

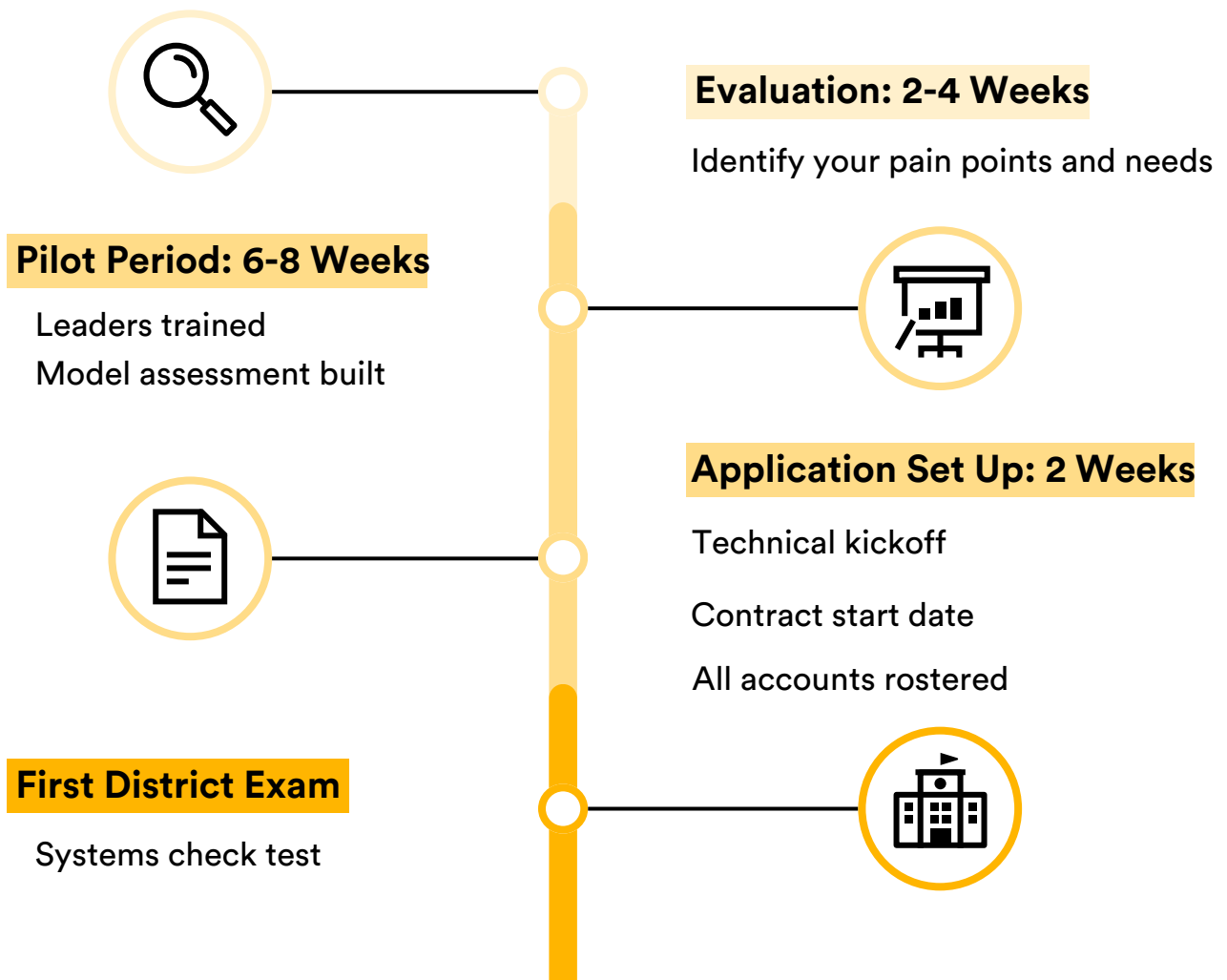
How are districts like yours transforming their assessment framework?

Classroom and district assessments often exist in two different worlds, each speaking to a part of the story but missing the opportunity to work together. Districts are finding that their traditional assessment platforms fall short, providing isolated data that fails to create transparency across assessment types and collaboration between departments.

Many are reevaluating their current tools, resources, and planning processes to implement a fully **balanced assessment framework** that intentionally uses different assessment types—formative, interim, and summative—at different times and frequencies to collect data that **informs collaborative teaching, learning, and decision-making**.

We know this transformation can seem daunting, but it's worth it. **That's why we've created this planning guide to show you how districts like yours have started their transition to balanced assessment with [Formative by Newsela](#).**

Balanced Assessment Implementation Timeline



Phase 1: Evaluation

We're an active partner throughout your district's vendor evaluation process.

Identify stakeholder pain points in your district

Districts we work with share these common difficulties when it comes to their current assessment platforms. Which challenges resonate most with you?

