

A guide to using Aspiration Charts with students

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Estimates, Targets, Predictions

FFT

The Fischer Family Trust (FFT) is a charitable organisation established by Mike Fischer whose fortune was created through the company Research Machines – a major supplier of IT to British schools over the last 40 years. They provide free data services to UK schools and to the National Health Service. In Education, they provide estimates of likely future performance and indicators which schools can use to self-evaluate their performance. They are a small organisation and work in conjunction with local authorities to support their service.

Estimates

- The FFT provides estimates for each student of their likely future attainment.
- It does this by using information from many thousands of students in the past and linking attainment at one age (e.g. GCSE results at 16) with attainment at a previous age (e.g. KS2 SAT results at 11).
- At KS3, the FFT provides for each student the percentage chance of getting each of levels 2 to 7 (or better) and the most likely level (and sublevel) for English, Maths & Science.
- At KS4, the FFT provides for each student the percentage chance of getting each grade for 26 GCSE subjects. They also show the most likely grade. They do not give estimates for non-GCSE subjects e.g. BTEC. The KS4 estimates can be based on KS2 SAT results or KS3 teacher assessments.
- At KS4 the FFT also provide estimates for whole school indicators such as 5 A*-C including English & Maths or levels of progress in English and Maths.
- BUT – the FFT database may not hold all students and some students didn't take KS2 tests, so it can't provide estimates for everybody.
- ALSO – estimates are not prophecies. Just because **many** students progressed from a particular KS2 score to some GCSE outcome doesn't mean that **this** student with their particular circumstances is destined to follow suit.
- The FFT uses a range of models for estimates of which 3 are common:
 - **FFT-A** - to make expected progress based on prior attainment, month of birth & gender of the students
 - **FFT-B** as FFT-A but also taking into account the socio-economic background of the school
 - **FFT-D** as FFT-B but raised so that if achieved, the school would be in the top 25% of similar schools for value-added
- JTB Education recommends you use **FFT-A or FFT-B for evaluating** overall progress. Both are similar to national baselines, though FFT-B takes into account your school's social mix while FFT-A doesn't
- For **aspirational targets** many schools use FFT-D estimates. Some schools do not find FFT-D challenging enough. If this applies to you, just ask us for more challenging estimates. JTB Education can provide estimates for the top 15% of similar schools (which we call FFT-E), or the top 10% (we call this FFT-X), or the top 5% (which we call FFT-V).

Targets

Everybody hates targets that someone else has set for them. They chip away at a sense of self-control. JTB Education strongly suggests that you agree a target with the person responsible for achieving it, whether that is a student, a subject teacher, a Head of Department or the Headteacher.

No target should just be a copy of the relevant FFT estimates.

Most research on value added supports the rule of thumb that around 50% of the final grade is predictable by knowing a student's previous attainment. The other 50% is determined by the quality of teaching, the support of the home, the determination of the student and other factors.

The purpose of a target is to motivate a person into higher achievement.

This is so important, I'll write it again.

The purpose of a target is to motivate a person into higher achievement.

Always remember this if you are helping a student arrive at a target or you are negotiating a performance management target with a teacher.

It is important that any achievement target is both realistic and aspirational if it is to motivate a person into higher achievement.

Don't use targets set in this way as a baseline to evaluate a teacher's performance. A teacher might then feel they were making their own life impossible by aiming high for their students, and you wouldn't want that. Instead, use the estimates from FFT to evaluate a class's and their teacher's performance. Then a teacher can encourage a student to aim high without being afraid of being penalised for it should the student fall a little short of a target. Aim high without fear.

Predictions

Predictions are made by teachers of the final outcomes of students in KS4 or the current level of attainment in KS3.

JTB Education recommends that KS4 tracking is a forward prediction of the likely attainment of each student at the end of Year 11, taking into account their current quality of work, their level of effort and the maturation that the rest of the course will bring. You may use whole grades like A, B, C or sub-grades like B1, B2, B3.

In KS3, JTB Education recommends tracking grades should be the teacher's best judgement of pupils' current KS3 attainment in sub-levels. Use grades like 6a, 6b & 6c where 6c is a low level 6 etc.

By examining teacher predictions against estimates or targets, we can identify any students failing to make good progress and act to improve things.

