

*Fieldhouse School, Greenbank Road, Rochdale, OL12 0HZ*

29 September 2002

**OPDM Consultation on the Local Government Finance Formula Grant Distribution -  
Education**

NALDIC (National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum) is dedicated to promoting the learning and achievement of bilingual pupils in schools. As such, we broadly welcome the proposals contained in the above consultation which recognise the cost implications of adequately supporting the education of pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) in schools in order to raise achievement.

In particular, we are familiar with the situation where specialist teaching support for pupils learning EAL in schools is inadequately financed and would echo the responses of schools to the Price Waterhouse Coopers research which identified a significant level of opportunity cost, where non-specialist support is diverted from other areas and a high level of unmet need.

Research in this area has revealed that long term gains in attainment of bilingual learners can only be made when adequate funding is available to deliver sustained support to pupils learning English as an Additional Language. As research also indicates that it may take as much as 7-10 years to become fluent in the academic language required by the curriculum, we are concerned that the level of funding should allow specialist teaching support to be maintained beyond the early stages of learning English. In order to improve the attainment of bilingual pupils in schools we therefore support those options which recognise the significant element of unmet need which occurs at school level.

We would however wish the DfES to take into consideration a number of points. We were surprised to note the replacement of the EAL indicator in the secondary block with one based on ethnicity given the PWC research finding that 'EAL is a slightly better proxy than ethnicity'. Whilst we acknowledge the 'low achievement and high social need of some ethnic groups (including English speaking groups)', we would argue that in terms of consistency and transparency, it would be better to retain a single proxy indicator across all school block sectors and which is consistent with the indicator within the LEA block.

In addition, we note that whilst the funding recommendations will implement the Green Paper proposals to match funding to the separate responsibilities of schools and LEAs, we consider the continuance of specialist funding for meeting needs related to EAL and ethnicity to be essential in order to underpin the further raising of standards for this group of pupils. We understand that the formula proposals are not funding the specific learning needs directly but we wish to ensure that specialist funding for EAL learning needs (in this case the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant) continues to be recognised as an important and effective tool for recognising and meeting the learning needs of pupils and challenging underachievement. We note that the DfES has indicated its intention to conduct a consultation exercise around the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and our intention would be to present a more specific and fuller response to this more focused consultation when it occurs.

In the meantime, we hope that you find these observations useful to the process of refining this important new development in Education funding.