How to describe an early warning system?

Early warning system is a broad term for all the systems, actions and programs that aim to identify early distress signals and provide timely intervention to tackle early leaving from education.

The Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving of the European Commission was responsible for policy level improvement based on the studies of member states' practice and policy regarding this issue, between 2011-2013. The working group, built up from the governmental and non-governmental experts of member states, conducted surveys on current practices and collected information on the states. It concluded there is no such a country with a perfectly complex early warning system and there are remarkable differences in the aspects which considered the most important in each country. Furthermore systems are different in terms of organization of early warning system: it can be part of the mainstream education system or a separate area dedicated only for this issue. For the majority of the countries it is part of the mainstream.

Further literature in English:

European Commission (2013a): *Early warning systems in Europe: practice, methods and lessons*. Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (TWG on ESL), Brussels. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/europe-warning-systems_en.pdf

RESL.EU project, (ongoing) web: https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/resl-eu/

RESLEA Project, 2012-2014 www.reslea.eu

Judit Juhasz (2015): *Final report on Crocoos – Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project background research*. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest. Ch. II. http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Final%20research%20report_Early%20school%20leaving%20policies_Crocoos.pdf

tags: situation analysis

Why is it important to build up such a system?

In the first place, a protocol based system has less room for subjective, random actions in case of a problem that can be well defined. We already have such examples in THE European systems such as the very general absenteeism and its strict follow up by any countries. It provides a frame for all those working in the system while narrowing the risk of a young person being unseen and unsupported with their problem.

Address: H-1077 Budapest, Kéthly Anna tér 1. | **Mailing address:** H-1438 Budapest 70, Pf. 508. | **Phone:** (+361) 237 1300 | **Fax:** (+361) 239 1329 | **E-mail:** crocoos@tpf.hu
Internet: www.tka.hu | www.crocoos.tka.hu

The people working day by day on the field are probably the wisest about which student has to be supported only after some weeks of observation already. The risk of leaving school early has widespread early signals which are many times seen common by different experts and countries.

For instance the already mentioned absenteeism, especially unnoticed one is considered as one of the most important early distress signal of a dropout so that it has a close follow up and well administered system all over. Nevertheless there are signals lacking a school protocol, being important factors though. One of these signals is boredom or loss of motivation during the classes for example. Special targeted programs and system level follow up in case of these less commonly registered signals contribute to a more efficient system in lowering the number of dropout students, proved by the examples of countries tackling dropout more successfully.

Further literature in English:

Jelena Joksimovic, Juhász Judit, Mihályi Krisztina, Tomcsik Dóra (2014): *Early warning systems in six European countries.* Desk research report on study visit countries in the framework of CROCOOS– Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project. Interim report. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Early%20warning%20systems%20in%20six%20European%20countries_interim%20report.pdf

Preventing early school leaving, SALAR, 2013 http://webbutik.skl.se/bilder/artiklar/pdf/7164-925-6.pdf

Rumberger, R., Ah Lim, S., (2008): *Why Students Drop Out of School: A Review of 25 Years of Researc.,* Flyer, California Dropout research Project, University of California Linguistic Minority research institute. http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/CSN/PDF/Flyer+-+Why+students+drop+out.pdf

Uekawa, K. (2010): *Creating an Early Warning System: Predictors of Dropout in Delaware.* Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid- Mac. http://www.doe.k12.de.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=2801&dataid=9385&FileName=MA1275TAFINAL508.pdf

Another reason for building up an early warning system is the well-defined role of teachers and other actors outside of school in the process. This means the teacher is not alone in tackling dropout and has the possibility to cooperate with other professionals with other competence.

tags: distress signals, identifying at risk students, cross-sectoral cooperation, mapping external partners

How to build the early warning system?

Traditionally there are three levels the different programs can work on: prevention, intervention and correction. Early warning system is initially more about intervention to tackle the problem when its

Address: H-1077 Budapest, Kéthly Anna tér 1. | **Mailing address:** H-1438 Budapest 70, Pf. 508. | **Phone:** (+361) 237 1300 | **Fax:** (+361) 239 1329 | **E-mail:** crocoos@tpf.hu
Internet: www.tka.hu | www.crocoos.tka.hu

first signals appear. Timely intervention is very effective in any sense from financial to efficiency: students remain in school with a much higher possibility if they can get support at the beginning, and they finish and go to the labour market earlier which is useful for the economy, besides teachers and other professionals have an easier job when the problem has just occurred.

