

Practical Pathways and Support System Construction for Cultivating Young Children's Social-Emotional Competencies

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Abstract: Young children's social-emotional competencies are core competencies for their lifelong development. They encompass key dimensions such as emotional cognition and regulation, social interaction, prosocial behavior, and self-management, directly impacting their mental health, interpersonal relationships, and future social adaptability. Current preschool education tends to prioritize knowledge transfer over emotional development. This, coupled with biased parenting practices and insufficient home-school/community collaboration, has hindered the systematic development of young children's social-emotional competencies. Based on the "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6," this article, combined with literature analysis and practical experience, explores practical paths for "life-oriented integration, game-based approaches, and collaborative promotion" within the three core contexts of kindergarten, family, and community. Furthermore, it constructs a three-dimensional support system: "institutional-professional-resource"—a plan designed to provide preschool educators and parents with actionable solutions, helping them develop positive and stable emotional qualities and strong social skills, laying the foundation for their all-round development.

Keywords: Young children's social-emotional competencies, practical paths, support system, home-school collaboration, preschool education.

1. Introduction

The "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" clearly prioritizes "health" over "emotional well-being" within its five key areas, emphasizing social-emotional development goals such as "emotional stability and happiness" and "being able to interact with peers," highlighting its central role in early childhood development. Early childhood is a critical period for the development of the brain's emotional centers. The emotional patterns and social habits formed during this period have lifelong imprints. Children with strong social-emotional skills are more adaptable to group life in kindergarten, experience less anxiety and withdrawal, and are more likely to achieve academic success and career development. However, current efforts to cultivate early childhood social-emotional skills face multiple challenges. Some kindergartens focus on "explicit skills" such as language and mathematics, lack dedicated social-emotional education curriculum, and even neglect opportunities for emotional education in daily life. At the family level, overprotective or harsh parenting styles are prevalent, with parents focusing primarily on their children's physical needs and insufficiently responding to their emotional expressions and social challenges. As a supplementary platform for education, communities lack a network of emotional education resources that connects with kindergartens and families, resulting in a fragmented development process. Against this backdrop, exploring scientifically feasible practical approaches and building a multi-stakeholder collaborative support system are key to addressing the "formalistic" and "isolated" nature of early childhood social-emotional education. Based on the laws of early childhood development and educational practice, this article analyzes the three dimensions of collaborative field

development, innovative methods, and implementation assurance. It aims to provide a systematic solution for cultivating early childhood social-emotional competence, promoting balanced development in children's emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions.

2. The Core Content and Cultivation Principles of Early Childhood Social-Emotional Competence

Early childhood social-emotional competence is not a single skill, but rather a comprehensive system encompassing four dimensions: emotional cognition and regulation, social interaction, prosocial behavior, and self-management. Emotional cognition and regulation refers to children's ability to recognize their own and others' emotions and mitigate negative emotions through simple means. Social interaction includes proactively greeting peers, sharing toys, and negotiating to resolve conflicts. Prosocial behavior reflects concern for others, adherence to group rules, and willingness to participate in group activities. Self-management demonstrates the ability to complete simple tasks as required and control impulsive behavior. Cultivating early childhood social-emotional competence requires adherence to these four core principles to ensure the scientific and appropriate nature of educational practice. First, the principle of daily life: Children's emotional experiences are closely linked to everyday situations. Therefore, emotional development should be integrated into daily activities such as eating, napping, and playing, rather than relying on specialized classroom instruction. For example, during meals, children can be taught to say, "Thank you, teacher, for sharing your food" to foster a sense of gratitude. When peers fight over toys, encourage both parties to say, "I want to play" or "I'll give it to you when I'm done," thereby learning social expression

through real-life conflict. Second, the principle of gamification: Play is a primary form of activity for children. Through role-playing and cooperative play, children can naturally experience other people's perspectives and learn collaboration, which is more receptive than lectures. Third, the principle of individualization: Different children have different rates of emotional development and personality traits, so individual needs must be addressed. Introverted children may need more encouragement to actively communicate, while impulsive children may need guidance to "think before acting." Fourth, the principle of permeability: Social and emotional development should not be isolated from other areas, but should be integrated into activities such as language and the arts. For example, when reading the picture book "Angry Soup," discuss "What to do when angry." When drawing "My Best Friend," encourage children to express "Why they like their best friend," thereby simultaneously developing language skills and emotional cognition [1].