Ease of Use: Teachers find the platform difficult to navigate and assessment creation cumbersome, leading to frustration.

Lack of Flexibility: Limited question types and modalities fail to adapt to the diverse needs of educators.

Less Variety of Assessment Types: The platform only supports periodic assessments and fails to support the full range of assessment types needed for a complete picture of student learning.

Inability to Collaborate: Teachers and administrators lack the ability to share assessments across departments and schools, while planning and designing assessments.

Strategic Misalignment: The platform fails to support district goals, such as implementing a balanced assessment framework, common assessment strategy, or collaborative PLC planning.

Declining Engagement: Year-over-year decrease in usage and enthusiasm as the platform fails to meet evolving needs.

Adoption of Alternatives: Teachers independently turn to other tools for classroom assessments, highlighting dissatisfaction and unmet expectations.

Outdated Item Banks: Continued use of outdated items because no better alternatives are available.

Review your district’s assessment strategy with the Newsela team

We’ll schedule a Solution Mapping call to review your district’s assessment strategy and demonstrate its alignment with Formative’s capabilities. Here’s a sample customer template you can use to help you define your district’s evaluation criteria:

Sample Assessment Platform Evaluation Template:

District’s Evaluation Criteria	How Formative Supports	Does your current platform meet your needs? Take notes below. 
Access to standards-aligned item banks and pre-made assessments in core subject areas: ELA, Social Studies, Math, Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Item Bank (Info + How to) • Grab & Edit Pre-Made Activities from Our Library 	
Ability to share assessments across PLC and District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration in Formative • Setting up Teams 	
User-friendly and easy for educators to get up and running with the platform quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to quickly and easily create activities 	
Reports for teachers, PLCs, and districts, with the ability for district leaders to drill down to individual classrooms and student performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing Data in Formative 	
Integration with Student Information System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up Integrations 	

District's Evaluation Criteria	How Formative Supports	Does your current platform meet your needs? Take notes below. 
Assessments with a variety of question and content types that support different learning styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to build an activity (with breakdown of item types) 	
Ability to upload an entire assessment via PDF or Google Slides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to quickly and easily create activities • Formative Item Bank (Info + How to) • Document Scrubber/Upload 	
Ability to author assessment items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to quickly and easily create activities • Formative Item Bank (Info + How to) 	
Ability to include speaking items for World Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to quickly and easily create activities • Tips for World Language Teachers 	
Easy to use secure testing browser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondus LockDown Browser 	
Ability to shuffle questions on an online assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Assessment Settings include randomized question order 	
Ability to control when and how students view results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Assessment Settings include results and feedback display 	
Ability to print assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printing Assessments 	

Phase 2: Preparing for Your Assessment Transformation

Pilot Period: Winter (January-March)

To prepare to implement Formative for Fall testing, we recommend piloting with your key stakeholders and assessment leads in the Winter before the start of the next school year. **By the end of your pilot period, your team will have built your first common assessment with the support of Newsela's onboarding team in Formative.**

Take these 5 steps to set up a successful Formative pilot:

- 1. Engage stakeholders:** Identify champions (TOSAs, PLCs, content area leaders) and align on pilot goals, such as end-of-course exam design and daily data use.
- 2. Develop your Formative Year 1 Plan:** We'll work with you to craft a Formative Year 1 plan that includes a district rollout plan, aligned with your assessment goals for the year.
- 3. Set up pilot environment:** Before starting your full district implementation, create a pilot cohort to train and upskill TOSAs and content leads to familiarize themselves with Formative.
- 4. Build our first assessment:** Start building your first district-wide common assessment. We recommend building a common assessment or end-of-unit exam by creating custom item banks, selecting and tagging your items with your district's standards, and modeling collaborative assessment design with your pilot group cohort.
- 5. Monitor and refine:** Review the Formative Tracker with your Customer Success Manager to understand how to leverage assessment data. Collect pilot feedback and use insights from your pilot to prepare for FAQs that will come up during district-wide rollout.

Phase 3: Launch District-wide Rollout & First Administration

Technical set up: Spring (April/May)

Technical kickoff call: We'll schedule a call with your Tech Team before your contract starts to define requirements, create a project plan, and recommend integrations like Clever for rostering.

Configuration and setup: Configure Formative to align with the district's LMS/SIS, organizational structure, and sub-departments; LMS integration (Clever recommended) can be completed in less than 2 weeks.

Testing and device management: Prepare for large-scale testing by whitelisting IPs and managing LockDown Browser installations for BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) programs, allowing ample time for setup.

District-wide rollout: Summer (July)

Enable district-wide rostering.

Collaborate with your Formative Onboarding Specialist to create a user guide specific to your district's use cases to support teacher adoption.

Schedule Formative training through PLCs, or virtual district-wide PD.

