

Ohio's Formative Assessment in Middle School Pilot Project Frequently Asked Questions

What is the objective of Ohio's Formative Assessment in Middle School (FAMS) pilot project?

The objective is to create a system of formative assessment practice in middle school mathematics and English language arts (ELA) aligned to the Common Core State Standards. This system serves two purposes: to improve teacher practice to think and act more formatively, allowing them to become more effective in their classroom instruction; and to encourage student practice of becoming more active participants in their own learning. By deepening their knowledge and developing their skills, students will be able to apply the skills effectively to academia and everyday life.

Why were the middle school grades chosen for this project?

As evidenced in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study reports and National Assessment of Educational Progress results, students in the middle school grades begin to falter in learning of the required content. Ohio Department of Education (ODE) leaders believe the use of formative assessment can reverse this trend and support students to learn and retain content at higher levels.

Who is eligible to participate in the Formative Assessment for Middle School pilot project?

Public or charter local educational agencies (LEAs) who are part of Ohio's Race to the Top efforts are eligible. FAMS will focus on the middle school grades as defined by Ohio Middle School licensure. The content areas in this pilot are mathematics and English language arts. LEAs may apply for the mathematics portion of the pilot, the ELA portion of the pilot or both mathematics and ELA portion. All participants must sign the assurances and participate in the pilot.

What is the composition of each cohort?

Up to six pilot sites will comprise each cohort. Each pilot site will consist of all school department members, including special education teachers, administrators, lead teachers, curriculum coordinators and any other support personnel working directly with teachers in that building. The pilot sites must represent the demographics of the students in the state of Ohio.

What is the timeline?

The FAMS pilot project spans two years for each cohort. Cohort 1 began in fall 2011 and ends in spring 2012. Cohorts 2 and 3 will begin in fall 2012 and end in spring 2014.

Is now the only opportunity to apply?

Yes, this is your last opportunity to apply for the FAMS pilot project with the RttT funding expiring in 2014. Applications are due at noon on March 30, 2012.

Is there financial support for FAMS participants?

Ohio has Race to the Top funds for this pilot. These funds are available for travel to meetings, substitute reimbursement, planning, implementation of the pilot, supplies and materials. Funds will be provided for each year of the pilot.

What other support will the state of Ohio provide for the participants in FAMS?

A coach will be assigned to each school to provide embedded professional development to support teachers in the development and implementation of the formative assessment process. ODE will provide the funding for the coach.

Can a coach working with a middle school apply to be the FAMS coach in that school?

Yes, the coach should coordinate efforts with that school, applying for the same content areas.

Can a coach employed by the school district apply to be a coach in that middle school?

Yes, the coach should coordinate efforts with their school. The coach within the school should apply for the specific content area(s) of the pilot that the school is applying for. This model will be important to study the sustainability of FAMS within the school and district after the pilot ends. Please note that funding for the coach goes to the school district towards the coach's salary, not in addition to the salary.

What professional development will support the FAMS pilot project?

ODE consultants and the Ohio Resource Center will provide professional development to help participants understand what Ohio's formative assessment process is, how to use this process effectively in the classroom, how teachers can develop their own methods for gathering student evidence, and how to develop and maintain a community of practice.

How many days will participants be away from their schools?

Professional development will be held twice in the fall and twice in the spring of each year for a total of eight full days of professional development during the pilot. These meetings will be held in central Ohio.

If formative assessment is so important, why isn't it included on school report cards?

Formative assessment is a valuable piece of a comprehensive assessment system. Formative assessments support instruction and learning in the classroom. Using the formative assessment process increases student learning which, in turn, improves summative assessment outcomes on which school report cards are based.