3. Kindergarten: The Main Platform for Cultivating Social-Emotional Skills

As the primary venue for children's collective life, kindergartens need to establish a regular mechanism for cultivating social-emotional skills through curriculum design, integration into daily life, and teacher guidance. Regarding curriculum integration, it is important to develop "micro-themed" social-emotional courses to avoid hollow content. Short-term themed activities can be designed based on children's interests and developmental needs. For example, in the "My Emotional Monster" theme, colored cards representing "happy (yellow)," "angry (red)," and "sad (blue)" are used to help children match their emotions to the cards, allowing them to express, "I'm the red monster now because my toy was taken away." In the "Playing with Friends" theme, activities such as "Sharing Snacks" and "Building a Castle Together" allow children to experience the joys of sharing and the ability to accomplish big tasks through collaboration. These programs don't require a significant amount of time; 1-2 times per week, 15-20 minutes each session, is sufficient. The focus is on enabling children to gain emotional experiences through specific activities. Regarding integration into daily life, it is important to explore educational opportunities within each activity. When children enter the kindergarten, teachers proactively greet them and guide them to respond with "Good morning, teacher," fostering good manners. During the group game "Drop the Handkerchief," children are encouraged to applaud their peers, fostering appreciation for others. During naptime, when children encounter difficulty dressing or undressing, teachers don't directly assist them, but instead guide them by saying, "Try pulling your sleeves first, and let me know if you need help," fostering resilience through self-care. When children leave the kindergarten, they are encouraged to "say goodbye to their peers" and "tell Mom and Dad about your happy day," reinforcing positive emotional expression [2]. These small details, while subtle, can help children develop stable behavioral habits and emotional cognition through repeated experiences. In terms of teacher guidance, teachers should act as both "emotional supporters" and "behavioral role models." When children express negative emotions, teachers should first empathize and then guide them. For example, when a

child cries because they miss home, teachers shouldn't say, "Stop crying, there's nothing to cry about." Instead, they should kneel down, hug the child, and say, "Teacher, I know you miss Mom and are a little sad. Let's wait for Mom together, okay?" When children engage in conflict, teachers shouldn't rush to judge who's right or wrong. Instead, they should guide both parties to express their needs: "Why did you take his toy?" "If you want to play, what can you say?" This allows children to learn to resolve problems through communication. Teachers should also proactively demonstrate positive behaviors, such as "Thank you, childcare teacher, for your help" and "Talk to my colleagues in a friendly manner." Children will learn social skills through imitation.

