



*How do teachers know what their students actually learn and who is in need of additional support? How can students become more empowered in their own learning? How can digital tools support student learning? And does COVID-19 change the way we think about these questions?*

*This newsletter aims to engage organisations working on assessment, as well as teachers, school heads, policy makers and anyone else who is interested in an exchange around these questions.*

### 3 questions about learning and assessment Interview with former student Jan Peter van Irsel

Jan Peter recently graduated from the Augustinianum school in Eindhoven in the Netherlands. In the last newsletter issue Marc van Dongen and Florian Allaart, school head and teacher at that school already shared how they promote a positive feedback culture at their school.



#### 1 - Can you give some examples of how you learned with digital formative assessment?

In history classes, we had one or two lessons time to improve our graded tests once we got them back and could still slightly improve our grade if we corrected all our mistakes during that time. Some teachers also used digital tools to provide new ways of learning with videos and different assignments. Such a way of using digital tools was nice. When teachers used digital tools to check our knowledge, I felt this exercise was more helpful for them than for us.

#### 2- Did you like learning with formative assessment?

Before our school started to focus more on formative assessment, we had a lot of tests every week. After that we had three weeks of tests at the end of each learning period. For the rest of the time, we could just focus on our assignments and homework. This way I could learn better, and my results improved. However, it is important to take the time to explain formative assessment to students and to provide them with guidance on how to change their learning.

#### 3 - What is a good teacher according to you?

The lessons I liked the most were my philosophy classes because we had a very motivated teacher who was very passionate about the subject. During his lessons, we did not just sit to take in knowledge, but we were always invited to ask questions and to challenge ourselves and the teacher.

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Do you want to join us on our learning journey? This newsletter is published twice a year until February 2023.

## 3 questions about Assess@Learning project

### Interview with Anna Laghigna

Are you also a professional working on the topics of formative and digital assessment and would like to appear here? [Just let us know!](#)

#### 1. What obstacles are there for teachers in using digital formative assessment according to you?

In my experience as a language teacher and a teacher trainer, I often saw that digital formative assessment works best when it is integrated within learning scenarios. The best results are often achieved in schools that promote active learning methodologies such as collaborative learning, personalized learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning.

Of course, digital formative assessment can be applied also in more traditional ways of academic teaching, but to fully appreciate the potential of using technology in education, teachers need to shift from only teacher-led lessons to more student-centred approaches.

An issue that often makes it difficult for teachers to constantly use digital assessment tools can be related to unstable Wi-Fi connectivity in the classroom, which can delay students' capacity to answer. Another reason why teachers on the whole do not use digital tools and resources in the classroom is often due to the lack of adequate infrastructure. In some schools, BYOD and the use of students' smartphones is not allowed in the classroom. Also, teachers may be concerned with class management issues. In other cases, teachers feel demotivated and may not want to leave their comfort zone, especially if they feel that their efforts are not recognised.

#### 2. How can school leaders or other stakeholders support teachers in trying digital formative assessment?

Digital formative assessment can be a first step to bring about digital innovation in schools. It can be a good starting point especially for teachers who do not feel very confident with using technology in the classroom. It can be an easy way also to involve a greater number of teachers in school projects that aim at developing innovative, technology-enhanced approaches to teaching and learning.

School leaders and middle managers can create opportunities for all stakeholders involved in a school community to reflect together on the importance of fostering a participatory culture in which school is seen as a learning organisation and everyone, not only students, continue to learn and grow together.

It is therefore crucial that school leaders are involved in the coordination of school improvement projects and, even if only tacit, that they contribute to create a supportive atmosphere, so that everybody can actively participate in innovative projects and feel a sense of belonging to a community. Also, school heads should motivate the teachers involved in school improvement projects and in training programmes. They can validate the time spent, provide incentives, and help spread innovation to all parts of the school.



Anna Laghigna has been a member of European Schoolnet Academy teacher trainers since 2016 and has moderated several EUN MOOCs. She is a co-author of the Assess@Learning toolkit and currently supports the MenSI project as pedagogical in-house consultant. She also served as language teacher in Italy for 20 years and is an experienced teacher trainer in the areas of active learning methodologies.

### 3. What kind of trainings do teachers need the most for digital formative assessment?

Nowadays, there are great opportunities for continuous professional development both online and face-to-face that can help teachers improve their skills in using ICT pedagogically. There are MOOCs, courses, workshops, webinars, learning snacks and video tutorials on YouTube and educational websites where teachers can easily learn how to use digital assessment tools.

In my opinion, teachers need first to see how digital assessment can be integrated within whole learning scenarios. This is easier to do through peer learning within teachers' communities of practice that can promote the transferring of innovative, technology-enhanced teaching and learning practices beyond a single school community.

Teacher training should focus on showing how to exploit the full potential of digital technologies and content for teaching and learning and empower teachers by providing models and examples that are easy to follow and implement in their own classrooms.

