

Please add your targets from the previous assignment (Only relevant if you have completed an assignment)

Targed/Target 1	Re-look at Havard referencing guidelines to ensure you can apply them accurately and consistently in your next assignment
Targed/Target 2	Try to use a contemporary range of professional and academic texts
Targed/Target 3	Continue to develop criticality within your writing

Written response: A proposal for a school community project

The purpose of this assignment is to design an effective whole school initiative which incorporates the local community. There are many factors that need to be followed to ensure that the initiative is a success, such as the needs of the school, the children and the community itself. The chosen school for this assignment is an urban school within an affluent area. There are 226 pupils that attend the school, approximately 3.2% of which receive free school meals which is substantially lower than the average in the country (Welsh Government, 2019). Estyn (2014) found that “the majority of students come from homes where English is the main language and very few come from ethnic minority backgrounds and have English as an additional language. Also, there are very few students who speak Welsh at home which is not surprising as Welsh is not widely spoken in the area. In terms of relations with the community the school aims to maintain strong links with the parents and other members of the public. The school has identified the importance of community involvement. One of the actions on the school development plan (SDP) is “continue to provide opportunities for staff and pupils to plan for greater community involvement”. The intention is for whole school involvement when contributing to the community “through litter picking/charities, involvement in community choirs, residential homes etc”. Estyn (2014) found that “the school contributes actively to the local community. Many members of the local community visit the school regularly to share expertise and to work with pupils”.

To ensure that links with the community are maintained, the chosen school community project is a Welsh week which incorporates the community and promoting Welsh in schools. This is deemed crucial within the contemporary Welsh education system. The proposed scheme will consist of different Welsh themed activities which will last a whole school week. Members of the community will be invited in each day to participate in the events and they will be open to everyone regardless of their Welsh ability. The inclusion of a Welsh themed project aims to develop the children’s Welsh skills and knowledge of the Welsh culture. This

supports Donaldson (2015) who states, “the future of Welsh and Welsh culture is wholly dependent on transmitting the language to our young people”.

The particular school in question already has a range of initiatives which aim to include the wider community, such as litter picking in the surrounding area, visiting local care homes and raising money for local charities. Therefore, the purpose of this community project is to maintain these links and build on them. The wider community will be targeted to ensure inclusion and to promote social justice. Van den Bos (2003) defines social justice as the “fair and equitable distribution of power, resources, and obligations in society to all people, regardless of race or ethnicity, age, gender and ability status”. It is crucial that social justice is being upheld in all scenarios, but especially as part of this community scheme. The school is situated within an affluent, tight-knit community which has stable links with the school. The importance of social justice within the community is apparent and is echoed by Kenny and Hage (2009) who states that “social justice issues and access to resources are also inexorably tied to collective well-being of families, communities, and society”.

This project was chosen as it possesses a wide variety of opportunities to include the community through different experiences and promote the children’s knowledge of Wales and its culture. It aims to maintain the strong links with the community whilst incorporating many Welsh based activities. It not only includes the parents/guardians of the children but the wider community as well. Barrera (2002) states that “everyone benefits when parent and family involvement occurs in educational settings”. This also supports Barrera and Warner (2006) who state, “parents want to know what is happening in the school environment; and teachers are aware that having parents on their side improves student behaviour”. When involving parents, Henderson (1987) believes that there are “three components to ensure that the programme is a success: climate, collaboration and communication”. It is important to create a positive climate and environment with the parents and especially with the parents who face major problems, such as unemployment and homelessness and may struggle to provide their children with optimum support (Epstein, 1987). This is supported by Barrera and Warner (2006) who state that “recognising difficult circumstances, educators can begin to focus on the needs of diverse families-parents and their-children- and work to establish a climate of trust and cooperation”. Creating the strong bond of trust between the teacher and parent is essential to ensure that there is a supportive relationship which in turn will greatly benefit the children. Communication is another important factor in establishing a strong bond between school and home. This in turn relates to Comer and Haynes (1991) who state that “when parents and educators communicate effectively, positive relationships develop, problems are solved more easily, and students make greater progress”. The need for

