

**THE BENEFITS OF PROVIDING REALISTIC TARGETS
APPROPRIATE TO YOUR STUDENTS AND SCHOOL**

STRATEGY PAPER

**The benefits of providing realistic targets appropriate to your students and school
Strategy Paper**

Product of The Erasmus+ project The School Improvement Partnership

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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:

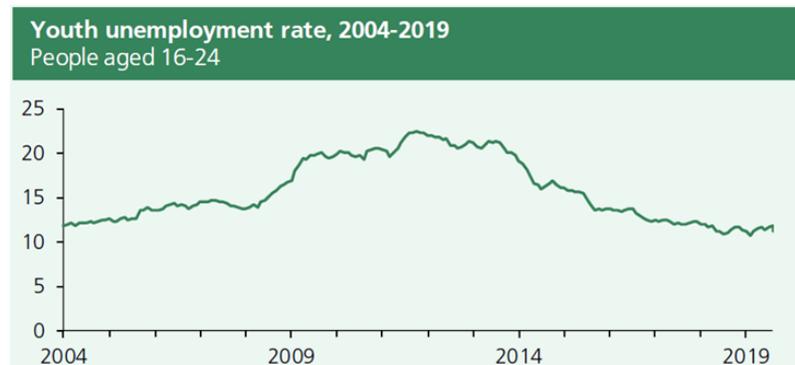
Since the Elementary Education Act in 1880 made it compulsory for children to attend school between the ages of 5 and 10, there have been numerous “Acts” to increase the school leaving age. The 2008 Education and Skills Act being the most recent, this heralded in a phased “raising of the participation age” starting in 2013. This means that in England since 2015 all young people must follow one of the following paths until the age of 18:

- Stay in full time education
- Start an apprenticeship or traineeship
- Spend 20 hour or more a week working or volunteering, while in part-time education or training.

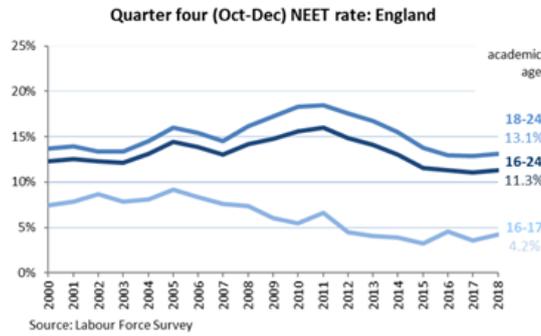
Part of the reason for this introduction was to reduce the number of students not in education, employment or training often referred to as “NEETS.” and those who dropped out of courses before gaining a final grade

Nationally and locally numerous strategies have been implemented to reduce both the % of early school leavers and youth unemployment. The data shows the rising trends of the 00s has been reversed in the 10s:

Youth Unemployment (16 to 24 year olds) in the UK has been declining since 2013, but still remains above 10% and the NEET %



Source: House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 5871 January 2020: Youth Unemployment Statistics



Source: DfE NEET Statistics Annual Brief: 2018 England

Likewise there has been a fall in NEET across both the youth age ranges in England, however there continues to be a % of students who are NEET.

Recommendation:

Careers advice and guidance is an integral part of the support schools provide to their students. The tools created in this project can act as part of that careers support. They enable a variety of subjects and qualifications to be reviewed to identify ones a student could be more successful in to support their career pathway. It may also open up the idea of subjects that the student is unaware of. By having this discussion pre-16 it has the opportunity to avoid students choosing inappropriate courses or having unrealistic aspirations, both of which can lead to drop out during the following two years.

Further development would see this information linked to different career pathways and long term information such as that found in the LEO dataset, giving students information about the opportunities different subjects can offer and the long term benefits, providing greater motivation to complete courses.

