



CASE STUDY

Balancing Student and Teacher Needs

for Horizon School Division

Horizon School Division in Saskatchewan faces the same challenges as many districts: A diverse population that requires tremendous differentiation, the need to move toward more outcome-based reports, and assessing students and implementing various practices more efficiently.

When Sharon Skretting, Assessment Coach for Horizon, talks about teaching and learning, she formulates her thoughts as someone with experience at every level—between 22 years teaching in the classroom and a principalship next year, Sharon knows how to coach teachers on critical topics such as increasing assessment performance while also providing nuanced wisdom gained along the journey.

“Our schools are disparate; it’s always a challenge to balance teacher needs and student needs,” Sharon explains. “Students need differentiation, but it’s hard on teachers to do this—it’s time-consuming to plan three different levels of a lesson, for example. The more we have to adapt, the heavier the workload becomes.”

Tipping the Scales Toward Efficiency

A teacher introduced Sharon to Formative, who started envisioning what could be: Making teachers’ lives easier with various features that save time, strengthen assessments, enable feedback, and add clarity; and also helping students “own” their learning, get the necessary support, and know immediately how well they’re doing.

**HORIZON
FACTS**

3,500+
students

27
schools

substantial
ESL
population



What Horizon's teachers have to say:

- "Amazing ability for students to retake assessments and get real-time information and class exemplars"
- "It's even better that it's linked to outcomes"
- "Making resources that are flexible with built-in auditory and verbal options—it's all very good"
- "Great that I can grade in real-time; I will also be using it for lesson creation"
- "Overall, I have better engagement and greater independence"
- "I can record all my examples to help my English language learners and others. The tracker simplifies outcome-based assessment"

"Formative has so many features, it's like, 'Here's how to make it easier on yourselves,'" Sharon says. "We use it not just to upload tests and such—not just entry-level—but rather to mark more efficiently, give immediate feedback, see who's having problems right away, and grade in real-time, seeing all results on one screen. We're challenging teachers to use Formative in deeper ways, moving beyond just assessing to lesson planning—almost like a flipped classroom. The possibilities are exciting."

Of particular interest to Sharon is Formative's ability to help teachers provide differentiation effortlessly. For example, Horizon has a large Mennonite population, for which English is a second language. Formative's audio option offers a way to include these children without drawing attention to differences, and the kids agree they're learning faster because of these unique tools. One school's grade 5-6 English as a Second Language students have shown such a significant improvement since using Formative that many who were below grade level and had specific learning goals are now achieving at grade level.

"We always ask, 'How can we get kids the reading support they need?' Formative's built-in audio feature allows immediate differentiation in the classroom, as well as affording student-drawn answers and a variety of ways to get to learning in non-threatening ways," Sharon reports. "These inclusive features are one of the biggest reasons to recommend, in my mind."

Built-in
differentiation
capabilities

Outcome-based,
tagged reports



Variety of
assessment
practices

Seeing Steady Improvements

To help teachers 'do more with less,' teachers can ask students interview questions, which they then can answer in audio. This saves tremendous time versus asking each student individually to come to the front of the class and answer questions verbally. And teachers are finding success where there had been a struggle: One of Sharon's super-users reported that she had two students who were failing every test. However, since starting to give them their assessments via Formative, they have passed all their tests, and their parents have requested that future tests be conducted that way.

"Plus, outcomes can be tagged and sorted, which is a game-changer in terms of assessment. One user reported that she knows when she's hitting those curriculum outcomes because of the tags. And, the ability to create exemplars—showing what a high-level, comprehensive answer should look like while hiding individual names—is key," Sharon says. "I've also been able to talk with Formative about ideas for all-in-one solutions (report cards and parent reports, for example), and appreciate how the company is listening to us and making changes that accommodate teachers to keep teaching well."

Are you looking for ways to balance teacher and student needs? [Find out how Formative can help.](#)



Formative loves the teacher, and it loves the learner. It saves teachers time so they can use it better elsewhere. I love that it balances both worlds."

Sharon Skretting
Assessment Coach
for Horizon School Division