

Family-School-Community Collaboration in Implementing the “Daily 2 Hours of Comprehensive Physical Activity” Policy: Real-World Barriers and Solutions from a Social-Ecological Systems Perspective

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Abstract: Implementing the policy of “no less than 2 hours of comprehensive physical activity per day for primary and secondary school students” is a critical lever for addressing adolescent physical health issues and conventionalizing the “Health First” educational philosophy within the context of China’s strategy to become a leading nation in education. Utilizing literature review and logical analysis, this study investigates the practical obstacles hindering family-school-community collaboration in implementing the “Daily 2 Hours of Comprehensive Physical Activity” policy through the lens of Social-Ecological Systems Theory, and subsequently proposes solutions. The research identifies key barriers: temporal conflicts among the three domains; a fragmentation of spatial resources; and a breakdown in collaborative relationships. Accordingly, this paper proposes solutions including: reshaping temporal structures to ensure non-school day provisions; constructing an integrated “sports activity circle” involving family, school, and community; and forging collaborative trust anchored in the “Health First” principle.

Keywords: School Physical Education; Primary and Secondary School Students; Family-School-Community Collaboration; Daily 2 Hours of Comprehensive Physical Activity; Social-Ecological Systems Theory

1. Introduction

In January 2025, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Planning Outline for Building a Leading Nation in Education (2024–2035), which explicitly mandated the implementation of the “Health First” educational philosophy and a plan to strengthen student fitness, requiring that “daily comprehensive physical activity time for primary and secondary school students shall not be less than 2 hours”^[1] (hereinafter referred to as “Daily 2 Hours”). Subsequently, in June 2026, the State Council’s 15th Five-Year Plan for Educational Development reiterated the call to “deepen the implementation of the student enfranchisement plan and ensure daily comprehensive physical activity time for primary and secondary school students is no less than 2 hours”^[2]. Thus, implementing the “Daily 2 Hours” policy has become an urgent necessity for improving adolescent physical health and is a contemporary requirement of national development strategies like the Healthy China and Leading Nation in Education initiatives. It’s urgent to implement the “Daily 2 Hours” across school physical education, family physical education, and community sports. Therefore, it is imperative to dismantle the barriers between schools, families, and communities to forge a collaborative educational synergy that guarantees students’ exercise duration.

However, promoting the “Daily Comprehensive Physical Activity” initiative through family-school-community collaboration faces numerous practical challenges. These include policy implementation deviations, inadequate conditional support, difficulties in supervising out-of-school time, and ineffective short-break physical activities^[3-4]. A review of relevant literature reveals that scholars have initiated preliminary discussions on the value, implementation dilemmas, and advancement pathways of the “Daily 2 Hours” policy^[5-6]. However, existing research often focuses on policy interpretation and experiential summaries from relatively narrow perspectives, with systematic

investigations into the “family-school-community collaborative education” model remaining insufficient. Social-Ecological Systems Theory (SEST), which offers a macroscopic understanding of human social functioning and emphasizes effective interactions among individuals, families, communities, and other social environments, has been widely applied in education and sports research. SEST provides a novel perspective for examining family-school-community collaboration in implementing the “Daily 2 Hours” policy. Consequently, this study, grounded in SEST, constructs a “Time-Space-Relationship” tripartite framework to scrutinize the practical obstacles to family-school-community collaboration and proposes systematic solutions. The aim is to provide theoretical and practical references for achieving high-quality implementation of the “Daily 2 Hours” policy and promoting the healthy development of adolescents.

2. Theoretical Foundation for Family-School-Community Collaboration in Implementing “Daily 2 Hours”

2.1. Social-Ecological Systems Theory

Social-Ecological Systems Theory, initially proposed by Brie Bronfenbrenner. The theory delineates four interconnected systems-micro, meso, ego, and macro to describe the social environment influencing human behavior, emphasizing the reciprocal interactions between individuals and their social contexts^[7]. The ecosystem refers to the individual, encompassing psychological subsystems; the ecosystem comprises small groups, including family, peer groups, and work units; the ecosystem involves external environments that indirectly influence the individual, such as parents' workplaces or community organizations; and the ecosystem encompasses broader cultural values, socioeconomic conditions, and political ideologies. These four systems are nested and interdependent, forming a logical cycle where macro-level values guide, ego-level structures support, meso-level organizations mediate, and micro-level individual actions constitute the ultimate outcome^[8].

