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Developing the Habit of Following After-School Self-Directed Learning Plans Among Upper-Grade Primary School Students

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Abstract

After-school self-directed learning is an important part of consolidating classroom knowledge, developing learning abilities, and establishing effective learning habits during primary education. Upper-grade primary school students gradually develop greater self-awareness and self-management abilities, which provide a foundation for participating in the formulation and management of their own learning plans. However, a gap often remains between making a plan and actually carrying it out. Some students can formulate after-school learning plans with the help of teachers or parents but struggle with setting specific goals, allocating time appropriately, maintaining consistent implementation, persisting when difficulties arise, and evaluating their learning after completing tasks. These problems not only affect the efficiency of after-school learning but also hinder the development of stable self-directed learning habits. Cultivating the habit of following learning plans should not rely solely on external supervision or task requirements. Instead, goal setting, task decomposition, time management, progress monitoring, and reflection should be integrated into a continuous learning process. Through this process, students can gradually develop the ability to plan independently, act according to their plans, make timely adjustments, and evaluate their own performance. Drawing on the developmental characteristics of upper-grade primary school students and existing research on self-directed learning habits, this paper examines the meaning, practical challenges, formative conditions, and development pathways of after-school learning plan implementation habits. It proposes an approach based on student participation, supported by concrete learning plans, teacher guidance, and home-school collaboration, with the aim of providing practical insights into cultivating self-directed learning habits among upper-grade primary school students.

Keywords: upper-grade primary school students, after-school learning, self-directed learning, learning plans, habit development

1. Introduction

As basic education increasingly emphasizes students' self-directed learning abilities, learning approaches are gradually shifting from passive acceptance of teachers' arrangements toward more active student participation in the learning process. Self-directed learning requires students not only to acquire knowledge but also to identify

learning objectives, organize tasks, select appropriate methods, and manage their own learning activities. Good self-directed learning habits enable students to gradually reduce their dependence on teachers and parents and develop a stable sense of initiative and responsibility in learning. Liu (2020) categorizes the development of student self-directed learning into four levels: interest-based engagement, habit formation, ritualization, and the development of personal meaning. This perspective emphasizes that self-directed learning needs to progress from initial participation toward habitual behavior and internal recognition. It also indicates that self-directed learning does not simply mean completing tasks independently; rather, it requires continuous behavioral development until active learning becomes a relatively stable tendency.

Upper-grade primary school is an important stage in the further development of students' learning habits and the gradual transformation of their learning approaches. As learning content expands, subject knowledge becomes more challenging, and learning tasks become increasingly complex, students need to devote more time to after-school review, homework, and knowledge consolidation. Compared with students in lower grades, those in upper primary grades have generally developed a stronger sense of time and greater awareness of self-management. They are increasingly capable of understanding learning objectives and organizing their own learning activities to some extent. Gao (2019), in a study of mathematics self-directed learning habits among upper-grade primary school students, identifies five dimensions of such habits: setting learning objectives, selecting learning content, allocating learning time, choosing learning methods, and evaluating learning outcomes. These dimensions provide a useful framework for understanding the specific components of self-directed learning habits at this educational stage.

After-school learning provides an important context for developing self-directed learning habits. Classroom learning is generally organized around clearly defined teaching arrangements and teacher guidance, whereas after-school learning takes place more frequently in the home environment, where students need to manage homework, review activities, reading tasks, and individual learning needs. Whether students can formulate plans according to their actual circumstances and translate those plans into sustained learning activities directly affects the quality of their after-school learning. Some students can list the tasks they need to complete each day but cannot allocate their time effectively. Others begin studying only after being reminded by their parents and lack the initiative to start learning independently. Some students complete their homework but rarely review their learning process or develop the habit of adjusting their plans. This gap between planning and implementation makes learning plans likely to remain merely formal arrangements.

Existing research on self-directed learning has addressed various aspects, including learning motivation, learning strategies, self-monitoring, family parenting styles, and teacher support. However, further attention needs to be given to how after-school learning plans can be translated into stable patterns of action in the specific context of upper-grade primary education. A learning plan is not simply a checklist of tasks. Its value lies not only in clarifying what students need to complete each day but also in helping them develop the ability to act consistently, allocate time appropriately, and manage their own learning activities. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the development of after-school self-directed learning plan implementation habits among upper-grade primary school students. It examines the common difficulties and underlying causes associated with plan implementation and proposes development pathways involving goal setting, task decomposition, time management, progress monitoring, evaluation and feedback, and home-school collaboration.

2. The Meaning of After-School Self-Directed Learning Plan Implementation Habits Among Upper-Grade Primary School Students

2.1 The Basic Meaning of After-School Self-Directed Learning Plan Implementation Habits

After-school self-directed learning refers to students' active engagement in activities outside classroom instruction based on their learning needs and the requirements provided by teachers. Such activities may include reviewing classroom knowledge, completing homework, undertaking supplementary reading, organizing mistakes in previous exercises, and pursuing other learning activities. Compared with classroom learning, after-school learning

involves a greater degree of independent organization. Students need to select and organize learning activities according to their tasks, individual abilities, and available time. Its self-directed nature does not mean that students must completely separate themselves from teacher and parental guidance. Rather, it involves gradually developing the ability to manage their own learning activities with appropriate support.

An after-school self-directed learning plan refers to an arrangement that students make regarding their learning tasks, the sequence of activities, completion times, and expected outcomes within a given period. Plans may be organized on a daily or weekly basis. They can include both school-assigned tasks and additional activities that students identify according to their own needs, such as reviewing knowledge, reading, and organizing learning materials. Compared with deciding what to study at the last minute, a learning plan helps students understand their tasks in advance, identify priorities, and reduce unnecessary uncertainty during the learning process.

The habit of implementing after-school self-directed learning plans refers to a relatively stable behavioral tendency developed through repeated learning activities. It involves actively following reasonable plans while making adjustments according to actual circumstances. This habit is reflected not only in completing planned tasks on time but also in checking learning arrangements independently, starting activities promptly, allocating time appropriately, seeking solutions when difficulties arise, and reviewing and reflecting on learning outcomes after completing tasks.

