

# Using the Activate System to Formatively Assess Students in Small Groups

**A seventh-grade math teacher finds multiple uses for her classroom audio system.**

Part of preparing students for the real world is teaching them to collaborate and problem-solve while working with others in small groups. At Andover Middle School in Andover, Kansas, 7th-grade math teacher Stacey Ryan often has her students complete tasks with a partner or in groups of four to six. After 17 years in the classroom, she has found it can sometimes be challenging for educators to gauge students' understanding through summative assessments strategies. They know a lot of learning is happening while in this small-group setting but they were struggling to capture it.

**“When students do not actively answer or participate in a whole-group setting, it can seem as if they don’t have a strong conceptual understanding of what they are learning. By capturing students’ learning in a small-group setting and without the teacher at their side, I am able to hear my students think aloud and readily verbalize what they know.”**

*Stacey Ryan  
Andover Middle School, 7th-grade  
math teacher*

“We have used the two-way audio systems from Lightspeed for several years as a way to promote student voice, collaboration, and student leadership in the classroom,” said Ryan. “What we are most surprised about was the insight we received when in observation mode – we now understand the thought process student groups were taking. We were able to make formative assessment and adjust learning along the way.”

Andover Middle School was one of the first to adopt the Lightspeed Activate System, which provides a clear picture of what students know and understand. The system is specially designed for teachers like Ryan, whose students often work in small groups. The two-way pods are the size of a glasses case and double as hand-held microphones, making it easy for students to pick them up and take them wherever they may be working.



**SCHOOL**  
ANDOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

**LOCATION**  
ANDOVER, KANSAS

**INDUSTRY**  
EDUCATION

**THE CHALLENGE**  
When students work in small groups, educators often have trouble assessing students’ knowledge during in-the-moment learning. Knowing where to spend their time and how to adjust lessons.

**LIGHTSPEED SOLUTION**  
Activate Audio System and App



**BENEFITS**  
Promotes student collaboration in small groups

Portable pods are conducive to small-group settings anywhere in the classroom

Educators listen to organic student conversations without being physically present

Student can use the system to capture audio and video or to address the whole class

By listening in on small group conversations, Ryan is able to hear them collaborate and share their ideas in an authentic and natural setting.

By pressing the call button on the pod, students can “raise their hand” and ask Ryan questions. Using her wearable microphone and earpiece, Ryan can respond even while working with another group of students, making for a smooth and speedy communication process. She can also chime in on student conversations and provide direction or feedback to the group.

Ryan’s class was able to integrate the new pods with their mobile devices to record high-quality video and audio. When students are presenting their work to the class, they amplify their voices using the pods so that all students can hear what is being said.

*“We love when new technology is versatile enough to have multiple uses, and allows us to take student learning to new levels.”*

*Stacey Ryan*

Ryan adds that her students love speaking with the microphone because it makes them feel important, and they know they’re being heard. They also wirelessly connect the system to the interactive whiteboard so students can clearly hear videos, songs, and more.

From this teacher’s perspective, tools like the Activate system make it easy to assess students’ learning even when they are collaborating in small-group settings.

