formative assessment process impacted students? (Check all that apply.)



Responses: 77

Respondents indicate that the formative assessment process has an overall positive impact on students. Of the many selected options, 39% of Coach responses indicated the formative assessment process contributed to increased ownership and self-regulation in students. In addition, 34% of Coach responses reported improved student engagement from the formative assessment process. Several other positive outcomes for students were selected by Coaches. None of the Coaches indicated a negative impact for students.

Q15. What are the most beneficial aspects of the Learning Team meetings? (Check all that apply.)



Responses: 81

Chart Summary: A majority of respondents indicated that sharing ideas about formative assessment was among the most beneficial elements of FAME Learning Team Meetings. Other popular responses indicated by a majority or near majority of Coach respondents included reflecting on the use of formative assessment and learning about formative assessment Components and Elements. Planning to use formative assessment in the classroom and exploring formative assessment resources were also common responses, but these did not approach 50 percent. Finally, receiving feedback on the implementation of the formative assessment process was not a common feature of learning team meetings. Fewer than 20% of respondents indicated dedicating productive meeting time to providing Learning Team members’ feedback.

Q25 Please comment on the overall value of the FAME program to you and for your Learning Team.

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	EXAMPLE
Great program	1	Excellent!
Benefit from FAME, but other competing needs	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAME is great! The school just has other priorities that need to be met and they haven't had time for FAME. This program is extremely important. It has been valuable to my personal and professional practice, as well as how I work with and coach both my students and my peers. I am sad to not be able to work with this initiative as we move forward next year.
Inactive due to the pandemic	1	Due to the pandemic, I opted out of the FAME Coach program and have continued to receive emails without any participation.

Responses: 5

Overall, Coaches indicate that the FAME program is beneficial and valuable personally and professionally. At the same time, the comments highlight other competing needs that Coaches must

address. The Coaches expressed their appreciation for the program and that other factors are contributing to not being able to continue participation.

Q26. Is there anything else the Michigan Department of Education could provide to support your work with your Learning Team and the formative assessment process?

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY
Build more capacity system-wide (e.g., getting district and site administrators involved)	3
More learning opportunities about formative assessment	5
More opportunities to learn about Cognitive Coaching and Adaptive Schools	1
More resources (e.g., classroom videos)	2
Suggestions for course of study for experienced Teams	1

Response: 5

There were far fewer Coach requests for support from the Michigan Department of Education. Most Coaches (5) indicated they would like more learning opportunities about the formative assessment process. There were also comments (3) about building system-wide capacity and increasing district and site administrator participation. There were also a few other notable responses about other ways to support Coaches work with Learning Teams and the formative assessment process.

Appendix 5
Policy Brief on Michigan’s Required Administration
of Interim Benchmark Assessments (P.A. 149, Section 104)

Background

Section 104 of Michigan’s “Return to Learn” package (P.A. 149 of 2020) stipulated that districts must administer at least one benchmark assessment (from an MDE-approved provider) in language arts and math to all students in kindergarten through 8th grade in the first 90 days of instruction. P.A. 149 also mandated that districts assess students again prior to the end of the school year. Districts that failed to comply would be at risk of losing state aid. The law also required the Michigan Department of Education to approve at least four assessment developers. It also provided the opportunity for districts to develop their own assessments and have them approved by the state. Of these, the state was to make at least one benchmark assessment available to districts for no cost. Districts were also encouraged to maintain consistency by administering the same benchmark they had used in previous years, “to the extent possible.”

MDE approved four benchmark assessment providers: i-Ready (Curriculum Associates), MAP Suite (NWEA), Star Assessments (Renaissance Learning), and Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments (Data Recognition Corporation). MDE selected Smarter Balanced as the no-cost option for districts. Smarter Balanced also maintained the “Tools for Teachers” website (<https://smartertoolsforteachers.org>) that created lessons plans and other resources for teachers to use to respond to their students’ performance, and the Tools for Teachers resource was made available all Michigan school districts, regardless of which interim assessment they chose to use.

Purpose of this Policy Report

This policy report is intended to better understand how local educators made sense of and responded to the new benchmark requirements. Specifically, this study was designed to answer the following questions:

Interim Benchmark Perceptions and Use

- How aware were educators about the new benchmark mandate?
- Which interim benchmark assessments were more commonly used to satisfy the mandate?
- What were educators initial impressions of the new mandate?
- How did educators use the interim benchmark results?
- How useful did educators believe the interim benchmark results to be?

Tools for Teachers Perceptions and Use

- What percentage of educators had accessed the Tools for Teachers website?
- What percentage of educators used Tools for Teachers website?
- How useful did educators believe the Tools for Teacher resources to be?
- How can the patterns of Tools for Teachers access, use and perceptions of quality be explained?