Issue: Identifying at risk students

Rationale:

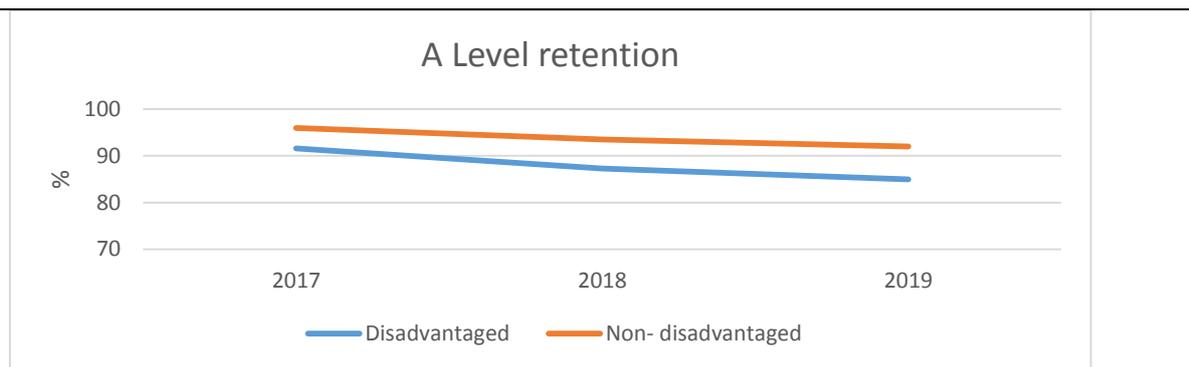
National data for 16-18 year olds show that there is a gap between disadvantaged students and non- disadvantaged students, across a series of issues including retention and progress as shown in the following charts:

Table 10: Level 3 value added scores by disadvantaged status (measures by characteristics CSV). England, state-funded providers, 2019 (revised).

Level 3 value added scores	A-level			Applied General		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Dis. Students	-0.06	-0.09	-0.12	-0.07	-0.03	-0.04
Non-dis. Students	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.02	0.02
All state-funded students	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01

Source: 16 to 18 attainment data

Source: DfE A level and other 16 to 18 results in England, 2018/19



Data Source: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>

Recommendation:

Whilst the tools do not identify disadvantaged or non-disadvantaged students, this is information that the school or college has access to for many of their students. The tools are able to support All students irrespective of characteristic. We recommend that in the records teachers have they know which of their students are in this at risk group, so that as their progress is being monitored intervention strategies to support the group are implemented.

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

Rationale:

In England the 16-18 Accountability measures introduced in 2016 saw for the first time retention data being published for students across the maintained school and college sector. The retention data is published at institution level, usually in the month of March after the students have completed key stage 5, by the Department for Education and can be found at <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/> This has enabled institutions to identify where they may have an issue regarding student retention on 16-19 study programmes and implement strategies to improve retention rates.

% of students retained (completed main learning aim)

Qual level	Programme type	Student cohort	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
3	A Level	All	96.1%	95.3%	92.5%	91.3%
		Not Disadvantaged		96	93.5	92.4%
		Disadvantaged		91.6	87.3	85.5%
3	Applied General	All	87.9%	88.5%	90.4%	86.5%
		Not Disadvantaged		89.6	91.2	87.8
		Disadvantaged		85.6	88.2	83
3	Tech Level	All	89.4%	90.5%	90.6%	87.9%
		Not		91.5	89.7	89.1

		Disadvantaged				
		Disadvantaged		87.5	88.5	84.5
2	Tech Certs	All		86.3%	88.3%	87.9%
		Not Disadvantaged		87.9	89.7	89.4
		Disadvantaged		83.4	85.7	84.9

Data Source: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>

Looking at national trends since data has been externally published the key things to note are:

A Level

The % of students retained is decreasing over time.

For vocational subjects the trend is mixed, this is possibly due to the vocational qualification reforms which has meant that in 2017-18 a majority of students studying L3 vocational courses were not included in these measures.

