

Targets	How you have worked on this	An example can be found on
Target 1- Consider using the 'read aloud' function in word alongside proofreading. This can help easily identify incorrect vocabulary, spellings and long sentences.	I have used the read aloud function as well as proofreading my work to identify mistakes. I have also used the suggested corrections function on my word to identify and correct any incorrect spelling.	When doing this I identified many mistakes throughout regarding my grammar and have hopefully corrected these where necessary.
Target 2- Continue to develop a supported critical approach throughout, continuing to offer the opposing view whenever possible.	While researching for this module, I have researched for opposing views of references that I have found.	I believe I found and included sufficient opposing views within my literature review, demonstrating the understanding of viewing opinions from different angles.
Target 3- Continue to synthesise research into your writing to aid the support of your key points.	Used my own wording more within the assignment, attempting to give my view on the different references used, rather than using direct quotes.	I have paraphrased majority of the references found to incorporate my own wording. I have also tried to include my personal synthesis after references to show my understanding of the information read.

ECAD5009-C

Written response - A proposal for a school community project (4000 words)

Word count (Excluding reference list, targets, title and appendix): 3,701

The aim of this assignment is to bestow a Welsh school with a community project proposal to support and excel pupils in key stage two's learning, both within and outside of school. During the assignment, I will be referring to the relevant school as 'school A', ensuring that all identifying features are concealed to certify complete anonymity and confidentiality (BERA, 2024).

The focus will be on parental engagement, with the main driver being to build a positive school and family relationship that will support increasing pupil learning experiences. According to the Welsh Government (2016), a school's positive and consistent engagement with parents and carers can provide many holistic benefits to pupils learning, including improved behaviour and attainment, as well as providing the school with a favourable reputation and morale among the community.

The project proposal is mathematics lessons for parents and carers, hosted by the school. All parents and carers will be given the opportunity to attend and learn about their child's mathematics and numeracy lessons by gaining insight on what methods the school and their children use to support their learning. The aim of the project is to help parents understand how to better support their children at home. Mathematics is an ongoing issue within the Welsh education system, as the mathematic attainment in schools has not progressed over the years, as the Welsh education assembly had hoped (Welsh Government, 2023), therefore, action needs to be taken to overcome the present issue. Consequently, the proposed school community project is relevant to the current issues within Welsh education and can provide many learning rich opportunities to the schools, parents, and most importantly, the pupils. It is specified on 'school A's' website (██████████ 2024), that working with parents and the community is one of their key strengths, indicating that they already actively involve parents and the community in their school-based projects. This foreshadows a positive outlook on the project, as strong engagement from parents already exists, suggesting that parental projects are more likely to have a high percentage of involvement.

Approximately 30.34% of pupils at 'school A' have been identified as eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) over the last three years (██████████, 2024). The FSM support is offered to eligible pupils from lower income families to ensure they are having a healthy, balanced meal during the school day (Department for Education, 2024). Based on the findings of Gorard (2012), children who are from disadvantaged, low-income families usually do not perform well academically due to their socioeconomic status. Moreover, Bradley and Howes (2020) state that on average, children from poorer families tend to have insufficient cognitive and socio-behavioural skills compared to their peers, largely affecting their learning and attitude towards their education. However, Easterbrook *et al.* (2022) challenge these statements, suggesting that the primary reason for the continuity of children from disadvantaged backgrounds underachieving is due to the stereotype of those within lower-income communities causing psychological disadvantages. Due to the attainment effects of lower-income families, when it comes to supporting their child's learning at home, some parents lack confidence due to insufficient knowledge and doubt themselves due to their deprivation of academic success (Power, 2018). Although, Poortvliet, Axford, and Lloyd (2021) argue that encouraging parents to support their children and enforcing more homework, has not actually been linked to any increase in pupils' attainment. This could potentially be linked to the parents' attitudes towards education. Some parents do not have the confidence or knowledge, and have their own negative experiences towards education, therefore, they struggle when it comes to supporting their child's learning or collaborating with the school (Al-Hassan *et al.* 2024). Again, it was found in a study by National Numeracy (2014), regarding parental engagement with their child's mathematic competence, that the main barriers to engagement stemmed from cultural values, socio-economic statuses, anxiety, school opinions, and a lack of skill. As a result, a further argument could be

presented for why schools should consider supporting parents, to help them understand how their children learn. Furthermore, to minimise the negative effect that socioeconomic statuses have on pupil attainment, schools must collaborate with their close community and offer their upmost support to parents to seek any improvement within pupil attainment.