Opportunities for Professional Learning

- What opportunities, if any, did educators have to learn about benchmark assessments and how might they be used to improve teaching and student learning outcomes?

- Furthermore, because the interim benchmarks schools and districts were using were not new, how likely would it be for recent professional development on the interim benchmark currently being administered?

Emerging Challenges

- What challenges, if any, have the benchmark mandate, combined with the district response, created?

Methodology

In order to answer these questions, the research team at the Michigan Assessment Consortium designed a two-step study. The first step included a survey of the individuals who had access to the Tools for Teachers secure site at Data Recognition Corporation. This list was chosen since it contained the name and e-mail address of the individuals who had been given log-in privileges.

Survey Population

The survey population was determined by obtaining email addresses for educators who had account in the Tools for Teachers system. The information was provided by Data Recognition Corp (DRC), the organization that manages Tools for Teachers. We conducted a census rather than a survey sample. That is to say, we surveyed the entire population of educators who had a Tools for Teachers account (n = 138). A total of 45 educators responded to the questionnaire, which represents a 33% return rate. The respondents held diverse professional roles (see Table 1) the included teachers, site administrators, district administrators, and ISD administrators. We suspect that the return rate was not higher because many of the people in the survey population may not have actually accessed the Tools for Teachers site. Because of the link between Tools for Teachers and the Smarter Balanced interim assessments, it is likely that the total percentage of respondents whose school adopted the Smarter Balanced assessments would be much lower if the entire state were surveyed.

Table 1. Survey Respondent Professional Role Overview

Role	Percentage
Classroom Teacher	28.89%
Site Administrator	37.78%
District Administrator	17.78%
ISD Administrator	11.11%
Other	4.44%

Interviews

The second part of the study included interviews a subset of respondents to the survey. These individuals were selected if they were aware of the new interim benchmark requirement and they had accessed the Tools for Teachers Website. Of the seven educators we selected for interview, six participated. The interview subjects included a teacher, an instructional coach, an elementary school principal, two principals who also worked as curriculum directors at the district office, and one full-time curriculum director. Each of the six semi-structured interviews was transcribed in its entirety and coded using categories that aligned with our research questions.

Findings

The findings section is organized to reflect the research questions and therefore includes the following topics:

- Educator Awareness of Interim Assessment Mandate and Selection of Interim Benchmark Assessments
- Educator Use of Benchmark Assessment Results
- Tools for Teachers Use
- Professional Learning Opportunities
- Emerging Challenges

The beginning of each section includes the research questions to be answer in that section.

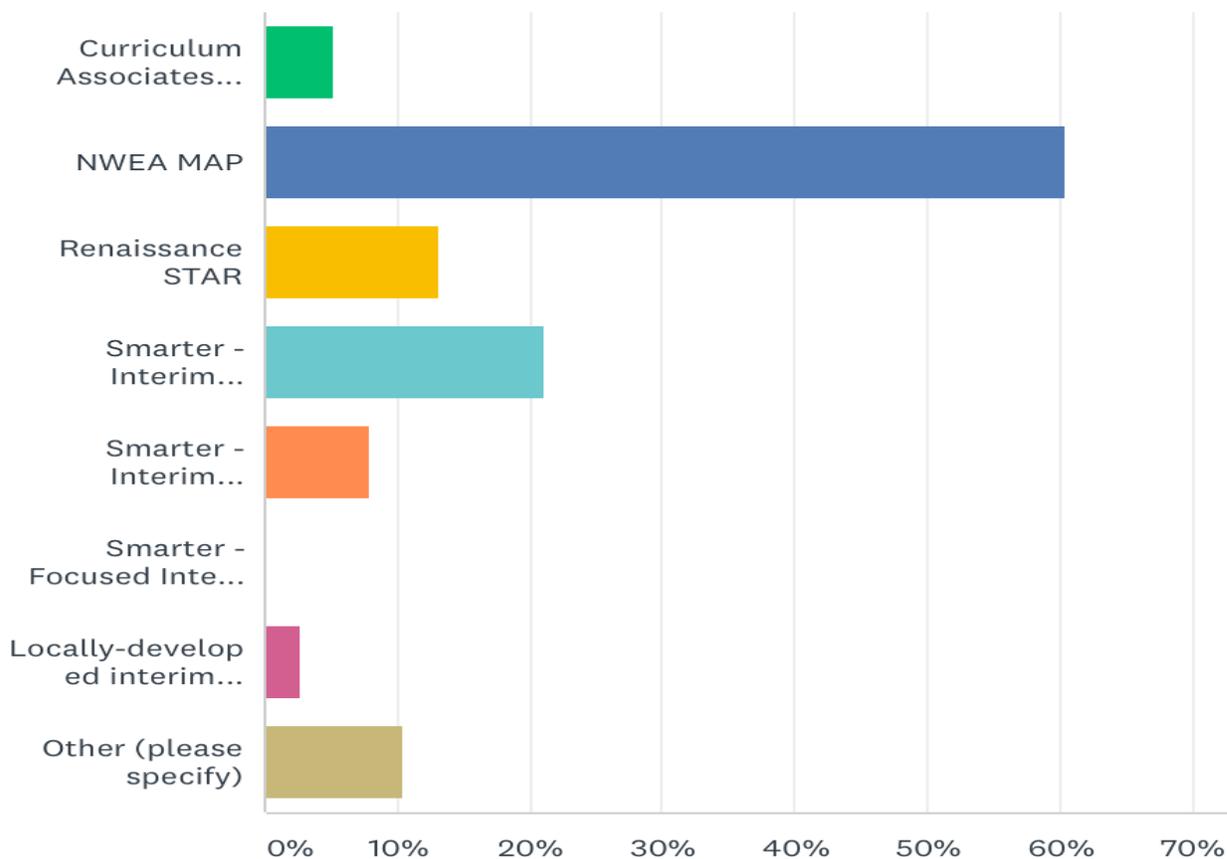
Educator Awareness of Interim Mandate and Selection of Interim Benchmark Assessments