2.2. Analytical Framework for Family-School-Community Collaboration in Promoting “Daily 2 Hours”

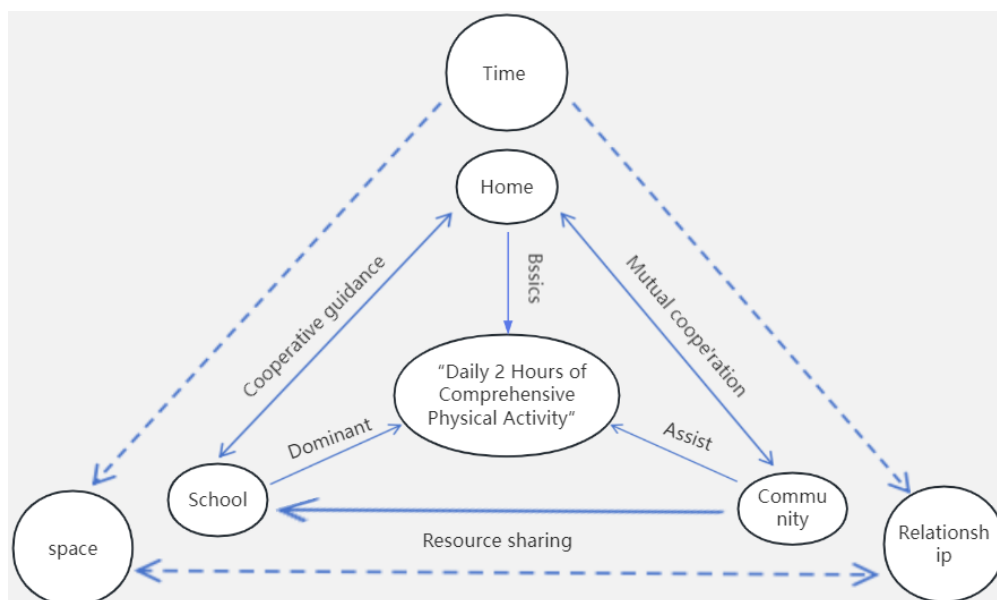


Figure 1. Analytical Framework for Family-School-Community Collaboration in Implementing “Daily 2 Hours” from a Social-Ecological Systems Perspective

The implementation of “Daily 2 Hours” requiring collaborative efforts from families, schools, and communities. At the micro-level, student participation is driven by factors like peer influence, interest, and self-efficacy. The ego-level includes elements like parental work pressure, school budget constraints, and community sports resources, which indirectly shape opportunities for student activity. The macro-level encompasses broader educational contexts, such as the “Health First” policy orientation, educational evaluation systems, and urban spaces for physical activity. “Daily 2 Hours” relying not only on direct inputs like family-school communication and community participation but

also on broader external conditions like educational administration, public funding, and societal trust. Therefore, utilizing the SEST perspective, this study constructs a “Time-Space-Relationship” analytical framework. First, the Time Dimension focuses on the allocation and distribution of daily physical activity time, requiring continuous and complementary supply from school, family, and community settings. Second, the Space Dimension concerns the provision and connection of both physical and social spaces for physical activity, necessitating collaborative spatial resource allocation. Third, the Relationship Dimension examines the interaction models among the three main actors (family, school, community). These three dimensions are mutually embedded and reinforcing. Thus, implementing “Daily 2 Hours” requires promoting a shift from “formal linkage” to “collaborative co governance” among family, school, and community through systematic integration (see Figure 1).

3. Real-World Barriers to Family-School-Community Collaboration in Implementing “Daily 2 Hours”

3.1. Temporal Conflicts: The “Time Game” Between School, Family, and Community

The fundamental goal of school physical education in China is to enhance student fitness, which fundamentally depends on sufficient exercise time. However, persistently affected by exam-oriented education and an emphasis on academics over physical activity, insufficient exercise time has become a significant factor undermining adolescent health^[9]. This manifests across the three domains: School Time: Structural Contradictions Between Institutional Rigidity and Student Activity Time. Schools are the primary site for implementing the “Daily 2 Hours”. In environments still dominated by a focus on college entrance exam rates, some schools employ tactics like “dual schedules” (official vs. actual) to ensure paper compliance while sacrificing actual activity time. Out-of-school physical activity relies on family and community settings. Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may lack exercise habits themselves, hindering their ability to effectively support their children's activity time^[10]. Family Time: Displacement by Anxiety and Screen Dependency. Families are expected to be key providers of out-of-school activity time. However, Parental academic anxiety often leads to academic tutoring and homework occupying the bulk of students' spare time. Additionally, screen time exerts a significant “substitution effect” on exercise. As “digital natives”, electronic devices serve not only as entertainment but also as social media and emotional anchors for contemporary adolescents. Chinese children and adolescents with daily screen time exceeding 2 hours are more prone to overweight/obesity, myopia, poor fitness, and psycho social problems^[11]. Community Time: The Dual Dilemma of Resource Under utilization and Organizational Deficiency. Chinese community sports suffer from “low opening rates” and “insufficient child-orientation” Community facilities are often designed to serve the general fitness needs of middle-aged and elderly populations, neglecting the specific needs of children and adolescents^[12].

