



**The Kitchen Garden Classroom: Educating Children for a Healthy Future  
13 October 2008 Abbotsford Convent**

**Session B3: What will we do next week?**

**Notes from group discussions**

**Question 1**

**What are the most successful examples of kitchen/garden/classroom collaboration in planning that have happened in your school, and what do you think are the keystones of good collaboration?**

- Market at school – the school selling fresh and cooked produce to raise funds for the program. This is a good learning experience for the children and a good way of exhibiting to parents and public the virtues of the Program.
- One hour class held by kitchen specialists on art and craft activities relating to the Kitchen Garden Program. This activity was held in the classroom.
- School camp kitchen cooking provides opportunities for kids to have food from the garden at camp.
- Pizza night once a week for families to attend – restaurant business skills learned by children who both cook and deal with money. Hospitality and PR skills developed.
- Celebrity event – planned activity followed by feast. Feasting together also means discussion, and the learning of convivial table skills.
- Recycle, renew, reuse . . . the children created bird scarers from totally recycled materials (Weeden Heights Primary)
- Language diary
- Multimedia production
- Library week – ‘Green scene’ – the teacher organised seed packs.
- Fire Pit celebration: catering for the community to celebrate their support/contribution
- Integrate with learning areas of maths

- Planning meeting – teacher led: garden and kitchen staff collaborate with teacher on themes being used in classroom.
- Open day – joining with kitchen and garden – herbs for sale, and other produce cooked by kids. Parents involved.
- 20 minutes of staff meeting dedicated to Kitchen Garden Program
- Kitchen and garden specialist walk together in the garden to discuss uses for produce available.
- Kitchen and garden specialists have lunch with school teachers and aides.
- Kids go home and tell parents what they've been doing and this changes what happens at home.
- Having a blackboard in the garden with a poem to mark a new season – or something from literature
- Children having a large sketchbook, with half for the garden and half for the kitchen so they can take notes, draw sketches and take it all away with them.
- Borrow an incubator and hatch ducklings and chickens in the classroom, then build a chook tractor and have the chickens cultivate the garden bed. The ducks are wonderful snail and slug control. If the teacher or kitchen specialist is inclined, the roosters and drakes can be eaten. Even the hens and ducks can be bred for the kitchen.

**If collaboration has not happened, then what needs to happen for it to occur?**

- Good communication between specialists is essential – kids might be growing great vegetables such as kale and artichokes, but have no idea how to cook them.
- Enthusiasm and flexibility of the kitchen specialist is essential – if produce is to be dealt with when it's ready.
- Kitchen and garden specialists need to get along; coordination can be difficult, using email helps.
- Program Coordinator and specialists need to meet together once a week. It is good for the rest of the staff to come to this meeting once a month to touch base and understand what is happening in the Program.

## **Question 2**

**What is the most successful activity you've done in the kitchen or garden, and what was it that made it successful?**

### **Garden**

- Bug audit – with the catching of bugs for identification purposes, and then releasing them back into the garden, if they are harmless. Life cycles can be drawn up. This activity can go hand in hand with making organic garden sprays (pyrethrum, garlic). 'Good' and 'bad' garden bugs can be identified.
- Weed audit – including a comparison of weeds, in particular, their growing habits.
- Wheelbarrow licences (not races)
- Trying to grow the 'biggest . . .'
- Taking veggies home
- 5 sense identification of herbs (spittoon option)
- Celebration of indigenous food plants
- Seed saving
- Garlic plaiting
- Making scarecrows – one per class, with children donating clothes. In this activity the children tried on the clothes themselves, discussed what kind of scarecrow they wanted to make and had great fun dressing the scarecrow. P-Year 6 each made a scarecrow with its own class identity – then they were lined up along the front fence for display.
- Art activities in the garden – botanical drawing, outlining child's face in wire and putting them on the fence
- Children bringing a treasure from home to be set into concrete pavers
- Weighing pumpkins and graphing growth
- Life cycle of a pea (eat a pea, plant a pea, understand what it will become in soil as distinct from stomach)
- Worm Olympics

### **Kitchen**

- Tempura vegies
- Pasta making 3–4 kids at a time going through the whole process from collecting the eggs to the drying of pasta. Semolina flour is best – makes firmer more easily managed dough. Dough must rest. Make it for the class that is coming next.

- Blindfold taste testing
- Catching a fish, cooking it and then eating it. Guts into the compost. Salad picked from garden to go with fish. Kids very proud and satisfied.
- Fire Pit – Aboriginal family came and made damper, cooked and shared it and did a traditional dance
- Fresh honeycomb tasting
- Making a whole batch of cakes and freezing them for use on occasions
- Introducing parent night classes – incorporating community health groups, and putting the funding back into the program
- Showcasing food (7-course meal) for paying parent
- Chef visit
- Compare the taste of different hot cross buns, and then make some themselves
- Giving out leftovers to be taken home
- Making jams and lemon butter at the beginning of the year
- Themed weeks – e.g. Indian week, Chinese week
- Tibetan monks visit – made traditional momo’s veggie dumplings
- Food Olympics

### **Question 3**

**What are some things you’ve done to work with children with particular needs, and how do you think the kitchen and garden classroom can facilitate good learning for such children?**

- Working with deaf children in the garden – we mixed hearing and deaf children in groups of 8 with four of each, all hearing children learned to do some signing so the whole session was done in signing.
- One disengaged student who doesn’t work well in a group is assigned to a teacher aide and given a task that he is happy to do.
- Child with extremely limited diet has been given particular attention to encourage them to try new foods.
- Another child with very limited food appreciation has been encouraged – smell, lick, nibble.
- Footstool for height-challenged children.

- One cooking station is a totally dairy- and nut-free zone for children with allergies. Alternatively, one station could be an egg-free zone.
- Child using a wheelchair – given a special table for cooking station activities.
- Giving jobs in the kitchen and garden to children who appear to lack the ability to socialise during breaks.
- For a child with cerebral palsy, a garden bed has been raised so that access is made easier.
- For a child with Asperger’s syndrome – giving very specific tasks to engage them, e.g. a cutlery box to organise.
- For a child with Tourette’s syndrome – consult with the child so that appropriate tasks are given according to mood or feelings.
- For a child with coeliac disease – give gluten free pasta. This is a good way of raising awareness for other children too.
- For a child with autism – child given very specific tasks such as digging a certain plot with a trowel and some hardy seedlings to plant. For child with autism in the kitchen – talk through the tasks at the start of the session using hand actions and engaging eye contact. Avoid giving too many directions at once.
- Dysfunctional behaviour – give an ‘action’ task like chopping up compostable material or building a tepee or hammering something – make the task a very definite one.
- Give tasks like compost turning to very active children.
- Paper ripping for compost is a good task for talkative girls.
- Working on a one-to-one basis is good for some children with special needs – labelling jars, digging, sweeping.
- Children with special needs might work with the same volunteer each week – building a special relationship.
- Group children carefully, taking emotional needs into account.
- Children with ESL like the garden as a time to speak their own language, so it can be more relaxing than the classroom.
- Phobias – glove ‘ownership’ might be necessary for some children.

**The kitchen and garden classrooms work very well as an alternative environment for children that might need special attention. It is a holistic approach, activities can so easily be adapted, and activities are generally good fun. ‘Children with special needs shine in these classes.’**