

# The importance and practical strategies of carrying out food education theme activities in kindergartens

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**Abstract:** Food education theme activities are a very important form of education and teaching in kindergartens. Carrying out food education theme activities is an urgent need to implement national policies, enhance children's cognitive experience and promote children's social development. To carry out the theme activities of food education in kindergartens, we need to, first, create a prepared environment for children's food education theme activities, second, scientifically design and implement children's food education theme activities, third, give full play to the traditional advantages of children's family and social resources.

**Keywords:** kindergarten; Feeding and breeding; Food and education in kindergarten; Theme activities

## 1. Connotation of Children's Food and Education Thematic Activities

Food education refers to special education on diet. The term "food and education" was first proposed in 1896 by the famous Japanese health preserving scientist Zuo Xuan Ishizuka: "food and education include sports, intellectual education and talent education". The ancient Chinese sages had long described the concept of food education, but the concept of "food education" was not introduced by Professor Li Lite of China Agricultural University until 2006. He believed that food education was the cultivation and education of good eating habits. In 2020, the document "National Food Nutrition Education Demonstration Base Construction Specifications" clearly pointed out that food nutrition education, referred to as food education, in a narrow sense, refers to the education of food nutrition knowledge, which is the cultivation and education of good eating habits; Broadly speaking, it refers to an all-round education carried out by food. As a result, the academic community has basically formed a unified understanding of the concept and connotation of food and education.

Thematic activities are a variety of teaching activities closely related to one or more themes for the purpose of educating people. Food and education theme activity is a very important teaching form in kindergartens. It is a series of educational and teaching activities around the theme, including collective teaching activities, parent-child activities and social activities, based on the characteristics of children's physical and mental development and life experience, according to the theme of children's food and education. Children's food and education theme activities focus on children's life experience, attach importance to teacher child interaction, and advocate home cooperation.

## 2. Importance of food education theme activities in kindergartens

The theme activity of infant food and education not only has a strong educational value for infant groups, but also plays a leading role in health education concept in the whole society. While widely spreading the concept of food and education, it effectively promotes the all-round development of children's morality, intelligence, physique, beauty and labor.

### 2.1 Carrying out food and education themed activities is a specific action for kindergartens to implement relevant national policies

According to the National Survey on Nutrition and Health Status of School aged Children and Adolescents, unhealthy eating habits of preschool children, such as picky eating, partial eating and eating junk food, are widespread. Bad eating habits seriously endanger the physical and mental health of children. It is urgent to cultivate good eating habits of preschool children through educational means. The Learning and Development Guide for Children Aged 3-6 points out that children should be helped to develop good eating habits. Eating habits are an important part of children's living habits, and cultivating children's good eating habits is the basis for promoting children's all-round development. The Guidelines for Kindergarten Education requires that kindergartens must put the protection of children's lives and the promotion of children's health at the top of their work. The Outline of the "Healthy China 2030" Plan clearly states that "all departments of the country should promote the construction of a healthy China and improve people's health". In 2022, the Chinese Nutrition Society issued the Dietary Guidelines for Preschool Children in China, which stipulates that children should participate in food selection and preparation to improve their knowledge and love of food. It can be seen that health education is not only an important part of kindergarten education, but also a key area of increasing concern for government departments or social groups. It is also the theme of the National Strategy for Healthy China. Food education has become an important means to ensure the healthy growth of children.

### 2.2 Carrying out food and education themed activities is an effective means to enhance children's cognitive experience

The food and education theme activities are mainly educational and teaching activities around food. The contents of the activities

include not only the cognition of the process life of food growth, but also the cognition of the social relationship between food and human beings and society. In other words, food and education theme activities have multiple educational effects. At the same time, food and education theme activities have a strong life, situational, interactive, and have a strong appeal to children, and the teaching effect is good. In the activity, children can intuitively feel the cognitive experience of food. For example, in the activities with the theme of “the characteristics of food” and the game link of “food look”, children can clearly identify and remember the name, smell, color, shape and function of different foods by comparing and corresponding to the characteristics of different foods; Through the theme activity of “food growth”, children can understand the growth process of a certain food, so that they can further understand the growth rules and seasonal changes of food, and continuously accumulate deeper cognitive experience of food.