The below list shows the most important policies and measures on each level of acting identified in different countries in Europe:

On Prevention level

- Improving access to and quality of ECEC (early childhood education and care)
- Reducing grade retention
- Desegregation policies
- Positive discrimination measures
- Developing extra-curricular activities
- Increasing flexibility and permeability of educational pathways
- Inclusion of ELET in initial teacher education and professional training
- Education and career guidance

On Intervention level

- Providing individual support
- Support for low achievers
- Language support for students with a different mother tongue
- Specialist staff supporting teachers and students
- Identification of groups at risk of ELET
- Developing early warning systems for students at risk of ELET
- Absenteeism management
- Networking with parents and other actors outside school

On Compensation level

- Reform of the second chance education system
- Identification of early leavers and measures to help them re-enter education and training (Eurydice-CEDEFOP 2014 57.)

Further literature in English:

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/CEDEFOP (2014): *Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures.* Eurydice and CEDEFOP Report. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/175EN.pdf 57. oldal

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European Commission (2013a): *Early warning systems in Europe: practice, methods and lessons*. Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (TWG on ESL), Brussels. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/europe-warning-systems_en.pdf

Judit Juhasz (2015): *Final report on Crocoos – Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project background research*. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest. Ch. III. http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Final%20research%20report_Early%20school%20leaving%20policies_Crocoos.pdf

tags: resource analysis, intervention on school level, intervention on EWS team level, intervention on student level, distress signals, identifying at risk students

Institutional level EWS

A well-functioning and logically structured EWS has its data gathering and measurement and monitoring-evaluation elements. As an input the circumstances e.g. social status of the student is important information: his or her knowledge, interests, skills and personality besides family circumstances are all features that have to be considered by the school. During the process gathered data and information is used for an individual level support and teaching process. Data gathering and especially the access and usage are always a sensitive issue and still in debate, however there is a common understanding of the importance of these factors in the student being at risk. Besides input data, the monitoring and handling of everyday behaviour issues and other signals of the student are the most important elements of such a system. Beyond the trivial signals like absenteeism, deteriorating achievement or grade repetition there are several other behaviour signals that worth to be followed up by the teacher. The most common signals from these kinds are boredom or low motivation, bullying or being bullied and a sudden change in behaviour which can be an unexpected aggression or too silent reaction as well. (The listed are described in other articles where you can find more literature about each too.) An efficient EWS gives a feedback to itself about its operation: professionals working in the system are informed from time to time about the exact numbers and other efficiency indicators they developed so that they have the opportunity to improve the system based on the experiences.

An institutional EWS works on different levels: a strategy represents the whole approach of the institution, data gathering and measurement tools and processes concerning early warning signals support the system, on the other hand it works on group level meaning different students and teachers, using for instance career orientation technics, and last but not least it has a role on the level of individuals. On the level of the school actual planning is crucial besides school teams have to be formulated, with their own clear responsibilities. On the level of the individual different elements of the support system are used such as individual development plan, or the involvement of external experts. Behind a successful institutional practice there must be always an engaged leader.

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Internet: www.tka.hu | www.crocoos.tka.hu

The base of an EWS is always individual attention for all the students. Teachers are in the frontline with the opportunity to realize these early distress signals and ask for a proper support if it's over their competence. Early leaving from education and training as an issue has to be built into teacher initial training and further education while the cooperation with other sectors has to be improved too. Tackling dropout is a shared responsibility of all connecting actors.

Further literature in English:

European Commission (2013a): *Early warning systems in Europe: practice, methods and lessons*. Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (TWG on ESL), Brussels. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/europe-warning-systems_en.pdf

Judit Juhasz (2015): *Final report on Crocoos – Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project background research*. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest. Ch. III. and VI. http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Final%20research%20report_Early%20school%20leaving%20policies_Crocoos.pdf

Adaptive Technologies Inc. (2008): *Using Predictive Modeling to Improve High School Dropout Prevention.* White paper, USA. http://adaptiveinc.com/pdf/ATi_Using%20Predictive%20Modeling%20to%20Improve%20High%20School%20Dropout%20Prevention.pdf

Happen, J. B., Bowles Therriault, S., (2008): *Developing Early Warning Systems to Identify Potential High School Dropouts.* American Institutes for Research. http://www.earlywarningsystems.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/IssueBrief_EarlyWarningSystemsGuide.pdf

tags: resource analysis, distress signals, identifying at risk students, cross-sectoral cooperation, mapping external partners, student centered support, absenteeism, harassment, observing behaviour, team building

The role of the school and the teacher

According to European data the quality of the school seems to be indicative considering the perspectives of its students. "Going to a predominantly low SES (socio-economic status) school will depress students' average scores, while going to a high SES school will tend to raise them. The effect is that a young person – with the same mix of dis/advantages and the same history of school achievement– will leave one school early but would not leave another school early. On the other hand students with objectively almost the same characteristics and in same situation schools perform differently: this shows the own effect of the specific school itself. This effect is widely noted and recognised. It is statistically significant in every country in PISA."

