

FESTIVAL OF LEARNING

Educators gathered at the Millennium Forum on 29 April 2026 for the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Festival of Learning, celebrating collaboration and shared education across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

The event highlighted the impact of cross-community partnerships in schools and early years settings, with speakers including Professor Tony Gallagher, Cheryl Stafford and Peter Day focusing on the value and future of shared education. Interactive sessions and networking also gave participants the chance to share experiences, reflect on progress and explore how these partnerships can continue to grow.



PRESENTATIONS AT FESTIVAL OF LEARNING

Partnerships from pre-school, primary and post-primary settings shared presentations with educators at the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Festival of Learning event.

Speakers shared how they overcame challenges and highlighted the benefit of partnership working for children, young people, their families, educators and local communities

Link below to watch partnership showcases from the Festival of Learning:
<https://ow.ly/5HjL50Z7TS5>



PRE-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

In May, the children at St John the Baptist Nursery School and Edenderry Nursery School came together for a session focusing on eco-activities and community engagement.

Together, they planted flowers which were donated to local care homes, helping the children develop teamwork and collaboration, while supporting their wider community. They were joined by Lord Mayor Alderman Stephen Moutray and Simon Quinn from the Portadown Wellness Garden Centre, who donated the flowers.



POST-PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

Students from Lecale Trinity Grammar School and Down High School recently came together for a shared residential at Lorne House as part of the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE programme.

Through outdoor learning, team-building activities and discussions on inclusion and diversity, the programme helped strengthen friendships, encourage collaboration and promote greater understanding between the two school communities.

The experience also forms part of a wider partnership project, including a community mural that will be unveiled in Downpatrick in the coming weeks.



PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

Pupils at Holy Cross Boys' School recently took part in a live Philosophy session following workshops led by Principal Kevin McAreevey on developing critical thinking skills.

Using the story The Playground Puzzle, the Primary 7 class explored themes such as equality, diversity, belonging and self-acceptance, while visiting teachers observed and joined the discussion.

The session offered a thoughtful insight into how philosophical enquiry can help young people reflect deeply, listen respectfully and value the perspectives of others, while giving visiting teachers a valuable opportunity to see these skills being developed in a live classroom setting.

Pupils also shared thoughtful reflections on fairness and difference, showing a mature understanding of inclusion and the importance of respecting others.



PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between Gaelscoil na gCeithre Máistrí and Scoil Naomh Chaitríona places cultural diversity and inclusion at its heart. Through projects such as "Teach Me A Word", where pupils share words from their native languages, and through cultural celebration days, the schools are creating a community where difference is valued and celebrated.

Most recently, the schools hosted an Intercultural Celebration Day in Ballyshannon, bringing together families and local community members to share food, traditions, jewellery and information from countries including Hungary, Great Britain, India, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Poland, Ireland and Ukraine.

Pupils, staff and parents visited each stand, learning about the cultures represented in their school communities. The event highlighted how celebrating diversity can strengthen relationships and build a stronger sense of belonging for everyone.



PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

Creelough National School, a small Church of Ireland school, and Scoil Náisiúnta Glasáin, an Irish-medium school, recently celebrated the end of a year-long shared programme with a community event.

The partnership focused on wellbeing, inclusion and building stronger community connections through shared learning.

The celebration brought together pupils, parents, staff and community leaders, with highlights including poetry performances in Irish, English and Ukrainian, alongside the unveiling of a mosaic created with a local artist.

The artwork, celebrating the individuality and diversity of pupils and their families, will now be permanently displayed in the local Day Centre, marking a lasting symbol of the relationships built through the programme.

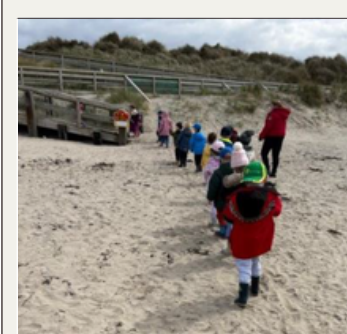


PRE-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Children, staff and parents from Kid Kare Montessori and Tiny Tots 2 Teens recently took part in a shared learning experience at Rossnowlagh Beach as part of the PEACEPLUS ASPIRE programme.

Supported by Quality Mentor Aoife and William with the Friends of Rossnowlagh group, the session brought both settings, families and the wider community

together for a beach clean-up activity, giving children the chance to learn about caring for their local environment while exploring the shoreline.



PEACEPLUS ASPIRE TALKS PODCAST

Don't forget to tune into PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Talks: Shared Education podcast series. You can catch up on all previous episodes.

Available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music and PEACEPLUS ASPIRE webpage: <https://ow.ly/7wMw50X4iR7>



COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Collaboration days held in Dungannon, Dublin and Monaghan brought PEACEPLUS ASPIRE Development Officers and Quality Mentors together to share learning, align approaches and strengthen consistency across the project.

Led by Early Years, Léargas and NCN, the sessions strengthened collaboration and improved communication between partners.



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@léargas.ie

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

National Childhood Network
info@NCN.ie