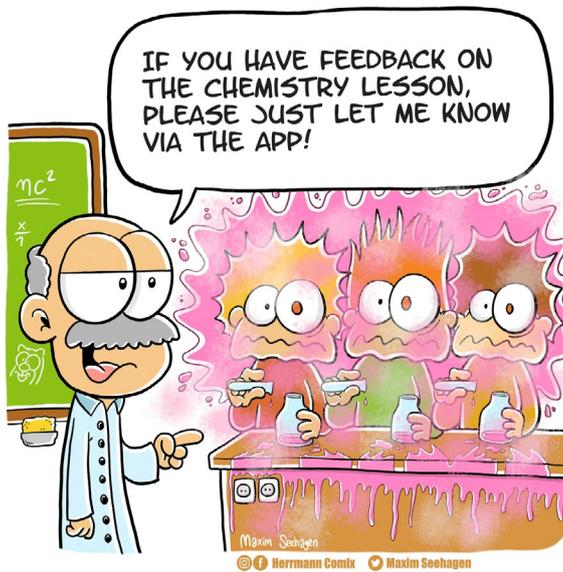


Assess@Learning newsletter

Empower students with *digital formative assessment*

- 3rd Issue - October 2021 -



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.

Share your views with us!

What is learning – and assessment – for you in one word? Watch two very short – and fun- videos to see what [learning](#) and [assessment](#) are for different stakeholders. What would you answer? [Let us know](#). We will share some of your answers in the next issues.

Subscribe to our newsletter

Do you want to join us on our learning journey? [Just subscribe!](#) This newsletter is published twice a year until February 2023.

Formative assessment will remain key beyond distance learning due to COVID-19

Schools put more emphasis on formative assessment and the learning process during distance and blended learning, according to the [European Schoolnet report on the impact of COVID-19 on schools](#).

Formative assessment will remain key in the coming months to identify students' learning gaps due to lockdown periods, emphasized Marco Montanari, European Commission, Joint Research Centre in this report. He is co-author of the report [JRC Science for Policy Report. What did we learn from schooling practices during the COVID-19 lockdown? Insights from five EU countries](#).

For Sarah Howard, University of Wollongong, Australia, knowing what learning journey students are on is more important than ever. For her, one big issue is that many teachers are not able or comfortable to use formative assessment in the right way. Teachers need good practice examples and formative assessment needs to become part of a wider vision of how education should look like in the future. Sarah Howard is co-author of the report [One-size does not fit all: Towards an adaptive model to develop preservice teachers' digital competencies](#).

How does the future of assessment look like beyond COVID-19? We want to explore this question together with you continuously! Would you like to share your experience and views on the topic with us? [Let us know!](#)

How to promote a positive feedback culture at school?

Marc van Dongen, school head and **Florian Allaart**, teacher and team leader at [Augustinianum](#), a school for secondary education in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, explained to us how they promote a positive feedback culture at their school. The students' learning process *"should really become theirs, not ours"*, they explained. Then students will feel more responsible for their own development. A feedback culture should be developed not only with students but also in school leadership and with everyone who works at the school.



"If we as school leaders do not act accordingly, we will eventually not be taken seriously by our teachers and students. As school leaders we have to practice what we preach", stressed Marc van Dongen. But how can school heads make feedback really part of their school culture? For their lessons teachers can receive training on how to give feedback and on how to give more responsibility and choices to students. That is in fact the 'easy' part, which can be learned

or developed. But to really move forward, school heads need to invite teachers to receive feedback from each other and their students. School heads also need to invite teachers to provide feedback on their own leadership and to listen and really do something with it.

So where can school heads start to bring about change at their school? The school management at Augustinianum first set a certain goal and when they want to reach it. Then they go to a group of teachers and ask them to come up with a plan on how to reach this goal. School management will only provide or give more concrete ideas if teachers struggle to come up with their own ideas. *"In our school and in the Netherlands, we do not like to tell teachers what to do. When they take ownership of (processes of) change, they will be more enthusiastic and effective"*, Marc van Dongen concluded.



Country focus – digital formative assessment in Finland

The [2014 core curriculum](#) introduced paradigmatic changes, namely phenomenal learning (or inquiry learning), transversal skills and new assessment practices. It was first implemented at elementary grades 1-4, and in 2019 finally also at 9th grade. To adapt the core curriculum to local needs, municipalities and other education providers, together with teachers, prepared their local versions.

In 2020, a renewed assessment chapter introduced several [national guidelines](#). In January 2021, renewed assessment criteria for basic education were added. The main purpose of this new chapter was to make a clear distinction between formative and summative assessment. Its previous version did not describe assessment clearly enough, which led to local differences in its implementation.

In the 2020 renewed assessment chapter, formative assessment is defined as assessment that supports and guides learning regarding the learning objectives. It helps students to understand their own learning, identify their strengths and weaknesses and improve their work to achieve the objectives set for the subjects. The chapter states that formative assessment should be part of daily teaching.

The 2020 updated assessment chapter was well received by teachers and practitioners. The updated version made clear that teachers are not expected to archive material from formative assessment, which would be time consuming.

3 questions about learning and assessment

Interview with Eszter Salamon

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. How can parents best support their children's learning?

The most important thing for parents to understand is that learning is happening all the time everywhere. The best thing a parent can do is to celebrate all learning, not only school grades. They need to allow their children to fail and re-try. Doing things for them is not supporting learning. If a parent can also provide a role model showing that they are also learning all the time, it will be an example and help children become lifelong learners – a necessity today. At the same time, it is important for all parents to understand that they are educators, supporting the learning of children, but they need to create a clear division in what learning school is facilitating and what learning is supported by them. It is important for all parents to understand that they support their children's learning regardless of their level of education. Their role is not in supporting schooling.

2. How has COVID-19 changed the role of parents in student learning, and which of these changes would you like to stay?

More parents have become more aware of the educator role they have and how it is different from the role of teachers. Far more parents are aware that today's school is broken, curricula and methodologies need to be renewed. They also have a deeper understanding of how methods different from the ones used in their own schooling can be more effective. Our research clearly shows that parents want to be as much involved in the learning process as during school closures, want to be part of creating the new school, but they definitely do not want to do the job they pay teachers for as taxpayers (and also as fee-payers).

3. How can policy makers and/or schools better support parents?

The delivery of governments' obligation to support parents in their duty to educate their children (as defined by Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) should be based on needs assessment, not assumptions or political goals. It should lead to more flexible and diverse provisions. Governments should also formally acknowledge parenting as a contribution to society e.g., by offering flexible work conditions and extra paid leave for parents. Schools should be strongly motivated and also formally obliged to engage parents in school leadership, all aspects of school life – hand-in-hand with ensuring student participation – and should be empowered to do so by training, coaching, mentoring, etc. At the same time, there is a need to have provisions for parents' empowerment by parents' organisations and other NGO's.



Eszter Salamon is the Director of [Parents International](#).

Stichting IPA (Parents International) is established with the mission of supporting parents around the world to become game-changers by helping their children to grow up happy and healthy 21st century citizens.

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.

In our next issue, we will:

- look at **how to include students and parents** in a schools' feedback culture
- **hear from Jan Peter van Irsel**, a previous student of the Augustinianum school in the Netherlands about his views on learning and assessment
- put our **country focus on Portugal**

About the Assess@Learning project

Do you want to find out more about the project? Check out our [website](#).



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