Hinds (2021), believes that instead of lowering expectations for lower achieving pupils, schools should trial different interventions to support their pupils and aid them in succeeding the best that they can. To achieve this, schools must improve their knowledge of each pupil and their parents to devise different effective strategies that will push their potential. Positive collaboration between parents and schools, can also lead to many fulfilling results, such as improvements in the pupil's attainment and attitude towards learning (Estyn, 2020).

Engaging with parents and carers regarding their child's learning can promote continuity within the child's learning experiences. Although parents can learn a lot from teachers regarding better supporting their child, parents can also exchange vital information regarding their child to support the teacher's knowledge, and aid in personalising effective teaching methods based on the child's interests to minimise their difficulties with certain topics (Whalley, 2017). Nevertheless, Stroetinga, Leeman and Veugelers (2021) portray that some parents find it difficult to collaborate with teachers regarding their child's development, declaring that they often feel as though teachers are interfering, or judging them when sharing their thoughts.

Lepowska and Nightingale (2019), suggest that children are heavily influenced by their parents's actions. Moreover, as well as the various genetic endowments that are passed down by parents, such as intelligence or temperament, children are also influenced by their parent's motivation and attitudes towards learning, which is showcased by the type of approach that parents take when supporting their child's learning (Eccles, 2005). For example, if a parent is distant from their child's school, and fails to make any effort for events like parent's evenings, or other school-based activities, their child is most likely not going to view the school as an important factor in their lives; whereas a parent's active engagement with their child's school could encourage the child to be more focused and determined when it comes to their learning (Madge, 2006). Studies by Ing (2014), portray that from an early age, parents motivational influence towards mathematics has an impact on the child's beliefs and academic achievement. They believe, that if a parent shows large interest, motivation and heavily contributes towards their child's mathematical achievement, it will positively increase their child's view on the subject. However, it is noticed that these factors can begin to decrease as children get older, because they begin to naturally seek more independence from their parents' contributions towards learning and life in general (Al-Hassan *et al.*, 2024).

Mathematics lessons and workshops for parents have already been implemented by many schools across the United Kingdom, resulting in more confident and eager parents, and an increase in their child's mathematic attainment in school (NCETM, 2019). The main aim of the project is to close the pupil attainment gap by increasing the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, and those from lower income families, building a strong relationship between parents and the school, and improving parents' confidence to allow them to sufficiently support their child's learning. *'There is empirical evidence to suggest that students with parents who provide more support display higher maths achievement and a more positive attitude towards maths'* (Bektas, 2020, p.93). Accordingly, this is why the chosen project to improve pupils of 'school A's' mathematics and numeracy attainment is to improve their parent's confidence and engagement with the topic. The first desired outcome will be to provide parents with the resources and support to enable them to support their child's learning more confidently. Eventually, if the first outcome is successful, the second desired outcome will be an improvement in pupils' mathematics attainment and attitude, because of the parent's engagement.

