Welcome

I have the pleasure of introducing this latest edition in my role as interim Head of School.

The last three years have certainly made us aware that nothing remains constant. I must admit that I like my world, both professionally and personally to remain pretty much the same, constancy has always been my preference. I am sure many others of you will prefer the comfort of regular routines and familiarity with ways of working.

Prof David Smith, in the last newsletter, talked about education being in the business of hopeful transformation. It is certain that although change can make us feel uncomfortable it is essentially part of the transformation process. We may be an ancient University, but we have a heritage in innovation and transformative practice.

Our four departments within the school are all important to transformation of learning and the pursuit of truth nationally and internationally. Examples of the impact of change and transformation can be found in this edition.

The Global Health Project led by Prof P. Abbott and Prof A. Binagwaho has the purpose to create a mindfulness intervention to children in sub-Saharan Africa. Supported by Prof G. Nixon and Dr R. Shanks who will lead the training, it is hoped that the intervention will result in real change for young pupils in school.

Prof G. Nixon and Dr W. Barlow surveyed secondary schools to learn more about the move to faculty structures in Scottish Schools. While some transformations can bring about positive outcomes, the overall feedback for this change is predominantly negative.

Led by Dr J. Mynott, Digital Collaborations between the School of Education and Northern Alliance Colleagues was initiated from learning experiences during Covid-19. Transformation and changes to practice explored the impact of digital tools in classrooms. An e-book with a focus on retrieval practice was created as a resource, and is currently being used widely.

Working in partnership with colleagues across the North our collaboration with Active Schools Aberdeen continues to upskill our student teachers. Complimenting the work of the Physical Education, Physical Activity and School Sport (PEPASS) group, the aim is to improve access to physical activity locally.

These examples give an insight to some of the School of Education’s recent activities. I hope you enjoy this latest edition.

Catriona MacDonald
Interim Head of School of Education
School News

School of Education Staff Involved in Major Global Health Project
Professor Pamela Abbott, Professor Graeme Nixon & Dr Rachel Shanks

On October 5th research partners and stakeholders in Scotland, Rwanda and Ethiopia came together virtually for the first time to officially launch the £2.9 million, four-year trans-disciplinary project that will design and test a mindfulness programme for schools in both African countries. The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research (NIHR133712), using UK aid from the UK Government to support global health research.

Led by Professor Pamela Abbott from the School of Education jointly with Professor Wenceslas Nzabalirwa, University of Rwanda, the project will see research carried out in the Burera district of Rwanda and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Bringing together health experts, social scientists, teacher educators and government officials, regional engagement will be built into each stage of the research with members of both local communities including parents, teachers, and young people themselves playing an integral role in developing the tailored programme.

Also involved in the project from the School of Education are Professor Graeme Nixon and Dr Rachel Shanks, as well as Isabel Stanley who is the Research Project Manager.

Graeme is heading up the training of Rwandan and Ethiopian teacher educators in mindfulness and mindfulness approaches with children, as well as working with academics and communities in both countries to devise a culturally appropriate mindfulness-based intervention for primary schools. Rachel is developing research capacity and training for those appointed to the project.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the project School of Education staff will also be joined by University of Aberdeen Institute of Medical Science colleagues Professor Paul McNamee (Health Economics Research Unit) and Dr Lucia D’Ambuoso (Aberdeen Centre for Health Data Science). Paul and Lucia will be developing and deploying the multifaceted research instruments involved in measuring the impact of the project.

Mental health issues are the leading cause of illness among young people aged 7-19 years, with about one in seven experiencing mental health problems. The World Health Organisation states that by 2030 mental health issues will form the biggest burden on health care resources and recommends preventative interventions in schools. However, it remains an under-researched issue in many of the least developed countries in the world.

The results of the research will be shared with policymakers in both countries, as well as the World Health Organisation and United Nations Children’s Fund and will also lead to multiple peer reviewed articles.

RESEARCH PROJECT LINK
www.abdn.ac.uk/nihr-camw

PAMELA OUTLINES THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT:
“Our hope is that this multi-faceted collaboration will lead to the creation of a meaningful, affordable and effective mindfulness intervention that can be delivered to all children across sub-Saharan Africa as part of the primary school curriculum.

We know that mindfulness has proven to be an effective use of resources in countries like the UK where it makes young people happier, improves their performance and helps them develop to their full potential while also producing adults who are less likely to develop mental and physical illnesses and better able to play a full role in society.”