4. Family Context: The Foundational Support for the Development of Social-Emotional Competencies

The family is the primary environment for children's emotional development. Parents' parenting styles and emotional expression patterns directly influence the development of children's social-emotional competencies. Family practice should focus on three core areas: emotional interaction, habit formation, and role modeling. Strengthening emotional interaction is key to family development. Parents should proactively monitor their children's emotions and foster an atmosphere conducive to emotional expression. They can include a bedtime chat session, asking children, "What was the happiest thing about daycare today?" and "Did anything upset you?" to help them feel valued. When children express their emotions, parents should respond patiently, rather than dismissively. For example, if a child says, "I hate Xiao Ming; he took my building blocks," parents can offer guidance by asking, "Are you angry because your toys were taken? Next time, why not try saying, 'Let's take turns playing,' okay?" This helps children identify their emotions and find solutions. Furthermore, parent-child reading is an excellent medium for emotional interaction. When choosing picture books like "Good Friends" and "Learn to Share," children can discuss the topic, "If you were the child in the story, what would you do?" This allows children to learn emotional management and social skills through the stories. Cultivating skills through daily habits is equally important. Small moments in family life provide excellent opportunities for children to practice self-management and prosocial behaviors [3]. For example, let children participate in simple housework and, after completion, give them prompt recognition like, "You helped Mom set the table. What a capable little helper!" to foster a sense of responsibility and self-worth. When shopping, have children "help carry things" and "wait in line to pay" to help them follow common rules. When family members have birthdays, prepare small gifts with children to help them experience the joy of caring for others. These activities don't take up any extra time, but they allow children to practically understand the relationship between themselves and others and develop a pro-social mindset. Parental role models are crucial. Children have a strong ability to imitate, and their parents' emotional management and interpersonal attitudes can subtly influence them. If parents are irritable and complain when faced with problems, children are more likely to develop angry yelling behaviors. However, if parents are friendly and willing to share, children will be more proactive

in interacting with their peers. Therefore, parents should be mindful of their words and actions: for example, when disagreeing with family members, say "Let's talk it over" instead of arguing. When meeting neighbors, greet them proactively to show them how to interact with others in a friendly way. When receiving gifts, say "thank you" in front of children to cultivate good manners [4].

5. Community Settings: A Complementary Extension for Social-Emotional Skill Development

As a "third place" beyond kindergarten and the home, the community must serve as a resource integration and interactive platform, providing diverse support for the development of children's social-emotional skills. The integrated utilization of community resources is fundamental. Public spaces within the community, such as libraries, children's activity centers, and parks, can be transformed into "practical classrooms" for social-emotional education. For example, community libraries can regularly host "parent-child picture book reading sessions," focusing on themes such as "emotional management" and "friendship," where children share picture book stories and engage in role-playing. These group activities allow children to connect with peers and learn social expression. Community children's activity centers can host "craft collaboration days," where children work in groups to complete crafts, learning to listen to others' ideas and help each other through collaboration. Slides and swings in community parks provide natural venues for children to socialize. Parents can encourage children to "ask their older brother if they can play together" and "take turns sliding down the slide," practicing negotiation and sharing through free play. Communities can also invite professionals like medical staff and firefighters to participate in "Professional Experience Days." By playing the role of doctor and visiting fire trucks, children can not only broaden their horizons but also cultivate a sense of courtesy and respect through interactions with adults. Establishing community interactive platforms can promote frequent social interactions among children. Communities can organize group activities based on festivals and seasons. For example, the "June 1st Parent-Child Sports Day" features collaborative activities like "three-legged race" and "relay dribbling," allowing children to participate with their parents and peers and experience the joy of collaboration. The "Mid-Autumn Festival" invites families with children in the community to make mooncakes and share delicious food together, allowing children to get to know their neighbors in a relaxed atmosphere and cultivate a sense of "neighborly friendliness." "Little Environmental Guardians" activities involve children collecting trash and planting saplings in the community, fostering awareness of the collective environment and cultivating a sense of responsibility and public service [5]. These activities require minimal planning but can provide children with more opportunities to "get out of the home and engage with society," filling the gap in social interactions outside of home and kindergarten. Providing community education guidance can help families enhance their childcare skills. Some parents are confused about methods for fostering social and emotional development in young children. Communities can serve as a bridge by inviting kindergarten teachers and preschool education experts to conduct "parent classes" on topics such as "How to Deal with Toddler Temper Tantrums" and "How

to Cultivate Sharing in Young Children." Through case analysis and interactive discussions, parents can be provided with concrete and actionable advice. Community parent exchange groups can also be established to encourage parents to share their experiences and raise concerns, fostering a supportive atmosphere. With community support, families can more effectively engage in social and emotional development.