### **2.3 Carrying out food and education themed activities is an important way to promote children’s socialization**

In the food education theme activities, it is an important task of food education to cultivate children’s cooperative ability, eating rules, food education emotion and other qualities, which can help children to establish their understanding of cooperation, rules and interpersonal relationships. In terms of cooperation ability, we can design “interesting radish” theme activities to guide children to pull out big radish together with their peers in the process of pulling radish, so as to promote children’s cooperation ability; In terms of dining rules, we can guide children’s daily eating behavior by carrying out the theme activity of “Eating Rules I Know”, help children gradually master their living abilities such as eating independently, arranging tableware, using chopsticks and making food, develop habits such as washing hands before meals, eating on time, chewing slowly, eating in a balanced way and cherishing food, and learn to let elders sit first, sit correctly and not hit the dishes and chopsticks, So as to internalize the dining rules in the society; In the aspect of food and education emotion, we can guide children to experience the hard work of growing food through the activity with the theme of “I am a small farmer”, awaken children’s respect for farmers’ uncles, and root the idea of loving nature and labor in the sense of achievement of harvesting food.

## **3. Practical strategies of food education theme activities in kindergartens**

The food and education theme activity is an important carrier to promote the healthy growth of children and promote the characteristic development of kindergartens. To carry out food and education themed activities, we should strictly follow the characteristics of children’s physical and mental development, deeply grasp the spiritual essence of food and education themed activities, and give full play to the important role of the government, families and kindergartens in food and education themed activities.

### **3.1 Create a prepared environment for children’s food and education themed activities**

Montessori believes that the first thing required for children’s education is to provide an environment for children to exert their natural power and provide a “prepared environment” for activities that develop children’s energy . The “prepared environment” is the basis and powerful guarantee for the kindergarten to carry out food and education themed activities, which can play an educational role of moistening things silently. In food and education theme activities, kindergartens can be equipped with planting bases and food and education workshops to create a prepared environment for children’s food and education theme activities.

On the one hand, the kindergarten uses the fruit and vegetable planting base to carry out the theme activity of “I am a small farmer”. In the fruit and vegetable planting base, kindergartens need to provide open space, high-quality soil, various fruit and vegetable seeds, shovels, showers and other planting tools, and provide places and materials for the “I am a small farmer” theme activities, so that children can participate in planting activities, observe the growth and change of fruits and vegetables and accumulate planting experience.

On the other hand, the kindergarten opened a food workshop and carried out the theme activity of “I am a little cook”. In the food workshop, kindergartens can give full play to children’s initiative, prepare cooking tools such as pots, bowls, ladles and basins with children, provide cooking equipment such as tables and chairs, refrigerators, sinks, clothing, and cooking materials such as cereals, meat, eggs, milk, fruits and vegetables. In the activity, children can play the role of chef, use the sensory system to identify food, independently choose the necessary ingredients and tools, cook under the guidance of nutritionists, and finally, act as gourmets to taste their own food.

In addition, kindergarten administrators can organize kindergarten teachers and children to arrange food exhibition stands, table etiquette maps, 24 solar terms and other content related to the theme of food and education in public areas such as the lobby, corridors and stairs of the kindergarten and on the theme walls of each class, so as to create a good atmosphere for food and education activities and enhance children’s sense of food and education experience.

### **3.2 Scientifically design and implement the theme activities of children’s food and education**

The design of children’s food and education theme activities is the preparation process for the kindergarten to carry out food and education teaching activities. It is the precondition for organizing and carrying out food and education theme activities. It is also the pre planning and careful arrangement made by preschool teachers from the aspects of food and education theme activities objectives, contents and methods after analyzing children’s food and education interests, needs and experiences. It is of great significance to ensure the smooth

development of food and education theme activities.