Post-McCrone Management Structures
Professor Graeme Nixon & Dr William Barlow

The development, in the last 20 years, of faculties in secondary schools in Scotland has marked a move away from discrete disciplinary departments. Most secondary schools now have groupings of subjects such as Humanities, Expressive Arts or Science which coalesce subject disciplines into largely cognate faculties.

This development has interested Graeme and Will for some time. Indeed, Graeme (RMPS) and Will (Drama) are former Principal teachers or department heads in secondary schools. Will was also the leader of an Expressive Arts Faculty. In 2020 Graeme co-wrote a paper which suggested that student and probationer teachers were less supported in the faculty model, though this was based on a small case study of only 47 participants.

In November 2021 Graeme and Will launched a national survey of Scottish secondary schools. This elicited 1,282 responses from all grades, roles, and disciplines across the secondary sector. Secondary staff commented on the efficacy of middle management structures using quantitative 5-point LIKERT scales, indicating how faculties and single departments are viewed (from 1 Very Positively to 5 Very Negatively). Will and Graeme have done preliminary data analysis, particularly relating to the 808 participants who have experience of working both within faculty and principal teacher (subject) models of management, who can offer a comparative perspective.

Their quantitative judgements about the efficacy of these systems are offered in terms of 18 questions which include areas such as promotion prospects, behaviour management, student mentoring, subject support, interdisciplinarity, attainment, staff well-being, etc.

The two comparison graphs included here show a very strong negative analysis of the faculty model. This pattern was replicated amongst most of the 18 questions.

The evidence shows that faculties compare unfavourably in the vast majority of responses, and that even in areas central to the rationale for the creation of faculties (such as interdisciplinarity and quality assurance) the evidence is, at best, mixed. The accompanying qualitative responses unpacked these graphs with a fairly damning analysis in terms of, for example, cost cutting, loss of prospects, stress, increased workload and diminishment of subjects. Interestingly, those working currently as faculty heads contributed to this negative analysis.

Will and Graeme presented at SERA 2022 and hope to write multiple papers from their survey as well as submit to the national discussion on Scottish Education. This is a topical area within Scottish education, especially given the current industrial dispute in Dundee City over the introduction of faculties. The Times Educational Supplement has also surfaced Graeme and Will’s research.

TES WEBSITE - ARE SCHOOL FACULTIES ONLY GOOD FOR SAVING MONEY?  
www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/are-school-faculties-only-good-saving-money

TES WEBSITE - SHOULD SCHOOL FACULTIES BE SCRAPPED IN SCOTLAND?  
www.tes.com/magazine/news/secondary/should-school-faculties-be-scrapped-scotland
2021 might have seemed like an odd time to start a new collaboration, as with lockdowns, Covid-19 pressures and adjusting to new ways of working, there was already a lot happening for people working in education. Yet, sometimes a great opportunity emerges that brings people together to work in new and interesting ways. This article is about one of those unique opportunities were the School of Education and the Northern Alliance came together to explore digital methods of retrieval practice.

We, a group, of a diverse range of education professionals, teachers (both primary and secondary) and school leaders, came together online to talk about how we could use the things we had learnt implementing digital tools in the classroom/virtual classroom focusing our attentions to retrieval practice.

We met regularly, online, during the Autumn of 2021 and worked together to think about the different digital tools we were using, often taking away ideas to try out in our own settings.

As we collaborated, we started to think about how we might share our learning with other teachers. In our discussions the idea of creating an e-book on BookCreator was formed. We were keen to provide relevant, accessible and short information about the different retrieval practice techniques we had been exploring and how we were using digital methods to facilitate these in our classrooms. We knew our audience of teachers would be busy and needed something accessible, easy and quick to review. This made BookCreator the perfect hosting platform.

In BookCreator we had flexibility of layout and could embed video, links and information into a format that was easy to read and accessible to all educational professionals.

We have shared our book widely and BookCreator have placed it in their Higher Education book library. It has been used by teachers, in the PGDE Primary Education course and continues to be a great initial point of reference if you are thinking about retrieval practice and digital tools.

The ebook was not the only success of our collaboration. We also co-wrote an article about our experience of working together digitally. In this we explored our experiences and found that the process of sharing our expertise and experience, through a facilitated collaboration enabled us to create a joint piece of work, despite never meeting in person.

Our digital collaboration was a powerful one and one we hope will be replicated again as it bought people from all across the Northern Alliance together to share, learn and create.

If you are interested in reading our book or the article please access these via the following weblinks.

**eBOOK**
https://read.bookcreator.com/library/-MHBL2X6FcrvWYyiUIV/book/UQQHcdjDTNySe7ITX7qqCYLA

**ARTICLE**

CONGRATULATIONS to our student award winners!

