



# Teach Peace

Report on the pilot year

April 2023 - March 2024

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## **Context: Empowering Teachers for a Peaceful Europe**

In today's interconnected world, where conflicts and tensions persist despite advancements in technology and communication, the significance of peace education cannot be overstated. Particularly in Europe, a continent marked by a complex history of wars and divisions, projects like Teach Peace play a pivotal role in fostering understanding, reconciliation, and empathy among individuals and communities.

## **Educating the Mind to Counter Extremism and Radicalisation**

In an era marked by rising extremism and radicalisation, governments are increasingly investing in preventive measures to safeguard societal cohesion and resilience. Teach Peace serves as a potent antidote to extremist ideologies by promoting a vision of common humanity. By fostering critical consciousness and resilience against manipulation, Teach Peace empowers educators to strengthen inclusive environments where students learn first-hand about the mind and its potential.

## **Educating the Heart to Build Sustainable Peace**

Sustainable peace entails not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of conditions conducive to social justice, equity, and reconciliation. Teach Peace lays the groundwork for sustainable peace by equipping educators with tools to address root causes of violence, promote dialogue across divides, and foster a culture of mutual respect and cooperation among students. By educating the heart of future generations of peacemakers and change agents, Teach Peace contributes to the long-term stability and prosperity of European societies.

Teach Peace projects in the six participating schools have come in on-schedule and in-budget (€5,000 per school). Within a similar general structure, each school devised a specific Teach Peace intervention according to its unique circumstances. One key feature in several schools was the quality of the relationship between the Teach Peace trainer and the main teacher(s) in the school. It has become clear that a 'whole-school approach' takes time, and relies chiefly on the commitment from teachers. The most successful projects empower teachers to go beyond their perceived shortcomings and, through 'embodiment', take charge of generating a culture of peace in their classroom, and, thereby, empower their students also to become agents of peace.

### Strengths

- The model of reaching and empowering current teachers in schools (who are already advocates of Peace education) short-cuts the preliminaries phases of 'cold-calling' schools and maximises chances of a project being initiated.
- Giving trainers and schools the flexibility to tailor the intervention according to the trainer's experience and the school's needs greatly increases chances of the project taking off.
- Clear guidelines, timeline and 'conditions' [e.g. at least 8 teachers undertaking a course of at least 15 hours] ensure the project establishes roots in the school.

### Key principles for success

Trainers shared their insights into future Teach Peace projects.

- **Embodiment** is the key. All staff taking part need to be in a place where they want to develop themselves individually; they see the benefits for themselves and then actively want to share that with pupils.
- **School context** is important, including Teach Peace's ability to understand and contribute towards school policy.
- Initially being flexible with content to create a **good connection with staff** allows them to engage, and then be introduced to contemplative practices.
- Finding a **balance** between teachers practicing themselves and having tools to introduce to their students.

### Challenge

Schools, and teachers in particular, are over-loaded with time-pressures. Multiple worthy projects don't even start, let alone reach fruition because little time and low priority is given to 'non-essential' initiatives. Teach Peace will need to continue to find innovative ways to address this situation.

## Pilot year in numbers

LOCATION	SCHOOL	LEAD TRAINER	OTHER TRAINERS	PEACE CHAMPION (Teacher in School)	TEACHERS TRAINED	STUDENTS REACHED (as of March 2024)	
Wavre, Belgium (French)	l'Orangerie-Tilleul (Primary, 3-11years)	Sophie Hardy			22	271	
Badajoz, SW Spain	Amalia (Primary, 5-12years)	Vicki Martin Moreno		Rosa Cebrián	13	191	
Glasgow, Scotland	St. Cadoc's (Primary, 5-12years)	Neil Fogg	Fiona Clarke	Neil Fogg	9	180	
Barcelona, NE Spain	Bitàcola (Secondary, 12-18years)	Germán Rodriguez			24	26	
Wicklow, Ireland (English)	St. Patrick's (Primary, 5-12years)	Fiona Clarke			9	160	
Berlin, Germany	Gustave-Eifel Secondary (14years)	Marc Schneider			6	35	
			<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>83</b>	<b>863</b>	

## L'Orangerie, Belgium

Teach Peach trainer: Sophie Hardy



Sophie's enthusiasm and efficiency was key in the set-up of this project. Two schools participated jointly, Orangerie - the lead school - and Tilleul. The large group of 22 teachers was a challenge, though did not seem to hinder intimacy or depth in the sessions. One teacher, who was initially reluctant to the training's content, has subsequently been enthusiastic at integrating the principles into her classroom, with a 'Zen corner'.