It is important to recognize that developing the habit of following learning plans is not equivalent to mechanically obeying every item in a schedule. Students may encounter changes in task difficulty, unexpected activities, or physical discomfort during the learning process. If the original plan is no longer appropriate, students who can independently adjust the sequence of tasks or modify their completion times are also demonstrating self-directed plan implementation. In contrast, even if students complete their daily tasks according to a schedule established by their parents, complete dependence on external reminders does not necessarily indicate that they have developed genuine habits of independent implementation.

Therefore, determining whether students have developed good after-school learning plan implementation habits should not depend solely on how many tasks they complete. Greater attention should be given to whether they demonstrate initiative in planning, the ability to sustain learning activities, and an awareness of when and how to make adjustments.

2.2 The Main Components of After-School Self-Directed Learning Plan Implementation Habits

The habit of implementing after-school self-directed learning plans among upper-grade primary school students mainly consists of four interconnected components: plan formulation, task implementation, process monitoring, and outcome evaluation.

Plan formulation is the starting point of implementation. Students need to understand their current learning tasks, identify what needs to be completed, and arrange activities according to their importance and personal abilities. Planned activities should be sufficiently specific. Rather than writing general objectives such as “study carefully” or “improve academic performance,” students should identify concrete activities. For example, instead of writing “review Chinese,” they can specify “review the vocabulary learned this week and organize the key points from two lessons.” This makes it easier for students to understand exactly what they need to accomplish.

Task implementation refers to the process of translating plans into actual learning activities. Students need to begin studying at the scheduled time, complete tasks in a reasonable order, and minimize distractions unrelated to learning. Implementation habits are reflected not only in whether students start on time but also in whether they can maintain a certain level of concentration and continue making efforts when difficulties arise rather than frequently interrupting their work or giving up immediately.

Process monitoring involves observing and managing the progress of planned learning activities. Students need to understand how much of a task has been completed and determine whether their actual progress is consistent with the original arrangement. When they discover that a task is taking longer than expected or that the learning results are unsatisfactory, they should be able to adjust their learning methods or reorganize subsequent

tasks. Process monitoring enables students to identify problems promptly and prevents their plans from becoming disconnected from actual learning activities.

Outcome evaluation is an important stage after the implementation of a learning plan. Students need to check whether tasks have been completed, determine whether learning objectives have been achieved, and consider which arrangements were effective and which aspects require improvement. Gao (2019) incorporates learning objectives, content, time allocation, learning methods, and evaluation into the analysis of self-directed learning habits, indicating that plan formulation and implementation involve several mutually supportive learning behaviors.

These four components are not independent of one another. Plan formulation establishes the direction of learning, task implementation translates the plan into action, process monitoring helps students address deviations, and outcome evaluation provides experience for subsequent planning. Only when these components form a continuous learning process can plans move beyond written arrangements and help students gradually develop stable implementation habits.

2.3 The Difference Between Learning Plan Implementation Habits and General Learning Habits

General learning habits include various behaviors, such as listening attentively in class, completing written assignments, reading, previewing lessons, reviewing knowledge, and preparing for examinations. Although after-school self-directed learning plan implementation habits are an important part of learning habits, their focus is not limited to any single learning activity. Instead, they concern how students organize and manage different learning activities.

For example, completing homework on time is a specific learning habit. However, arranging homework according to task quantity, difficulty, and available time, and checking progress after completion, reflects the broader habit of implementing learning plans. Similarly, reading extracurricular books every day is a reading habit, whereas independently incorporating reading into a daily learning plan, completing the activity consistently, and recording reading content demonstrate a more developed plan implementation habit.

This distinction indicates that cultivating after-school learning plan implementation habits should not simply require students to complete a particular task on time. Instead, students should be helped to develop the ability to organize learning activities so that different tasks can be incorporated into a relatively stable arrangement. Only when students gradually acquire this management ability can they maintain a certain degree of independence when learning tasks change.

3. The Value of Developing After-School Self-Directed Learning Plan Implementation Habits among Upper-Grade Primary School Students

3.1 Strengthening Students' Awareness of Their Role in Learning

Awareness of one's role as an active learner is an important foundation for participating in learning activities. Some students become accustomed to receiving instructions from teachers and parents throughout their educational experience. Learning content, study times, and even the sequence of activities are determined by others. Although this approach may help ensure that tasks are completed, it can also lead to dependence on external arrangements. When reminders become less frequent, students may not know what to study or how to organize their time.

Formulating and implementing after-school learning plans provides students with opportunities to participate in managing their own learning. They need to identify learning tasks according to their circumstances, determine the sequence of activities, and take responsibility for the results. Through this process, students gradually recognize that learning is not merely about completing tasks assigned by others but also about managing their own learning activities.

Sun (2015), in a study of the factors influencing the development of self-directed learning habits among upper-grade primary school students, examines learning motivation, family parenting styles, and teachers' classroom roles, emphasizing the relationship between learning motivation and the development of self-directed learning habits. This suggests that students' ability to develop active learning behaviors depends not only on external task requirements but also on whether they have an internal willingness to participate in learning. Allowing students to participate in plan formulation can

strengthen their sense of responsibility for learning and reduce their dependence on parental reminders.

3.2 Improving the Continuity of After-School Learning Activities

After-school learning tasks are often dispersed across different subjects, completed at flexible times, and carried out in relatively complex environments. Without reasonable arrangements, students may experience confusion about the sequence of activities, omit certain tasks, or allocate their time unevenly. Some students may complete the activities they enjoy first and leave more difficult tasks until the end, resulting in insufficient time for subsequent work. Others may frequently switch between different tasks and struggle to maintain a stable learning state.

Learning plans help students identify tasks and establish a reasonable sequence before beginning their activities. Once the habit of implementing plans has developed, students no longer need to reconsider what they should do every day. Instead, they can begin learning according to an established arrangement. This stability helps reduce hesitation and procrastination and enables after-school learning to become a more continuous process.

Implementing a plan does not mean requiring students to follow exactly the same schedule every day. Rather, it means helping them develop relatively stable methods of organizing learning activities. When learning tasks change, students should still be able to redistribute their time according to actual circumstances and ensure that important tasks are completed.

3.3 Developing Students' Self-Management Abilities

Upper-grade primary school students are at a stage when self-awareness and self-management abilities are gradually developing. Implementing after-school learning plans requires students to exercise a certain degree of control over their own behavior, including managing study time, reducing irrelevant activities, persisting in completing tasks, and dealing with learning difficulties. These behaviors are not limited to academic activities and may also be transferred to other aspects of daily life.