A.L ROGER PRIZE
Sam Eldridge, MA2
Awarded to the MA Year 1 student who submits the best piece of academic work.

ANNE MACKIE MEMORIAL PRIZE
Claire Basil-Rattey, MA Graduate 2022
This prize is awarded for excellence in School Experience.

JESS CUTT PRIZE
Nicole Stevenson, MA2
Awarded in recognition of the effort and commitment of a 1st Year Primary School Teaching student, in their course of studies.

KAY PRIZE
Scott Nichol, MA Graduate 2022
Awarded to a Year 4 student who has been recognised by peers and tutors for their academic excellence.

MacGREGOR MEMORIAL PRIZE
Angel McKay, MA Graduate 2022
Awarded to the most exceptional student on placement across years 1-4 of the MA programme.

MACIVER PRIZE
Lindsey Delaney, BA Childhood Practice Graduate 2022
Awarded to the graduating BA Childhood Practice Student who has submitted an exceptional piece of research and enquiry.

RICHARD GREIG PGDE PROFESSIONAL STUDIES AWARD
Emily Neilly, PGDE in Business Education Graduate 2022
Awarded for commitment to social justice and professionalism, which is deemed outstanding.

STEPH SMITH AWARD
Olivia Keller, MA Graduate 2022
Awarded to a Year 4 student who has been recognised by peers and tutors for excellence in Professional Values and Personal Commitment.

“My time at the University of Aberdeen is difficult to sum up. At times, it has been challenging and busy but I will look back on my four years at university with great fondness and remember the fun times I had whilst studying. Studying within the School of Education has been a pleasure and the support from tutors has been remarkable. Whilst I always benefitted from the support of my tutors, this was further exemplified in my final year when my Mum became ill and a number of staff went out of their way to support me. I have made great friends and been given an opportunity to work with incredible teachers on school placements, particularly my final placement mentor whose support and friendship have allowed me to start my probation year knowing that I am the best teacher I can be at this stage. I look forward to developing my practice and learning knowing that I have a great foundation that I have built at the University of Aberdeen. Being the recipient of the Steph Smith award means a lot to me and I truly appreciate how much it means to Steph's family and the staff at the University of Aberdeen. I hope Steph's story continues to inspire future teaching students and they take with them the passion and values that she held.”

Olivia Keller, Steph Smith Awardee

“Dylan Wiliam once stated that “if we create a culture where every teacher believes they need to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better, there is no limit to what we can achieve”. I believe these words typify the inspirational culture I was lucky enough to experience during my time spent with the University of Aberdeen’s School of Education. Not only was I passionately inspired to nurture and challenge others, but also myself. Although I must admit that it came as a complete surprise, I am deeply honoured to have been awarded the Ann Mackie Memorial prize for Excellence in School Experience. I would like to sincerely thank the PGDE team, and Banchory and Braemar Primary Schools as I owe my achievement to their exceptional quality of teaching.”

Claire Basil-Rattey, Anne Mackie Memorial Prize Awardee
Active Schools Aberdeen delivers masterclass in physical education for PDGE students at University of Aberdeen

More than 200 University of Aberdeen postgraduate students on the Professional Graduate Diploma in Primary Education (PGDE) course gathered at the King’s Pavilion Playing Fields on Wednesday 17 August to attend an Active Schools event.

Through continued effective partnership working between Active Schools Aberdeen and University of Aberdeen, the day was organised with the purpose of upskilling the next generation of Primary school teachers – building their confidence in the delivery of physical education (PE).

Two group sessions were planned and organised by Active Schools Coordinator Cameron Robinson – a morning session from 1000 to 1230 and an afternoon session from 1300 to 1530. These were delivered by Active Schools Coordinators from across the city, supported by staff from University of Aberdeen.

The students took part in different sporting activities including touch rugby, football, hockey, athletics and circuits, learned about the practicalities of delivering PE in a classroom environment, and were given a platform to ask questions before going on placement.

This complements the work of the Physical Education, Physical Activity and School Sport (PEPASS) group, consisting of representatives from Aberdeen City Council’s Integrated and Family Services and the Sport and Leisure industry, with the shared goal of improving the quality and access to sport and physical activity.

“Sport and physical activity has a huge role to play in young people’s development and that’s why it’s so important that the experience they have at school is a positive one.

This partnership between Active Schools Aberdeen and University of Aberdeen is a fantastic way to upskill the teachers of the future and give them the confidence they need to provide young people with more and better opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity.