communication is promoted by Barrera and Warner (2006) who argue that “communication needs to be regular and meaningful, with sharing coming from both parents and schools”. This highlights the need for effective communication in establishing a strong connection and bond between parents and teachers which again will undoubtedly benefit the pupil’s learning experience. The process of communicating with parents can be undertaken by a continuous triangular dialogue format. It involves communication between three parties. This strategy is used in the Pen Green centre which is a “multifunctional service for children and parents” (Whalley, 2007). Communication is completed between “parents and family worker, family worker and researcher, and researcher and parents” (Whalley, 2001). Easen et al (1992) support the use of the triangulation dialogue. They argue that “the triangulation of perspectives in which each participant’s knowledge is shared enhances everyone’s understanding of the child”. The third component, collaboration, is also key in ensuring a healthy relationship. Barrera and Warner (2006) state that “schools can reach out to link families to needed services and community organisations, which in turn can strengthen home environments and increase student learning”. This allows the wider community to establish stronger relations. Antunez (2000) argues that “communications with businesses, cultural organisations, and community groups create shared responsibility for the well-being of children, and schools by all members of the community”.

It could be argued that this particular community project targets all three of the components mentioned. It aims not only to involve the parents/guardians of the children but also the wider community which is definitely an important factor when planning a community scheme. Through incorporating both the community and the parent “schools can work to develop relationships with parents from diverse backgrounds and others who previously have not been involved actively in school-parent activities” (Barrera and Warner, 2006).

The need for community involvement in education has always been evident. However, with the contemporary Welsh education system undergoing change, community involvement will become ever more present. The new curriculum aims to provide the children of Wales with more opportunities and is designed to promote independent learning. Donaldson (2015) outlined four purposes which the curriculum looks to promote:

- “ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society”.

Donaldson (2015) states that as part of the third purpose, “ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world”, children of Wales should be “knowledgeable of their culture, community, society and the world, now and in the past”. This highlights the need for more community involvement and ensuring that the children of Wales are the driving force to guarantee that they receive the optimal learning experience. An Estyn (2019) inspection in ‘Cylch Meithrin A’ again underlines the importance of community involvement for both the children and the community itself. Estyn (2019) states that “children are given regular opportunities to visit the local shop, where they use money to buy goods for their activities... which promotes their literacy skills successfully by speaking confidently and politely with others”. This not only helps develop children as “ethical, informed citizens” (Donaldson, 2015) but it also helps the local shops economically. The establishment also has strong links with the parents who “contribute to themes regularly” and has “extended children’s ability to discuss their work and experiences in their homes” (Estyn, 2019).

The main aim of the community project is to maintain and grow the links with the parents and the wider community. The school already has substantial links with the local community, but the school aims to improve the relationship even further to ensure that the needs of the school and the community are met and ultimately that the needs of the children are met.

As mentioned, the chosen community project is a Welsh week designed to get the children, parents and wider community working together whilst improving their Welsh skills. There will be Welsh themed activities every day to which different members of the community will be invited. Prior to the event the children will be tasked with promoting and publicising the event. They will design posters and display them in the surrounding area. The school will use social media outlets, such as Twitter and Facebook, to promote the upcoming events. The purpose of using social media is to target a higher percentage of the community and to make them aware of the forthcoming occasions. The first activity of the week is a ‘Criw Cymraeg Assembly’. The children will advertise the planned activities for the week and explain what each one entails. They will lead and plan the assembly under the supervision of a teacher. This will provide them with more independence and pupil voice. This aligns with the United Nations (1989) who stated, “that children and young people should be given the right to express their opinions on matters affecting their lives”. The whole of the community will be invited in to watch the assembly and the school will provide a sign-up form for each activity and the parents/people of the community can choose which events they would like to attend.