Research questions answered in this section:

- How aware were educators about the new benchmark mandate?
- Which interim benchmark assessments were more commonly used to satisfy the mandate?
- What were educators' initial impressions of the new mandate?

The survey yielded several interesting findings about respondents' awareness of the interim benchmark mandate and the types of benchmarks districts had chosen. First, nearly all of the survey respondents (95%) were aware of the new interim benchmark assessment mandate. Furthermore, the large majority of the sample (84%) were familiar with the interim benchmark provider their district was using. Of the interim benchmark assessments, the NWEA MAP was by far the most popular. Slightly over 60% of the sample reported that their district was using the NWEA MAP. The Smarter Balanced interim assessment (provided to districts at no cost to districts), the second most common choice, was selected by just over 21% of districts in our sample. The other approved interim benchmark providers constituted only small minority of our sample. These providers included Renaissance STAR (13%) and Curriculum Associates iReady (5%) tests. Very few individuals indicated that their district had opted to develop their own interim benchmark assessment (3%). This information is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Overview of Interim Benchmarks Used to Satisfy the Mandate



Awareness of the new interim benchmark assessment mandate was coupled with experience using the interim benchmark assessments. Importantly, for all those educators interviewed, administering interim benchmark assessments was something their school was already doing and had been doing for some time. For instance, an instructional coach at a virtual high school with more than a decade of experience said “we’ve been doing [interim benchmarks] my entire career.” A district administrator and school principal in our sample said, “We have been an NWEA district...This is like maybe our third or fourth year, I think. So, we had already planned to give interim benchmark assessments three times a year. For us, that was just, like, a practice that was part of a balanced assessment system.” A principal from our sample added that when she heard about the new requirement she was “indifferent...assessing the kids within the first 90 days of the school year is something that you do, naturally, anyway just as best practice... It was something that we would use regardless of whether we had to do it for a report and turn it in or not.”

Thus, extensive experience administering interim benchmarks made the new requirement an established, unmarkable “business as usual” practice. This finding of familiarity also helps explain why only 21% of the survey respondents reported having used the SBAC interim assessments. Districts had pre-established contracts with providers (most commonly NWEA) that would satisfy the demands of the new mandate. Nevertheless, SBAC interims could be an attractive option for financially-strapped districts, as this quote from a district administrator explains:

Before the CARES money came through, we anticipated a massive budget cut being necessary this fall, which most districts did...Our superintendent being very proactive, started cutting the budget. And near the top on the list—NWEA. Right? We knew we

wouldn't get the assessment grant. We had heard the assessment grant would be cut, which it was, and he said, "It's \$10,000 dollars. It's got to go." So, we cut NWEA.

In sum, the educators in our sample were very aware of the new benchmark assessment mandate and they responded to this mandate with a level of indifference that can be explained by the fact that they had already been satisfying the mandate's demands through long-established routines and practices already in place. This also explains the infrequency of the adoption of Smarter Balanced interim assessments, as districts opted to stick with the familiar providers except in the case of significant fiscal concerns.

Educator Use of Benchmark Assessment Results

Research questions answered in this section:

- How did educators use the interim benchmark results?
- How useful did educators believe the interim benchmark results to be?