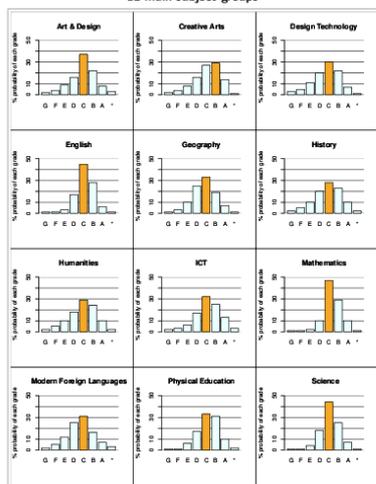
Aspiration Charts at KS4

JTB Education takes the FFT estimates and puts them into bar-charts to make them easier to use. We provide bar-charts of estimates grouped by class for teachers and by student for teachers to use.

Student charts – example

Students get estimates of 24 GCSE subjects as follows ...

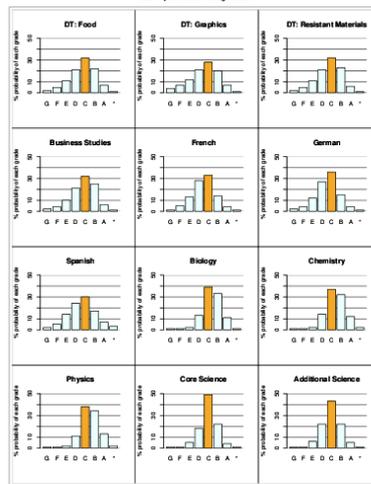
JTB Education
Aspiration Charts dated 9th September 2012
FFT type D GCSE estimates for David Cook, 10A
12 main subject groups



These estimates from the Fischer Family Trust are based on what you scored in your KS2 tests, whether you are a boy or girl, and when in the year you were born. They do not take into account your interests or your effort. Discuss these estimates with your teachers and parents and think what a suitable target might be for each of your subjects. These type D estimates are fairly ambitious. They are what students in the top quarter of schools might achieve if they were similar students to you.

Example School page 7 of 38 FFT-D estimates for GCSEs in 2014

JTB Education
Aspiration Charts dated 9th September 2012
FFT type D GCSE estimates for David Cook, 10A
12 specific subjects



Example School page 8 of 38 FFT-D estimates for GCSEs in 2014

Each subject is a bar-chart:

Note that the most likely grade (here a C) is coloured orange.

This bar-chart is based on FFT-E estimates so already contains aspiration.

Look at the probability of a C – it is about 28%.

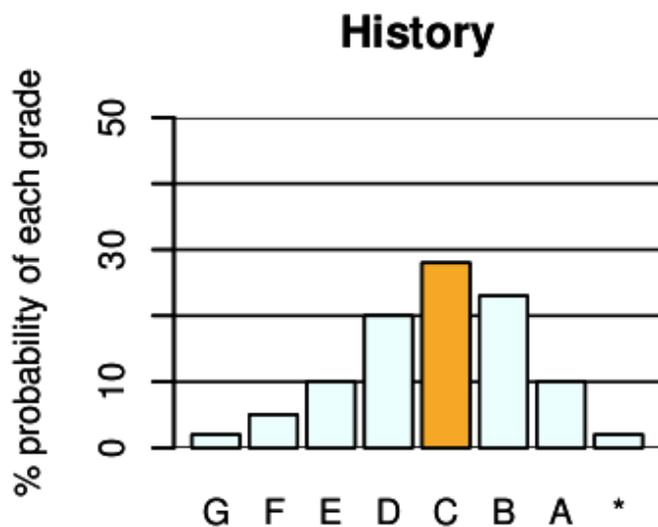
Now check the probability of B, A and A* - they are about 23%, 10% and 2%. So the probability of getting above a C is 35% - there is more chance of getting above a C than a C! Of course, that leaves 37% chance of getting below a C.

