

# FÁISTINEOIR GRÁD

**HOW TO PROVIDE REALISTIC TARGETS  
APPROPRIATE TO YOUR STUDENTS AND SCHOOL**

**STRATEGY PAPERS**

**How to provide realistic targets appropriate to your students and school  
Strategy Paper**

Product of The Erasmus+ project The School Improvement Partnership

**Authors: Karen Burke**

**Editor: GRETB**

**Year of issue: 2020**

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

## **The School Improvement Partnership Project (SIPP)**

The SIP Project, led by LPUK and involving partners from Ireland, Spain, Finland and The Czech Republic, has produced a Grade Predictor Tool which can be implemented in the partner countries through training teachers and other associated staff in its usage. The tool is then implemented with students who are making decisions about their future pathway choice or are at risk of drop out and need help/support in their current study or to be directed elsewhere. The Grade Predictor methodology is based on data from grades that students in the partner country have received. It is then used to predict students' performance in the future based on their achievement in the past.

LPUK has created a Grade Predictor tool for each partner which is customised to the educational system in their country, their qualifications and availability of data. The tool was trialled on students in all partner countries Ireland, Finland, Spain and Czech Republic to see were there any issues with the tool.

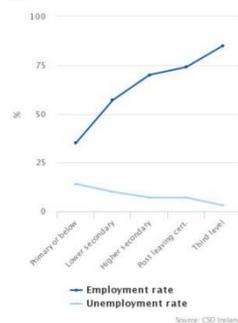
As part of SIPP, each partner also produced three Intervention videos which showcase the relevance of the Grade Predictor and other interventions. They outline the effectiveness of Grade Predictor in a teaching context particularly the guidance element accompanied with interventions in each partner country. Research tells us that short and simple videos are a very powerful way to put a message across to staff in schools who have limited time in a busy schedule. These videos are very effective in accompanying training and bringing the Grade Predictor tool into reality in the school situation. The videos aim to reflect issues of equality such as the under representation of young women in particular subjects and those with disability in particular careers. All videos are available on the SIP Project website, partner websites and through a YouTube channel created by the lead organisation for this task Xabec. The videos are a central resource for staff across partner countries.

## Issue: Early School Leavers & Recognition of Youth Unemployment

### Rationale:

From latest figures available there is a rate of 6% rate of Early School Leaving of all 18-24-year olds in Ireland. This is below the EU average of 11% of Early School Leaving and ranks us as the seventh lowest among the EU-28 member states as of 2018. (Educational Attainment Thematic Report, CSO, 2018). Currently in Ireland there is a rate of youth unemployment if 11.5% but when numbers are analysed further than the impact of Early School Leaving becomes more apparent.

Figure 1 Employment and unemployment rates for those aged 25-64, classified by highest level of education attained, Q2 2017



From the Central Statistics Office, we can see there is a direct correlation between the unemployment rate and the highest level of education achieved. The lower the level of educational attainment the higher the rate of unemployment. Those with Primary level or lower secondary (Early School Leavers) have more than twice the level of unemployment.

Early school leavers are less likely to be employed, face precarious employment conditions when they are or rely on the social welfare system. There are further implications of this such as poor mental and physical health. These factors when coupled with a higher occurrence of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity mean that the early decision to leave school may lead to a much higher risk of poverty and unstable working or living arrangements.

### Recommendation:

- When studying the ERSI report “No way back” there are two factors that influence the rate of early school leaving that may be counteracted the Grade Predictor Tool. Rejection by school (Lack of encouragement from school) and rejection of school:(feelings of underachievement) are two factors that we can mitigate. The grade predictor tool allows for direct engagement with the students via the conversation about correct pathway and possible outcome for the student. The feelings of underachievement can be flipped on its head as by identifying possible grades for students the stakeholders (student, school, parents/guardians) may identify the pathway with highest achievement/avoid pathways that may result in failure.