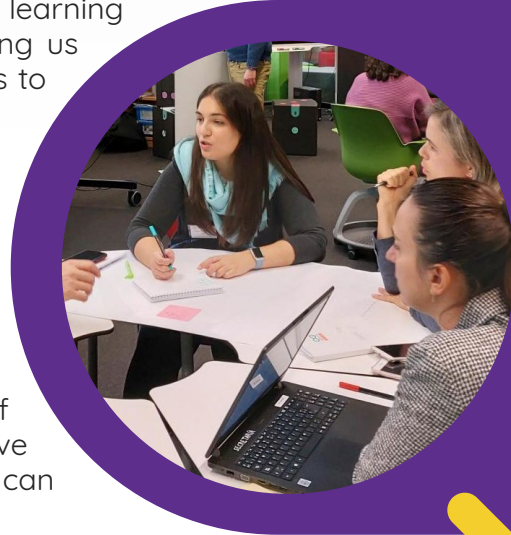
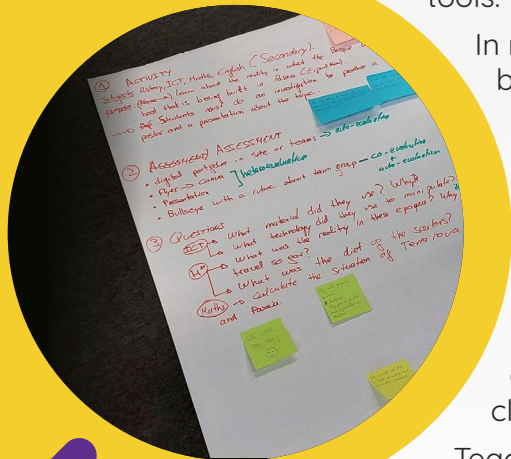
Teachmeets and regional hubs are a great way for teachers to get together, learn from each other and share best practice.

### 4. As a regular user of digital tools and formative assessment in your practice, how can digital formative assessment empower students in their learning? Can you tell us a story from your classroom?

It is often said that formative assessment is assessment for learning. It must be informative and guide students with instant feedback to move learning forward. For us teachers, it is like having a GPS in class - telling us where students are along their learning process and allowing us to adapt teaching to their learning needs.

I believe digital formative assessment makes it easier for teachers to provide personalised feedback to their students. It also contributes to making the whole learning process motivating for students as they are constantly challenged in their learning through a series of formative tasks that generate immediate feedback and encourage them to revisit their answers and correct possible misconceptions. This approach can help students become more engaged and responsible for their learning: if students are constantly stimulated to reflect on what they have learnt and the strategies they have applied in their learning, this can help them develop their own learning agency.

I have used technology in my classroom mainly to support my students, especially those that were struggling with learning. I started using simple quizzes and eduapps to facilitate learning for students with disabilities. I then extended the practice to engage all students in the classroom in self-regulated activities.



I had the best results when I could embed all the resources that students needed to learn in a complete learning scenario. I used digital tools that allowed integrating text, videos, images in the formative assessment, so that my students could do the tasks at their own pace. This option can facilitate students' learning as it encourages self-regulation and personal responsibility through self-assessment. Students can always feel the teachers' presence and guidance behind: while the students are performing the assignment, the teacher can monitor what students are doing in real-time and can provide scaffolding if necessary.

The instant feedback feature that is often embedded in digital tools allowed me to make instant teaching adjustments in order to help weak students while they were doing the activity. This helped me to get more classroom time to guide and facilitate learning. The results were excellent: students were more motivated and enjoyed learning at their own pace. Moreover, they could develop digital skills and become more independent in their learning.

## What's next?

### The release of the Toolkit and the project results

In February we will publish the Digital Formative Assessment Toolkit, which will be accessible through our website. The toolkit is an open educational resource. You can download it from our website in five languages, put it on your own website and adapt it to your own needs!

We will also release the results of our policy experimentation on this toolkit. The final reports will be available at our project outcomes page.

We will present the results and engage in discussions about DFA at our final webinar series on the 6th, 8th and 10th of February. More information will be available soon!

## Digital formative assessment in Estonia

Estonian national education strategies highly value formative assessment. Both formative assessment and digital competences are included in the national curricula, not as targets to meet but as guidelines to highlight best practices. The curriculum emphasises that educators shall provide students with feedback throughout the school day to support the formation of the students' behaviour, attitudes, and values. Non-graded assessment is nowadays also a widely used practice especially for subjects such as arts, music, and physical education.

Schools in Estonia are generally run by the municipal government but have wide autonomy from both the central and the municipal government. Schools can design their own school curriculum based on the state curriculum. Schools widely use digital management platforms (e.g eSchool, Studium) that support formative assessment.

In January 2022, the Ministry of Education hired three educational psychologists to provide evidence-based input on learning motivation for future education laws. There is currently a very open discussion about the role of assessment and feedback in the learning process.

For example, since the Covid-19 pandemic, final exams are not tied to graduation. There is currently a governmental proposal on the table to continue in this way, which has generated a lot of discussions around assessment in nation-wide media. Final exams currently use points that are then converted to grade. However, this system is debated because it does not reflect the learning of students well. Hence, a proposal to use a percentage-based system is currently being discussed.

Estonia is working on a nation-wide digital infrastructure and a single sign-on system to facilitate an efficient and safe use of data for administration and digital personalised learning and working on a digital marketplace ecosystem for EdTech providers.

## About our newsletter

We aim to provide you with new evidence on student learning and assessment with digital tools in an easy and engaging way. We warmly invite all newsletter readers to **contribute with their own views and questions to the newsletter** – it does not matter if you are an expert or novice to the topic!

Does this sound ambitious to you? Do you have a particular question that you would like us to address? Provide us with your [anonymous feedback](#) on our newsletter and let us know what you still would like to improve.



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