When formulating plans, students need to recognize their own abilities. During implementation, they must manage their attention and behavior. When reviewing their plans, they need to evaluate their own performance. These activities help students gradually develop the ability to observe and regulate their behavior. Gao (2022), in a study of academic self-efficacy and self-directed learning among upper-grade primary school students, connects goal setting, autonomy in the learning process, and learning strategies, emphasizing the positive role of academic self-efficacy in supporting self-directed learning.

When students successfully complete planned tasks through their own efforts, they are more likely to develop a clear sense of achievement. Such experiences can strengthen their confidence in their learning abilities, encourage them to undertake new tasks, and gradually develop their willingness to manage learning activities independently.

3.4 Supporting the Transition from Primary to Secondary Education

Upper-grade primary school is an important period during which students' learning approaches gradually change. After entering secondary school, students generally encounter changes in the number of subjects, the complexity of learning content, and the amount of after-school work. They need to manage increasingly complicated learning arrangements. Students who have long depended on teachers and parents to organize their learning may experience difficulties adapting to these new requirements.

Developing the habit of implementing after-school learning plans can help students establish basic abilities in time management, task allocation, and self-evaluation in advance. Even when they encounter new learning content, they can use previously acquired planning methods to organize their activities. Wen (2013), from the perspective of lifelong learning, emphasizes the role of good learning habits and self-directed learning abilities in supporting continuous personal development. The development of plan implementation habits during primary education can therefore provide a foundation for students' subsequent transitions in learning approaches.

4. Problems and Causes in the Implementation of After-School Self-Directed Learning Plans Among Upper-Grade Primary School Students

4.1 Dependence on External Arrangements and Insufficient Student Participation

Some students have clear after-school learning arrangements every day, but these plans are

primarily formulated by their parents or teachers. Parents organize learning times according to homework requirements and their own expectations, while students simply complete the assigned tasks one by one. This approach may provide useful support before learning habits have been established. However, when students are not sufficiently involved in formulating plans over an extended period, learning plans can become external management tools.

In such situations, students may know what tasks they need to complete every day but may not understand why the tasks are arranged in a particular way. They may also lack the awareness needed to adjust their plans according to actual circumstances. When learning tasks change or parents are not present, students may wait for reminders, delay starting their work, or become uncertain about how to organize their learning activities.

Dependence on external arrangements is related to insufficient development of students' awareness of self-directed learning. Although upper-grade primary school students have developed a certain degree of independence, they still need guidance in learning experience, time management, and independent judgment. If adults make all the arrangements on their behalf, students have fewer opportunities to gain practical experience in planning. Yang (2017), in a study of teacher support strategies in self-directed learning, emphasizes that self-directed learning does not mean learning entirely without teacher involvement. Instead, teachers need to gradually shift from external controllers to providers of learning support. This approach is equally applicable to after-school learning plans. Teachers and parents should provide necessary guidance without making every decision on behalf of students over the long term.

4.2 Vague Learning Objectives and Insufficiently Actionable Plans

Whether a learning plan can be implemented is closely related to the specificity of its objectives. Some students tend to use general expressions when making plans, such as "review lessons," "complete homework carefully," or "read more extracurricular books." Although these objectives reflect a willingness to learn, they do not clearly define the scope of tasks or the criteria for completion. As a result, students may feel uncertain when carrying out their plans.

For example, "review mathematics" does not indicate which knowledge points need to be reviewed or what methods should be used. After opening the textbook, students may browse through it casually or remain unsure about where to begin. In comparison, a task such as "organize two mathematical concepts that were not fully understood this week and complete the corresponding exercises" provides a much clearer learning direction.

Vague objectives can also make it difficult for students to determine whether a task has been completed. Without specific completion criteria, students may use the amount of time spent studying as a substitute for actual learning outcomes, assuming that sitting at a desk is equivalent to completing a learning task. In reality, learning plans should focus on the specific activities students need to undertake rather than simply specifying the duration of study.

Some students also include too many tasks in their plans, which can undermine implementation. Parents may expect students to complete school homework, additional exercises, reading, and lesson preparation within the same period. Students may consequently continue adding tasks in response to external expectations. When the total workload exceeds their available time and abilities, the plan becomes difficult to implement. Repeatedly facing plans that cannot be completed may gradually weaken students' confidence and even lead them to resist planning altogether.

4.3 Unreasonable Time Allocation and Disruptions to Plan Implementation

Time allocation is an important component of after-school self-directed learning plans. Although upper-grade primary school students have generally developed a basic awareness of time, they may still find it difficult to estimate how long different learning tasks will take. Some students organize their schedules according to ideal conditions without considering task difficulty, changes in concentration, or necessary rest periods. Consequently, deviations frequently occur during implementation.

For example, a student may assume that a particular assignment will take only ten minutes, but the actual completion time may be much longer. As the first task takes longer than expected, subsequent arrangements are also affected. Without the ability to make adjustments, students may rush through their

work, complete tasks carelessly, or abandon some activities.

Distractions in the home environment can also affect plan implementation. Television, mobile phones, family activities, and other forms of entertainment may divert students' attention. Some students have already formulated learning plans but are easily attracted by unrelated activities during study time, making it difficult to maintain continuous engagement.

Unreasonable time allocation is also related to students' limited experience in practical time management. Effective planning requires students to understand their own learning pace and the characteristics of different tasks. Such understanding cannot be acquired solely through adult explanations. It develops gradually through repeated experiences of planning, implementation, and adjustment. Gao's (2019) study of mathematics self-directed learning habits among upper-grade primary school students also identifies the allocation of learning time as an important dimension, highlighting the significance of time management in developing self-directed learning habits.

4.4 Insufficient Consistency in Implementation and Frequent Procrastination or Interruptions

Implementing a learning plan requires persistence. However, the learning behaviors of upper-grade primary school students are still easily influenced by interest, emotions, and external environments. Some students demonstrate strong enthusiasm when they first formulate a plan and carefully record their learning tasks. However, their willingness to follow the plan gradually declines over time.

This may be reflected in several ways. Students may complete tasks successfully at the beginning but gradually begin to omit activities. They may procrastinate when dealing with subjects they dislike, frequently interrupt their work when encountering difficult tasks, or abandon subsequent arrangements entirely after failing to complete a plan on a particular day.

