The Open University ITE Partnership in Wales
PGCE Programme: Research Bulletin

Issue 14: February 2026

Welcome to the PGCE Programme's research bulletin. If you are undertaking any research or professional enquiries, we would welcome the opportunity to share this with the Partnership. You can find more about research across the partnership on the Partnership website, including items/blogs at Y Llais. If you wish to know more about PGCE Programme research activities, please contact Alison Glover (alison.glover@open.ac.uk).

In this issue ....

♥ **Community focused schools and an ethic of care:** A study with two Welsh schools aimed to understand how schools foster positive relationships with parents and children.

💬 **Talk with young children:** Child-to-child talk is examined in a Cardiff primary school during Forest School activities.

🎵 **Opportunities and challenges for the Expressive Arts AoLE:** How teachers of Expressive Arts perceived the opportunities and challenges of Curriculum for Wales.

🔍 **Learning strategies to study and revise for Science:** Informed by nearly 400 students from north Wales.

👥 **Partnership research activities**: mentoring, school attendance, student teachers' Welsh language confidence.

♥ ## Community focused schools and an ethic of care

'They treat every child individually and will do their best for each child.'

This paper draws on data generated from a case study involving Pentre Primary School and Bryncoed Community School in Wales, which sought to understand how schools foster positive relationships with parents and children. Interviews and focus groups with staff (14), parents (10) and pupils (30) revealed that an ethic of care was crucial to the formation of quality trusting relationships between staff, parents and pupils. The caring relationships which school staff grafted with parents and pupils through day-to-day acts were inextricably bound with their wider social contexts and location in areas of significant socio-economic disadvantage. These schools' wider social contexts informed how they interpreted and enacted policy agendas around both academic performance and community schooling. It is suggested that the fostering of a relational dimension of schooling is crucial to the development of a community focused schools' agenda in Wales.

Evans, C., Welton, N., Pitman, J., Clegg, C. and Williams, D. (2025) An ethic of care in two community focused schools in Wales, *Research Papers in Education*, 40(2), pp. 281-298, https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2024.2381114.

Talk with young children

'Don't worry I'll send out my fire. I'll light some fire out of my mouth.'

This study examined the child-to-child talk of 15 children (4–5-years-old) from a Cardiff primary school, over 7 weeks of 30 minutes of free play each week during Forest School. Free play presents elements of choice and autonomy and the opportunity to engage in child-led play with no, or limited, adult involvement. The children chose to wear camera glasses which recorded speech and gaze. Results showed that free play within a woodland environment encouraged more, and different, types of talk than evident in existing classroom-based studies. Eight categories of talk were identified: Invitational; Competitive; Imaginative; Informational; Questioning; Inquisitive; Instructional and Self-talk, as well as cumulative and disputational. Young children's use of language, displayed nuance and imagination as they used it for a range of purposes, including to build meaning with others, to instruct, to impress and to engage in imaginative play. There were also examples of co-construction of language to develop and/or extend play scenarios.

Beauchamp, G., Ellis, C., Ellis, R., Dumitrescu, S., Sarwar, S., Tyrie, J., and Haughton, C. (2025) Types of talk with young children, aged 4-5 years, within woodland free play, *Journal of Early Childhood Research*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X251363722.

Expressive Arts AoLE

'Concerns about teacher efficacy emerged as a possible explanation for resistance to change.'

This paper draws on a dataset gathered between October 2021 and May 2022, utilising online questionnaires (n=62) and semi-structured interviews (n=4), to explore how Expressive Arts teachers perceived the opportunities and challenges presented by the Curriculum for Wales prior to its launch. Emergent themes relate to freedom and flexibility of design; cross-curricular learning and collaboration; resistance to change; teacher efficacy and confidence; training and government steer; and time and resource allocation. The data revealed anxieties about curriculum planning and design, with teachers feeling uncertain about where to begin. The perceived tensions between expectations and realities prompted scepticism about the implementation of change versus simply 'relabelling' old practices.

Griffiths, M., Oliver, E., Hewage, C., North, K. and Pigott, J. (2025) Where is the 'New'? Teachers' perceptions of the opportunities and challenges for the Expressive Arts AoLE in the Curriculum for Wales (2022), *Wales Journal of Education* 27(1), pp. 50–78. doi: https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.27.1.3.

