

# LAMP Curriculum System: Exploration and Practice of the Mental Health Education Curriculum System during the Compulsory Education Stage

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## Abstract

The school has established a core competency system for mental health in secondary education, tailored to meet the demands of individual lifelong development and societal needs. By integrating educational philosophies, characteristics of student development, and diverse stakeholder requirements, the system identifies 18 core competencies across six dimensions, including self-awareness, emotional management, and interpersonal communication, covering crucial aspects such as physical and mental well-being, positive mindset, and responsibility. Based on this framework, the school has developed the “LAMP” (Lighting the Path to the Heart) mental health education curriculum system, structured as a “three-tier, six-category” model. This includes foundational, extended activity, and exploratory research courses, with 24 sub-themes under six major themes and 72 transferable course modules. Additionally, an innovative “12345” implementation model has been proposed, aiming to comprehensively enhance students’ psychological qualities, foster positive mental attributes, and lay a solid foundation for their lifelong development.

## Keywords

LAMP Curriculum System; Compulsory Education Stage; Mental Health Education

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## 1. Background of LAMP Curriculum System Construction

### 1.1. Policy Requirements

The Party and the state attach great importance to mental health education in primary and secondary schools. Policies such as the “Guidelines for Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Revised in

2012)” and the “Special Action Plan for Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Student Mental Health Work in the New Era (2023-2025)” clearly require the promotion of scientific development in mental health education through curriculum construction, providing a policy basis for the development of the curriculum system.

## **1.2. Psychological Development Characteristics and Common Issues of Junior High School Students**

Junior high school students experience self-awareness awakening but are prone to cognitive biases. They exhibit significant emotional fluctuations, with a mix of independence and dependence. They have strong social needs, and their psychological states oscillate between closure and openness. These characteristics make them susceptible to issues such as academic differentiation, psychological distress, and parent-child conflicts. They urgently require guidance in areas such as role modeling, making friends, learning strategies, and emotional control. A positive psychological state is crucial for students' academic improvement, interpersonal relationship building, and personality development. The curriculum system should be tailored to the school's characteristic of "individualized development education," tapping into students' potential and supporting their comprehensive and healthy development.

## **1.3. Foundations of School Mental Health Education**

Since 1989, our school has taken the lead in conducting school-based research on mental health education in secondary schools and has constructed a "four-level, all-round" service system with remarkable practical results that have been widely promoted. Additionally, a "3+3" curriculum system has been established to meet the diverse needs of students, and related achievements have received the highest award in basic education in Tianjin and the second prize of the National Teaching Achievement Award in Basic Education multiple times.

## **1.4. Reflection after Student Course Evaluation Survey**

(1) Course Evaluation Feedback: Students express high satisfaction with psychology courses but indicate that the course format is monotonous, the post-class application effect is poor, and the courses offer insufficient support for future psychological development. (2) Effectiveness Regression Test: Specialized studies show that traditional mental health courses have no significant predictive effect on students' positive development, whereas diverse activities such as social practice, club

activities, and group counseling have significant effects, aligning with student feedback. (3) Reflection on System Reconstruction: Focusing on core issues such as "the role of psychology courses" and "the positioning of psychology teachers," the concept of "advancing psychological work" is proposed. It is clarified that psychology teachers should undertake the responsibility for the top-level design of school mental health education, reconstruct the curriculum system under the guidance of a "comprehensive curriculum perspective," and enhance the effectiveness of education.

## **2. Construction of a Core Competency System for Mental Health among Students in the Compulsory Education Stage at Our School**

### **2.1. Basis for Refining Core Competencies in Mental Health**

Adhering to the Party's educational policies and aligning with the educational requirements of the new era, the system takes promoting students' harmonious and sustainable physical and mental development and laying a foundation for their healthy growth and happy life as its starting point. It matches our school's educational philosophy and objectives, cultivates unique mental health qualities among experimental students who embody the experimental spirit and image, and aligns with the characteristics of middle school students' physical and mental development, as well as the goals and content of mental health education work. Additionally, it conforms to the objective laws of mental health education and teaching.

