

NALDIC Response to the GTCE Code Consultation - February 2009

National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) is the subject association for English as an additional language (EAL). It is dedicated to promoting the learning and achievement of bilingual pupils in schools and draws its membership from those who work in this field in schools, universities and other educational institutions.

1. The Eight Principles of Conduct and Practice

The principles capture the aspects of the teacher's role and responsibilities that are important to NALDIC. We are particularly pleased to note that promoting equality and valuing diversity and working as part of a whole-school team are presented as a key principles of teachers' conduct and practice. This is especially important in our field as the success of our work and the effective achievement of bilingual pupils is directly related to these principles of practice. NALDIC has been lobbying for many years for greater recognition of the language and learning needs of EAL learners and the role of the EAL teacher. In our experience, the needs of EAL learners are not always fully acknowledged, neither is there full recognition of the role of the EAL specialist teacher within our current context. We are pleased therefore to see both these principles included.

Under 4 - 'Promote Equality and Value Diversity', the first bullet point currently reads '*Act respectfully towards all children and young people, parents, carers and colleagues, regardless of their socio-economic background, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or beliefs*'. We believe that this should read '*Teachers' practice in and out of the classroom should demonstrate their respect for all children and young people, parents, carers and colleagues, regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, gender, **language**, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation or socio-economic background*'. The importance of respect for linguistic diversity is often overlooked in equality statements and yet we know from research that this has a powerful impact on individuals' well being. Similarly, specific reference to language diversity is important at a time when comments by politicians and in the media continue to promote the myth that linguistic diversity and bilingualism is educationally and socially harmful rather than a key preparation for life in an increasingly multilingual and globalised world. We would therefore welcome this being explicitly reflected in the Code.

Under 2 - 'Reflect on their own teaching to ensure that it meets the high professional standards required to help children and young people meet their full potential', we would like to see reference under the second bullet point to the 'Base their practices oneffective teaching and learning of **all** pupils' or 'effective teaching and learning of all pupils including those from diverse ability, age, ethnicity, gender, **language**, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation or socio-economic backgrounds. This is because we see an understanding of linguistic diversity not simply as an attitudinal issue (Code Point 4) but also as a teaching and learning issue. Whilst positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity are clearly important, international research has consistently highlighted that teachers' professional knowledge about the process of learning EAL and becoming bilingual is a key factor in the long term educational success of bilingual pupils. An understanding of linguistic diversity is an essential part of each teacher's professionalism and crucial to ensuring the success of bilingual pupils within our education system. We believe that working effectively with bilingual pupils has linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions that require specialised education and training and that this should be reflected in the Code.

2. The Values

We believe that it is essential for the Code of Conduct and Practice to begin with a clear statement of the core values which underpin teacher professionalism and that the draft 8 principles are appropriate..

3. The language of the draft Code

The draft Code is clearly written and the language and tone of the language is appropriate. In order for the draft Code to play a role in helping parents and pupils understand what they have a right to expect from teachers, we would like to see versions of the code made available on your website in community languages.

If it is intended that examples (currently Messages from the Consultation) are to be included in the final version we would welcome the inclusion of examples which relate to linguistic diversity and an acknowledgement of the roles of specialist staff in helping all children to succeed.

4. Overall, how successful is the draft Code?

Whilst the draft Code is successful in setting out clear statements about teacher professionalism that apply to all teachers in England, no matter what subject or age of children they teach, their role or level of experience, or the context in which they work, we would welcome a specific references to the role of specialist teachers under Principle of Conduct and Practice 6 - 'Work as part of a whole-school team'.

Currently the first bullet point reads '*Take positive steps to develop productive and supportive relationships with all school colleagues, including teachers, teaching assistants, other school staff, and governors*'. We would like this to read '*...including mainstream and specialist teachers, teaching assistants ..*'. Those working in the field often have rigorous education, credentials, and experience equivalent to that of their peers in other subjects however in the experience of our members there are occasions when teachers of EAL are not respected as being part of a unique discipline, and do not receive the same professional treatment or response as their peers in other subjects or disciplines. Our position is that teachers should recognize the field of EAL as a unique academic and professional discipline that is distinct from, but on par with, other subjects.

We would welcome both this change in wording and additionally further guidance on the types of behaviour that falls short of the expected standards of conduct and practice in relation to our field. We understand that Appendix 2 only refers to examples which have been referred to the GTCE but we have recently been contacted by an EAL specialist teacher who, when undertaking their normal duties as a teacher, has been asked if they possess QTS and has been demoralized by a colleague by: being prevented from undertaking their duties; by verbal comments aimed at lowering their standing in the eyes of pupils; and by being given tasks that are not among those normally undertaken by teachers, such as working as a TA, photocopying for another teacher etc. This is unfortunately not an isolated incident. We would therefore welcome exemplification within the Code of 'good practices' in working with specialist colleagues as we do not believe that this is always understood clearly enough. We are opposed to policies that treat EAL teachers differently from their counterparts with comparable credentials in other disciplines and feel it is to support this explicitly in order to foster equity and integrity in schools and in society. It would therefore be helpful to have some explicit statements about working with specialist colleagues built into the Code to support the well written principles of valuing diversity, responding to all pupils' needs and working collegially.

Similarly we would welcome some reference to the fact that failing to take responsibility for meeting the needs of bilingual pupils or making negative comments about their skills would fall foul of 4 Promoting equality and valuing diversity.

5. Communication and use of the Code

See our comments under item 3.

6. Finally, please make any further comments that you would like the GTCE to consider in revising the draft Code to produce the final version.

See above

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