

# PEACEPLUS ASPIRE

NEWSLETTER

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## PEACEPLUS ASPIRE GOOD RELATIONS WEEK SYMPOSIUM

The PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Good Relations Symposium, held at the Crowne Plaza, Belfast on 16th October 2025, brought together educators for interactive workshops centred on the theme 'Connect' in Shared Education. The event, a flagship of Good Relations Week, celebrated the achievements of the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE initiative, with keynote speaker Willie Anderson inspiring attendees on leadership and unity, and moving presentations from young participants highlighting the impact of the project. The five workshops delivered by various organisations explored innovative approaches for fostering inclusivity and good relations in schools and settings.



## PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Children from Kidkare Montessori and Tinytots 2 Teens enjoyed a festive adventure to the decorated Community Christmas windows at a local business, where they were warmly welcomed by staff and transition placement students. The children sang their well-practised carols and gifted a giant bauble featuring their school logos and the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE logo for the store's main tree. They posted their Santa letters and enjoyed treats. Four groups, including 120 children, educators, and parents, made this joyful celebration of Christmas within their community possible.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: EDUCATE TOGETHER

Educate Together presented their Culturally & Socially Responsive Practices Module at the Good Relations Week Symposium, sharing practical approaches for creating inclusive, nurturing school environments. The session explored how schools can move beyond safe spaces into brave spaces that build acceptance, understanding and belonging, and highlighted the value of EPL in supporting teachers to embed these practices with confidence. Link to access the course: [Log in to the site | EducateTogether](#)



# PEACEPLUS ASPIRE TALKS PODCAST SERIES

PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Talks is a podcast series developed by PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Project team in partnership with EATV and has been streamed throughout term one on Spotify, Amazon Music, Apple Podcast and PEACEPLUS ASPIRE websites. The series celebrates innovative shared education initiatives in preschool, primary and post primary settings in North and South of Ireland. The six episodes showcase educators dedicated to creating inclusive, collaborative experiences.



The series explores how student leadership is nurtured, and how cultural diversity and language are woven into school partnerships. It also showcases the integration of digital technology, the building of strong inter-school relationships, and the transformative effects of outdoor and nature-based learning. Throughout each episode, listeners discover how joint efforts and creative approaches drive progress and connection in education, making a meaningful difference for pupils, staff, and wider communities. All episodes are available to stream.

## PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

In October, children from Bangor Integrated Nursery School and Newtownards Nursery School visited the forest school at Clandeboye Estate for a morning of outdoor play and an Autumn walk together. The session was an opportunity for the children to learn, explore and make new connections in nature.

The children will continue visiting each other's settings to link in with their new friends. They will also be making use of digital technology, holding online sessions where the children will contact each other through video streaming and send videos and stories to each other.



## POST PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

Two secondary schools in Dundalk, St Vincent's School and Dundalk Grammar School, recently launched a project involving over 160 Transition Year students. The initiative aims to build inclusive and supportive communities through shared educational and cultural experiences, enabling students to engage meaningfully with local nursing home residents and people living with dementia. Throughout the year, they will take part in activities that encourage dialogue, bridge generational gaps, and foster compassion and inclusion.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKERS

Primary School teachers involved in PEACEPLUS ASPIRE attended Professional Learning sessions on Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Omagh and Belfast, led by Kevin McArevey, Principal Holy Cross Boys School, Belfast and Rachael Armstrong, Shared Education Coordinator. The session focused on using philosophical enquiry as a tool to develop critical thinking, empathy and dialogue among children and the impact of this on wellbeing, classroom culture, and personal growth



## POST PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

As part of their post primary partnership students from Methodist College, Malone Integrated College, Coláiste Feirste, and St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School, all based in Belfast, have come together to prepare for the First Tech Challenge. The robotics competition, called Decode, involves teams designing, building and programming robots to compete in an alliance format against other teams, in W5, Belfast. Competition participants learn engineering skills and work collaboratively to solve problems. The challenge focuses on unlocking the mysteries of the world's artifacts through strategy, innovation, and teamwork.

Students are looking forward to having the support of an engineer at a future session, who will introduce them to essential design principles and guide their creative process.



## PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

In November, St Mary's PS Nursery Unit were delighted to host Omagh Integrated Nursery Unit for their second Shared Education session so far this year. The children enjoyed a themed Pilates session, moving through the 'Stick Man' story. They also explored and experimented with resources in the nursery classroom and outdoor play area. This exciting day focused on developing gross motor skills, following instructions, and understanding movement-related vocabulary - all while building friendships and fostering inclusion.



## PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between St. Mary's BNS, St. Louis GNS and Urbleshanny NS shows a shared commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Together in Monaghan, the schools serve a growing mix of pupils from many cultural and international backgrounds, working intentionally to ensure every child feels welcomed, represented and supported. This year, the partnership is focusing on the Wellbeing Curriculum, with pupils developing emotional awareness, conflict-management skills, and an appreciation of differences through activities such as movement circuits, art, yoga, and relaxation. Through collaboration with community organisations, pupils will also learn cycling skills while exploring their local area.



## DIGITAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

During October and November, PEACEPLUS ASPIRE successfully delivered Digital Educator Professional Learning sessions to 176 educators across pre-school, primary and post primary settings, focusing on practical digital skills with tools such as Google & Gemini, Just2easy, Prodigy Learning Coding, DreamSpace Minecraft, Adobe, Microsoft 0365, and CoPilot. These sessions focused on equipping educators with strategies and practical skills, that align with the curriculum, and integrate technology effectively, support digital literacy and problem-solving in key subjects.



## PRESCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Children from Laurel Hill in Castleblayney and Little Explorers Culloville, accompanied by several parents, met in the Square in Crossmaglen for a shared session focused on the theme of “people in the community who help us.” Previously the children had visited The Hidden Village role-play centre, where they explored child-sized replicas of various businesses and community spaces. Within their own settings, the children had also been learning about the different roles of community helpers.

During the visit, the children met two members of the police service, who spoke to them about their role in supporting the community, the importance of road safety, and how to stay visible when walking outdoors.

Children then participated in a guided tour of the local community, visiting veterinary practice, library, a local councillor’s office, and concluding at the supermarket - where they were treated to hot food and a Christmas gift.



## PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

Pupils from Knocknagor Primary School and Queen Elizabeth II Primary School recently came together for their first Shared Education pupil activity session under the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE programme.

The initiative, designed to foster friendship, outdoor learning, and digital skills, saw 46 excited pupils from Knocknagor PS join their 29 counterparts from Queen Elizabeth II PS for a day of interactive activities in the scenic Parkanaur Forest, facilitated by the Speedwell Trust.

From orienteering and forest trails to team games filled with laughter, the day was a celebration of connection, collaboration and friendship.



## COORDINATOR TRAINING

PEACEPLUS ASPIRE recently hosted a series of Teacher Professional Learning sessions in Coleraine, Cookstown, and Belfast to support and empower new Shared Education Coordinators.

These sessions brought together dedicated educators to collaborate, share ideas, and learn strategies for building inclusive, cross-community partnerships in their schools. Through interactive workshops and peer learning, participants developed practical skills and a strong support network. The enthusiasm and engagement at each venue reflected a shared commitment to fostering inclusive education.



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For more information on the project please contact:

### Education Authority

PEACEPLUSASPIRE@eani.org.uk

### Léargas

PEACEPLUSASPIRE@léargas.ie

### Early Years- the organisation for young children

PPAspire.preschool@early-years.org

### National Childhood Network

info@NCN.ie