### **2.2. The Connotative Foundation and Content of Core Competencies in Mental Health**

In the process of refining the specific content of core mental health competencies for students in the compulsory education stage at our school, we conducted research on the composition of core competencies in various disciplines, emphasizing the fundamental components of correct values, essential character traits, and key abilities. On the other hand, we systematically considered the latest dimensions of mental health standards. Thirdly, we took into comprehensive

consideration the practical needs and existing issues in students' psychological development, the problems and expectations that homeroom teachers and subject teachers have regarding students in the context of education and teaching, the expectations of school leaders and higher-level administrative departments for the experimental subjects, as well as the aspirations of parents and society for mental health education. Particularly, we reflected on the unique contributions and value of our school's mental health education to the harmonious and sustainable development of students' physical and mental well-being. By employing research methods such as questionnaires, structured interviews, and case studies, we ultimately summarized and categorized 18 core competencies across six dimensions, as follows:



**Figure 1.** Map of Core Competencies for Students in the Compulsory Education Stage at Our School

Highlighting the educational function of mental health education, the self-awareness dimension emphasizes physical and mental well-being, as well as self-esteem and confidence, based on a comprehensive and objective understanding of oneself, with a focus on the concept of health first. The emotional management dimension advocates a positive and optimistic mindset in the process of recognizing, regulating, and maintaining emotional stability, building upon the foundation of emotional identification. In terms of the dimension of

interpersonal communication, apart from emphasizing communication skills and teamwork, it further underscores core socialist values such as integrity, kindness, respect, and tolerance, highlighting the importance of respect and inclusivity. Particularly, it stresses the establishment of ideals and beliefs, correct values, worldviews, and outlooks on life, reinforcing the cultivation of advanced emotions like patriotism and the aspiration to serve the country, as well as providing value-based guidance. It emphasizes personal development planning under this guidance. In the dimension of self-efficacy, the focus is on learning how to learn, cultivating interests and hobbies, and optimizing learning qualities, with an emphasis on innovative practice and problem-solving. It also places significant emphasis on autonomous development and self-management centered around learning motivation, self-control, and career planning. In response to practical issues in reality, the dimension of adaptability highlights responsibility and accountability, primarily focusing on cherishing life and coping with setbacks.

### 3. Content and Implementation Strategies of the "LAMP" Mental Health Education Curriculum System

#### 3.1. Content of the "LAMP" Mental Health Education Curriculum System

Based on the establishment of core mental health competencies for students in the compulsory education stage at our school, we have constructed the content of the "LAMP" curriculum system through a three-tiered curriculum structure encompassing six major themes, 24 sub-themes, and 72 mutually transferable teaching modules with constantly updatable course content. Centered around this curriculum content, we have developed a comprehensive curriculum system model that includes core values, curriculum objectives, teaching methods, curriculum evaluation, learning platforms, teaching and learning resources, and support measures. Through its application and testing in educational and teaching practices, we continuously enrich and optimize the system. The specific content of the curriculum system is as follows:

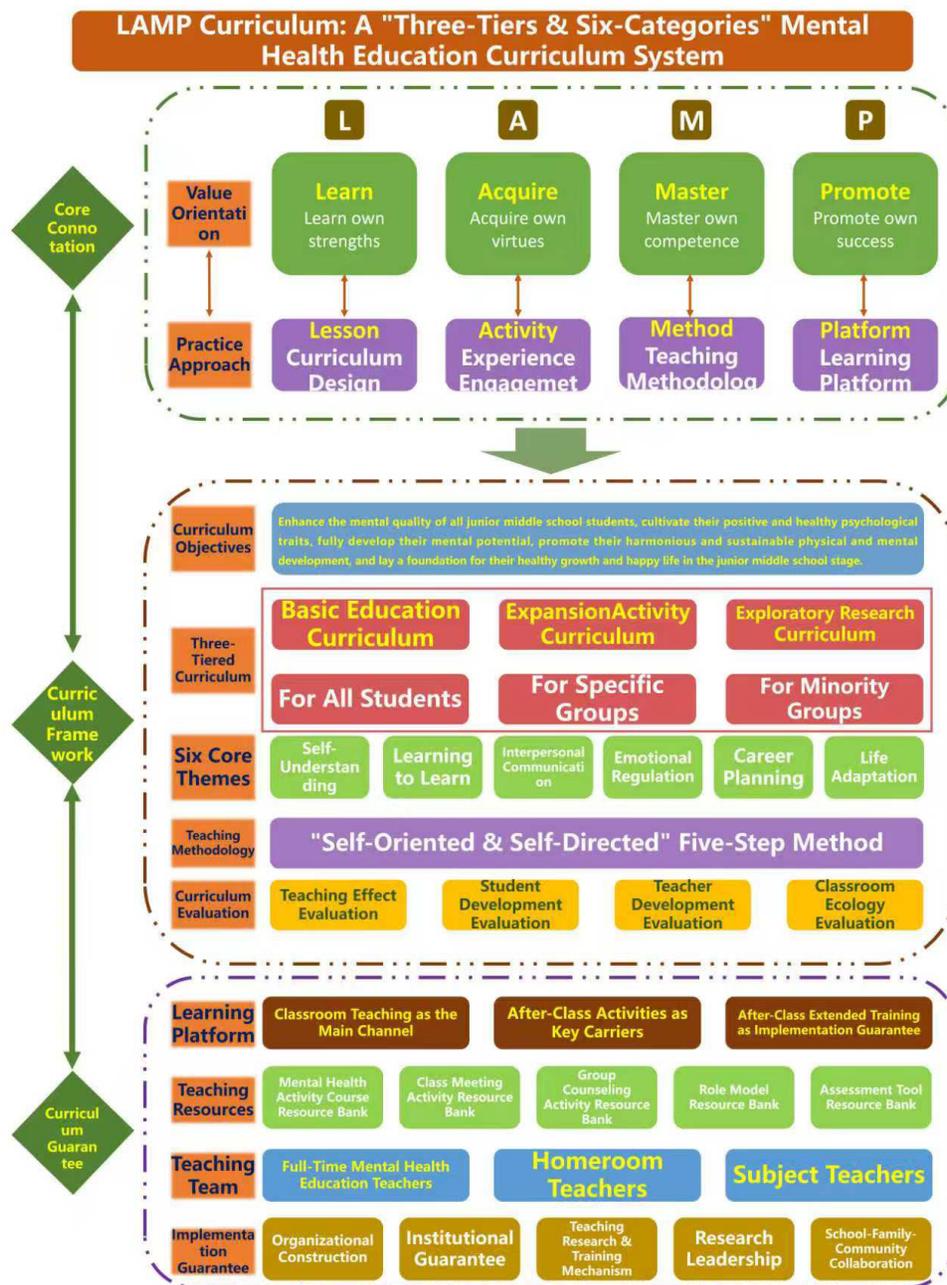


Figure 2. The Architecture of the “LAMP” Mental Health Education Curriculum System

### 3.2. Implementation Strategies for the “LAMP” Mental Health Education Curriculum System

In practice, we have systematically summarized and consolidated the outcomes of over 30 years of mental health education experience accumulated by our school. Combining these with the requirements of educational development in the new era and the psychological development characteristics of junior high school students, we have innovatively refined the

implementation strategies for the “LAMP” (Lighting the Path to the Heart) mental health education curriculum system into the “12345” implementation model. The specific implementation strategies are as follows:

#### 3.2.1. The specific connotations of “1”: Define a course value orientation, build a team, and create a learning strategy

(1) Clarify the core value orientation of the curriculum

system. The curriculum system is named “LAMP,” which, like a warm light illuminating the dark valley of students’ psychological growth, sheds light on every step of their journey. With a gentle yet firm approach, it focuses on monitoring students’ individual mental health status, helping them understand their strengths, acquire essential skills, cultivate excellent character traits, and enhance their psychological resilience and adaptability within the social environment. It emphasizes students’ active participation and self-reflection in mental health education, aiming to achieve comprehensive and personalized physical and mental health development for students based on a foundation of mental well-being, thereby facilitating their future success.