The second events day will be centred around Welsh games/activities. The children will be split into their four houses and a section of each house will undertake each activity at a time. The parents and other members of the community will be stationed at the different activities and will participate with the children. The activities include cooking different Welsh foods, such as Welsh cakes, 'Bara Brith', etc. Locally sourced ingredients will be bought from local businesses using money obtained from fundraisers throughout the school year. The use of local ingredients will benefit the local economy through providing local businesses with extra income. This supports Stephenson and Lev (2004) who found that "the two most important reasons for buying local were to keep farmers in the area and to support the local economy". The use of local ingredients will also make the children more aware of what is available in their locality. Another activity will be a Welsh themed treasure hunt in which the children/adults will have to find a range of Welsh items, such as a daffodil, and take a picture of it using an iPad. They will also be tasked with finding letters which would have been positioned around the local environment before-hand. The letters will spell out the word "shwmae" which would incorporate Welsh language skills into the activities.

The third day is centred around a 'Caffi Cymraeg'. A selection of year 5 and 6 children will be selected to manage a Welsh themed shop selling their Welsh cakes and 'Bara Brith'. This particular activity is hugely beneficial for the children as it is designed to promote working with others, working with money and other skills that can be transferred into the classroom. Members of the community and parents will be invited in to partake in the activity and will be given the opportunity to purchase the Welsh items of food at an affordable price. The money raised will be split between the school and donated to a local charity. The fourth events day will contain a whole school eisteddfod in which members of the community will be asked to judge. The children will be grouped in their houses and will be given the opportunity to display Welsh work that they had completed. There will be Welsh music, singing and poetry which are all aimed at a celebration of Welsh culture. The final event is entitled 'Cawl a chân' which again is aimed at combining the children and the community. The community will be invited in to have cawl and sing Welsh songs with the children and this integration of different people promotes greater collaboration. This relates to Vygotsky (1962) who states that "we learn through our interactions and communications with others and those in our community". These particular activities were chosen as they aim to meet the needs of every participant and if completed in an effective manner this will be achieved. The children's needs will be especially taken into account to ensure their development. As a result, the activities aim to target Donaldson's (2015) four purposes. The selection of activities provides the children with vast learning experiences. They allow them to be enterprising and creative learners whilst gaining a broader perspective of their community and culture.

It is imperative that schools measure the impact of any project to understand whether it was a success or needed improvement. Self-evaluation is needed in any school to identify steps for progression. This is supported by Welsh Government (2014) who state that “the process of self-evaluation and improvement planning is central to supporting advances in school improvement, professional learning and learner outcomes”. Therefore, the school development plan must be used effectively to ensure that the staff and parents understand the future intended steps of the school.

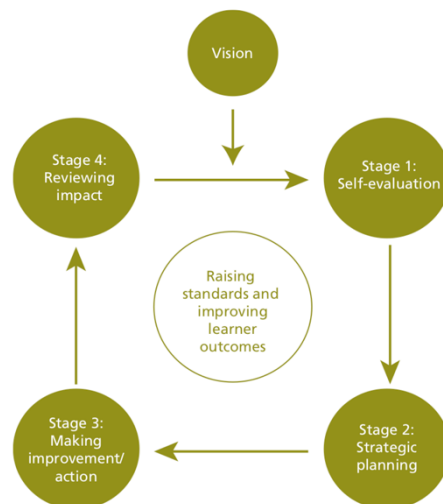


Figure 1- School development planning cycle. Welsh Government (2014)