The lack of consistency in plan implementation is related to students' understanding of learning tasks, their interests, and their academic self-efficacy. Students who repeatedly face tasks they cannot complete may begin to believe that their abilities are insufficient, reducing their willingness to continue making efforts. Gao (2022) connects academic self-efficacy with goal setting, learning processes, and learning strategies among upper-grade primary school students, emphasizing that positive perceptions of one's abilities can support continued engagement when learning difficulties arise.

Therefore, cultivating plan implementation habits should not focus exclusively on discipline and persistence. It should also consider whether students can gain successful learning experiences through appropriate task arrangements. If plans consistently exceed students' actual abilities, even strict external supervision may fail to establish stable self-directed behaviors.

4.5 Insufficient Progress Checking and Plan Adjustment

Some students regard plan formulation and task completion as two separate activities. Once they have finished their assignments, they consider the learning process complete and rarely check their actual progress or evaluate whether their arrangements were reasonable. As a result, plan implementation may become a mechanical process of completing and marking tasks.

For example, a student may originally schedule mathematics exercises for a particular period but spend considerably longer than expected on difficult questions. If no adjustments are made, subsequent learning activities may be affected. Other students may complete their planned reading tasks without reviewing the content or checking whether they have understood the main ideas. Their plans may indicate that the tasks have been completed, but the actual learning outcomes may not meet expectations.

Insufficient self-evaluation also affects students' understanding of their learning processes. Students may focus exclusively on whether homework has been completed and whether answers are correct while overlooking factors such as time allocation, learning methods, and attention management. Consequently, recurring problems may remain unnoticed.

Shi and Xu (2022), in their discussion of cultivating self-directed learning habits, emphasize the importance of learning method guidance, diversified evaluation, and home-school communication. This suggests that the development of plan implementation habits should extend beyond task completion. Progress checking and outcome evaluation are also necessary to help students gradually learn how to improve their own learning behaviors.

4.6 Insufficient Coordination Between Family and

School Support

After-school self-directed learning mainly takes place in the home environment, but its tasks and methods are closely connected with school teaching. If teachers and parents have different understandings of self-directed learning, the development of plan implementation habits may be affected.

Some teachers pay greater attention to whether homework is completed on time, whereas parents may focus more on the amount of time spent studying or the completion of additional exercises. Students may consequently face several different learning arrangements, leading to duplicated tasks, time conflicts, and excessive workloads.

Some families also regard supervision as the primary method of cultivating self-directed learning habits. Parents repeatedly ask whether tasks have been completed, remind students to begin studying, or directly check every step of the learning process. Although this approach may improve the likelihood of task completion in the short term, it can also lead students to depend on external supervision. In other families, insufficient attention is paid to after-school learning, leaving students without timely guidance when difficulties arise.

Chen (2014), in a study of self-directed learning among upper-grade primary school students, examines students' learning attitudes, habits, and learning conditions, while also considering differences between teachers' and parents' understandings of self-directed learning. This indicates that the development of plan implementation habits requires a relatively consistent educational approach between schools and families, rather than relying entirely on either party.

5. Conditions for Developing After-School Self-Directed Learning Plan Implementation Habits

5.1 Students Need to Develop Clear Motivation for Self-Directed Learning

The formation of habits requires motivation to engage in particular behaviors. If students regard learning plans merely as additional tasks imposed by their parents, it is difficult for them to develop an independent willingness to implement those plans. In contrast, when students recognize that planning can help address specific learning needs and are willing to use it to solve practical problems, they are more likely to participate actively in planning and implementation.

The motivation for self-directed learning does not necessarily originate from abstract academic objectives. For upper-grade primary school students, practical benefits such as having more time to read books they enjoy after completing homework, preparing for examinations in advance, or reducing the stress associated with approaching deadlines can all serve as meaningful motivations for planning.

Teachers and parents should help students recognize the practical benefits of organizing their learning rather than simply emphasizing the importance of making plans. Zhang, Yan, and Rao (2017), in their discussion of developing independent habits among primary school students through joyful education, emphasize the roles of independent choice and self-management in habit development. Therefore, cultivating plan implementation habits requires preserving opportunities for students to make choices, allowing them to determine learning content, task sequences, and specific methods within reasonable limits.

5.2 Students Need to Master Basic Planning and Implementation Methods

Good implementation habits require practical methods. Even when students are motivated to learn, they may struggle to translate their intentions into action if they do not know how to divide tasks, allocate time, or deal with difficulties.

Planning methods mainly involve identifying tasks, distinguishing priorities, estimating the time required, and organizing the sequence of activities. Task implementation methods include starting promptly, maintaining concentration, reducing distractions, and dealing with learning difficulties appropriately. Process management also requires students to develop the ability to check progress and adjust their plans.

These methods should be taught through specific learning activities rather than abstract explanations alone. For example, teachers can select a common after-school assignment and guide students in analyzing its content, estimating the time required, and discussing reasonable ways to organize different tasks. Repeatedly applying these methods in actual learning situations enables students to gradually develop relatively stable behavioral patterns.

5.3 Students Need to Gain Appropriate Experiences of Success

The development of plan implementation habits is closely related to students' perceptions of their own learning abilities. When students complete a plan and clearly recognize their efforts and progress, they are more likely to develop positive learning experiences.

Successful experiences do not mean that every plan must be completed perfectly the first time or that difficulties should never occur. For students, being able to start a task that they previously tended to postpone, completing a difficult assignment by adjusting their methods, or independently identifying and correcting an unreasonable time arrangement can all represent meaningful progress.

Teachers and parents should establish appropriate learning requirements according to students' actual abilities, enabling them to gradually improve their implementation through continued effort. Excessively demanding goals may lead to frustration, whereas goals that are too easy may provide insufficient challenges. Maintaining an appropriate relationship between task difficulty and students' current abilities helps ensure that plan implementation remains both achievable and developmentally meaningful.

5.4 Students Need a Relatively Stable Learning Environment and Appropriate Support

The after-school learning environment affects the continuity of plan implementation. Students need a relatively fixed learning space, access to necessary learning materials, and minimal interference from activities unrelated to learning. A family does not necessarily need a separate study room, but it should provide basic conditions for a quiet and relatively stable study period.