- (2) **Building a Professional Faculty Team.** The professional development of school mental health education relies on the construction of a professional teaching team. A team of full-time and part-time mental health educators has been established, led by dedicated mental health education teachers, with homeroom teachers as the backbone, and all subject teachers having obtained mental health education qualifications.
- (3) **Developing the “Dual Autonomy and Five-Step Approach” learning strategy for mental health education courses.** This approach involves creating a five-step student-led self-help learning method: “Participation—Experience—Reflection—Sharing—Growth.” In the designed activity scenarios, students are encouraged to actively participate; through participation, they gain experiences that touch their hearts. Teachers carefully design questions to stimulate students’ thinking and reflections. Students share their insights within teams and learn from their peers through communication. Through observation and learning, students enhance their self-awareness and resolve issues, achieving personal growth. Completing extended course activities allows students to experience the joy of growth through action, thereby fostering excellent psychological qualities.

### **3.1.2. The Specific Connotations of “2”: Two Types of Curriculum Learning Resources**

Develop two types of curriculum learning resources. One

type is hardware resources. The Mental Health Education Center has been established with five functional areas: group counseling, individual counseling, library reading, emotion regulation, and behavioral training, providing specialized venues for mental health education teaching and counseling. The school has also built a microteaching research center, whose core function is to conduct teaching discussions in segments and modules, providing technical and venue support for the development of mental health education courses and their integration with other disciplines. The other category consists of software resources. The “Teaching Syllabus for Mental Health Education” has been compiled, and the “Guide to Middle School Students’ Development (Junior and Senior High School Editions)” has been published to serve as teaching and learning resources for teachers and students. In 2024, the “Teaching Syllabus for Mental Health Education” was revised to provide flexibility for full-time mental health education teachers, class advisors, and subject teachers to use based on actual teaching situations.

### **3.1.3. The specific connotations of “3”: Three-tier learning courses and three learning platforms**

- (1) **Optimize the three-tier learning courses.** We have established foundational education courses (including national courses such as “Morality and the Rule of Law” and “Physical Education and Health,” compulsory courses in specialized mental health education, and elective courses developed by full-time psychology teachers for students to choose from, as well as student development guidance courses and subject integration courses), extended activity courses (including mental health education class and school meetings, clubs, themed activities, group counseling, mental health education festivals, etc.), and exploratory research courses (including social practice summary task sheets, research-based learning, themed exploration activities, etc.). Course development is not limited to school psychology teachers and classroom instruction in psychology; rather, it involves full participation, comprehensive implementation throughout the entire process, and multidimensional integration of in-class and after-class activities, compulsory and elective courses, national and school-based curricula, as well as on-

campus and off-campus learning. It emphasizes the educational nature of course objectives guided by core mental health competencies, the systematic structure of the curriculum, the serialization of course content, and the diversification of implementation approaches. Develop serialized and systematic teaching syllabi and curriculum designs for different grade levels. During the process of curriculum implementation and management, by integrating with subject teaching, class team meetings, and specialized courses for class activities, the “LAMP” curriculum system is implemented and advanced to achieve the practical application of core mental health competencies.

Based on core mental health competencies, the “three-tier, six-category” curriculum system constructed from six major themes has, to a certain extent, addressed the objective of implementing mental health education for all students. However, it is also necessary to recognize that, in addition to meeting the common literacy development needs of all students, attention must also be given to the mental health needs of different groups, which should be addressed through various forms of courses. During the process of exploration and practice, it has been observed that certain core competencies may manifest at different stages and be less perceptible among different groups<sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore, the School Mental Health Education Center has developed and compiled the “Questionnaire on Mental Health Needs of Middle School Students in Compulsory Education” (hereinafter referred to as the “Needs Questionnaire”). This questionnaire aims to help different groups proactively identify their own needs and select core competency course content and formats suitable for their group, supported by a repository of curriculum activities and other resources. Based on core mental health competencies and in accordance with the “Guidelines for Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Revised 2012),” the Needs Questionnaire was developed to include six dimensions and 60 items. Through exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, using SPSS 22.0 for Mac and Mplus 6.0 as research tools, the relevant questionnaire data indicators are as