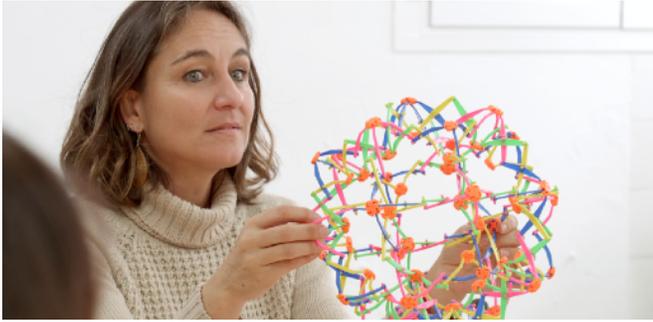


Several teachers felt that after the training, they were still not confident to lead guided exercises themselves. They have been opting for 'pressing play' on audio recordings from experienced voices.

### Teacher Testimonials

*This training course is enriching on both a personal and professional level. The trainer guarantees a spirit of benevolence and respect, essential to the success of the course and the commitment of each participant. It's a course that offers concrete, directly usable tools.*

*I'm not personally interested in all these relaxation methods and I confess I was a bit "resistant" to this training. But the fact that I wasn't forced to do any of the relaxation exercises, and all the little tips that were given over the course meant that actually I really enjoyed it! As a result, a little "Zen" corner has been created in my classroom, and the children (and myself) are delighted.*



Rosa, the head teacher of one of the three small schools participating, approached Teach Peace requesting a trainer. Vicki held some of the training sessions online and visited the school for several training sessions.

The dynamic, interactive sessions offered by experienced trainer Vicki use multiple hand-gestures and 'props' to hold attention. This made for high engagement from both staff and students. In order for staff to further 'embody' the principles of mindfulness and compassion, Vicki is planning to lead a short retreat for teachers next year. The aim is that after 3 years the schools will have enough expertise and experience amongst staff to no longer rely on Vicki's input.

### Teacher Testimonials

*The Teach Peace training has had a great impact on me, both personally and professionally. I feel more connected with myself, which has the effect of more kindness towards myself, and also towards my colleagues and students. This has led to a better classroom climate, where students are learning that recognising and expressing emotions is something positive and beneficial for their health, both physical and mental.*



Neil, centre right in staff group photo, approached Teach Peace hoping to bring mindfulness to his school, where he is a highly respected member of staff. He had previously lead mindfulness classes for staff. He ran a new mindfulness course as part of the project. Fiona, from UK charity Mind With Heart, was brought in to train teachers in how to introduce exercises to students.

### **Staff Mindfulness Course Content Overview**

Week 1 included The Unsettled Mind, Settling the Mind and the Body Scan

Week 2: Body Scan and Memories of kindness

Week 3: Settling, Grounding, Resting, Support of sound and Loving Kindness for Other

Week 4: Settling, Grounding, Resting, Support of Breath and Loving Kindness for self and other

Week 5: Noticing the Undercurrent and Safe Place

Week 6: Noticing the Undercurrent, Mindful movement, Mindful walking

Week 7: Mindful walking, RAIN and Widening Circle of Loving Kindness

Week 8: Practices for the workplace: Self compassion break and 3 stage breathing space

Fiona's **6-hour workshop** was focused on teachers gaining experience and confidence in holding a range of mindfulness, SEL and compassion exercises for children. The workshop also included exercises for teachers' own nourishment.

Fiona demonstrated how not to hold an exercise – including the common mistakes of guiding too quickly, without embodying/ meaning the words, moving and being distracted while guiding, and using commanding rather than invitational language.