Many parents are unable to attend school projects due to being time poor, usually due to working long hours, multiple jobs, other childcare priorities, and inflexible working hours that clash with school hours (Harvey and Mukhopadhyay, 2006). Thus, highlighting the potential barriers that could arise when attempting to increase parental engagement with the school. It is important to consider when 'School A' might implement the project. Cable, Miller and Goodliff (2010), suggest that it is best to work and discuss with parents about what suits them best, rather than assume they will be able to change their daily schedule to suit the school's wishes. However, the project is to be aimed at all parents of the school; therefore, catering to everybody's needs, as they suggest, may be difficult. However, as a natural part of the 21st century, digital media can be used as a source of communication between schools and parents (Hutchison, Paatsch and Cloonan, 2020). It would be useful to provide in person and online workshops and resources or parents, making it accessible for parents to revisit the information shared during the workshop, and for those who could not make it to still have some access to the experience. For these reasons, the project will take place during the evening for approximately two hours. This will give parents the opportunity to come in outside of the typical working hours, as well as provide more space in the school as all pupils will not be present. In addition to this, the sessions will be recorded for parents to watch so that those who could not make it can still experience the workshop, to an extent, using the school's social media platforms, or the parent and school collaborative media websites.

It would be beneficial for all teachers to be present during the project; however, it is important to consider the impact that the sessions would have on their workload. A large present issue is the workload burden on teachers and school staff. Many teachers are struggling to deliver educational priorities that support pupil learning and progress due to the heavy and intense workload burdens that are constantly heightened throughout the school year (Creagh *et al.*, 2023). However, one of the desired outcomes of the project is to build stronger relationships and communication between the teachers and parents regarding their child's learning. Therefore, all teachers will be present, but the project will not become a weekly occurrence; instead, it will run once or twice a month, giving the teachers plenty of time to plan their resources and not override their important work, thus focusing on the pupils learning. With all teachers in attendance, the plan for the school project is for the parents to visit their child's classroom with their current teacher to learn about the specific lessons and methods their children use.

Also, the project will include outside agencies such as '*Learning through Landscapes*' (2023) and '*Techniquet*' (2024). These outside agencies supply many school-based activities, helping teachers and communities to develop and recognise the rich learning experiences that can be applied throughout everyday activities. By welcoming these companies into the school, it is making the experience more memorable for parents and teachers, and offering an alternative outlook on learning, different from what is usually displayed in schools.

Although there is already evidence of some mathematic workshops like this project proposal working successfully and excelling pupil progress and attainment, each school, pupil, and community is different. Therefore, the effectiveness of the project will have to be measured during its implementation to justify its continuation throughout the years, if successful. The impact of the project will be measured by evaluating the outcomes in between each session, using the '*impact evaluation model*' (Training and Development Agency for Schools, 2010). Teachers and staff from 'School A', will come together to share their observations regarding their classes performance after implementing the project. They will compare pupil progress and attainment from the date of implementation to measure against the aims and desired outcomes that were previously stated, to consider whether the project has affected the pupils' attainment. However, it can be hard to measure progression, as it should not be

measured by one individual assessment (Welsh Government, 2022 A). Therefore, instead of measuring the pupil's attainment progress against a specific whole class target, a series of different personalised assessments and observations should take place throughout the school year to assess what progress is being made by individual pupils. A strong collaboration between the teachers and parents should also continue throughout the evaluation process to gauge what learning is taking place at home and assess whether the pupils progress is relevant to the parent collaboration.

As the school project involves the parents, their input would be vital to the evaluation of the project, as if the parents have not found the project useful, or educational, then it would not be working, or making the positive difference that 'school A' would expect it to. A commonly used source for collecting and analysing multiple opinions is a questionnaire, as it is easy to create and distribute. However, Domenech *et al.* (2019) portray the difficulty of collecting responses within a certain period, if those responses are given at all, suggesting that less than half of the recipients are likely to respond with a fully completed questionnaire. Furthermore, Niessen, Meijer and Tendeiro (2016), portray that online questionnaires receive many careless responses that result in inefficient and informative data being collected. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017), voice that in person surveys are a common practice for small focus groups, and an effective method of receiving more personal and meaningful data. However, they also suggest that face-to-face questionnaires can increase the pressure and are therefore more likely to produce ineffective data as the participant may feel too uncomfortable to answer honestly, resulting in inaccurate, biased answers (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). As the participants will be the parents of one classroom, a face-to-face questionnaire may be the best opportunity to receive as many responses as possible, from the relevant people in attendance. A quicker, and easier method could be giving out paper questionnaires (see Appendix A) at the end of the session for parents to complete and give in once completed. This way, answers are easier and quicker to collect and evaluate.