follows: After conducting exploratory factor analysis on the self-designed questionnaire, along with the KMO and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, the results indicated a KMO value of 0.855 and a p-value less than 0.001, suggesting that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Upon examination, six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, explaining 68.586% of the variance. The reliability of the entire sample data was tested using SPSS, revealing an overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.922 for the questionnaire, indicating high reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the questionnaire data using Mplus, and the results showed that the  $\chi^2/df$  value was less than 5, RMSEA (0.069) was below 0.08, and GFI (0.94), NFI (0.87), IFI (0.895), and CFI (0.894) were all greater than 0.85, indicating a good fit between the data and the model and suggesting that the questionnaire had good construct validity. All indicators demonstrate that this needs assessment questionnaire possesses good reliability and validity, making it suitable for large-scale administration. Based on this needs assessment questionnaire, we can more precisely identify the core competencies that different groups need to address and develop, select appropriate course content and formats, and conduct mental health education more scientifically and effectively.

- (2) Establishment of Three Course Learning Platforms. We have constructed three learning platforms: classroom instruction as the primary channel, extracurricular activities as an important vehicle, and post-class extended training as a guarantee for implementation. Classroom learning focuses on experiential activities and sharing learning experiences; extracurricular club activities, group counseling, psychological training camps, and the school’s signature event, the “Mental Health Festival,” provide students with a stage to showcase, create, and apply mental health adjustment methods and enhance their mental health management capabilities; post-class extensions ensure the application of learned knowledge to real-life situations and the consolidation of psychological skills through training.

### 3.1.4. The specific connotations of “4”: Four-level curriculum objectives and four aspects of curriculum evaluation content

(1) Construct a comprehensive four-level curriculum objective system. The objectives of the “LAMP” (Lighting the Path to the Heart) mental health education curriculum system are divided into four levels: overall objectives, specific objectives, thematic module objectives, and thematic module grade objectives, guiding the curriculum system to be carried out more scientifically and orderly from top to bottom. The first level, the overall objectives, serve as a guiding force for the curriculum, aiming to enhance the psychological qualities of all students, cultivate positive, optimistic, and healthy psychological traits, fully develop students’ psychological potential, promote harmonious and sustainable physical and mental development, and lay a foundation for students’ healthy growth, happy life, and lifelong excellence<sup>[2][3]</sup>. The second level, specific objectives, clarify the specific training tasks, aiming to enable students to learn how to study and live, correctly understand themselves, improve their self-help and self-education abilities, enhance their abilities to regulate emotions, withstand setbacks, and adapt to the environment, and cultivate sound personalities and good individual psychological qualities. Students should be able to master essential basic knowledge and skills in mental health and improve their self-management, problem-solving, and autonomous learning abilities through various forms such as activity experiences, thematic activities, practical activities, integrated teaching across disciplines, and case analysis, as well as develop a positive and optimistic attitude towards life. The third level pertains to the objectives of thematic modules, with the curriculum system divided into six major thematic modules. Defining module objectives serves to provide more specific guidance for curriculum development, with the following goals (unfolded in thematic order): learning to correctly understand oneself, enhancing self-awareness, and establishing a positive self-concept; adapting to middle school life as early as possible, optimizing learning psychology, improving learning efficiency, and boosting learning

motivation; establishing positive interpersonal relationships, enhancing interpersonal skills, and fostering a sense of teamwork; recognizing the diversity of emotions, better managing emotions, mastering methods for emotional regulation, and maintaining a positive mental state; gaining a preliminary understanding of career planning, enhancing career awareness, clarifying initial career goals and development directions, and strengthening planning abilities; establishing healthy lifestyle concepts, loving life, valuing life, and acquiring positive and optimistic psychological qualities. The fourth level consists of grade-specific objectives under each thematic module, aiming to clarify the direction of mental health education efforts at each grade level. Objectives are set using a spiral progression approach of understanding-deepening-application across grades, guiding specialized psychology teachers, homeroom teachers, and subject teachers to carry out targeted work<sup>[4]</sup>.