Learning strategies for Science

'Learners do not generally have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the learning strategies they most frequently use.'

This paper draws on a sample of 385 students (aged 14 to 15 years) from 29 secondary schools in north Wales, using the Effective Revision and Study Strategies Questionnaire survey. The results show that the learning strategies most frequently used by students for independent science study and revision were making notes, repeatedly reading information, and highlighting or underlining information. The findings also suggest many students do not have a complete understanding of the strategies that are known to have higher utility (i.e., retrieval and spaced practice).

Sultana, F., Watkins, R.C., Baghal, T.A. and Hughes, J.C. (2025) An Evaluation of Secondary School Students' Use and Understanding of Learning Strategies to Study and Revise for Science Examinations, *Education Sciences*, 15(1), 101, https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/15/1/101.

Open University ITE Partnership research activities

The OU ITE Partnership contribute to the Welsh Government funded Collaborative Research Networks (CRNs). Some examples of ongoing projects for these networks include: how mentoring practices are conceptualised and enacted in the Welsh education workforce; children's experience of school attendance and Welsh language confidence of student teachers in Wales.

Also, as part of the Wales Collaborative for Learning Design project, six partner schools have been supported to create virtual tools and interactive spaces.
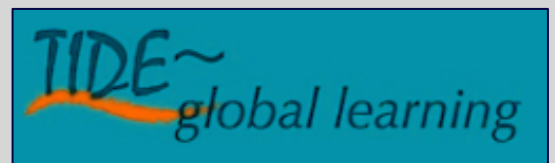
If you would like to know more / be involved in any of these projects please get in touch (alison.glover@open.ac.uk).
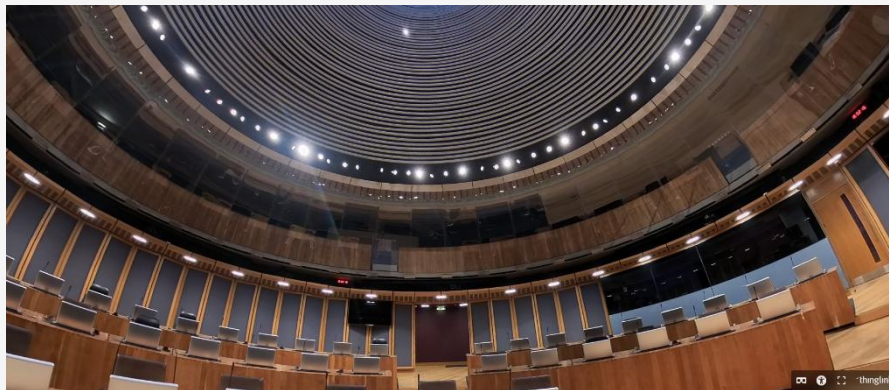
[Click on the image to explore the Senedd Chamber.]

Tide - Global Learning

A range of free resources are available to use or adapt to your teaching.

Creative pedagogies and assessment

Research into how dispositional learning and creative practices can reshape educational assessments, fostering well-being and creativity among learners.

Many other educational-themed resources, blogs and links to free events are also available at the Rethinking Assessment website.
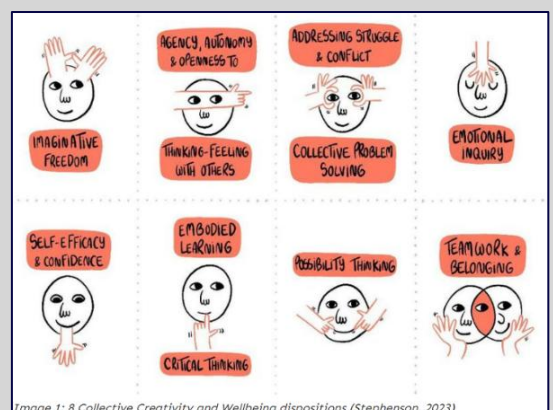
Image 1: 8 Collective Creativity and Wellbeing dispositions (Stephenson, 2023)