When developing a plan for the project, it was important to consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). These factors were identified and noted in a SWOT analysis table (see Appendix B). One of the first strengths that has not been discussed yet is the amount of staff expertise the school already has. Within education, teachers are the masters of knowledge, they provide the pupils with lessons and support daily in their classrooms and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil in their class (Saha and Dworkin, 2009). Additionally, parental engagement with children's learning is best supported when parents are provided with clear and specific information from their teacher (Goodall, J. and Vorhaus, J, 2011), therefore, the class's teacher is the best option to run lessons with parents. 'School A' already has experienced members of the teaching staff to share their knowledge and understanding with parents during the project.

Secondly, 'school A' state on their website that they thrive to offer the parents of their school a safe and comfortable environment, where they are always welcome (██████████ 2024). This suggests that 'school A' already has a strong relationship with many parents and are happy to offer their support when needed. This factor could avoid one of the weaknesses that may arise, which is parents feeling embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help. If 'School A' has already adapted a safe, judgment-free environment, it is more likely that parents will feel comfortable asking for help and not feel ashamed that they need support when helping with their child's learning. Additionally, to extend on both strengths, if a healthy teacher and parents' collaboration has already been developed, the parent will be more willing to cooperate with the school and teachers (Deslandes, Morin, and Barma, 2015), proposing that the parent's willingness to participate in the project will be increased if they have a collaborative relationship with the teacher.

Although there are many strengths to this community project, it is always important to identify the negative aspects that may arise. A weakness that has not been discussed so far is the school budget, and what finances will need to be considered alongside the mathematic workshops. Welsh schools have experienced a large budget cut in their yearly salary as a school, resulting in a reduction in spending on resources, as well as staff (NAHT Cymru, 2024). During the project, 'school A' will need to cover funds to pay for resources to supply to the parents, payments to outside agencies, refreshments for parents, and payments to support staff or supply teachers while the class teachers are working on the project. Other successful projects like this, such as Murrays (NCETM, 2019) were rewarded with a grant from outside organisations to support her school with their project, receiving £15,000. Applying for a large grant like this would be a timely process, therefore causing a delay to the commencement of the project. National Numeracy (2014), believes that to gain enough interest and engagement from many parents, they must be rewarded or compensated for their time, for example, through vouchers or refreshments. If the project is not engaging enough parents, 'School A' must begin to think of ways to persuade more participants to join and may need extra funds to cover the expenses of these agreements.

'We often ended up talking to parents who already felt fairly confident about maths/engaging with the school' (National Numeracy, 2014, p.8). It was briefly discussed earlier, how some parents do not feel comfortable engaging with the school and asking for help as they are embarrassed of their low mathematic skills. This weakness could potentially cause a threat to the attainment gap, as the main audience of parents could end up being those of the pupils who are more able and talented, whose parents may already be confident with their mathematic capabilities. However, Goodall *et al.* (2011) convey that an effective way to engage other parents is through encouraging communication between parents. Accordingly, if there is a poor turnout of parents at the mathematics workshops, 'school A' should share photos and videos on their social media platforms so that other parents can see that people are getting involved. Additionally, staff at the school should ask parents to share their experiences with others to hopefully recruit more participants.

One of the most potent threats to the project would be a lack of engagement from parents, as they are at the forefront of making this school project successful. As previously discussed, there can be many reasons for a lack of parental engagement. Perhaps cultural values and beliefs affect parental engagement, as well as a child's education. As explained by Arshad, Wrigley and Pratt (2020), families from gypsy, Roma, and traveller backgrounds do not feel expected within their outside communities. Arguably, this could stem from issues that these communities often face, such as social injustice and inequality due to negative stereotyping, resulting in them keeping their distance from school collaboration events (Pollock and Barrow, 2021). Additionally, language barriers could affect parental engagement. Language barriers can prevent collaboration and detailed conversations between parents and teachers, as well as hinder relationships with other parents, resulting in a sense of loneliness and exclusion from the local community (Zaidi *et al.*, 2021). Barriers such as those discussed above can often be overseen by schools where these communities and people are a minority, however, schools must seek support from experienced persons or outside organisations in those fields (Campbell, 2011), these could be social workers, translators, or staff who are from the same lower ethnic minority groups.

