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

Issue 16: Oct 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 Wales-PGCE@open.ac.uk.

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Developing Reflective Practice *PGCE student-tutor collaborative research project*

Over the past year and a half, the PGCE team have been responding to school feedback on the need to provide more support for our student teachers to engage with reflective practice. The result was a PGCE student-tutor collaborative research project, and the creation of two reflection models for students to use. Findings from the project highlighted that student teachers value support from school staff, particularly Mentors and School Coordinators and that professional discussions and feedback questions, from experienced school staff members, can help develop the students' reflective practice by:

- Finding new ways of thinking about a classroom situation;
- Seeing positives, not just negatives, in their teaching;
- Having confidence to explore different ways of developing their skills and pedagogy.

The practical materials created as part of the project are available to both Year 1 and Year 2 PGCE students in the form of a reflective practice toolkit. Students are asked to use this toolkit in specific Practice Learning Activities (PLAs) across both year groups. School staff can look out for these reflective models as they review PLAs and practice learning with their students.

You can read about the project in more detail in an UCET blog written by Nerys Defis and a published research paper. Nerys' blog captures the impact others can have on student reflective practice development: 'whilst reflecting on practice is a personal experience, the voices of others can have a powerful impact.'

Cross-CRN Conference

Share, Explore, Collaborate

The OU ITE Partnership contribute to the four Welsh Government funded Collaborative Research Networks (CRNs). On the 13th July 2026, all four Collaborative Research Networks came together for a joint 'Share, Explore, Collaborate: All Four CRNs Project Day'. This event provided an opportunity for each CRN to share their ongoing research and activities, and for all to explore collaborative research opportunities across the networks moving forward. The day was well-attended and feedback indicated a strong appetite for more joint research activity, continued knowledge-exchange, and ongoing professional dialogue.

Equity and Inclusion CRN Project

Participate in the School Attendance Project survey

The Equity and Inclusion CRN is running a school attendance project aimed at better understanding changes to school attendance since the Covid-19 pandemic. All children and young people in Wales aged 7–16 are invited to take part in this research by filling in an online questionnaire, including children and young people who are home educated or not currently registered at a school. The questionnaire is accessed via a project website which features downloadable resources including a lesson pack about children's rights. The project's findings will provide insight to changes in school attendance since the Covid-19 pandemic, what might make some children not want to go to school, and how children and young people can be better supported to achieve their right to an education. Please do encourage participation and circulate amongst your networks.

The project is also interested in the views of children aged 3-7, and schools, organisations, parents/carers who would like to take part in the study can join creative toolbox sessions, sharing their feelings about school through stories, art, and play. If you're an adult working or supporting children please get in touch wales-pgce@open.ac.uk to find out more.

What does joy mean to young children - and why does it matter to us all?

Why joyful environments are important in educational spaces

July 2026's edition of *small**talk*** Early Years Wales members' magazine features an article on joy in early childhood by Dr Carys Jennings, PGCE Primary Curriculum Tutor. The article, based on the EdD research which Carys undertook, explores how joy is fundamental to children's wellbeing, learning and development and that, through creativity, such as drawing, painting, photography and discussion, children can communicate what happiness means to them, revealing personal and meaningful insights into their lives. A central finding of Carys' research is the importance of adults intentionally 'creating the conditions for joy' by making time and creating opportunities for children to express

themselves: while children can share their joyful experiences enthusiastically, meaningful adult-facilitated conversations help uncover emotional significance behind their drawings, photographs, and stories. As noted in the article: 'When practitioners create time and space for dialogue and creativity, they strengthen trust and nurture environments where joy becomes central to learning and development'. Environments which not only recognise but also nurture and sustain joy requires practitioners to continually reflect and refine their approaches, and adults play a crucial role in creating conditions for joy through attentive listening, reflective practice and responsive action. With this in mind, the article highlights that joy should not be viewed as an extra element of education, but rather an essential component of effective, child-centred pedagogy and positive learning experiences.

Jennings, C. (2026) What does joy mean to young children – and why does it matter to us all? *Small**talk***, 155, pp.7-9, Available at: https://earlyyearswales.hflip.co/smalltalk_July2026_ENGLISH#page/1



Open University ITE Partnership research activities

Multiplicative Reasoning Through Measurement: Resource Pack and Presentation

This is a reminder that a 'Multiplicative Reasoning through Measurement' resource pack (mainly aimed at progression step 2), developed by Curriculum Tutor Rachel Wallis with support from two partnership schools is available here. Rachel Wallis and Matt Owens, from Baden Powell Primary School, will be presenting experiences of using these resources at the British Congress of Mathematics Education conference in October. They will also be running an enrichment session introducing these resources and approaches to using them for Open University in Wales PGCE students and partnership schools on Thursday January 21st at 4pm – 'save the date' and please keep an eye out for further communication about this and how to sign-up.



PGCE Research Conference 2026

The 5th annual PGCE Research Conference

On June 19th 2026 the 5th annual PGCE Research Conference was held. This year's theme was 'Equity and Inclusion'. The conference featured an inspiring keynote presentation from Professor Mel Ainscow CBE which drew upon his research from schools across the world to explore what it means to create more inclusive educational systems. The annual Conference provides the opportunity for Yr2 PGCE student teachers to present findings from their own professional enquiries, and this year 10 students showcased their research. These presentations demonstrated the research skills and experience that have been developed by the Yr2 students as they undertook their enquiries, and an interesting range of research across different subject areas was highlighted. Topic areas included including outdoor learning, reading for pleasure, linguistic drilling strategies, and the impact of mindfulness on children's readiness to learn.

Full bilingual conference proceedings available here; and an online gallery of student teachers' summary posters of their small-scale professional enquiries is here.