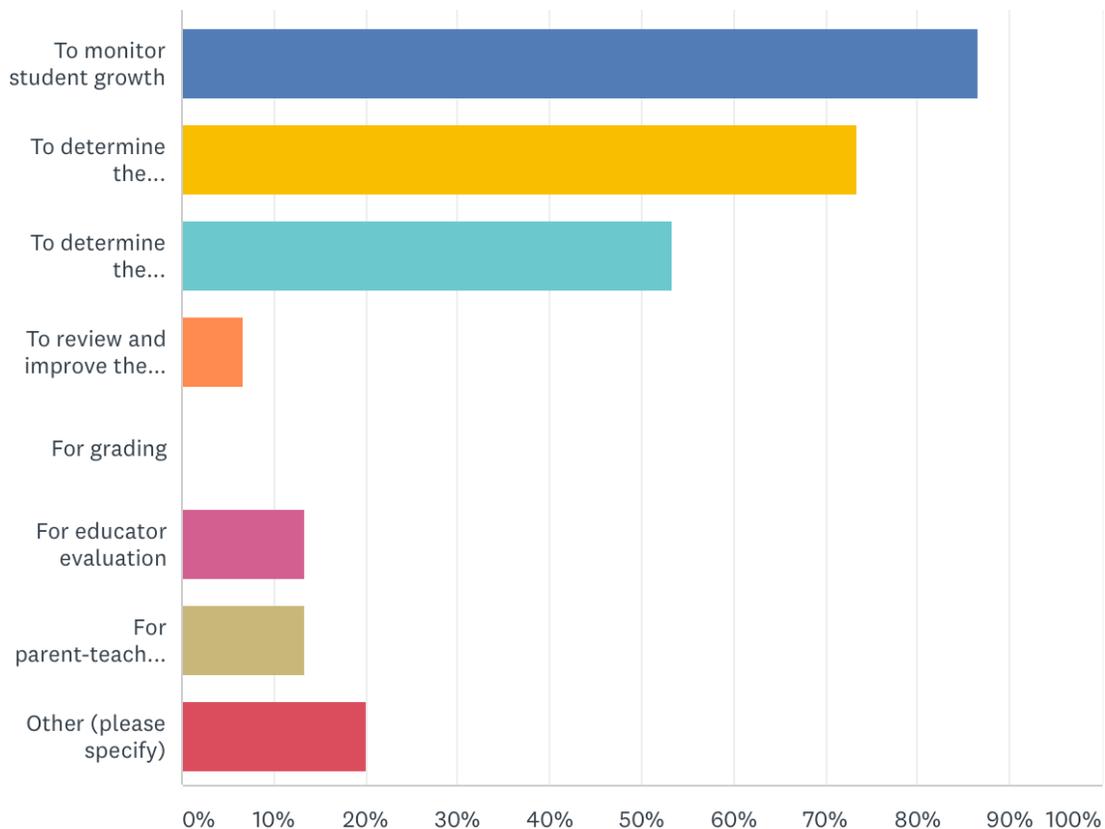
Next, we turn to educators' perceptions of the use of the interim benchmark results. Educators used interim benchmark assessment results for varied and multiple purposes. For instance, 87% of the survey sample indicated that they used results to monitor student growth. Seventy-three percent reported that they used results to meet the needs of individual students and 53% said that they used the results to make whole-class decisions (see Figure 2). However, there was considerable variation of use in schools. As one high school math teacher whose school was using the Renaissance STAR explained, teachers used results to varying degrees and they learned from one another over time:

"As a teacher, we can go into STAR and look at the results for just our students or just our homeroom students or individual students in our class, how they performed on individual standards. I personally haven't done that much with the data except to look at, overall in my class, what are the things that they struggle with the most? And what is the level, overall, of my students? Now, some teachers will look at that, and some teachers have. I just met with a different teacher at our school earlier this week and she showed me how she looks at their STAR, looks at the students who are most needing intervention, and she made custom assessments in STAR based on those standards that are focus standards that were listed as "needing intervention" for those students. And so, she made individual practice for students based on the report that STAR gave on their STAR tests."

She went on to explain that interim benchmark results can also be used to identify struggling students and design whole school interventions:

"We also are starting a math lab...and we just hired a math support teacher and he works with students who need intervention and one of the things that we base that need on is their STAR score. So, we looked at STAR scores and I think that was the first thing that we used to pull the list of students from. And then teachers verified, "Ok, STAR says this student needs, do we think this student really needs assistance or do we think that maybe they rushed through the test?" And then, he works with those students in small groups to provide them some extra assistance with math."

Table 2. Use of Interim Benchmark Assessment Results



Other uses, like educator evaluation and parent-teacher conferences were less popular (both 13%), but still noteworthy. Finally, a large majority of the sample believed that the interim benchmark assessment results were either useful (66%) or very useful (8%). Of the minority of the sample who felt the benchmark results were not useful, most indicated that this was due to uncertainty of whether the students took the assessment independently or received help from parents (more coverage of this topic is provided below).