Teacher and parental support is also essential. Teachers need to help students understand learning tasks and acquire appropriate methods, while parents can assist them in establishing daily learning routines and provide necessary guidance when difficulties arise. The purpose of such support should be to help students gradually develop independent management abilities rather than permanently replacing their own efforts.

6. Pathways for Developing After-School Self-Directed Learning Plan Implementation Habits among Upper-Grade Primary School Students

6.1 Developing Awareness of Independent Planning Based on Students' Actual Needs

The development of plan implementation habits should begin with students' willingness to participate in formulating their own plans. If students do not identify with their plans, even a complete planning schedule provided by teachers and parents may result in superficial completion, arbitrary modifications, or failure to follow the arrangements.

Therefore, cultivating planning awareness requires connecting plan formulation with students' actual learning needs. Teachers can begin with common problems in daily learning and encourage students to consider why certain assignments are repeatedly postponed, why review tasks are frequently forgotten, and why extended study time does not always produce the expected results. Through these specific questions, students can recognize the practical value of planning and understand that making a plan is not intended to increase their workload but to organize learning activities more effectively.

Student participation in plan formulation should gradually increase. For students who have not yet developed planning awareness, teachers can initially provide a basic framework within which students choose the sequence of tasks and specific completion times. As students gain more experience, external arrangements can gradually be reduced, allowing them to formulate daily and weekly plans independently.

Students should also have a certain degree of freedom when making plans. For example, after completing essential homework, they can choose extracurricular reading, supplementary learning, or other educational activities according to their interests. They can also select the order in which different subjects are reviewed within reasonable limits. Such opportunities help students recognize the direct relationship between their plans and their own learning activities, thereby strengthening their willingness to implement those plans.

Teachers should recognize that independent choice does not mean the absence of guidance. When students make clearly unreasonable arrangements, teachers should help them analyze the causes, explain the possible consequences of different choices, and guide them toward more appropriate decisions. Through continuous

participation and adjustment, students can gradually move from accepting plans made by others to formulating their own learning arrangements.

6.2 Translating Learning Objectives into Specific Tasks to Improve Plan Feasibility

Vague learning objectives are an important reason why plans fail to be implemented. Developing plan implementation habits therefore requires helping students learn how to translate broad learning objectives into specific tasks.

In practice, learning objectives can be divided into short-term developmental goals and concrete daily tasks. Developmental goals identify the general direction of learning over a period of time, such as consolidating the mathematics knowledge covered during the week, improving English vocabulary retention, or completing a certain amount of extracurricular reading. Concrete tasks specify what students need to do each day, such as organizing classroom notes, correcting exercises, reading a passage aloud, or reviewing a particular group of vocabulary items.

Teachers can guide students to describe tasks in simple but specific terms, clarifying the learning content, completion requirements, and expected time. For example, the general task "review Chinese" can be revised to "review this week's vocabulary, check words that are easily misspelled, and recall the key points of the lessons." Similarly, "study mathematics" can be divided into "complete the exercises that were not fully understood in class and organize one incorrect answer that requires further review."

Task decomposition should also take students' actual abilities into account. For students with weaker academic foundations or a tendency to procrastinate, larger tasks can be divided into smaller components to reduce the psychological difficulty of getting started. Students who have already developed stronger planning abilities can be given greater opportunities for independent choice and supplementary learning.

The number of tasks included in a plan should not be excessive. Students' after-school time needs to accommodate not only school assignments but also necessary rest, physical activities, and personal interests. If plans are too intensive, students may experience fatigue and resistance during implementation. Zhu (2023), in a discussion of assignment design for guiding students' self-directed learning of physics textbooks, examines the relationship between assignment content and independent learning and emphasizes the importance of optimizing assignment design. This suggests that cultivating plan implementation habits requires attention to the reasonableness of learning tasks rather than simply increasing their number.

6.3 Allocating Time According to Task Characteristics and Developing Stable Study-Starting Habits

Time allocation affects not only learning efficiency but also whether students can begin their activities according to their plans. Upper-grade primary school students need to gradually learn how to organize their learning time according to task difficulty, estimated duration, and personal learning conditions rather than simply distributing all tasks evenly across fixed periods.

Teachers and parents can guide students in arranging their after-school schedules according to their actual daily circumstances. Homework that must be completed on the same day can be given priority. Tasks requiring sustained thinking can be scheduled during periods when students are relatively focused. Activities such as reading and organizing learning materials can be arranged more flexibly according to students' learning conditions.

Time arrangements should include a certain amount of flexibility. Students may underestimate the time required for particular tasks, and difficult questions may require additional thinking. If no buffer time is provided between activities, delays in one task can disrupt the entire schedule. Appropriate rest periods are equally important. Students should not be expected to study continuously for long periods simply to complete every item in their plans.

Developing stable study-starting habits is an important aspect of time management. Students can establish a fixed set of preparatory activities before beginning their work, such as organizing learning materials, checking the day's tasks, and preparing necessary stationery. Repeating these relatively consistent behaviors can gradually establish a clear signal for starting learning activities.

For students who frequently procrastinate, the difficulty of beginning a task can be reduced appropriately. Instead of requiring them to complete an entire set of exercises immediately, teachers and parents can encourage them to

begin with the first question or read a short passage. Once students have started, they may find it easier to enter a focused learning state and continue with subsequent tasks.

Teachers can also guide students in observing their learning conditions at different times of the day. Students can identify which periods are more suitable for tasks requiring concentration and which are more appropriate for reading or organizing information. As students gradually understand their own characteristics, time management can become more individualized and reasonable rather than a mechanical set of requirements.

6.4 Strengthening Learning Method Guidance to Improve Persistence during Plan Implementation

Plan implementation involves more than starting a task on time. It also requires students to use appropriate methods to complete their learning activities. Some students can begin studying as scheduled but lack effective learning strategies. When difficulties arise, they may spend too much time on a single problem, affecting the completion of subsequent tasks.

Teachers should provide guidance according to the characteristics of different learning activities. For memorization tasks, students can be encouraged to use classification, spaced review, and self-questioning. For reading tasks, teachers can guide them to focus on main ideas, keywords, and personal understanding. For mathematics exercises, students can learn to analyze the conditions of a problem, recall relevant knowledge, and check their reasoning after completing the task.