Teachers explored different ways of creating a conducive atmosphere using supports such as bell, music, poetry, stories, videos, mega-timers, hobermann spheres, and a 'quiet zone' in the classroom.

Teachers also looked at guiding practices in a trauma-sensitive way, working with special needs, with resistance, and the importance of choice and autonomy. Fiona shared some movement and breathing-based exercises for energising or calming children.

From several of the staff testimonials, it is clear that completing a mindfulness course together had a positive impact on relationships between colleagues, and on the general staffroom atmosphere.

#### Teacher Testimonials

*I got a lot out of the Teach Peace training personally. I am looking forward to passing on this positive experience / strategies for life to the pupils in front of me. As an aside, I also enjoyed being in a group of colleagues, that I wouldn't necessarily have been with naturally, with the aim of improving the feelings around our school.*

*The Teach Peace training has already had a big impact on myself and my own mental wellbeing. I feel like I have formed better relationships with my colleagues having experienced the training with them and from the inputs I have done so far with my children I can see that there is a sense of calm and engagement from everyone.*



Germán had a very organic and compassionate approach to bringing this secondary school on board. One particularity of the project is that the school management requested all 24 teaching staff attend the training (upper photo). These factors mean that a deep process was undertaken regarding the vision of the school, including offering a workshop with parents (lower photo), but students have yet to be introduced to the principles.

The content of the staff training sessions are focused on three pillars: Connection, Communication and the Cultivation of inner space. Materials were shared on restorative practices, non-violent communication and contemplative techniques.

All staff were introduced to a basic meditation practice, making explicit the need for 'inner skills' when addressing conflict and developing societal peace.

The fact of having presented tools for Non-Violent Communication and Restorative Practices as part of the programme made it easier to introduce and "justify" the need for meditation techniques.

## Training Content Outline

Block 1

SESSION 1: 25/9/23, 3:30 - 5PM

Introduction

Activity: "The Causes Chart"

Meditation

SESSION 2: 27/9/23, 3:30 - 5PM

Play: "Do you trust your neighbours?"

Activity: "Enquiry"

Meditation

SESSION 3: 2/10/23, 3:30 - 5PM

Play: "The empty space" and "I like your vibe"

Activity: "The 36 Needs"

The 5 restorative principles

Meditation

Block 2

SESSION 4: 27/11/23, 3:30 - 5PM

Meditation and explanation of "Equanimity"

Adolescence and meditation practice

Activity: "the 16 Guidelines"

SESSION 5: 29/11/23, 3:30 - 5PM

Building Balance Empathy

Activity: "BBE Charts"

Videos of Brené Brown and Dr. Dacher Keltner

SESSION 6: 4/12/23, 3:30 - 5PM

Review of all of the contents of the training

The 8 verses to educate the mind

Introduction to group work in 'teams'

Block 3

SESSION 7: 14/2/24, 3:30 - 5PM

Presentation: working in groups

Discussion on implementation

SESSION with families: 16/1/24 6-7PM

Introduction to Teach Peace

Explaining the programme

Mindfulness meditation

SESSION with the student 'class representatives' 23/1/24 10-11AM

16 attitudes as a guideline for our social cohesion

Exercise: "how our mind behaves?"

### Teacher Testimonials : the impact of the training on professional life

*I can apply in the group what I usually do with one student.*

*I now have skills to manage relations with students.*

*It's possible to manage emotions, and conflicts as well, from a place of empathy.*

### Suggestions

*Let's have a session with students and teachers together. It would be good to cultivate connections between, for example, student representative and tutors.*



The programme consisted of three main elements :

- Mind With Heart's *Connected Educators*, a **9 week training** via Zoom (top left photo) in personal well-being, inner peace, healthy relationships, and basic guiding of mindfulness practices for children
- *Connecting for Primary Schools* – a **4-hour workshop** for holding a range of mindfulness, SEL and compassion exercises for children
- A celebratory **day retreat** for teachers' personal well-being practicing mindfulness, embodied listening, mindful walking, compassion and meditative arts (top right photo)

Online training via Zoom was the teachers' preferred method of delivery. A detailed follow-up email for each session gave a complete summary of the sessions (and included 7 bite-size videos and links to all audios used). For anyone who missed a session, the trainer, Fiona, offered a catchup 15 minutes just before subsequent session. This modelled good practice in emphasising the importance of continuity.