Our interview sample included one administrator whose district had adopted the Smarter Balanced interim assessments as a cost-saving measure. As might be expected, the shift to Smarter Balanced after years with the NWEA had generated some frustration that often comes with a change in practice and the learning curve that comes with it. However, even this district administrator who was frustrated by the Smarter Balanced assessments at first began to see the value and utility of the assessments in helping teachers identify student learning needs. Her district had administered the lengthy Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) at the beginning of the year but later switched over the much shorter Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs). She explained:

“We might use those IABs because I think they're a nice benchmark. If I said to teachers, "When you give your test over fractions I'd also like you to give the IAB fractions assessments." Because, let's be honest. Teachers are many good things. They're not sophisticated psychometricians. Sometimes you need an assessment written by a third party to make sure you got "what do the kids know" versus "what did I tell the kids" or "how much do the kids remember that I told them?" Or "How much did they internalize what the textbook focuses on?" And that's a nice outside source and it's a reasonable exam. If we got to that point I think Tools for Teachers would be a great MTSS tool and

as we recover from this year, really strengthening the toolbox that we use in MTSS is going to be a priority.”

In sum, educators believed that interim benchmark assessment results were useful for a wide range of purposes. In one case, the switch to a new interim benchmark provider surfaced some additional learning needs, but, even so, the results soon became useful.

Tools for Teachers Use

This section addresses the following research questions:

Research questions answered in this section:

- What percentage of educators had accessed the Tools for Teachers website?
- What percentage of educators used Tools for Teachers website?
- How useful did educators believe the Tools for Teacher resources to be?
- How can the patterns of Tools for Teachers access, use and perceptions of quality be explained?

Just over half of our sample (51%) had accessed the *Tools for Teachers* (TfT) website at the time of the survey, but very few had actually used any of the resources. Of the 51% of respondents who had accessed the TfT website, only 17% reported using a TfT resource. Thus, less than 10% of the total sample (4 educators total) had both accessed the TfT website and used a resource they found there. Although small minority of the sample, respondents found these resources useful (75%) or very useful (25%).

It is remarkable that 50% of the sample had accessed TfT at any point. Finding out about the Tools for Teachers website was idiosyncratic. For instance, the instructional coach in our sample went to TfT after she received a request from a state administrator. One of the curriculum directors said she could not remember how she had heard of TfT, but believed that it may have come up in a webinar that she attended. She explained that during online meetings, “and I tend to as I'm listening, you know, check out whatever links are in the agenda and I don't know if it was through a MAC or webinar that I ended up there.” Other educators mentioned following up on TfT after hearing about it at a conference, or a conversation with a colleague.

Interviews with educators also help shed light on the survey findings of how TfT was mostly unused but at the same time potentially useful. First, while TfT use was low, this may be attributed to the website’s newness. For instance, a high school math teacher explained that that she had not “used [*Tools for Teachers*] much other than kind of exploring the website, seeing what kind of thing are on there” but she “did download some ideas that I could use, maybe, next year.” This suggests that use might lag behind exploration. Other evidence also suggests that educators first explored the website to get a sense of the resources that can be found there without a specific plan for how and when the resources might be used. In fact, educators who had spent time on the TfT website were enthusiastic about the potential, as one instructional coach explained:

“I logged on and I was like, “Oh my gosh! This is phenomenal.” So, I reached out to my principal and said, “This is a Christmas gift. This is it! This is going to solve all of our problems.” I got in and I searched around, it was a very good resource in itself. I think I

just got overwhelmed and then just didn't get back in. And it's difficult. I think the most difficult thing about Tools for Teachers is the idea that it's one more thing that I'm asking my teachers...it's a great resource. If I were to say, "Hey, guys. This is your resource. Use this exclusively to....if today you're teaching Y axis. Type it in Tools for Teachers and it will bring up the information you need." There's just so much in there."

This quote surfaces several interesting points that capture the sentiments of the other educators interviewed. First, educators believed that Tft contains many good resources that they might use or suggest to others. Second, educators may feel a bit overwhelmed by the sheer volume of resources and this may lead to them perusing the website without selecting any resources for immediate use. Third, as valuable as using Tft might be, it can also be "just one more thing" teachers are asked to do. The instructional coach quoted above went on to say, "I'm going to have sift through the materials and I can't feel good about throwing that at my teachers until I've played around with it." This instructional coach, like other non-teacher educators in our sample, assumed the role of vetting the resources for teachers to spare them the time and energy of having to do so themselves.

