

# PEACEPLUS ASPIRE

NEWSLETTER

JAN- MAR 2026

## NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

PEACEPLUS ASPIRE took part in the most recent North South Ministerial Council Education Sectoral, highlighting the projects impactful work in Shared Education and cross-border collaboration.

Through Shared Education, the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE project brings children and young people together to build understanding, respect and lasting connections across communities, supporting peace and reconciliation. PEACEPLUS ASPIRE helps to create a society where differences are celebrated and communities thrive together.



## PRE-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

In February, children from Millburn Community Playgroup and Playhouse Activity Centre came together to celebrate culture, music and creativity - with parents playing a central role in the experience.

The session began with parent volunteer Jessica leading the Jerusalema dance from South Africa, bringing together children, families and staff.

The children then explored rhythm through a multicultural drumming workshop, supported by parents and staff.

The session ended with live saxophone music from parent volunteer Clement, providing a calm and celebratory close to the joyful event.



## PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

In January more than 200 Primary 4 pupils from Ballyholme PS, Bangor Central IPS and Rathmore PS, all located in Bangor, came together at Blair Mayne Leisure Centre in Newtownards for a large-scale collaborative learning event.

The schools organised a carousel of team-building activities, including guiding blindfolded partners through a simple obstacle course, working together to keep balloons in the air, and a range of other cooperative challenges.

Pupils wore beautifully designed T-shirts that encouraged immediate mixing across schools.

The session was expertly facilitated by teachers, classroom assistants and the Blair Mayne leadership team.



## LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

PEACEPLUS ASPIRE held two sessions on 'Leading a highly effective shared education partnership' - one in Newry, in January, and one in Antrim, in February.

There were 71 attendees representing Preschool settings, Primary and Post Primary, North and South of Ireland and the sessions were delivered by Mark Barr and Peter Geoghegan, retired ETI Inspectors.

The sessions explored:

- Essential leadership skills and attributes for collaborative leadership
- Key evidence sources for effective and accurate evaluation of provision
- Necessary skills, attitudes, and dispositions for focused discussions on learning and teaching within Shared Education

The next session will be held in Letterkenny, on 17 April 2026, with another date and location to be confirmed soon. Don't miss out and register [here!](#)



## POST-PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

Post-Primary pupils from St Columba's College Stranorlar and Strabane Academy recently travelled to Derry - Londonderry, where they took part in a guided tour of Guildhall and the Tower Museum.

The visit took the pupils on a journey through time, reflecting on key milestones from the city's history, concluding with a workshop on improving local communities.

During the session, pupils also had the opportunity to participate in a short mock debate in the council chamber, actively engaging with democratic life.

This session highlighted the importance of collaboration and partnership working in supporting young people to grow and develop within a diverse, shared society.



## PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

A burst of colour, rhythm and imagination swept through the community as Ashlea PS, Chapel Road PS, Culmore PS and Oakgrove IPS recently embarked on an exciting creative arts programme designed to spark confidence, collaboration and creativity in pupils, co-delivered by Greater Shantallow Community Arts and Studio2.

The initiative brings together children from across the participating schools to explore a wide range of expressive activities, including arts and crafts, dance, singing, drama and even podcasting.

With specialist facilitators leading each session, pupils are encouraged to experiment, take creative risks and discover new talents.



## PEACEPLUS ASPIRE TALKS: SERIES 2

This series features engaging conversations with educational experts on Shared Education and practitioners from preschool, primary and post-primary settings, who are delivering Shared Education to children and young people.

Listeners will gain valuable perspectives from educational experts who share their approaches to fostering collaboration, pupil voice, and inclusive practices in Shared Education.



Through interviews with educators actively involved in the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE programme, episodes highlight the practical implementation of Shared Education, the significance of pupil voice, and child-centred approaches.

By drawing on real-life examples and established models such as the Lundy Model of Participation, the series provides valuable guidance and inspiration for educators committed to embedding Shared Education in their everyday practice.



### PRE-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Barnesmore Montessori and Donegal Playgroup spent a shared session almost entirely outdoors.

Children of all abilities and multiple cultures participated. The intentionally prepared garden created a space where everyone could connect. The children communicated through the universal language of play.

In line with Aistear, the session was child-led as children climbed, built, took risks and solved problems together using natural open-ended materials.

Teamwork, inclusion and new friendships naturally emerged.

The educators played an important role by thoughtfully preparing the environment and supporting the children's ideas, allowing collaboration, confidence and a strong sense of belonging to flourish.



### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The PEACEPLUS ASPIRE project delivered a two-day professional learning course, 'Conflict, Memory and Meaning', at the Ulster Museum

Centred on the BBC documentary Once Upon a Time in Northern Ireland, the event enabled educators to engage with powerful personal testimonies and lived experiences, supporting deeper reflection on themes including conflict, trauma, memory, identity, and reconciliation.

The resource provided a compelling foundation for exploring the human impact of the Troubles within a safe, structured, and curriculum-aligned framework.



The ASPIRE project is supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

For more information on the project please contact:

**Education Authority**  
PEACEPLUSASPIRE@eani.org.uk

**Léargas**  
PEACEPLUSASPIRE@leargas.ie

**Early Years- the organisation for young children**  
PPAspire.preschool@early-years.org

**National Childhood Network**  
info@NCN.ie