Above a grade C – 35% chance

Grade C – 28% chance

Below a grade C – 37% chance

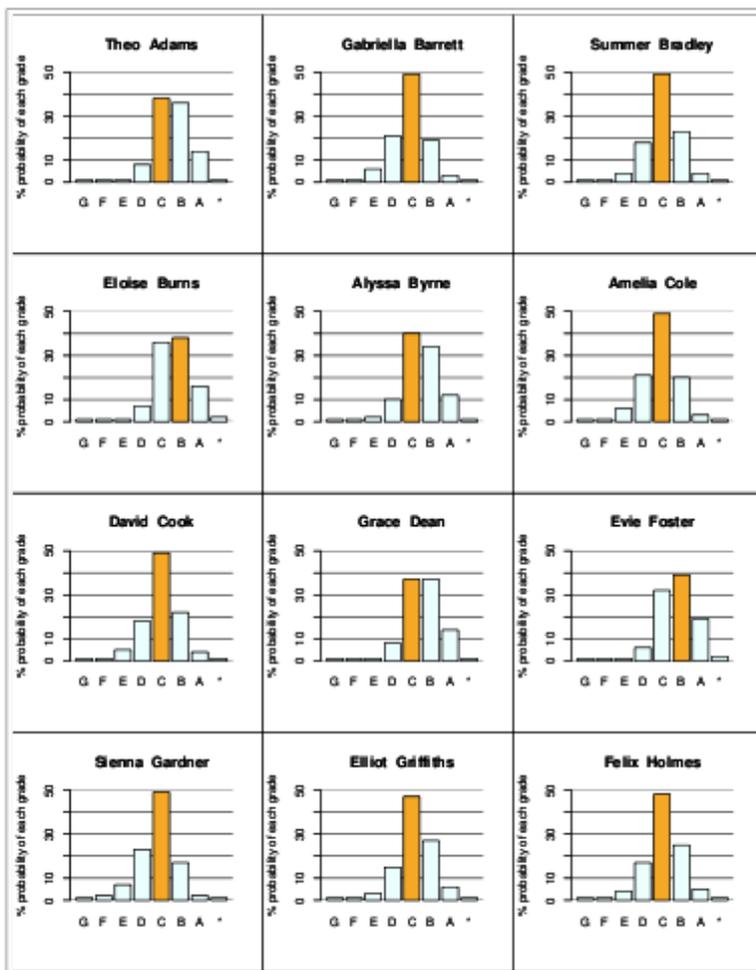
The key question is what grade would the student like to achieve? With your guidance, the student can set a SMART target – achievable and realistic, but also with a degree of aspiration.



Teacher/Class charts

These are just like the student charts except they show all the students' charts in your class, for your subject:

FFT SciCore type D GCSE estimates for SciCore Teaching group: 10x/S11



These estimates from the Fischer Family Trust are based on what students scored in KS2 tests, gender, and when in the year they were born. They do not take into account student interests or effort. Discuss these estimates with your students and think what a suitable target might be for each of your students. These type D estimates are fairly ambitious. They are what similar students in the top quarter of schools might achieve.

Thus the class teacher and the student have access to the same information.

Best practice in KS4 student target-setting

The process

Student targets must be ASPIRATIONAL.

Student targets must MOTIVATE STUDENTS.

Therefore, targets must be negotiated and engage students in thinking about their successful futures.

1. Let your Year 10 teachers get used to the students before discussing targets. Early in November is a suitable time.
2. Introduce your students to the aspiration charts and flight paths in assembly. Explain all the uncertainties: “all the FFT computer knows are your KS2 levels, your gender and the month you were born in. It has no idea which subjects you like or hate, how hard you work, how well you are taught or what support you have from friends and family. The estimates are a starting point for you to think about your targets.” Also, stress the vital role that effort and determination play in achievement. If you use the Carol Dweck “Mindset” approach, bring it out here.
3. Encourage students to think about what grade they would like to aim at in each of their subjects. You may invite them to involve parents in discussing this at home.
4. After a short time, ask all subject teachers to meet with them to negotiate their target. Students must be prepared for this meeting with their preferred target and teachers must be prepared to listen to their views. Don't instruct teachers to refuse to accept anything below the FFT-D most likely grade – remember that “**the purpose of a target is to motivate a person into higher achievement**” and it's not very motivating to be ignored. There will not be many students who lack the confidence to aim high (but see the scenarios in the detailed guidance below).
5. Subject teachers add negotiated targets into your Management Information System pupil database.

The role of form tutors

Form tutors should be briefed by pastoral leaders before the student assembly. They can then encourage students to think hard about their targets. For example, form tutors can check students are writing their preferred targets in their planner in pencil before they negotiate with subject teachers.

Form tutors should continue to explain again, where needed, all the uncertainties covered in their assembly and help them with individual issues. Many young people find it hard to understand uncertainty and it is important they don't view the estimates as somehow pre-ordained.

Form tutors may know individuals who need some extra support. They can also discuss with the form how some subjects might be important for their career aspirations. They should try to link achievement in school to their intended careers, however changeable those might be.

Finally, form tutors should definitely encourage high aspirations in English & Maths as they will be vital for students' long-term success.

The role of subject teachers

Subject tutors should set some work for the whole class while you meet individually with each student.

Each meeting should be brief as each student should come with a target they would like. In most cases, one lesson will be enough to negotiate individual targets for the whole class.

Make sure the student is being appropriately ambitious but not unrealistic.