A district administrator shared a similar experience he had visiting Tft with an instructional coach with the purpose of culling resources for teachers:

"So, that was the idea and vision behind us going [to the Tft website] and our vision for using it moving forward. I think it's easy for me to say how flexible it is and how easy it is to plug and play. It's another thing to change the mindset of teachers that, "Oh, I can create this? I can find resources?" You know, sometimes they do. They go to Teachers Pay Teachers sometimes and they buy lessons and things like that. And I happen to be an open educational resource....somebody who believes in that. I think it's wonderful that I can find high-quality curriculum and it doesn't cost me six figures to be able to implement. So, there's an equity and access piece there with open educational resources like the things that are on Tools for Teachers where I can just go."

These quotes suggest that the educator who accesses the Tft website may not be the same as the educators who are putting the resources classroom use. One of the curriculum directors in our sample shared a similar experience that supports these points. When asked about her experience on the Tft website, she recalled:

"I remember thinking that I'd really like to dig into [Tft] more, take some more time with it. I have a curriculum and instructional coach staff meeting every Friday morning and so I also was considering "do I put the link into my agenda and we take some time to look at it together?" but then also realizing that we had a lot of other things that we've been digging into. So, trying to balance how much I share and, just, again, SOOO many resources out there. How do you decide which one is the one to devote your time with?"

Only one of the educators in our interview sample worked in a district that had adopted the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments. In theory, using SBAC should facilitate the use of Tft, as Smarter Balanced has provided a "Connections Playlist" that links student outcomes on SBAC assessments to relevant Tft resources. And yet, this administrator found the layout of Tft frustrating, although the following quote also suggests that this frustration may be diminishing over time with increased experience:

"We just started using [Tft]. I have a teacher who's working on this for me. A teacher leader. So, one of the things about Smarter Balanced is the instruction. The training is

not great and [the Tft website] is not intuitive. So we finally got, recently, about to the place where they were really looking at the Smarter reporting. And you've got to get there in order for the Tools for Teachers to really help you target what you need. Right? We had to get them using [the DRC website] and then get them to [Tft], and then say, "What I need is" and then you say, "Ok. Tools for teachers has that."

At the same time that Tft was both useful and under-used, it was also overwhelming and yet not comprehensive, as one principal lamented, "the Smarter Balance didn't have anything for the lower [elementary], so it was a really helpful tool for the 3-5, but they didn't have anything for the lower [elementary]. And so, when you want consistency, for them not to have examples at the lower grade levels, you know, that was frustrating, I guess. But, I was still pretty, pleasantly pleased with all that we got done and where we're headed. There's still lots of work to do."

All the of the interview sample educators expressed intentions of returning to the Tft website, although it was not a pressing intention likely to be satisfied immediately, as a principal in our sample made clear:

"I know we definitely will probably be going back to it at some point. Like I said, we started the proficiency standard so we've got to do some more with that. And I could see us using it because then our next step is to come up with the tests to assess the different standards. And they are some good examples. And they are some lesson plans and things like that. So, I could definitely see us going back and digging a little bit deeper into some of that. But I think, again, if I wanted my teachers to really use it and be successful with it, I would have to do some prep to take away the heavy lifting."

In sum, just over half of our survey sample had accessed the Tft and less than 10% had actually used a Tft resource. Educators found the Tft website through various and idiosyncratic means and most were not classroom teachers but rather educators who intended to make sense of the website and vet resources in order to lessen the burden on teachers.

Professional Learning Opportunities

This section answers the following two research questions:

Research questions answered in this section:

- What opportunities, if any, did educators have to learn about benchmark assessments and how might they be used to improve teaching and student learning outcomes?
- Furthermore, because the interim benchmarks schools and districts were using were not new, how likely would it be for recent professional development on the interim benchmark currently being administered?

The interview respondents did not report that their district provided any professional learning opportunities specific to the new interim benchmark mandate. However, this does not mean that they had *never* received training on the interim benchmark assessment their district was using or how to use benchmark results effectively. Because the benchmarks districts used

tended to be an extension of what they had used previously, professional learning opportunities had often occurred in prior years. As one math teacher and department chair explained, “We had some school-wide training on just how to navigate the STAR website and how to make use of the reports that are in there. We've had quite a bit of training, actually...we have been trained on how to use those reports, which reports give us what information, that kind of thing.” When asked if her schools had received any recent professional development opportunities, one curriculum director said, “No, we've had it in the past, because I think this is our tenth year with Renaissance [STAR] so the first couple years we had Renaissance training and then after that our administrators are pretty veteran, so we've been able to almost, like, everybody just knew what to do and just remind people of protocols.” She did add, however, that she had recently designed a training for teachers explaining how to administer the assessments in a virtual environment. An educator in our sample who was both a site principal and a district administrator had a similar experience. He explained, “we're in the second or third year [using NWEA]. There was a lot of PD frontloaded, to, ‘these are right reports to look at for these purposes. This is the learning continuum, how interpret where kids fall on the learning continuum, how to differentiate and design lessons based on what is in the continuum based on their RITS score’ all those things. A lot of that had already been done.”