Applied General

The % of students retained was increasing over time, but has regressed in 2018-19

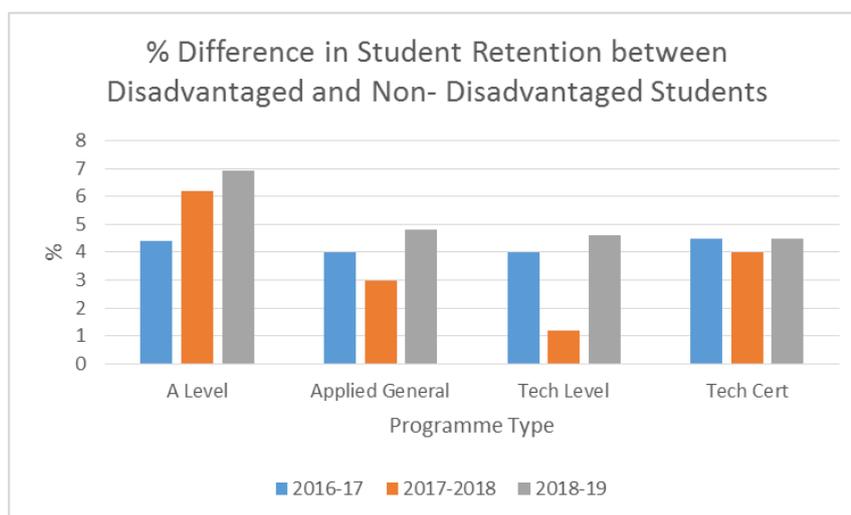
Tech Level

The % of students retained was stable around the 90% mark, but has regressed in 2018-19.

The % of non-disadvantaged students retained is decreasing

Tech Cert

The % of students retained is increasing over time



Data Source: <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>

The data also highlights the retention gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students and in particular the growing gap in A level retention.

Recommendation:

There are many reasons why young people chose their 16-19 study programme courses. However for around 10% of those young people there appears to be issues which mean they do not complete the course and it could be seen as “wasted time”. The reasons for non-completion are diverse and complex, with at times the school or college having little

or no influence in the decision.

With 8 to 10% of students nationally not being retained on different programmes types and this % showing an increasing trend in A levels then what can be put in place to support young people needs to be examined and best practice shared across the sector. Whilst further research is needed to identify the main reasons for not completing courses. At school or college level internal information can be used to identify the causes and determine strategies to improve retention at subject, programme and qualification type. Anecdotally for some students it is that they made the wrong choice of subjects or didn't know what they wanted to study. Using the tools when a student is making that choice provides realistic, informed goals.

Once a student has started a course, using the tool to set realistic targets enables teachers to monitor the progress that students are making during the two years. They can identify students and specific courses being studied where interventions are required. This is particularly pertinent where, based on their current work, there is a danger of a student being predicted to fail the course or achieve a grade which is below what they need to progress to their chosen destination. Swift interventions can be implemented to support the student and get them back on track, rather than dropping out of the course.

Issue: Improve Student performance and strengthen teaching

Rationale:

For many years in England the concept of “adding value” or “progress” has been used as a method to improve student performance and strengthen teaching. “Progress” is the key accountability measure across the different key stages. At 16-18 setting target grades based on the outcomes of students of a similar prior attainment at subject level enables teachers to identify underperforming students and those at risk of failing, through the monitoring of progress during the academic year and implementing intervention strategies to support students and get them back on track.

The recent move in England from modular to linear L3 courses means that to ensure positive outcomes at the end of the 2 year course appropriate monitoring and interventions are needed during the course, is even more pertinent.

Recommendation:

The use of the tool has shown how using robust objective evidence can support a student to improve their learning outcomes. As the targets are created using national data it takes away the subjectivity of internally created targets. We recommend that the tools targets are the start of the conversation and they inform the minimum and challenge targets a student may have. It is important to build in the time for the teacher to discuss the data with the student to create appropriate challenge target grades, giving ownership to both the teacher and the student.

The target grade then provides a basis from which the teacher/tutor can monitor the progress of their students and provide the appropriate support and challenge to enable the student to achieve and surpass their target grades.