(2) Clarify the four aspects of curriculum system evaluation. The evaluation of the “LAMP” mental health education curriculum encompasses four dimensions: teaching effectiveness evaluation, student development evaluation, teacher development evaluation, and classroom ecology evaluation. This approach emphasizes the autonomous development of students and the professional advancement of teachers, with a focus on classroom and teaching effectiveness evaluations<sup>[5]</sup>. Teaching effectiveness evaluation aims to measure the achievement of curriculum objectives and the effectiveness of teaching strategies<sup>[6]</sup>, focusing on the internalization process of students’ psychological knowledge and skills. It mainly evaluates and provides feedback through structured scales and questionnaire surveys based on the achievement of curriculum objectives, such as students’ mastery of mental health knowledge, application of skills, and changes in attitudes. Student development evaluation aims to track the dynamic development of students’ psychological qualities, emphasizing process-oriented growth records. Through the Student Development Record Manual, it focuses on students’ growth, development, and improvement of psychological qualities, providing

evaluation and feedback through quantitative or qualitative measurement tools such as questionnaire surveys<sup>[7]</sup>, observation records, and case analyses. Teacher development evaluation aims to focus on the enhancement of psychological teachers' professional competence and the depth of their teaching reflections. It seeks to improve teachers' professional abilities through their post-class reflections and shared feedback during teaching research activities. Classroom ecology evaluation primarily considers classroom interaction, student participation, and the effectiveness of teaching methods, with the goal of enhancing the timeliness of classroom teaching and improving the psychological safety in psychological classes<sup>[8]</sup>.

### 3.1.5. The specific connotations of “5”: Constructing a guarantee system consisting of five aspects

- (1) Organizational construction. A specialized organization, the Mental Health Education Center, was established in 1992, and in 2024, a subordinate teaching and research institution, the Microteaching Research Center, was established. Establish a psychological health education teaching and research group at the school level, implementing disciplinary management to strengthen support for research in psychological health education. Meanwhile, clarify the central leadership role of the psychological health education center in the school's psychological work, overseeing psychological health education efforts across the school. All grades and departments should collaborate and cooperate, with a top-down working mechanism enabling the implementation of school psychological health education through grade- and class-specific initiatives. This also ensures timely feedback on issues within classes and grades.
- (2) Institutional Guarantees. Develop 20 specialized systems for psychological health education to institutionalize psychological health education efforts. Use systems to clarify responsibilities and standardize behaviors. Building upon the existing institutional framework of the psychological health education center, we have introduced a system for integrating psychological health education into various disciplines, clarified the teaching

and research system for psychology courses, and enhanced distinctive systems such as those for pre-service training in psychological health education for newly hired teachers and for managing psychological health education in parent schools, based on the “Xingzhi Academy - Teacher Development School.” Additionally, regulations have been established in the form of systems regarding the inclusion of psychological health education courses in the curriculum, the inclusion of full-time teachers in the professional title promotion series for psychological health education teachers, and psychological training for part-time teachers.

- (3) Teaching and Research Training Mechanism. Centered around the concept of “comprehensive psychological health education for all,” we have constructed a “three-dimensional linkage” teaching and research system (in-depth research within disciplines + interdisciplinary integration + inter-school collaboration within the group) to promote the coordinated development of specialized psychological courses and the integration of psychological health education into various disciplines. A three-tier management system has been established, with the vice principal in charge of mental health education, the vice principal responsible for teaching and research, and specially appointed experts serving as team leaders, and the head of the Mental Health Education Center acting as the executive team leader. This structure coordinates research directions and resource allocation, forms core subject teams and interdisciplinary collaboration teams, and makes efficient use of the microteaching research center to modularize and systematize teaching and research activities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of mental health education curriculum implementation<sup>[9]</sup>. A biweekly alternating schedule has been set for teaching and research activities (subject-specific teaching and research on odd weeks and interdisciplinary teaching and research on even weeks). A menu of teaching and research topics has been developed, and a four-step approach—“problem introduction - lesson analysis - collaborative design - practical verification”—has been adopted. The “1+1+N” classroom observation