First, the goals of food and education theme activities should be reasonable. The goal of the activity is the effect that preschool teachers expect to achieve in their educational and teaching activities. From the macro point of view, preschool teachers can carefully design from the five perspectives of moral education, intellectual education, physical education, aesthetic education and labor education to promote the all-round development of children. For example, in terms of moral education, it is mainly to guide children to understand the dining rules and etiquette and improve their moral quality; In terms of intellectual education, it is mainly to educate children to be familiar with the name, shape and growth law of food, and accumulate cognitive experience. In micro design, preschool teachers should follow the characteristics of physical and mental development of children, and carry out scientific design from three levels of cognition, ability and emotion according to the age characteristics of children in large, medium and small classes.

Second, the food and education theme activities should be diversified. The selection of food and education theme activities should focus on the children's age characteristics and needs, take the food and education theme network map as the center, and take the kindergarten school-based curriculum development as the program to determine a variety of food and education theme for the kindergarten to choose. First, choose activities according to the age characteristics of children to adapt to the physical and mental development of children. The second is to use the food and education theme network map to select activities. Build a food and education theme network around five major fields of health, language, society, science and art, and extend it to all fields with food and education as the center to create a food and education theme activity with unique characteristics and educational value. The third is to integrate food culture with solar term culture. Under the curriculum system of the five major fields, with the solar term culture as the starting point of creation, we will deeply explore the food and education curriculum with regional characteristics.

Third, food and education theme activities should be flexible. The method of children's food and education theme activities is the specific way and means adopted to achieve the goal of food and education theme activities in the kindergarten food and education theme activities, mainly including carrying out food and education theme games, carrying out food and education theme activities through picture books, and actively developing Internet+food and education activities. First of all, play is a popular activity for children. Food and education themed activities can better meet the needs of children at different levels of development through entertaining play. Secondly, picture books have the characteristics of visualization, intuition, artistry and interest. It has strong attraction to carry out food and education theme activities through picture books. Finally, through the combination of the Internet and food and education, we will display food and education knowledge and skills in an all-round and three-dimensional way, and stimulate children's learning interest with the convenience, diversity and innovation of information technology.

### 3.3 Give full play to the traditional advantages of children's family and social resources

The development of food and education theme activities not only requires the careful design and organization of kindergarten teachers, but also the active cooperation and participation of children's family members, and more importantly, the support of food and education resources from all sectors of society.

First of all, in the family food and education of children. Preschool teachers can open online series of food education lectures corresponding to food education theme activities through WeChat parent groups or nail groups and other online channels, push articles about food education theme activities, and share real-time nutrition broadcasts, photos and videos of children participating in food education theme activities. Food exhibition activities can be held offline to show the food completed by children and family members to other children. Parents of children can also be invited to the kindergarten to share food and education stories. In addition, family members need to urge children to develop good eating habits at home, such as not watching TV, not playing with mobile phones and not feeding parents, to prevent the "5+2=0" phenomenon, so as to ensure that the food and education theme activities achieve good results.

Secondly, in terms of social food and education resources. Make full use of extensive social resources to provide support for the development of food and education theme activities in kindergartens. First, we should "go out" to carry out children's food and education themed activities. For example, when the kindergarten carries out the theme activity of "I am a small farmer", it can lead children to go to the fields, fruit forests, and breeding grounds under the premise of ensuring safety. In the real scene, they can experience farmers' life and perceive the laws of nature. Second, skillfully use the living places related to food and education to carry out food and education themed activities. In the theme activity of "selling food", the kindergarten takes the vegetable market or supermarket as the carrier, and lets children act as small volunteers to help the staff sell more food, so as to accumulate the experience of selling food. Third, invite food education experts to carry out food education themed lectures for kindergartens and parents, improve the food education literacy of preschool teachers and parents, and constantly enrich the food education themed activity network.

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