As well as the numerous opportunities that the school project will create for the school and the community, it could hopefully bestow the pupils with more positive learning experiences and achievements. As previously discussed, Ing (2014) believes that children follow their parent's guidance, pursuing their personality traits such as emotion and motivation. Through motivating pupils to enjoy, excel, and show interest in their learning, they are following a path to become '*ambitious, capable learners*' (Welsh Government, 2022 B), one of the four purposes, which are the aspirations of each school's curriculum.

With all the above information considered, I believe it would be beneficial for 'school A' to implement the school project that has been proposed. It offers them the potential opportunity to increase their average school achievements and close the attainment gap by excelling disadvantaged pupils. Additionally, it opens doors to further build on stronger relationships with families, which can benefit the school in the future, with the potential to gain more support for the parent-teacher association, parent's evenings, stronger, more effective collaboration, and potentially more engagement within future school community projects. When designing their curriculum, 'school A', should have planned for how they can begin and continue collaborating with parents and the community. It is noted on the Curriculum for Wales that if parent, community, and school collaboration is planned well, and continues to work successfully, it can aid pupil learning inside and outside of school (Welsh Government, 2022 C). Evidently, this is what the school project aims to achieve, therefore, the implementation of the maths workshops would coincide with the standards of the Welsh curriculum.

In conclusion, the main issue that schools are believed to be facing when implementing school and community projects, is the lack of engagement from parents and families. From my research, I believe schools should continue, or begin to make a conscious effort to make each parent, family member, or carer feel welcomed within the school. They may need to harvest support from outside agencies, or have their staff make the time to engage with families more when seeing them during the start and end of the school day. Moving forward within my own professional teaching experiences, I will remember the importance of collaborating with parents and continue to involve them in their child's learning experiences as much as possible. It has been established by the research acquired within this module, that with the support of parents and the community, pupils are granted more learning rich opportunities that allow them to reach the best of their abilities.

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Appendices

Appendix A- P.11: Survey example for parents.

Appendix B- P.12: SWOT analysis.

Appendix A- The template of the face-to-face survey for parents.

What did you think of today's session?

Do you feel more confident about supporting your child's learning as a result of this session?

What was your favourite thing from the session?

What could be included next time to improve the session?

Appendix B- A table of the SWOT analysis completed for the school community project- Maths lessons for parents.

	HELPFUL		HARMFUL	
INTERNAL (within the school)	Strengths		Weaknesses	
	- Staff expertise. - Safe place for parents. - Other projects similar have been successful within other schools. - Support from outside agencies. - Making links with families of the school.		- Stressful workload for staff. - Budget - Lack of funds to provide parents with resources. - Finding funds large enough to support the project. - Parents feel embarrassed to join. - Finding the correct time to suit all participants/staff.	
EXTERNAL (outside the school)	Opportunities		Threats	
	- Strengthening the relationship between school and community. - Building strong bonds with parents of the school; Parents are more likely to support the school with activities if they have a good morale with the school. (i.e school disco, PTA) - Development of ambitious capable learners. - Engage parents in their children's learning. - Building a positive morale within the community. - Opportunities for parents to build relationships.		- Lack of engagement from parents. - Language barriers. - Parents attitude towards education. - Socio-economic barriers. - Cultural Values barrier (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller). - Gender roles (Traditional parenting stereotypes). - Parents overstepping boundaries with other parents/Pupils. - All parents in attendance are of those who are MAT- Could potentially increase the attainment gap rather than closing.	