and evaluation system (1 mental health lesson + 1 subject integration lesson + N analyses) has been implemented. Monthly interdisciplinary consultations on student psychological cases are conducted. Based on the group of schools and the second district of Hexi District, a regional mental health education and research alliance has been established, implementing an “online teaching and research” system, building an online teaching and research community, and sharing exemplary lesson cases and research achievements.

- (4) **Research-led Development.** With research projects as the vehicle, we emphasize scientific methodology to overcome blindness and randomness. Since the 1990s, more than ten national and municipal research projects have been initiated at different stages, focusing on key issues to be addressed. By adopting a scientific attitude and research methods, we aim to overcome the randomness and blindness in our work and enhance the scientific rigor and standardization of school-based practices. We emphasize using research to drive teaching and research activities and promoting research through teaching and research. Multiple research projects have been initiated, including “Comprehensive Mental Health Model for Middle School Students,” “Integration of Mental Health Education with Subject Teaching,” “Student Development Guidance Research,” and “Innovative Development of School Mental Health Education,” all of which play a significant role in deepening mental health education in schools.
- (5) **School-family-community collaboration.** Whether it is the cultivation of students’ good psychological qualities or the implementation of core academic competencies, the cooperation of parents and the utilization of social resources are indispensable. Collaborative education among schools, families, and communities serves as a crucial safeguard. By holding parent-teacher meetings and conducting thematic tutoring lectures, schools help parents understand the importance of cultivating students’ good psychological qualities, master methods for family psychological education, and guide parents in training students’ good psychological qualities. Schools also invite parents to leverage their own social resources to assist students in participating in

social practice activities and gaining knowledge about the professional world.

## 4. Conclusion

This study, based on the requirements for mental - health development among students in the compulsory education stage and integrating policy guidance, school practice foundations, and student feedback, has established the "LAMP" (Lighting the Journey of the Heart) mental-health education curriculum system, offering a practical model for the scientific and systematic implementation of mental - health education in middle schools.

Through multi-method research, the study has distilled 18 core mental health competencies across six dimensions, including self-awareness and emotional management, precisely aligning with the educational requirements of the new era and the characteristics of students' physical and mental development, thereby establishing a core framework for the curriculum system. The "three-tier, six-category" curriculum content developed on this basis achieves an organic integration of national and school-based curricula, in-class teaching and extracurricular practices, as well as universal coverage and individual attention. The 72 transferable courses effectively address the issues of monotonous forms and weak application in traditional curricula.

The innovatively proposed "12345" implementation model constructs a comprehensive practical pathway across five dimensions: value orientation, resource assurance, curriculum hierarchy, goal evaluation, and support system. Among them, the "Dual Self-Discovery and Five-Step Method" learning strategy, the "Three-Dimensional Linkage" teaching and research mechanism, and the collaborative education model involving schools, families, and communities further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of curriculum implementation. The development and application of the needs questionnaire provide a scientific tool for precisely matching students' psychological needs and optimizing curriculum provision, with its good reliability and validity laying a foundation for subsequent research.

Practice has demonstrated that the LAMP curriculum system, through its core competency-oriented curriculum design, diversified implementation pathways, and

comprehensive assurance mechanisms, effectively enhances students' psychological resilience and positive mental qualities while promoting teachers' professional development and optimizing the ecosystem of school mental health education. This system not only responds to policy requirements for the scientific development of mental health education but also addresses prominent issues in practice, offering valuable experience for

the reconstruction and upgrading of mental health education curricula in the compulsory education stage. In the future, further efforts can be made to deepen the connection of curriculum across academic stages and its interdisciplinary integration, continuously track the long-term effects on students' psychological development, and continually improve the adaptability and vitality of the curriculum system.

### Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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