Looking ahead, Active Schools and University of Aberdeen are planning a similar session with the HWB course in the 2nd year of the MA in Education Programme (the 4-year undergraduate programme) and in the second semester of the PGDE[P] programme.”

Ian McGregor, Partnership Manager at SportScotland
“The School of Education at the University of Aberdeen has been working closely with Active Schools Aberdeen and the PEPASS group for a number of years and now that the PGDE (Primary) Programme has returned to campus we were very keen to give our students some practical experiences of PE before they embark on their first placement.

I think it’s fair to say that a lot of fun was had by students and staff alike!

Participation and engagement by students was extremely high, with many talking about how this practical experience gave them more confidence and changed their perceptions of what PE would be like.

It was also great to hear students reflecting on their experiences and asking challenging questions, particularly about inclusion.

What a great opportunity to develop and understand skills and attitudes in physical activity and PE for a new generation of primary teachers.

A huge thanks to everyone involved and we can’t wait to do it again soon!”

Alyson Young, PGDE (Primary) Programme Director at University of Aberdeen

“PE is a crucial part of the primary school curriculum, having a positive impact on children’s physical health and emotional wellbeing.

It’s great to play our part in helping future teachers to develop the fundamental skills and be confident when teaching PE through our successful partnership working with University of Aberdeen.

It’s alarming to see and hear how negative past experiences of PE have stayed with students and teachers into adulthood. Our role is to inspire them to change this for the next generation of school children.

One student commented that they hated PE at school which made them nervous about the event... but by the end of the day, they said they loved it! Everyone took part in every activity, seeing that sport is for all.

I’d like to give a huge thanks to Active Schools Coordinator Cameron Robinson for his responsibility in organising the day, and Alyson Young, Programme Director for the PGDE programme.

We look forward to building on this partnership going forward.”

Kim McRobbie, Active Schools Inclusion Manager

SPORT ABERDEEN

An award-winning registered charity committed to creating opportunities, inspiring people and changing lives through sport and physical activity services on behalf of Aberdeen City Council. For more information about Sport Aberdeen and the services available, please visit: www.sportaberdeen.co.uk

MURDO MACIVER

3rd June 1890 – 16th June 1915

Unfortunately like as many other universities, studies were interrupted with the outbreak of World War One and Two.

Murdo MacIver, was a Corporal with the 4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders. Born in Coll, Stornoway, 3 June 1890, he was educated at the Back Public School and Nicolson Institute, Stornoway. He was a student in Arts, 1911 - 14, combining with attendance at the University his training for the teaching profession, until the start of the first world war that interrupted his studies.

Murdo undertook territorial training with the Ross Mountain Battery during his secondary course at school, then going on to Aberdeen he joined the University Company of the Gordon Highlanders. After training at Bedford, he went to Flanders, where he took part with his Battalion in the very heavy fighting in front of Ypres through the early months of 1915.

Murdo was unfortunately killed in action during the advance against the enemy on 16 June 1915, when “our men behaved magnificently”, and the Gordons covered themselves with glory.
Events

The school Events Team have set up several events throughout the session. Here are some highlights!

**SIGN LANGUAGE WORKSHOP**
International week of the Deaf. We were visited by Heather Gregg and Susan Mair from the Aberdeen School for the Deaf who ran an informative and enlightening workshop for staff.

**MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING**
A fantastic £210 was raised.

**BINGO**
Heads down eyes to the front! LETS PLAY BINGO!

**BREAKOUT GAMES NIGHT**
We broke out!

**INTERNATIONAL POT LUCK LUNCH**
A lunchtime event showing the range of cultures and diversification across the school.

**SUMMER BBQ**
A fun sunny afternoon in June attended by all staff members.
Staff Spotlight

Gordon Stewart  LECTURER, ITE

Picture the scene! It’s Tuesday morning on the 16th September 2008. The MR051 Lecture Theatre begins to fill with lots of fresh young faces, some worried, slightly anxious, but all ready and raring to start their studies. Yes, it’s the first day of BEd 1 at the University of Aberdeen and I was one of those students!

Since a young age, I always wanted to become a Primary School Teacher. At school, I was inspired to go into education by my Primary 5 teacher, who made learning interesting and real for me. In my eyes, Miss Mackay could do no wrong. Since graduation, not much has changed. My passion and enthusiasm for learning has continued, which led me to complete my Masters in 2017 and PGCE in School Leadership in 2020. During my time at university, I enjoyed learning about practitioner pedagogy and studying with my peers. The friendships I made during my time on the BEd programme are still strong today. There are now more children and partners in our Uni friendship group, than initial members.