Address: H-1077 Budapest, Kéthly Anna tér 1. | **Mailing address:** H-1438 Budapest 70, Pf. 508. | **Phone:** (+361) 237 1300 | **Fax:** (+361) 239 1329 | **E-mail:** crocoos@tpf.hu
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Further literature in English:

Network of experts in social sciences of education and training (NESSE) (2010): *Early school leaving. Lessons from research for policy makers*. An independent expert report submitted to the European Commission. http://www.nesetweb.eu/sites/default/files/early-school-leaving-report.pdf p. 23.

The significant role of school environment and student-teacher relationship is strengthened by an American study as well. It quotes results about Chicago Public Schools indicate that students' course performance is related to three school factors: relationships with teachers, the relevance of classroom instruction to their perceived future, and teachers' cooperation with each other. Data even proves that high level of trust and personal support decrease failures while unsuccessful students hardly see teachers as helpful and motivating actors. Just as in family so in school expectations and requirements have a great effect on final attainment.

Further literature in English:

Iver, M. A., Mac Iver, D. J. (2009): *Beyond the indicators: An integrated school-level approach to dropout prevention.* Arlington, VA: The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center, The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education. http://diplomasnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/dropout-report-8-11-09.pdf p. 6.

Based on another US study the characteristics of schools that have been unsuccessful with holding onto their at-risk youth include the following: "low expectations for success, inconsistent discipline, low teacher involvement and/or accountability, inattention to individual student needs, and a low level of engagement in productive learning activities". As opposed to this, the characteristics of successful dropout reduction programs include strong commitment by instructional staff, quality leadership, small class size, and fair and consistent discipline that is clearly communicated. Furthermore these schools have a curriculum expanded to include personal and career components; teachers/administrators who believe the students can succeed; students who participate in the programs by their own choice; the wide availability of support services; a high amount of personalized interactions among staff and students; learning that is emphasized over teaching; and funding that is available for smaller class sizes and more equipment and resources.

Further literature in English:

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http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Final%20research%20report_Early%20school%20leaving%20policies_Crocoos.pdf

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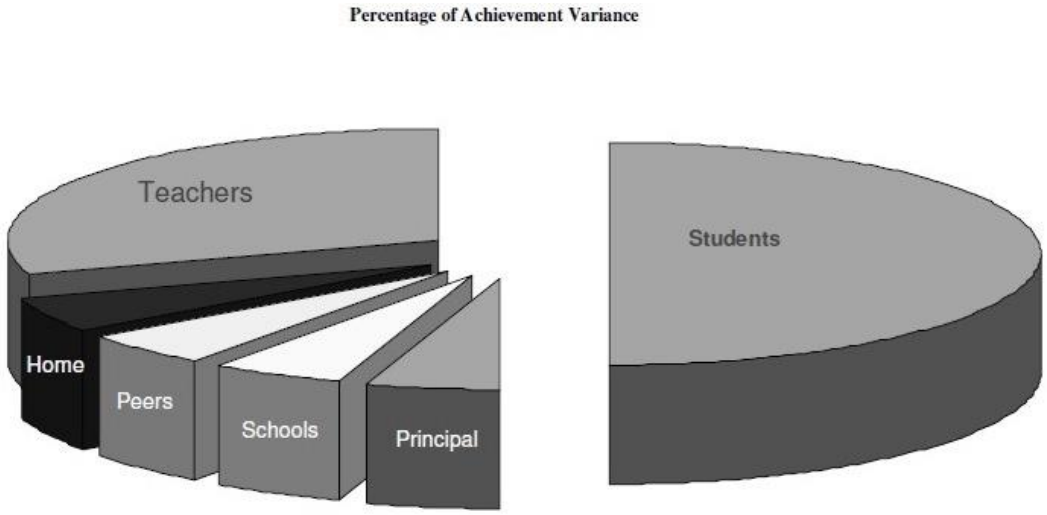
Internet: www.tka.hu | www.crocoos.tka.hu

Crain-Dorough, M. L., (2003): *A study of dropout characteristics and school-level effects on dropout prevention, Dissertation*, USA. http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-0710103-021510/unrestricted/Crain-Dorough_dis.pdf p. 13.