Guidance should also address how students respond to tasks they cannot complete immediately. When encountering a difficult question, students can mark it, review relevant classroom content, or consult appropriate learning materials. If they remain unable to solve the problem after making reasonable efforts, they can seek help from teachers or parents. This approach prevents students from spending excessive time on a single task and reduces the likelihood of abandoning learning activities immediately when difficulties arise.

When interruptions occur during plan implementation, teachers and parents should not simply attribute them to a lack of discipline. Instead, they should help students identify the specific causes. If students frequently stop working because tasks are too difficult, the tasks may need to be divided into smaller components. If mobile phones and entertainment activities repeatedly distract them, the learning environment may need to be improved. If students cannot complete tasks because they lack appropriate methods, further guidance in learning strategies is necessary.

Wu (2022), in a discussion of cultivating self-directed learning abilities in primary school mathematics teaching, addresses learning environments, preparatory learning tasks, teaching methods, and learning habits. This perspective can be extended to after-school learning management. Through appropriate learning method guidance and reasonable task design, students can acquire the practical abilities needed to carry out their plans.

6.5 Establishing Progress Monitoring Mechanisms and Developing the Habit of Checking and Adjusting Plans

During plan implementation, students need to understand their actual learning progress and identify differences between their plans and their real circumstances. Progress monitoring should not become continuous parental inspection. Instead, it should gradually develop into a process through which students independently observe and manage their own learning behavior.

Teachers can encourage students to use simple daily learning records to compare planned tasks with actual completion. These records do not need to be complicated. They can include whether a task was completed, whether it was started on time, how long it actually took, and what difficulties arose. Completed tasks can be marked accordingly, while unfinished tasks should be accompanied by a brief explanation of the reasons and a decision about whether they need to be rescheduled.

Plan adjustments should be based on actual circumstances. If a task takes longer than expected because of its difficulty, students can reorganize subsequent activities. If unexpected events occur during the day, they can adjust the sequence of learning tasks. If a particular task is no longer necessary, it can be modified or replaced under the guidance of teachers.

Teachers should help students distinguish between reasonable adjustments and arbitrary abandonment. Reasonable adjustment involves modifying arrangements according to learning tasks and actual circumstances while making

efforts to ensure that important learning objectives are achieved. Arbitrary abandonment, in contrast, occurs when students stop working simply because they dislike a task or are distracted by unrelated activities. Although the two behaviors may appear similar, they reflect different attitudes toward learning and self-management.

For upper-grade primary school students, progress monitoring can begin with simple self-questioning. During learning activities, students can ask themselves whether they started according to their plans, whether their current progress is consistent with expectations, and whether their learning methods need to be changed. Through these simple checking behaviors, students can gradually develop awareness of their own learning processes.

During the initial stage of development, teachers and parents can participate in checking students' progress. However, they should avoid interrupting learning activities too frequently. As students' self-monitoring abilities improve, external checks can gradually be reduced, allowing students to report their own progress and adjustments independently. Yang (2017) emphasizes the role of teacher support in developing students' self-monitoring abilities and learning strategies. The ultimate purpose of teacher support should be to help students acquire the ability to monitor their learning processes independently.

6.6 Emphasizing Outcome Evaluation and Using Positive Feedback to Reinforce Implementation Habits

Outcome evaluation is an essential component of plan implementation. After completing their daily learning tasks, students need to review whether their plans have been carried out, identify unfinished tasks, and consider whether their original arrangements were appropriate.

Evaluation should not focus exclusively on the number of completed tasks and academic performance. It should also consider specific behaviors during plan implementation. For example, whether students can begin learning independently, whether they complete tasks in a reasonable order, whether they can reduce distractions, whether they actively seek solutions when difficulties arise, and whether they can adjust their plans according to actual circumstances.

When students fail to complete planned tasks, teachers and parents should guide them in analyzing the reasons rather than immediately criticizing them. If a task remains unfinished because the estimated time was inaccurate, students can be helped to reassess the time required for different activities. If progress is slow because students have not mastered appropriate learning methods, teachers and parents can provide necessary guidance. If learning is interrupted by entertainment activities, they can discuss ways to improve the learning environment and organize behavior more effectively.

Positive feedback can strengthen students' identification with their learning plans. After completing planned tasks, students should receive recognition for their efforts. Teachers can acknowledge specific improvements, such as independently formulating plans, starting learning activities on time, completing tasks without direct assistance, and actively adjusting unreasonable arrangements. Compared with praising academic results alone, recognizing specific behaviors helps students become more aware of changes in their implementation habits.

Evaluation methods can also gradually shift from external assessment toward self-evaluation. Teachers can encourage students to review their plan implementation once a week, identify one habit they have successfully developed and one behavior that still needs improvement, and determine specific adjustments for the following period. Through continuous reflection, students can gradually understand that plan evaluation is not intended to determine whether they are sufficiently successful, but rather to make future learning arrangements more effective.

6.7 Providing Differentiated Guidance According to Individual Student Differences

Although upper-grade primary school students are generally at similar developmental stages, they differ in academic foundations, learning interests, family environments, and self-management abilities. Requiring all students to follow exactly the same planning arrangements may result in excessive workloads for some, insufficient challenges for others, and difficulties adapting for those who need additional support.

For students with limited awareness of self-directed learning who frequently rely on parental reminders, the primary focus should be on developing basic study-starting habits. Teachers can help them identify a small number of essential daily tasks and gradually establish fixed

study times and basic implementation routines. Their plans should remain simple, and they should not be required to meet too many expectations at once.

For students who can complete basic learning tasks but have difficulty allocating time appropriately, guidance should focus on estimating task duration, prioritizing activities, and checking progress. Teachers can encourage these students to record the actual time required for different tasks and use their experiences to improve subsequent arrangements.

For students who have already developed relatively strong self-directed learning abilities, greater opportunities for independent choice and reflection can be provided. For example, students can arrange supplementary reading, error correction, and periodic review according to their learning needs and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their plans. Teachers do not need to specify every task in detail but should focus more on whether students' learning objectives are reasonable and whether their plans are feasible.

The developmental priorities of Grade Five and Grade Six students can also differ. Grade Five students may benefit more from teacher demonstrations and collaborative planning to acquire basic methods, whereas Grade Six students can gradually be expected to formulate weekly plans independently, manage review tasks, and adjust their arrangements when necessary. Tian (2011), in a discussion of self-directed mathematics learning among upper-grade primary school students, examines the roles of schools and families in developing self-directed learning and emphasizes the importance of support from multiple sources.