3.2. Spatial Fragmentation: Closed and Mismatched Activity Settings

Schools and communities are the two core spatial settings for daily adolescent physical activity, ideally playing complementary roles. However, the closure and mismatch of these settings prevent students from achieving continuous and sufficient activity time. School Space: “Open but Not Accessible” due to “Unlimited Liability”. Compulsory education stages are high-risk periods for sports injuries^[13], yet China lacks a well-established liability-sharing mechanism for such incidents. Existing safety documents lack specific provisions, and standards for risk prevention and definition of rights/responsibilities are vague^[14]. When injuries occur, schools, as venue providers and managers, are often compelled to bear partial or even primary liability. To mitigate risk, schools generally adopt conservative stances, implementing restrictive measures^[15]. Even when local governments mandate the opening of eligible school facilities during off-hours and holidays, there is often a lack of punitive measures for non-compliance^[16]. Community Space: Persistent Inefficiency. Communities are essential for supplementing out-of-school activity time. However, “economic capital” activation in community sports is insufficient, and a normalized resource-sharing mechanism between schools and communities is absent. Surveys indicate a lack of community sports centers, widespread “zero-activity”, an imbalance in facility supply and demand, and a scarcity of equipment suitable for children and adolescents^[17].

3.3. Relationship Breakdown: Responsibility Shifting and Trust Deficit

Currently, the collaboration among schools, families, and communities in implementing the “Daily 2 Hours” initiative lacks sufficient depth, making it difficult to provide a comprehensive guarantee for students' physical activity time both inside and outside the classroom, as well as within and beyond the school premises. On one hand, parental competency in sports varies significantly, influenced by their own willingness and ability^[18]. Participation in physical education homework is low; parents are often too busy or lack the necessary knowledge to effectively supervise and guide it^[19]. On the other hand, feedback mechanisms are missing, undermining the foundation for collaboration. For example, following the “Double Reduction” policy, divergent interests, asymmetric information, and intermittent engagement have hindered consensus and collaborative strategies^[20]. Superficial and Episodic School-Community Linkages. Sharing and complementing sports resources between schools and communities are crucial for overcoming resource constraints related to “Daily 2 Hours”. However, linkages are often superficial. On one hand, there is a lack of deep integration and sharing of sports facilities. Surveys indicate that fewer than half of school sports facilities are open to communities, and only 11.2% of community facilities are open to schools^[21]. Spatial constraints also limit the diversification and specialization of school sports activities. On the other hand, cooperation lacks depth and sustainability. While recent policies promoting the integration of sports and education have fostered collaboration between public stadiums and schools^[22], most projects remain at an initial stage of short-term venue borrowing or one-off event cooperation, lacking sustainable mechanisms^[23]. Hollow Family-Community Interaction and Distrust. First, community sports service capacity is generally weak. Communities often lack the professional capacity (content design, scheduling, safety) to effectively organize out-of-school physical activities. Research shows insufficient supply of community public sports services is a key factor hindering adolescent participation^[24]. Trust in community sports governance is lacking due to weak governmental awareness, sluggish responsiveness to residents' fitness needs, and instances of administrative inertia or even public distrust^[25].