About the role of the teachers there are many studies from the US, Australia and Quebec. Hattie's research was aiming at identifying the features of excellent teachers as he identified teachers as the second most important influence on student's achievement after the students themselves.



Forrás: Hattie, J. 2003 3.

Beyond excellence the attitude towards students is as well important in the learning process. According to a Quebec research the more at-risk are the students the less positive are the attitudes towards them. Interestingly, teachers have different attitude towards students who fail from different reasons, proved by another USA research. Those who fail due to perceived lack of effort are in a better position than those who fail due to perceived lack of ability or other mitigating circumstances. Other researchers, as well from Quebec highlighted one important conclusion that depressive type students are not so much in the focus of teachers so that they are probably unseen by them as they normally cause no "problem" meaning behaviour issues in the classroom.

Further literature in English:

Judit Juhasz (2015): *Final report on Crocoos – Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project background research*. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest. Ch. III., Attachment
http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Final%20research%20report_Early%20school%20leaving%20policies_Crocoos.pdf

Fortin, L., Marcotte, D., Potvin, P., Royer, E., & Joly, J. (2005): Typology of Students at Risk of Dropping out of School: Description by personal, family and school factors. *European Journal of Psychology of Educatio. XXI.* 4
http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBF03173508#page-1

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Iver, M. A., Mac Iver, D. J. (2009): *Beyond the indicators: An integrated school-level approach to dropout prevention.* Arlington, VA: The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center, The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education. http://diplomasnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/dropout-report-8-11-09.pdf p. 6.

tags: intervention on school level, intervention on EWS team level, intervention on student level, distress signals, identifying at risk students, student centered support, early warning system

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Jelena Joksimovic, Juhász Judit, Mihályi Krisztina, Tomcsik Dóra (2014): *Early warning systems in six European countries.* Desk research report on study visit countries in the framework of CROCOOS– Cross-sectoral cooperation focused solutions for the prevention of early school leaving project. Interim report. Tempus Public Foundation, Budapest. http://oktataskepzes.tka.hu/content/documents/CroCooS/Early%20warning%20systems%20in%20six%20European%20countries_interim%20report.pdf

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Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving November 2013 http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf [downloaded 30. June 2015]

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Internet: www.tka.hu | www.crocoos.tka.hu

Attachment

Features lead to school dropout

School Factors	Curriculum Factors	Family factors	Individual Factors
Teachers lack skills to work with disengaged students	Perceived irrelevance of curriculum	Education not valued – limited support to remain in school	Issues with self-esteem, confidence, social skills, coping skills and resilience
Lack of training opportunities for teachers	Prescribed academic curriculum	Absence condoned by parents	Negative experience of school including discrimination, academic failure and transfers to lower level of education
Lack of educational resources and support staff	Lock in to inappropriate vocational/academic courses	Household problems, processes and dynamics	Relationships with peers: • Outsider/loner/bullying • Friends beyond school attracting out of school • Alpha female/male – high degree of autonomy, behaviour problems and actively influencing others' disengagement • Colluder/disputant – non-attendance influenced by truanting peers
School admission policies	Reduction in pastoral time as a result of curriculum pressure	Contradictory social, behavioural and cultural expectations	
Lack of supportive pastoral systems	Inappropriate pedagogy – focus on curriculum content rather than learners	Expectations of assumption of adult roles and caring responsibilities	
Insufficient career advice and guidance	Incompatible learner and school norms		
Teacher/pupil relationships	Lack of alternative education provision with formalised accreditation		Lack of academic ability, special educational needs and difficulties in coping with traditional assessment procedures
Low status of vocational education			Boredom, alienation, discouragement, Health problems including mental, health problems leading to absence and substance misuse

Adapted from Ferguson et al, 2005, Kendall and Kinder, 2005 and ReStart, 2007

Source: NESSE 2010 26.