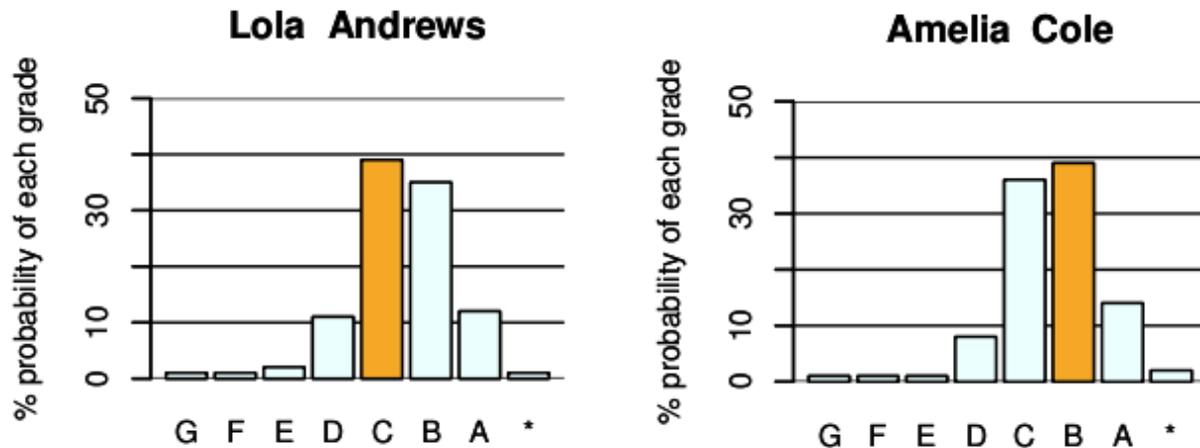
Try to guide the student to a grade at or above the most likely estimate (but see the detailed guidance).

Record the agreed target in your mark book and in the school's management information system..

Make sure the student records it in their planner for your subject.

Detailed Guidance

Take a close look at the chart. Is the most likely grade suitable? Is the next higher grade nearly the same probability or perhaps the next lower grade is nearly as likely?



In the case of Lola, she has nearly a 40% chance of a C (the most likely grade), but nearly a 50% chance of getting a B or higher ($35\% + 12\% + 1\% = 48\%$). It would not be silly to aim at a grade B if Lola was ambitious.

Amelia on the other hand, has a most likely grade of a B but a low estimate of exceeding it. It would not be aspirational to drop to the C, but it is probably over-ambitious to aim higher than a B. Everything depends on circumstances though. If Amelia has worked really hard in KS3 these estimates may be too low. Perhaps she is keen for an A grade in your subject. If so, it will do no harm to say “OK, that's really ambitious, and if you are prepared to put in the work, I'll agree it. Remember, it's not the target that will get you there, it's the work you put in.”

General principles

For almost all students, the most likely grade or the one above it is ambitious.

Try not to drop below the most likely grade. If you do, ask yourself “how will this secure high achievement for this young person” - it is possible that it might!

Be positive & supportive – be very careful of your language.

There are some scenarios which are a bit more difficult to deal with ...

Scenario 1 – wildly ambitious student

They want not one grade higher than their estimated most likely grade, but two or more. Option 1: agree with them, and if your first assessment suggests it is far too ambitious, re-open the discussion. Option 2: explain that the work you've seen already suggests they are way below that target – suggest that they accept something more realistic, but you are always willing to raise the target if they produce higher quality work.

Scenario 2 – anxious high achiever

They are estimated many high grades across their subjects but worry about whether they can achieve them – they lack confidence in their ability or their capacity to work hard enough. This is often about the A*/A boundary. Don't sweat it. Accept the lower grade, build up their confidence and renegotiate the target grade once they feel they can actually do it.

Scenario 3 – not engaged with the process

This may be to do with the student thinking they are low-attaining. Perhaps they have been estimated a grade D or below. Tell them you want them to do as well as they can to give them a successful future, and you think they can achieve at least a grade “X”. Tell them you'd like to put this down – is that OK? It is important they hear that their achievement matters to you (despite it not seeming to matter to them at the moment).

Scenario 4 – upset by the estimates not being very high

This may be a student whose KS2 results were modest but who has worked very hard to raise their achievement by the end of KS3. The estimates based on KS2 results thus under-estimate their real potential. They are typically a hard-worker and keen to do well. Alternatively, they may be a student with a very high KS2 English mark and a very low KS2 Maths mark – FFT takes both into account and often estimates middle grades.

Emphasise the uncertainties in the estimates - “they are produced by a computer which only knows your KS2 results, your date of birth and your gender, it doesn't know how hard you work”. Encourage them to raise at least one grade above the estimated most likely grade. This is an exceptional case in which you could consider a target two grades above the most likely estimate.