**North Islington Education Action Zone**

**Framework**

North Islington Education Action Zone (NIEAZ) was one of the first of the statutory education action zones (EAZ’s) established under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The aim of EAZ’s was to maximize educational opportunities in areas of social and economic deprivation. Each zone operated for an initial three year period, and the successful ones, such as NIEAZ, were extended for two further years.

EAZ’s worked under the direction of an Education Action Forum, that was legally responsible for administering funds and had wide powers to act in furtherance of the Zone’s objectives. Typically an education action zone could receive around £1million per year, comprising money raised from local businesses and partners and (usually matching) central government funds.

**North Islington Education Action Zone (NIEAZ)**

In November 1999 schools in the Northern part of Islington Local Authority were invited to ‘join’ together to share good practice, identify joint priority areas and to work collaboratively to raise educational standards in their schools. The Zone comprised fourteen primary schools, three secondary schools and one special school and two nursery schools joined as associates. The Zone received £750K p.a. grant from government, plus £250K p.a. sponsorship from Fischer Family Trust and support from RM, the computer company.

**Excellence in Cities (EiC)**

Shortly after the establishment of the NIEAZ the Government set the Excellence in Cities initiative that also contained Action Zones. These were non-statutory education action zones, as one of the six strands. Typically they focus on the needs of a single secondary school and its associated primary schools. They differed from the first zones such as NIEAZ because their work was overseen by the local authority.

**Raising Standards from 1999-2005**

The zone’s headteachers and the FFT sponsor agreed the key focus would be on developing high standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT. There was great emphasis placed on recruiting very highly qualified and experienced professionals to lead the projects. These Project Leaders ensured there was thorough research and development with integral collaborative professional development supported but the unique use of data pioneered by FFT. The data project that started in Islington was so successful that every LA choose to join the project and pay a subscription for the data.

<http://www.fft.org.uk/>

Staff from across the zone began working together on collaborative projects as they had never done before. This approach, advocated by FFT, was known as structured improvement methodology.

At the beginning of the Zone the achievement profile of the zone was low; end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in mathematics showed that 67% of pupils achieved Level 4+.

Ofsted inspections of the primary schools **pre 1999** found seven schools were requiring special measures or had serious weaknesses.

The headteachers of the zone were committed to providing a good standard of education for their pupils, teachers worked hard and were keen to develop their own skills and competences.

The National Numeracy Strategy was beginning to impact positively on teachers’ own mathematical knowledge and understanding although many teachers were struggling with whole-class teaching. In the years preceding the Strategy, it was very unusual to find teachers who were comfortable with this aspect of pedagogy.

The ICT provision in schools was poor; the ratio of computers to pupils was low, very few teachers had personal access to a computer, there were few who demonstrated confidence with the use of technology in their everyday teaching. Co-ordinators in the schools provided limited technical support to their colleagues and their influence on the curriculum was minimal. Most schools were trying to use the QCA schemes of work for IT, albeit without much training and support.

Even more unusual was the occurrence of lessons where teachers and pupils used ICT to enhance their learning of mathematics.

Like many other inner- city environments, retention and recruitment of teachers was a serious impediment to bringing about the necessary improvements.

**Priorities**

A yearly Action Plan was drawn up in collaboration with the schools and submitted to DfES for approval. The Action Plan identified current priorities, and a series of programmes were established with termly/yearly targets which were phased in to meet schools current and future needs. These included:

* Thinking Schools’ programme including Cognitive Acceleration courses e.g. CAME
* Gifted and Talented programmes at Arsenal
* Leadership programmes
  + Prepared 4 Leadership
  + Extending Leadership
  + Masters Course
  + Regular Meetings with Heads + Headteacher Conferences x 2 p.a.
  + Fischer Family Trust Data Sets and results in ‘Value Added’ terms
  + Transition Primary-Secondary : Cross phase work
  + Coaching & Mentoring
* Collaborative Learning Opportunities for Pupils e.g. Zone Poetry course; Kenwood House - Writing Through Art.
* Developing of school based Lead Teacher Network
* Accreditation of Teachers’ Achievement to review progress and future needs

