

# How JS Morton empowered teachers with authentic common assessments and real-time results

## DISTRICT PROFILE

### District

JS MORTON HIGH SCHOOL  
DISTRICT 201

### Location

CICERO, IL

### Student Population

8,000

### Classroom Use Case

COMMON ASSESSMENT

## THE CHALLENGE

**A suburban high school district aims to bring authentic, standards-aligned common assessments to students.**

The community of educators at JS Morton High School District 201 in Illinois is a highly engaged group. They offer a rich variety of classes to students, with an emphasis on opportunities for both college and career preparedness. And with a student population of over 70% current and former English learners (EL), inclusive and accessible teaching strategies play a significant role in daily instruction.

Director of Innovation and Accountability, Samantha Skubal, focuses on helping teachers incorporate technology and data to drive positive learning outcomes. The district prioritizes common assessments to ensure all students are progressing throughout the year, and give teachers actionable data to make informed instructional decisions.



But the common assessment program the district had been using felt antiquated and unhelpful. Students were confined to rigid assessments with one-size-fits-all question types and feedback tools. Teachers were looking for a flexible, engaging platform that enabled them to assess students through more inclusive methods that would meet those students—who come with a variety of learning needs and preferences—where they are. When educators asked repeatedly for Formative as a replacement for their current assessment platform, Ms. Skubal couldn't ignore their enthusiasm.

## THE PLAN

### Equip teachers with a tool to empower students with multiple ways to show their knowledge.

To ensure widespread support, Ms. Skubal and her team piloted Formative with a multi-disciplinary group of educators. Professional learning teams met weekly to design and share common formative and summative assessments. They built a shared library for teachers, with a variety of question types to ensure students had many ways to demonstrate their understanding.

Each week, teams reviewed performance across the district, broken down by building, department, and classroom. They used this data to inform their instructional priorities for the coming weeks.



In daily instruction, teachers used Formative throughout their units to check for understanding. With the platform's real-time data, they could see the gaps in students' knowledge and adjust lessons accordingly. At the end of units, teachers leveraged the district's shared library to administer common summative assessments and see how all students across the district were progressing on state standards.

## THE IMPACT

### Teachers use assessments that meet students where they are with real-time insights to create more effective learning experiences.

At the end of the yearlong pilot, teachers voted unanimously to adopt Formative districtwide. They loved the ability to watch students' responses populate as they answered each question, and be able to adjust their teaching in the moment.

"Teachers can now gather data, add rubrics, and see those insights immediately," shared Ms. Skubal.



"Having a tool that allows us to use audio in an assessment has been life-changing, especially for our English learners and Modern Language students. We used to try to smash apps together to do this, so the fact that it can now be in one spot is really nice."

**Samantha Skubal**

DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION  
AND ACCOUNTABILITY

At the department level, educators now have a way to collaborate on instructional strategies and assessments and work towards shared goals. They can see how their assessments align to standards easily, in addition to seeing how students are performing on standards throughout the school year. This makes it easier for admins and teachers alike to build and adjust their instructional strategies, learn from each others' success, and share best practices.

At the individual level, teachers raved about the breadth of activity options available. It enabled them to build assessments that meet students where they are and show what they know through more accessible formats. "Having a tool that allows us to use audio in an assessment has been life-changing, especially for our EL and Modern Language students," said Ms. Skubal. "We used to try to smash apps together to do this, so the fact that it can now be in one spot is really nice."



Giving teachers a flexible way to administer common assessment is a step towards more equitable learning for all students. And with real-time insights, both teachers and admins are empowered to make a greater impact on student outcomes.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

- Foster inclusive learning with a **flexible tool for common assessments** that empowers students to **show knowledge in a variety of ways**.
- Leverage **real-time insights on standards performance** to adjust instructional strategies in the moment, in classrooms and district-wide.
- Engage teachers from each department to **build teacher buy-in and foster collaboration** in improving instruction, and do it at the beginning of implementation.