Differentiated guidance does not mean assigning students to fixed categories. Rather, it requires adjusting the level of support according to their current implementation abilities. Students' self-directed learning abilities change as they gain experience, and teachers should modify their guidance accordingly so that external support can gradually be transformed into students' own management abilities.

7. Implementation Support through Home-School Collaboration

7.1 Integrating Learning Plan Guidance into Daily School Teaching

Schools are important environments for developing students' learning habits. Although teachers cannot directly manage every aspect of students' learning at home, they can help students acquire the skills needed to formulate and implement after-school plans through classroom instruction, assignment design, and daily guidance.

In daily teaching, teachers can guide students in identifying specific after-school review tasks according to the characteristics of different subjects. Chinese language learning can involve reviewing texts, accumulating vocabulary, and completing reading activities. Mathematics learning can focus on organizing knowledge, correcting mistakes, and consolidating exercises. English learning can incorporate vocabulary memorization, text reading, and language practice.

Assignment design should take the reasonableness and different levels of learning tasks into account. Teachers should not rely simply on increasing the amount of homework to improve students' learning engagement. Instead, they should consider whether assignments help students consolidate knowledge, identify learning difficulties, and develop learning abilities. Appropriate optional supplementary tasks can provide students with opportunities to organize their learning activities independently.

Schools can also organize classroom discussions in which students share their experiences of formulating learning plans. For example, students can explain how they organize tasks across different subjects, deal with time conflicts, and solve difficulties by adjusting their learning methods. Through such exchanges, students can learn about different approaches to learning management and gain useful insights from their peers.

Teachers should avoid turning learning plans into another standardized checking task. If schools focus only on whether planning forms are completed correctly or whether students meet daily check-in requirements, students may begin formulating plans merely to satisfy inspection requirements. The primary focus of school guidance should be whether students have genuinely learned to manage their own learning processes rather than whether their planning forms meet formal standards.

7.2 Shifting Family Support from Direct Supervision to Appropriate Assistance

The family is the primary environment for after-

school self-directed learning, and parental approaches can influence students' learning attitudes and behavioral habits. The key to family support is not to organize every learning activity on behalf of students but to provide a stable learning environment and gradually develop their ability to manage their own activities.

Parents can discuss daily learning tasks with their children and help them understand the amount of homework, completion requirements, and available study time. When students formulate plans, parents can offer suggestions but should allow children to decide the sequence of tasks and specific arrangements whenever possible. If a plan is unreasonable, parents should help children identify the problem through discussion rather than immediately rejecting the plan and replacing it with their own arrangements.

The home learning environment should also remain relatively stable. Parents can agree with their children on reasonable study times, reduce distractions from television, mobile phones, and other entertainment activities, and prepare the necessary learning materials. Family members should avoid interrupting students too frequently during study periods so that they can maintain relatively continuous engagement.

When children fail to follow their plans, parents should first understand the specific reasons. If the tasks are too difficult, they can help divide them into smaller components. If time allocation is unreasonable, they can reconsider how long different activities are likely to take. If learning is repeatedly interrupted by distractions, they can discuss ways to improve the environment. Parents should not automatically interpret every failure to complete a plan as an attitude problem, nor should they rely on continuous criticism and punishment to force children to follow their arrangements.

As children's independent abilities improve, parents should gradually reduce direct reminders and allow children to assume greater responsibility for managing their learning. For students who have already developed stable implementation habits, parents can pay greater attention to their overall learning conditions rather than checking every individual task. The value of family education lies in helping students develop learning methods that they can use independently, rather than making them permanently dependent on adult supervision.

7.3 Establishing Communication Mechanisms Between Schools and Families

The development of plan implementation habits involves both school teaching requirements and the home learning environment. Without sufficient communication between schools and families, students may face conflicting expectations. Schools and families should therefore establish relatively consistent developmental goals based on students' actual learning needs.

Teachers can explain the basic requirements of after-school learning plans to parents so that they understand the importance of respecting students' actual abilities and avoiding excessive supplementary tasks. Parents can also provide feedback to teachers about students' learning conditions at home, including which tasks take longer than expected, which learning activities present difficulties, and which stages are most likely to involve procrastination.

Communication should focus on solving specific problems rather than simply comparing students' performance. For students who repeatedly fail to implement their plans, teachers and parents can jointly analyze the underlying difficulties and clarify their respective responsibilities. Teachers are responsible for providing guidance on learning content and methods, parents are responsible for maintaining basic learning conditions and offering necessary support, and students should gradually assume primary responsibility for planning and implementation.

Shi and Xu (2022) connect home-school communication with learning method guidance and evaluation approaches in their discussion of cultivating self-directed learning habits. Cooperation between schools and families can reduce conflicting expectations and create a relatively stable environment in which students can accumulate experience in implementing their learning plans.

7.4 Using Learning Tools Appropriately and Avoiding Formalistic Planning

Learning tools can help students record tasks, organize their time, and monitor their progress. For upper-grade primary school students, simple paper-based schedules, calendars, and task lists are generally sufficient for most daily learning management needs.

A planning form does not need to be complicated. Students can record their daily

learning tasks according to the date and allocate estimated completion times while also recording actual progress. A simple daily record enables students to understand the status of their plans. They can then conduct a weekly review to identify which arrangements were reasonable and which tasks were frequently delayed.

Digital tools can also serve as supplementary resources. For example, students may use simple calendar reminders or electronic task lists to record important learning activities. However, the purpose of using such tools should be to support learning management rather than create additional operations for students. For students whose self-control abilities are not yet fully developed, excessive use of mobile phones and electronic devices may introduce further distractions.

Teachers and parents should not equate the use of planning tools with self-directed learning abilities. A completed planning form does not necessarily indicate that a student can implement plans independently, and the use of digital tools does not automatically mean that effective time management skills have been acquired. Tools can provide recording and reminder functions, but the actual development of habits still depends on students' continued participation in real learning activities.

8. Sustained Development and Evaluation of After-School Self-Directed Learning Plan Implementation Habits

8.1 Promoting Habit Formation Through a Gradual Development Process

Developing plan implementation habits requires a transition from external guidance to independent action. Students should not be expected to complete all behavioral changes within a short period. The requirements should gradually increase according to their actual circumstances.