**ICT Programmes**

* Network installation in all schools + printers
* Technical Support Initiatives including trial of Managed Services
* Laptop for every Teacher + desktop in each classroom
* Assisted schools in preparation for Ofsted
* ICT Assessment Portfolios
* Updating ICT policies and planning documents
* ICT Alive Training
* Purchase of cross Zone software licensing agreements
* ICT Coordinators Network provided with
* Assessment for Learning Support
* ICT Coordinators role in school
* Leadership development – supporting colleagues in school
* Developing Interactive Teaching in English (LISA) and Maths (Easiteach)
* Hands on Support Training Courses (Government Harnessing Technology initiative)
  + Involved seconded specialist teachers working in partner schools
  + Demo lessons
  + In-class team teaching to develop pedagogy and confidence
  + Reflection and mentoring support
* Self Review of ICT resources (later ICT Mark)
* Total Cost of Ownership
* Roles and Responsibilities associated with ICT Ownership
* E-Safety policy and implementation
* Computer Club for Girls

**Evaluation**

Throughout the first 5 years of the Zone external evaluations were carried out, plus extensive use was made of Fischer Family Trust data sets to ensure schools were raising achievement alongside raising the aspirations of staff and pupils alike. Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks were developed and the results informed the planning and ensured the long term viability of the collaboration.

**Outcomes 2005 – (cessation of central funding)**

Headteachers identified the following benefits to their schools through participation with the EAZ.

* Increased opportunities to work with pupils and staff from other schools in a range of settings (e.g. Arsenal, Transition)
* Peer support – sharing ideas, good practice
* Share resources and facilities
* Staff development – particularly leadership
* Strategic and Hands-On ICT support
* Sustainable development
* Increased opportunities to learn about new developments in education
* CAME Programme embedded in schools with ongoing programmes
* Increased opportunities for transition work EY-Primary and Primary-Secondary e.g. Creative Arts Partnerships, MfL
* KS1 – support for issues around achievement
* Development of tracking individual children and interpretation of data
* ICT advice and support
* Leading from the Middle Programme
* Developing coaching and mentoring
* Increased confidence and self-value
* Increased opportunities to develop a creative/integrated curriculum
* Training and continued support ELS and ALS
* Positive impact on teacher retention
* Improved Teacher Confidence

Central staff at the EAZ identified the following additional achievements

* DfEs value added showed the Zone to be one of highest achieving zones in the country, with successful schools now in the top 5% in the country (Fischer Family Trust/DfEs project)
* Awarded BECTa Best Practice Award (Nov 2005)
* Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in mathematics showed that 73% of pupils achieved Level 4+ (1999 figure 67%)
* By 2005 Ofsted reports indicated that all schools had significantly improved – good or better
* NIEAZ Final Accounting period April 2004-Nov 2004 prepared by National Audit Office – showed good accounting practice

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/235255/0355.pdf>

* Publication of Digital Blue Classroom Handbook – Royalty income from TAG
* Equitable investment across schools

**Post 2005**

Upon the demise of the EAZ the collaboration evolved into Education Improvement Partnership. This enabled the partnership to move forward to secure continued schools improvements through partnership. During this period the Partnership received £270K p.a. through EIP funding and £100K p.a. from Fischer Family Trust + £50K match funding from Government. The schools contributed £58K through the National Hands on Support funded Programme.

Schools continued to second teachers to the Zone either at reduced costs or free of charge. Although there was a significant drop in income the Zone continued with the majority of programmes with schools gradually covering supply cover costs and investment in ICT resources.

**March 2011**

With the cessation once again of central government funding the collaboration evolved into The Future Zone and continues today fully funded by the schools within the partnership.