Figure 1 shows the four stages of an SDP outlined by Welsh Government (2014). Stage 1 is centred around the need for Self-evaluation to ensure that the school sustainably plans their improvement. If executed efficiently “self-evaluation is a key tool in assisting a school to assess its performance” (Welsh Government, 2014). Estyn (2019) has emphasised the importance of schools using self-evaluation to pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses. They have also identified “a strong correlation between school self-evaluation that focuses on impact and outcomes, and improvements in educational experiences and outcomes for learners”. Stage 2 focuses on ‘Strategic planning’ and how “all school partners and stakeholders should be involved; this is essential in ensuring that everyone has a commitment to the school’s improvement agenda” (Welsh Government, 2014). The school must effectively plan how they are going to sustainably improve the school, and this requires consultation with a range of people, such as school staff, parents and others involved with the school. Schools must set out clear guidelines to show how they aim to promote learning in the school and how they intend to develop the children. Stage 3 concentrates on ‘making improvement’ and this is where the school implements the plan and they “put into practise the actions and strategies outlined in the SDP” (Welsh Government, 2014). The

implementation must be completed in an efficient manor to ensure the success of the initiatives. It is essential that all of the school staff are consulted and are “made aware of their responsibilities in implementing the actions necessary to bring about improvement”. The strategies used should be inclusive, targeting the needs of everyone involved ranging from the community, the parents and especially the pupils of the school. Stage 4 concentrates on reviewing the impact of the action. The SDP must be updated regularly to ensure that “the school’s improvement planning and strategies reflect the up-to-date context of the school” (Welsh Government, 2014).

In terms of this community project, there must be certain steps taken to measure the impact of whether the event was perceived as beneficial or not. As the project involves a variety of people their perceptions of the event must be collected to measure the impact. An effective way to collect the data is to form a questionnaire for the different groups of people. A questionnaire is a “versatile and cost-effective research tool” (Walliman, 2001) which can be used to collect large amounts of data. Each of the individuals could respond to the questionnaire which would help the school obtain a broader understanding of the perceptions of the people involved. It would allow the school to grasp the strengths and weaknesses of the event which would be beneficial when planning future events. Another way of measuring the impact of the event is to perform an audit of each activity. This would provide the school with the knowledge of which activity was the most popular and which was the least attended. Upon reflection the school would be able to assess any reason why one activity was more popular than another. This would be seen as an effective form of practise in ensuring that future events are a success. In addition, the school would need to ensure that activities coincide with the SDP. This community project is designed to target the SDP and the aims of the school. As mentioned, an aim of the school is to “continue to provide opportunities for staff and pupils to plan for greater community involvement”. The activity promotes community work whilst incorporating with other skills that can be transferred into the classroom, such as Welsh language skills, problem solving, designing, etc. It is important that the needs of the community are integrated into the school’s vision to ensure that a strong relationship is maintained. This is supported by Welsh Government (2014) who state that “the SDP must contain details of how the governing body will work with the wider school community”. The long-term plan of the school should be to monitor whether parent and community involvement increases as a result of the project. Also, if the event is deemed a success, the event could be completed annually to promote wider community involvement which ultimately would develop the children both inside and outside of the classroom. This supports Estyn (2017) who found that in ‘Nursery A’ interactions with the community

“provides valuable and meaningful opportunities for children to practise their social skills as well as developing their understanding of the world around them”.

The chosen community project possesses both strengths and weaknesses which are built on by School X. As mentioned, the school is known for having a strong relationship with the community which would suggest that if the project was undertaken, they would give it their full support. This is supported by Estyn (2014) who found that “effective communication and good relationships strengthen home, school and community links well”. The school has a history of successful whole school projects especially initiatives involving the community. It aims to widely incorporate the community and to maintain the strong links. The school has established initiatives affecting the local and wider community. One major community scheme that the school continues to promote is a weekly litter pick in the school and the surrounding area. This supports Donaldson (2015) who encourages learners to show their commitment for the sustainability of the planet. However, the effectiveness of the school may generate weaknesses in relation to the success of the project. The size of the school is relatively small, and this has resulted in some staffing issues. The limited members of staff may determine how efficiently the project is completed. An enlarged number of staff may prove beneficial to ensure that each activity has the optimum amount of people to oversee proceedings. Also, as the project is centred around Welsh and its culture, pupil perceptions of learning Welsh may hinder the activities. A main aim of the school is to promote Welsh and they have even achieved the ‘bronze siarter iaith’ award. But pupil motivation to undertake Welsh activities is substantially lower compared to other subjects. This could result in pupils not fully participating in events, although the school is known for an energetic and driven group of students and it could be argued that as the activities are stimulating the children will be motivated to partake.