## Issue: Identifying at risk students

**Rationale:**

- “Guidelines on Identifying Young People at Risk of Early School Leaving” and Tulsa’s “Early School Leaving: Predictive Risk Factors” tells us that there are many risk factors as to why people leave school at an early age (Age, Gender, Socio-economic background, Ethnicity, Native language, Region, Ability, Disability, Parental employment, School size and type, Family structure). Not all of these can be changed however we can alter some things such as grades, disruptive behaviour, absenteeism, school policies, school climate, alienation and decreased levels of participation and motivation to achieve. Many of these can be facilitated through proper use of the Grade Predictor Tool.
- Alongside the tool itself there is also a data collection file which we use to profile the students we are engaging with. This allows for these high-risk students to be quickly flagged and supports and intervention plans to be put in place most notably as we look specifically for students with disadvantaged status and disability.
- In using the tool, we also ensure students are engaging with the courses and pathways that allow for the most successful route, this ensures students remain motivated and show them that they can succeed.

**Recommendation:**

- I would recommend that all students are engaged with the Grade Predictor Tool as a means of motivating them about the possible attainment but to also identify the students most at risk of Early School Leaving.
- I would also recommend however that the data collection file be modified and (this made be on the specific risk factors for individual countries) a greater number of risk factors be utilised to build a clearer picture of the students with the highest number of risk factors and those who would require the most intervention be it at pastoral or academic level.

**Issue: Solid Use of Data Focus and the Impact on Early School Leaving****Rationale:**

Early School Leaving is usually not a single decision but is based on experiences in the years and months that precede the act. The use of the grade predictor tool gives us an ability to recognise the early indicators of disengagement, underachievement and possible increased absenteeism. Through the use of data, the students are not discriminated by previous behaviour or experience with individual educators. From the No Way Back report we can see that ESL’s often feel “rejected by the school through alienation from school staff and students, expulsion, or the school encouraging them to pursue an alternative education pathway” and it is this that results in the push for the students to leave education. Data removes all bias for the student and ensures that the conversation remains on the ability to succeed and by correcting the most suitable pathway then should remain motivated and engaged throughout. The other advantage that the Grade Predictor Tool is that it allows for on-going monitoring of the students progress often ESL is preceded by a deteriorating performance in their studies. This maybe to disengagement, lack of motivation other problems but if the teacher is able to use the tool they can quickly to identify the drop-off in performance and engage with the student identifying and overcoming the issues through the correct interventions.



**Recommendation:**

The use of the tool should not merely be used by guidance counsellors to pick the most suitable pathway for the individual but also that the relevant teachers are trained in the use of the tool. As the subject teacher is the person who has the greatest level of interaction with the student and will be carrying out the assessments, they need to be able to flag when students are underachieving (dropping below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile). This allows for the stakeholders to engage at the earliest point to reengage students/development interventions.

**Issue: Improve Student performance and strengthen teaching**

**Rationale:**

- Grade Predictor Tool is unique in the Irish setting as the we have no other means to predict the student's level of attainment. Often students pick their pathways due to personal experiences and with little thought of their outcomes.
  - Grade Predictor should ensure students are on the correct pathway. Students who are predicted to not achieve the 5 passing grades in the Leaving Certificate and will therefore not be able to progress to Third Level directly need to be shown alternate pathways such as LCA, VTOS, Solas.
  - All students are engaged in continuous based assessments throughout their course of study. The Grade Predictor shows a range of possible results from the 50<sup>th</sup> to the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile this allows teachers to track the level of performance of the students. When students show a regression in attainment or dropping below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile teachers can immediately act and engage with the students. Early interventions can be then implemented to ensure engagement and highest possible attainment. This also ensures that students can be motivated as to their possible grades if they apply themselves and move up the band.
  - The initial task of the Grade Predictor Tool is to research the students to identify the criteria that they fall into (gender, disability, socio-economic background). These are all risk factors for ESL. As these high-risk students are being identified at the entry to their course strategies can be put in place by the school or educational institute to ensure that these higher risk students can be monitored and supported.



Erasmus+



**Recommendation:**

- At the earliest possible time students should be engaging with the Grade Predictor tool this should ensure 2 things:
  1. Students are engaging with the correct pathway
  2. Students at risk of ESL are identified and all possible supports are put in place.
- The data collection file should be expanded to include other indicators of ESL such as absenteeism etc could be included to make it more reliable and to highlight those with the greatest needs for supports.