I recently joined the School of Education in May 2022, but prior to this, I worked in several different schools in Moray in a variety of roles. Throughout my teaching career, I have worked with many fantastic colleagues who continued to inspire me and encourage me to go further within my professional development. As well as being a Primary teacher, I have also been a NQT Probationer Mentor, Depute Head Teacher and latterly the Acting Head Teacher of the same school I attended as a pupil.

Outside of work, I am a very sociable person. I enjoy spending time with friends and travelling to different parts of the country, exploring the islands of Scotland. In October last year, I got married. My wife is a Music Teacher, but has yet to teach me how to play the piano properly! We love a boardgame - Articulate, Catan, Linkee and Quirkle just to name a few. All suggestions are greatly welcomed.

Yukiyo Nishida  LECTURER

‘I have been around the world a couple of times or maybe more, I’ve seen the sites, I’ve had delights on every foreign shore, but when my friends all ask me ‘bout the place that I adore, I tell them right away, Give me a home among the gum tree with lots of plum trees, a sheep or two, a kangaroo, a clothesline out the back, veranda out the front and an old rocking chair’

The song, called ‘Give me a Home Among the Gum Trees’ by Bob Brown and Wally Johnson was once considered to replace ‘God Save the Queen’ as a national anthem in Australia. I wonder if Australia could replace it after the death of Her Majesty the Queen as they always discuss it. Yes, I moved from a land down under where people have Vegemite on toast.

The year 2022 became one of the most unforgettable years of my life. I had a life-changing moment as I moved from Australia to Scotland. I was appointed a new position at the University of Aberdeen. I packed everything, handed over my jobs to my colleagues and left Australia. It was an amazing journey as I did everything in a month. I joined the School of Education on the 18th of July and started a new chapter of my life in Aberdeen. Although I still miss the sunshine and ‘no worries, mate!’ easy-going life in Australia, I am happy to have moved to Scotland.

Now, I would like to talk about my new life in Aberdeen. My Scottish friends in Australia who migrated from Scotland to Australia told me that Scotland is the most beautiful country on the planet. Therefore, I always wanted to live in Scotland. I used to watch the BBC drama ‘Shetland’ and the BBC travel show Scotland in Australia. I wish to visit all of the places I have seen on TV. Now, I think that I am ready for the Scottish winter- look at me!
Student & Alumni Spotlight

Nathan Fry  ALUMNI, MASTERS OF EDUCATION (EARLY YEARS) (ONLINE) 2022

Studying a Masters was an opportunity that when I started teaching I hadn’t considered or thought about, but as I moved to China to continue my career, I found that often materials, curriculum and the learning was designed for native monolingual learners. So through my interest in making my teaching and learning the best it could be for my students, I looked for courses that would increase my knowledge specifically around Language and literacy learning in my current context. That is exactly what I found at the University of Aberdeen. A three year, part time course that is tailored around your needs and a typical school calendar.

While studying my research became focused around the use of bilingual instruction in the early years, critically challenging the current practices and sources of information. With the assistance and guidance of my tutors and lecturers, I developed a plan to complete an action research project with my students and their parents. The research delved into the use of language separation and flexible bilingualism, in the early years and progressed with the children and parents input. The findings were interesting and culturally influenced. The data showed that the desire of the students’ parents for language separation, also reflected positively in the students engagement, comprehension and bilingual language development.

I would love to continue my studies further and with the guidance and academic skills I have gained from the University of Aberdeen, I now feel confident that I could complete and publish additional research in this area.

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Research Activity

Publications


Reports


Presentations

25-27 MAY 2022
Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) Spring Conference 2022, Teacher Education and Practice: Foresight and Hindsight, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin 25th to 27th May 2022.


1-10 SEPTEMBER 2022


6-8 SEPTEMBER 2022
British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, 6-8 September 2022, University of Liverpool.

• Shanks, R. (2022) Equalities in school uniform.


14 SEPTEMBER 2022

20-23 SEPTEMBER 2022


3 OCTOBER 2022

Papers

3 NOVEMBER 2022

24 NOVEMBER 2022

OCTOBER 2022

18 OCTOBER 2022
UK Anti-slavery Day event at University of Aberdeen 18th October 2022.


• Shanks, R. (2022) “Making School Uniforms Affordable, Fair and Sustainable”.

20-21 OCTOBER 2022

10 NOVEMBER 2022

13 NOVEMBER 2022