As well as strengths and weaknesses, the project may present certain opportunities which target the needs of the community, the school and the pupils. As mentioned, the aim of the scheme is to maintain and develop the strong links with the community. This would be an opportunity to lead to further cooperation in the future between the community and the school. Also, the project welcomes all members of the community which promotes social justice. It not only targets the parents of the children it also aims to involve the wider community. This ensures “inclusion, collaboration, equal access and equal opportunity. Such values are also the foundation of a democratic and egalitarian society” (Sue, 2001). A main opportunity that would occur as a result of the project is to promote Donaldson’s (2015) four purposes. A wide range of the purposes are targeted in all of the activities. The children receive first-hand experiences which promote a variety of skills in a cross-curricular manner.

It provides the pupils with opportunities they may not receive in the classroom which will allow the children to “develop deep conceptual understanding and transfer knowledge and skills to new situations to solve complex problems in a creative way” (Donaldson, 2015). However, there are some weaknesses that could arise as a result of the project. The project is inclusive and aims to target a wide range of people, but engagement from these individuals is not guaranteed. As previously said, the school is situated in an affluent area where Welsh is not widely spoken. This may impede the effectiveness of the project as the motivation to participate in the Welsh activities may be insignificant. Therefore, the school would be tasked with efficiently promoting the event to attract more members of the community to attend. The children should be at the centre of promoting the event which might improve pupil motivation towards the event as they would be fully involved. Rudduck and Flutter (2004) argue that “some pupils disengage because the conditions of learning in school today do not always support the development of all young people as learners”. The inclusion of the children in decision making and the experiences that they would receive as a result of the project may provoke enthusiasm from the children (A full SWOT analysis of the community project can be found in the appendix).

In conclusion, the need for community involvement in school life is apparent and is crucial in providing the children with a rounded and optimum learning experience. The links between school and community not only benefit the children but everyone involved in a variety of ways. This supports Watkins (2005) who pointed to a variety of positive outcomes from emphasising the development of community in schools and class, including “higher student engagement, greater respect for diversity of all students, higher intrinsic motivation, and increased learning in the areas that are most important”. The objective of this assignment was to design a community scheme that was inclusive to all and aimed to increase partnership with the community. It could be argued that the proposed community project fits the mould and would be hugely beneficial for the school, the children and the community. The project intends to develop the children in an assortment of ways which would assist them inside and outside the classroom. It encourages the children to be more independent whilst working cooperatively in a team. A major benefit of the proposed project is that it is designed to promote Welsh and its culture. It not only improves the Welsh skills of the children but also the members of the community. As stated, the school is situated in an area where Welsh is not widely spoken and increasing the amount of people using Welsh in everyday situations would undoubtedly aid the future of the Welsh language. Another important fact is that it supports Welsh Government (2017) in its goal of obtaining “a million Welsh speakers by 2050” by improving the Welsh skills of the community and especially the children who are the future of the Welsh language.

AppendixSWOT analysis of 'Welsh week' community project

	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
INTERNAL (within the school)	Strengths - Good Estyn report - Good relationship with the community - Have a history of successful projects - Pupil participation - Expert members of staff	Weaknesses - Pupil motivation involving Welsh - Staffing
EXTERNAL (outside the school)	Opportunities - Develops the four purposes - Integrates Welsh language skills - Engages parents with their children's work - Strengthening relationship with the community - Inclusive for all members of the community	Threats - Lack of engagement from the community - Cost of the ingredients

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