6. Multi-Dimensional Collaboration: Building a Support System for Early Childhood Social and Emotional Development

The implementation of practical pathways requires a comprehensive support system, leveraging institutional, professional, and resource-based approaches to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the development process. Institutional support underpins the system's operation, clarifying the responsibilities and collaborative mechanisms of kindergartens, families, and communities. At the kindergarten level, social and emotional development should be incorporated into the school-based curriculum plan. A "Daily Life Emotional Education Guideline" should be developed to clarify teacher guidance requirements at all stages. A "home-school communication system" should be established to share emotional development methods with parents through weekly "home-school contact columns" and monthly "parent open days." At the family level, under community guidance, a "Family Emotional Interaction Plan" can be developed to integrate emotional education into family routines. At the community level, a "Community Preschool Education Resource Integration Plan" should be issued to clarify the emotional education services provided by libraries, activity centers, and other venues. A "Home-Community Collaboration Meeting" system should be established, with quarterly meetings held to coordinate and resolve issues in emotional education. Professional support is central to improving the quality of education, and the professional capabilities of both teachers and parents must be strengthened. For kindergarten teachers, professional competence can be enhanced through "tiered training": novice teachers should focus on "emotional recognition and response skills"; core teachers should focus on "social-emotional curriculum design." Furthermore, university experts in early childhood education should be invited to provide regular guidance and enhance teachers' practical skills through case studies. For parents, in addition to community "parent classes," kindergartens can develop a "Family Emotional Education Handbook" that uses illustrations and text to introduce simple methods. Parent experience sharing sessions can also be held to allow parents with successful experiences to share their practices and strengthen their confidence in implementing these practices. Resource support is the material foundation for the operation of the system, and it is necessary to integrate resources from all sources to meet the needs of emotional education. Kindergartens should be equipped with resources related to social and emotional education, such as emotion picture books, emotion cards, and cooperative play materials. They should also establish "emotion corners" with cuddle pillows and drawing tools, allowing children to express and relieve their emotions at any time. At the family level, communities can coordinate with businesses and charitable organizations to provide parent-child picture books,

educational toys, and other supplies to struggling families, ensuring that all children have the material conditions for emotional development. At the community level, it is necessary to integrate social resources, inviting university students and retired teachers to serve as "community preschool education volunteers" to assist in parent-child activities. Medical institutions should also be connected to provide professional assessments and intervention recommendations for children with special emotional needs, forming a complete "prevention-intervention" support chain [6].

7. Conclusion

The development of children's social and emotional competence is not the responsibility of a single entity, but a systematic project involving the collaborative participation of kindergartens, families, and communities. This analysis shows that practical approaches must be based on three key areas: kindergartens should play a leading role, focusing on "curriculum integration and daily life penetration"; families should strengthen foundational support, focusing on "emotional interaction and habit formation"; and communities should supplement this with "resource integration and interactive platform development" to expand the scope of development. The three should follow the principles of life-oriented, gamified and personalized training, integrate training into children's daily life and avoid the tendency of "formalization". The construction of the support system should focus on the three aspects of system, professional and resource: the system should clarify the cooperation mechanism to ensure that the responsibilities of all parties are clear; professional improvement should be strengthened between teachers and students. Parents' abilities ensure scientific training methods; resources integrate materials and manpower to provide guarantees for practice. Only by coordinating paths and systems can we solve the current problems of "fragmentation" and "superficiality" in children's social and emotional development, allowing

children to gradually develop core abilities such as emotional regulation, social interaction, and prosocial behavior in a continuous and appropriate environment. In the future, the development of children's social and emotional abilities will need to pay more attention to individual differences and explore personalized training programs for children with different personalities and family backgrounds. At the same time, the depth of home-school-community collaboration needs to be strengthened, such as establishing a "child social and emotional development file" in which the three parties jointly record and analyze the development of children and achieve "joint assessment-dynamic adjustment." Only by continuously optimizing practical paths and support systems can we truly help children develop positive and healthy emotional qualities and lay a solid foundation for their lifelong development.

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