During the initial stage, teachers and parents can focus on helping students establish basic planning awareness. Students need to understand what learning tasks they have each day, make simple time arrangements under adult guidance, and gradually establish fixed study-starting behaviors. At this stage, plans should remain simple, and implementation requirements should not be excessive. The main objective is to help students gain experience in completing tasks consistently.

During the adaptation stage, students should be given more opportunities to formulate plans independently. Teachers can gradually reduce restrictions on the specific sequence of learning activities, allowing students to organize tasks according to their own circumstances and conduct simple checks after completion. When students make unreasonable arrangements, they should be encouraged to analyze the causes and make adjustments rather than having adults reorganize the entire plan for them.

During the consolidation stage, students should gradually become capable of formulating daily or weekly plans independently, monitoring task progress, and adjusting arrangements according to actual circumstances. Teachers and parents can then shift their roles toward observation, feedback, and necessary guidance. Students should not only be able to complete familiar learning tasks but also apply previously acquired methods to reorganize their activities when learning content or time arrangements change.

This gradual process is consistent with the developmental approach to self-directed learning, which progresses from external behavioral participation toward habitual behavior and internal recognition (Liu, 2020). The key to habit formation is not how many plans students complete within a short period but whether they can maintain active planning and consistent implementation over time.

8.2 Establishing Multiple Evaluation Methods that Focus on the Implementation Process

The evaluation of after-school self-directed learning plan implementation habits should avoid relying exclusively on academic performance or the number of completed tasks. Students' academic results are influenced by their prior knowledge, task difficulty, and other factors and therefore cannot fully reflect the development of their plan implementation habits.

Evaluation can focus on several aspects. In terms of plan formulation, attention should be given to whether students can establish learning objectives according to their actual circumstances and whether their task arrangements are specific and reasonable. In terms of implementation, evaluation should consider whether students can begin learning independently and demonstrate a certain degree of persistence. Regarding process monitoring, attention should be given to whether students can identify problems in their learning

progress and make timely adjustments. In terms of reflection, evaluation should examine whether students can analyze their implementation results and recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their learning behaviors.

The evaluation process can also involve different participants. Student self-evaluation helps them understand their own implementation performance, teacher evaluation provides guidance from the perspectives of learning tasks and methods, and parental evaluation reflects students' actual learning behaviors in the home environment. Different participants should communicate around relatively consistent developmental objectives to avoid focusing exclusively on different outcome indicators.

Evaluation methods do not need to be complicated. Students can use simple daily records and weekly reviews to understand their progress and obtain suggestions through teachers' observations and appropriate parental feedback. Existing improvements should be acknowledged promptly, while recurring problems should be examined to identify their specific causes and determine appropriate adjustments for the next stage.

Pei (2016), in a discussion of strategies for improving students' self-directed learning efficacy, emphasizes the importance of harmonious teacher-student relationships and effective learning strategies. This indicates that evaluation should provide support and guidance, helping students develop a better understanding of their learning behaviors rather than creating excessive pressure through evaluation results.

8.3 Preventing Plan Implementation from Becoming Mechanical Check-In Behavior

During the development process, planning forms, task lists, and completion records can provide useful support. However, excessive reliance on these tools may also create problems. If teachers and parents focus too heavily on the number of check-ins, the completeness of planning forms, and the quantity of daily tasks completed, students may begin treating the completion records as their primary objectives while neglecting actual learning outcomes.

For example, students may complete tasks quickly merely to mark them as finished on their planning forms without carefully understanding the learning content. Others may record tasks as completed to avoid parental criticism even though they have not actually followed their plans. Although such behaviors may satisfy formal requirements, they do not genuinely promote the development of self-directed learning habits.

Therefore, evaluation of plan implementation should focus on actual changes in learning behavior. Whether students can formulate arrangements independently, select appropriate methods according to learning tasks, make adjustments when difficulties arise, and gradually reduce their dependence on adult reminders are all important indicators of habit development.

Teachers and parents should also preserve a certain degree of flexibility for students. Learning plans are tools for organizing learning activities rather than fixed rules that restrict students' behavior. Students should be allowed to make reasonable adjustments according to actual circumstances and arrange rest and recreational activities after completing essential tasks. Only when students understand the purpose of planning and can use plans flexibly according to their own needs can plan implementation habits become genuinely integrated into daily learning.

9. Conclusion

Upper-grade primary school is an important stage in the development of students' self-directed learning awareness and self-management abilities. Cultivating the habit of implementing after-school self-directed learning plans can contribute to improving learning behaviors, strengthening students' awareness of their role in learning, and supporting the transformation of learning approaches. After-school learning plans should not only clarify learning objectives and task arrangements but also incorporate actual implementation, process monitoring, and outcome evaluation. Only when students can translate plans into sustained action and actively identify and address problems during learning can they gradually develop stable plan implementation habits.

In practice, after-school self-directed learning plan implementation may be affected by insufficient student participation, vague learning objectives, unreasonable time allocation, weak implementation consistency, inadequate process monitoring, and insufficient coordination between family and school support. These problems are related to students' limited experience in self-management, insufficient

mastery of learning methods, inappropriate forms of external supervision, and inadequate support from the learning environment. Cultivating plan implementation habits should not rely solely on increasing tasks or strengthening supervision. Instead, attention should be given to the relationship between students' independent awareness, practical abilities, and learning environments.

The development process should be based on students' active participation in plan formulation. Learning objectives should be translated into specific tasks, students should be helped to establish reasonable time arrangements and stable study-starting behaviors, and learning method guidance should be provided to strengthen their ability to complete tasks. Teachers and parents should also guide students in monitoring their progress, adjusting plans, and reflecting on outcomes so that they can gradually acquire the ability to manage their own learning activities. On this basis, home-school collaboration, differentiated guidance, and process-oriented evaluation can provide sustained support for habit development.

The habit of implementing after-school self-directed learning plans does not simply mean requiring students to complete a fixed number of tasks every day. Rather, it involves helping students gradually develop the ability to plan actively, act consistently, make timely adjustments, and evaluate their own learning. As these behaviors are repeatedly practiced in daily learning activities, students can gradually reduce their dependence on external reminders and develop more stable self-directed learning awareness and behavioral abilities, thereby establishing a foundation for subsequent learning and continuous personal development.

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