4. Solutions for Family-School-Community Collaboration in Implementing “Daily 2 Hours”

4.1. Institutional Flexibility: Reshaping Temporal Order and Ensuring Non-School Day Provision

Implementing the policy effectively requires building a multi-center collaborative governance network with “schools leading, families fulfilling responsibilities, and communities providing support”, shifting from simply meeting time quotas to improving quality. First, schools should replace “patchwork time” with “time reorganization”. We must establish a combined system to guarantee the “in-school&out-of-school” time. It's a wise way to take full advantage of out-of-school time if the “2 hours” in school cannot be completed fully. For example, we can boost the physical homework system and extend teaching into the home effectively. On the other hand, we'd better provide the substantive support for teachers. Performance incentives should explicitly count after-school training, extracurricular activities, and competition guidance as part of teachers' workloads. Flexible working hours is permitted to sustain teachers' motivation. For example, those teachers who are involved in early morning or after-school activities are allowed to arrive later or leave earlier. This protects teachers' rights while ensuring policy sustainability. Third, parents should transition from “passive compliance” to “active participation”. First, a closed-loop mechanism should be put in place: schools provide professional guidance and tailored plans, while parents oversee daily implementation at home. Schools reinforce engagement through incentives—including “Vibrant Family” awards—and feedback via parent meetings or online platforms that highlight best practices, thereby gradually dispelling the notion that physical activity is merely “disposable” time. Second, digital tools should be harnessed to transform screen time into active time, using AI fitness check-ins, VR games, or online sports leagues, with built-in data tracking to maintain motivation. Third, communities should adopt a standardized activity provision framework anchored in a sports service responsibility system. Governments should purchase public youth sports services through social organizations like youth sports clubs or community centers, providing regular, public-welfare activities. For instance, Changsha City offers summer swimming services via government procurement.

4.2. Spatial Integration: Constructing a Family-School-Community “Sports Activity Circle”

To ensure effective provision, we must break spatial barriers across three dimensions: facility opening, space renovation, and pathway connectivity. School facility access should be transitioned

from passive compliance to proactive service. Normalized opening of school sports facilities during non-instructional hours requires addressing two core constraints: liability risks and operational costs. On the legal front, diversified liability-sharing arrangements should be introduced, with local authorities specifying management liability exemptions. On the financial front, a cost-recovery model should be explored, whereby facilities are opened to the public at non-profit rates during off-hours, with revenues covering maintenance and staffing costs. Fuzhou offers a working example: the city mandates a minimum of eight hours of facility access on weekends and public holidays. In addition, child-oriented retrofitting of community sports spaces should be advanced. Facility usability can be improved by converting marginal spaces—such as areas beneath viaducts or unused corners—into child-friendly installations, including mini football pitches, basketball courts, and climbing walls. Furthermore, safe walking and cycling routes connecting home, community, and school should be delineated with clear signage, ensuring that children can commute actively. This approach transforms travel time into physical activity time.

4.3. Relationship Restructuring: Building Collaborative Trust Anchored in the “Health First” Principle

Relationship restructuring requires achieving consensus on principles, institutional design, and activating professional drivers. A district-level co-governance platform for student health should be established. At the district or county level, student health steering committees should be formed, bringing together representatives from education authorities, health departments, sub-district offices, parents, schools, and community sports organizations. These committees would meet regularly to coordinate key issues such as facility access, activity funding, and injury management. At the school level, school–family–community sports collaboration groups should be instituted, convened by the school's head of physical education and comprising PE faculty representatives, parent committee members, and community workers; each group would be responsible for developing tailored implementation plans for its school. Tripartite sports safety agreements should also be introduced, with contracts clearly defining each party's rights, obligations, and liability boundaries among schools, families, and community partners. This shifts the emphasis from retrospective blame to proactive clarification of responsibilities, thereby reducing risk-averse behavior. In addition, non-teaching workloads for PE teachers should be reduced to unlock their intrinsic motivation. First, implement a dual-teacher system (“PE Teacher+Assistant PE Teacher”) in larger schools, where assistants manage equipment, data entry, and community liaison, allowing teachers to focus on instruction. Second, establish a PE teacher performance evaluation system centered on qualitative indicators like students' fitness improvement, skill acquisition, and sustained interest, rather than solely on class hours or competition results.

5. Conclusion

The “Daily 2 Hours of Comprehensive Physical Activity” policy represents a crucial lever for improving adolescent physical health and driving high-quality development of school physical education in the new era. Its implementation must be rooted in a comprehensive vision of student development and must clarify the intrinsic collaborative logic among families, schools, and communities from a Social-Ecological Systems perspective, ensuring the policy's implementation is strategic, profound, and comprehensive. This study, using the “Time-Space-Relationship” analytical framework grounded in SEST, has explored the practical dilemmas of family-school-community collaboration in implementing the policy and proposed corresponding solutions. It is hoped that this analysis can serve as a practical reference for deepening school physical education reform and constructing sustainable mechanisms for multi-stakeholder collaborative education.

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