Even when the benchmark assessment provider was new, as it was for one district administrator whose district adopted SBAC as a cost-saving measure, professional development was extremely limited. She reported that she had to learn on her own from the Smarter Balanced website and relay her findings to other administrators and teachers in her district. No formal or comprehensive opportunities to learn were provided.

Formal opportunities to learn about TtT were no better. However, as noted above, the educators in our interview sample were already involved in or on the cusp of learning about TtT and detailing the website’s utility for teachers. For example, one principal from our sample took great pains to connect the teachers in her school to the TtT resources. She explained, “I made a whole step-by-step PowerPoint how to get in and look at it and then we had a whole to-do list, like, ‘once you're here and you're looking at it, this is what you need to do next.’ They were pretty successful. We were really happy about the amount of progress they got done.”

Professional learning about interim benchmarks and TtT can be summarized by the phrase “already and not yet.” Any professional learning for the benchmark assessments had already occurred, as in all but one case the educators had been using the district-selected benchmark for several years. Learning about TtT had not occurred yet, but several of the educators in our interview sample expressed vague and tentative plans to facilitate greater teacher learning about and involvement with TtT in the future.

Emerging Challenges

This final section of the findings examines emerging challenges that surfaced during data collection and analysis. Specifically, we answer the following research question:

Research questions answered in this section:

- What challenges, if any, have the benchmark mandate, combined with the district response, created?

This section includes three primary challenges that emerged from our data: Potential for over testing and student motivation; uncertainty of student independence; and alignment with state content standards.

Potential of Over-testing and Student Motivation

Educators often wondered if students were being tested too frequently. Over-testing had two potential adverse consequences. First, educators believed that testing students too often would crowd out instruction. Second, over-testing might lead to student assessment fatigue that would lead to questionable results, as the following quote from a high school instructional coach makes clear:

“I feel like it could have the potential to render this data that could be so valuable to a school, but I feel like it gets muddled with the idea that I'm giving [students] a beginning of the year, middle of the year, end of the year test, plus they're taking MSTEP and PSAT or SAT. How many times can we test a kid until they're like, "I don't care"? So...what test are we going to say to a student is the most important?”

Furthermore, educators had limited control over student motivation. One educator said she discussed growth mindset with students and extolled the value of always doing your best. She added, “There are extrinsic consequences. I hate to use that term, so we have the ability to....what we do is we have participation points in their ELA and math courses where they get 10 points for simply taking it.”

Other educators were concerned with the amount of time required to complete the test. Of the only educator in our interview sample to be using the SBAC interim benchmarks contended the assessments were far too long:

“When you look at what the requirements are, it looks like you've got to take the ICAs [one of the three SBAC interim assessments] and so that's what we gave them in the fall, which is a test over the whole year...It has a performance task. It has an essay in English. It has three extended problems in math. It takes hours. And our kids who are online were online a whole day taking these assessments with a camera on them so that we knew they weren't cheating.”

By the middle of the year, however, as this district administrator learned more about the different types of SBAC interim benchmarks, she insisted that her district move away from the Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) and administer the Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) instead:

“[In the middle of the year] we gave the IABs. The IAB is 12 questions instead of 52. Twelve multiple choice questions, no project. And we gave them the base ten number system and asked them 12 questions and that was much better. It took them 45 minutes or something. Then the teachers were able to look at the data.”

Uncertainty of Student Independence

Motivation was not the only thing that threatened to undermine the validity of the results. Educators questioned if students who took the assessment remotely had help from a parent or another family member, thus inflating their score. As one curriculum directors who was concerned that parents were helping their early elementary school children said:

"I'm not even sure that the data, right, I think the other point is, is the data really that accurate? Do we really trust the data? After the fall, we gave NWEA, map growth reading to our K,1,2 kids, like we normally would except they were taking it at home. And we set up all these up all these protocols and procedures from NWEA about the best way to do that, right, and, look, I had more kids in kindergarten in the 99 percentile this fall than I've ever had in the combined years that we've been giving it fall, winter, spring. So, what does that tell you? That's moms and dads can read at a kindergarten level. I mean, I've got kids in the 99 percentiles. That's not accurate."