Several of the **challenges** at St Patrick's were also evident in other schools.

Some teachers practised mindfulness exercises between sessions but some didn't. Teacher's availability for in-person workshop was limited because of conflicting priorities, and the general level of school activity. There was no teacher really championing the project (unlike St Cadoc's). The main teacher liaising with Teach Peace had a young family (who were sometimes sick). She was also undertaking a Masters course in her spare time.

Moving towards a 'whole-school approach', there is a clear need to involve parents. The **plan** for next year will include asking parents what they need. One possibility will be to design a series of emotional intelligence workshops for parents.

### Teacher Testimonials

*During the course Fiona encouraged us to lead the practices ourselves instead of using videos. I was of course nervous but I was also very adamant that the children wouldn't enjoy listening to me as I am the voice that is constantly giving instruction and giving out when needed. Therefore I felt my voice wouldn't instil calm. However as the weeks went on, I plucked up the courage and started leading practices myself in class. After a couple of weeks I asked the kids which they preferred, the Youtube version or myself doing the practices. They were all in agreement that they much preferred me leading the practice. I was genuinely shocked, couldn't believe that my voice could actually create such calm... I am very glad I pushed myself to do it, and I appreciate all the support.*

## Gustave-Eifel, Germany

Teach Peace trainer: Marc Schneider



Marc's project in Berlin was a late addition. In addition, the project targeted adolescents who were having difficulty in main-stream education. As such ,the project was significantly different from other Teach Peace interventions.

Marc's project was based on the existing 'Frei-day' project <https://frei-day.org/der-frei-day/lernformat/> and included training facilitators to work with the adolescents one day per week using alternative pedagogies where facilitators are 'buddies' rather than 'teachers', including focusing activity around preparing a meal.

## **Facilitator-Training : building healthy relationships**

- 3 sessions (each 5 hours)

### Session I

Holding yourself: Basics - working with oneself

Basic methods

Non-violent communication (questioning techniques, SMART, PURE)

Deep listening (children's rights, 54/3 parts), stress/pressure

Value formation & perception (deep dive reflection & contemplation)

- Value framework for collaboration as facilitators, with students, in the context of education for sustainable development (12 values)

- Basic meditation techniques (mindfulness of body, emotions, thoughts and perception)

- study material for self-paced study

- role out of a workshop day with students, rules and methods

### Session II

Holding groups: Methods - working with young people (KiezRebellen)

Empathy and compassion exercises, group dynamics

Drama triangle, bullying, trauma, perception (film: The Brain Paradox)

- value framework, deep dive

### Session III:

Holding workshops: Specifications - building regenerative educational landscapes

alternative format for inspiration to develop workshops: FreiDay/FreeDay (ESD), learning islands & apps, TUMO

Partner work & role play, basics of constellation work

Civic engagement/heroes, stars & men/women of honour

### **Plans for the coming year**

- Find new networks, extending communication to reach more teachers interested
- Cultivate links with potential trainers, to grow capacity
- Start organising a conference to raise profile and galvanise support

### **Questions for the coming year**

We predict that a sustainable 'whole school approach' could take three years to set up. Are we prepared to fund a single school for three consecutive years?

The current prediction of growth is about five new schools every year. What is the financial forecast for the second and third years? And how are we planning to fund future projects?

Is the current level of 'research' adequate? If not, what is our strategy?

What indicators of success should we be using, in addition to those already in place?

We have several trainers interested in running project at university level. What conditions are we stipulating for projects aimed at 18-24 year olds, and their educators?

Are we ready to run a Teach Peace Instagram (or other social media) account? If so, what are the advantages?

Are we ready to look for a Celebrity Ambassador? If so, how to go about this?