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Sample Intervention Recording Sheet for Grade-Level Teachers

CODE DIRECTORY

Presenting EWI		EWI Today		Level of Concern		Responder		Intervention-Service		Student Strengths	
A	Attendance	**ATTENDANCE - A**		1	Mild	ADMIN	Administrator	IN	Investigate deeply	AC+	Attends class on time
B	Behavior	AB	Absent two or more days betw grade group meetings	2	Moderate	C	Counselor	O	Other	AS+	95% attend.
Ac	Academics	LATE	Late two or more days betw grade group meetings	3	Severe	C & E	Consulationa & Evaluation	**ATTENDANCE/LATENESS**		C	Cooperative
		BEHAVIOR - B		**Intervention- Tier**		CA	Counseling Asst.	CH	Call home	DH	Does homework
		AC	Annoys classmate(s)			CD	CADE	DC	Daily check-in	FR	Friendly
		CO	Calls out	W	Wholeschool/ Classroom	CIS	Communities in Schools	GBN	Greet by name	KBL	Knows Basic Lit.
		DA	Disrespectful to adult	T	Targeted	CRL	Com Rel. Liaison	P/S/T C	Contract	KBM	Knows Basic Math
		DP	Defaces property	I	Intensive	CY	City Year	R/CM	Referral/case managemt	O	Other
		F	Involved in fight	**Status**		ELLT	ELL Teacher	RI	Rewards/Incentives	O+	On time to class
		LS	Leaves seat/classroom	1	Improved	ESRT	Empow Sch Resp Team	**BEHAVIOR**		PA	Poss. Attitude
		MAC	Makes inappropriate comments	2	Same	HRT	Homeroom Teacher	Start w/ Above Interventions		SA	Strong Art skills
		RH/S	Roams hallways/stairwells	3	Worse	JHU	JHU Content Advisors	CCUE	Clear consequences uniformly enforced	SC	Strong Computer
		U	Not in uniform			LS	Literacy Specialist	D S	De-escalate by adult	SLS	Strong Lit skills
		ACADEMICS -LITERACY/MATH - Ac				LT	Literacy Teacher	I/R	Incentive/Rewards	SM	Strong Music skills
		BML	Doesn't have basic math facts			MS	Math Specialist	IM	I-Messages	SMS	Strong Math skills
		BRL	Below reading level			MT	Math Teacher	PCW	Pre-class Work	SPE	Strong in Phys Ed
		DPA	Does not pay attention			N	Nurse	PF	Positive feedback	SS	Strong Science
		LBL	Low benchmark In literacy			OCT	Other Content Teacher	PR	Predictable routines	SSS	Strong SS skills
		LBM	Low benchmark In math			Par	Parent/Caregiver Support	**ACADEMICS -L/M**		T	Tries hard
		LODT	Low on other diagnostic assess.			PLCA	PLC Academic Dean	AEH	Aligned Extra Help	WG	Well groomed
		N/IH	No/incomplete homework			PLCD	PLC Discipline Dean	ASA	After-school Activity	WH	Good work habits
		NGC	Does not grasp concept[s]			PM	Peer Mediation	DI	Differentiate Instruction		
		NP	Not prepared for classwork			PO	Parent Ombudsman	GR	Guided Reading		
		RDA	Refuses to do assignments			RDGS	Reading Specialist	HS	Homework Support		
						SA	Student Advisor	MM	Math manipulatives		
						SET	Special Ed Teacher	SGI	Small group instruction in math		

Date	October 7, 2008
Grade Level	6th

Grade Group Team Members	K S	M. D	K C	E. Y	E T
	B. W	M. P		T B	
Meeting Facilitator	A. M , L. H				

Student	Presenting EWI from 6/08		EWI Today		Level of Concern	Student Strengths	(Tier)-Responder = Intervention	Status	CSAP Tier	Notes	(Tier)-Responder = New Intervention
	Code	Notes	Code	Notes							
Student A	B	3 neg comm in M	BML	F on 2 math quizzes	2	PA	(T)-MT=SGI				
		BRL -3.5				C					
		D in Math				T					
Student B	A	78% attendance	AB	Absent 5 days	3	C	(t)hrt & cy=cb				
							(t)hrt & cy=gbn				
							(t)hrt & cy=p/s/t c				
							(t)cy=ri				
Student C	Ac	F in M & L	DPA	Literacy	3	AS+	(t)cy=hs				
	B	6 neg comm 3&3	N/IH			AC+					
			NP			KBL					
			NGC								
Student D	A	79% attendance	LS	Behavior	3	FR	(t)hrt & cy=ch				
		BRL -3.5	CO				(t)hrt & cy =p/s/t c				
		D in M & L	AC				(t)cy =dc				
							(t) cy =ri				
Student E	B	12 neg comm 8&4	LS			WG					
	Ac	F in M	DA								
		BRL - 3.5	AC								
			CO								
			LS								
New Student											

Source: Iver, M. A., Mac Iver, D. J. 2009 24.-25.

< < < Disclaimer > > >

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