Systems check test: 1 month before administering first assessment

Create a test assessment (up to 3 questions) to administer district-wide, ensuring a smooth transition before deployment of the first district-wide administration.

Distribute the assessment "share link" to all teachers who will be administering your assessments for your systems check test.

Have all teachers assign the system check test and collect student responses.

Administer your first assessment, with three easy steps:

Finalize your assessment for administration.

Distribute the "share link" for the assessment to all teachers.

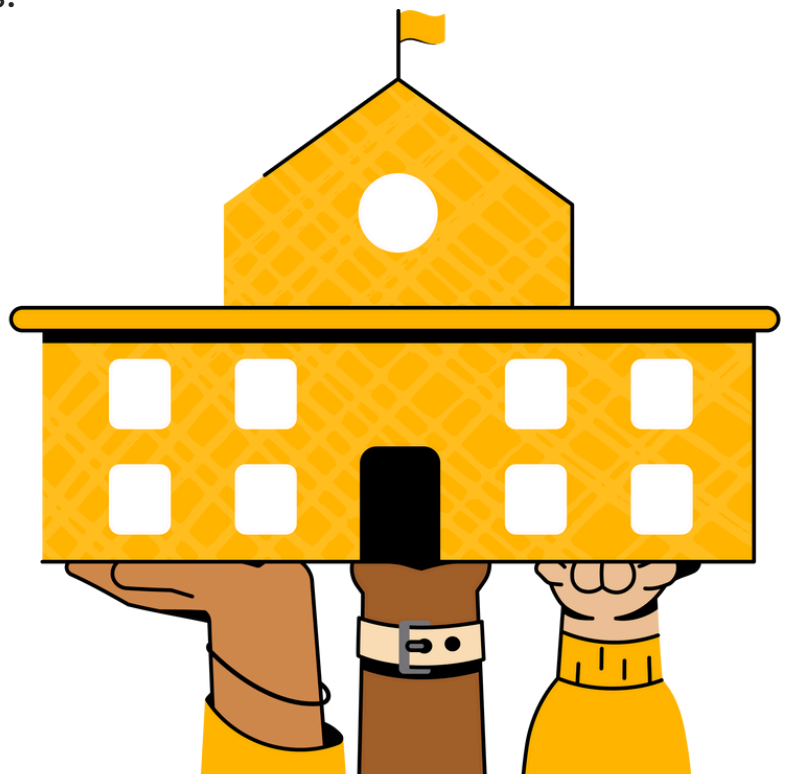
Teachers assign the assessment to their classes and begin to collect responses.

Phase 4: Turn Balanced Assessment into Daily Practice Throughout the School Year

At this stage, you are up and running with Formative, having deployed your first district-wide common assessment. With Formative, teachers can also bring a formative assessment strategy into their daily instructional practice.

To help ensure that Formative becomes an essential district-wide solution, be sure to:

1. Spotlight power users by sharing best practices during continued PLC collaboration to optimize district-wide, department-wide, and classroom-level assessments.
2. Regularly review assessment data with your content and assessment leads.
3. Explore additional use cases in Formative, such as lesson delivery, video instruction, and independent student practice, to help you consolidate your district's other supplemental tools.
4. Join monthly meetings with your Customer Success Manager to troubleshoot any issues, explore additional use cases and new features, and learn about additional professional learning opportunities.



How are districts like yours implementing a balanced assessment framework with Formative?

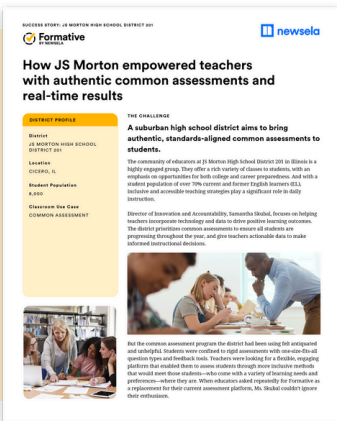
Districts that use Formative and optional services have been able to create district-wide alignment on strategic assessment design, support collaboration among Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and build a sustainable foundation for success, while still maintaining accountability and clear reporting. It's time to get back to the core of why we assess—to accelerate student growth.



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
 JS Morton High School District 201, IL

[Read more >](#)



The schools that used Formative for consistent practice and instructional guidance outperformed the state in end-of-course scores by over four points, putting us in the top 8% of schools. Formative is a strategy my teachers use to help decide where to take their lessons each day.

Ann Sanderson
 Professional Learning Coach
 Dorchester School District 02, SC

[Read more >](#)



Formative is research-backed and proven effective



Secondary students who use Formative regularly for math saw the equivalent of a nine-percentile advantage on the FastBridge math assessment.



A study of a district serving primarily low-SES and Hispanic students showed that the use of Formative was linked to higher Reading/Writing SAT scores.