Alignment with State Content Standards

Other questions arose with how well the interim benchmarks aligned with either state content standards or the teachers' course of study. As one math teacher explained of the STAR assessments her school was using, "I know that it's adaptive...so every student is going to get questions from different levels...I can't look at standards for algebra 1 for every student because not every student has made their way up to algebra 1 standards." Even so, this teacher found the adaptive nature of the test informative and preferred results over what she would have received if every student completed the same, grade-specific assessment:

"[The adaptive assessment] gives me a better picture. Instead of just saying "Well, they Didn't meet the high school standard" this tells me, "Oh. But they did meet the 3rd grade and 7th grade and 8th grade standards"... They met these specific standards and I wouldn't get that much detail if it was one standardized test, if everybody was taking the same thing...I have students who are already a year behind or are taking [algebra 1] for the second or sometimes third time...So, that's really helpful for me that it's adaptive and gives me more than just 'they didn't meet high school standards.'"

When asked about the alignment between the interim benchmarks and teachers' course of study, one curriculum director said, "I guess I haven't asked that question. I don't have teachers indicating otherwise, but we also don't....that's not the purpose, I think, it's more is it like an MSTEP-type prediction, right? And are we able to predict what a student may be doing on MSTEP, which then predicts are they getting the learning or the type of experience that they should be getting out of our instruction."

Not having the test be computer-adaptive posed challenges, too. The district administrator whose district abandoned the NWEA assessments when budget shortfalls threatened, explained that her experience with the grade-level SBAC assessments had been frustrating. When comparing the NWEA to the SBAC, she explained:

"[With NWEA] if you're an 8th grader and you read at the first grade level, you're going to get a test pretty much at the first grade level. The Smarter Balanced assessment is a test over that grade's Common Core standards. So, when you give the 8th graders a Common Core, the SBAC in the fall, you're giving a test that takes about 6 hours to take over everything they're supposed to be taught in the coming year. When a kid has just spent 12 weeks at home and is worried about how school's going, the best thing we should do is probably not give them a test over something they've never been taught that takes them six hours. Right? I mean, that's just humiliating, but that's what it is."

Discussion/Implications/Recommendations

All told, the new mandate for schools to administer interim benchmark assessments in the first 90 days of instructions was not a disruptive requirement, nor did it seem to inspire schools to improve. Rather, the mandate settled easily into pre-established practices that supported a smooth implementation. In other words, the mandate was easily satisfied with what schools were already doing. In a word, then, the mandate can be summarized as *unremarkable*.

In this final section, we consider some of the trends we uncovered in the findings section to discuss recommendations that may enhance the impact of the benchmark assessment mandate, in general, and the use of Tools for Teachers, in particular.

Recommendation 1. Provide Professional Learning Opportunities for Educators

Educators had only meager opportunities recently to learn about interim benchmark exams and this lack of opportunity may lead to frustration and under use. For example, in the lone instance when an interview subject's district was using the Smarter Balanced assessments, she was given no training about which of the three Smarter Balanced assessments (ICAs, IABs, FIABs) to use. With her lack of experience and training, she selected the ICAs, the lengthiest and most comprehensive of the three. She left this experience feeling frustrated and exhausted and, as a consequence, she was encouraging her district to look at other assessment options. Providing more opportunities for professional learning could have lessened the challenges of adopting a new assessment and enhanced the use of student assessment data to contribute to overall school improvement. Thus, we recommend ongoing and sustained professional learning for all educators, particularly those in districts that have adopted a new interim benchmark that they will be implementing for the first time.

Recommendation 2. Establish a Clearer Link between Benchmarks and Tools for Teachers

Second, because educators had no clear and consistent path through which they could be connected to TtT, the resources on the TtT websites were rarely used. Even those educators who accessed the website (and these educators were in the minority) they most often left after a brief perusal without any concrete plans to put the resources to use. In conjunction with the first recommendation, educators should have the opportunity to learn about the Tools for Teachers resources, how they connect with benchmark assessment results, and how they can be used to improve teaching and learning. Without dedicated time to learn about, experiment with, and reflect upon TtT resources, these resources are likely to remain just another set of materials vying for teachers' attention in a crowded space of virtual resources (e.g., Teachers Pay Teachers, Pinterest).

Recommendation 3. Map Tools for Teachers with other Interim Benchmark Providers

Only a fraction of the survey respondents were in districts that had adopted the Smarter Balanced interim benchmarks. Nearly 80% of educators surveyed were working in districts that had adopted another assessment. Because of the way we constructed our interview census (see the methodology section) it is likely that the percentage of Smarter Balanced districts is inflated and overstates the popularity of Smarter Balanced interim assessment adoption. As such, Tools for Teachers may remain underutilized because the connection between TtT and Smarter Balanced (used by only a fraction of districts) does not exist for the other, more commonly used benchmarks. For instance, NWEA was the adopted benchmark for 60% of our panel, but the relationship between NWEA results and Tools for Teachers is unclear. Any efforts to construct a "crosswalk" between NWEA and Tools for Teachers and then to connect this crosswalk to educator opportunities to learn could improve the use of the Tools for Teachers website.

