



YARRA PRIMARY SCHOOL

THE KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM-MAKING IT WORK

Jude Sullivan: Kitchen Garden Coordinator

Slide 1:

I have taught at Yarra Primary School for over 10 years and recently have become a part-time teacher, co-ordinator kitchen garden program and garden teacher. The following information accompanies the power-point presentation, ***Making it Work*** which I presented at the SAKGF Conference October 13th. In essence the paper is about how to get the program going, maintaining it and taking it into the future.

Slide 2:

Yarra Primary School was built in 1888 and is situated on a large block in Richmond. Finbar Neighbourhood House belongs to the school and is an integral part of the school and community. Some of the garden is established there and is linked to the rest of the garden in the school grounds.

There are 160 students and 7 classes. The school is multi-cultural and the demographics have changed over recent years, with an increase in the number of professional families moving into the area.

Slide 3:

THE JOURNEY:

Our purpose at Yarra Primary is to ensure a positive learning experience for all children within a safe and healthy school environment; to provide a vibrant and engaging curriculum; to foster a happy and supportive community spirit.

We are committed to an active partnership between parents, students, staff and the wider community.

The Kitchen Garden Program strongly reflects these goals.

The 2007-2008 Strategic Plan included the following goal (seen on the slide)

To engage and challenge the students within a learning environment that promotes the well-being of all

This goal connected well to the Kitchen Garden and the philosophy behind the program of children developing life-long habits around growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing delicious fresh food around the table with family and friends.

In the next Strategic Plan there will be provision for a continued school goal with the Kitchen Garden philosophy included.

The program has a good reputation in the local community. Parents are very supportive and there have been many enquiries and much interest in the Kitchen Garden Program as part of the curriculum.

Slide 4:

ORGANISATION

This is vital to the success of the program.

PLANNING

You need a well planned program with links to the curriculum and the scope and sequence plan as the time involved in both the garden and the kitchen is a big chunk out of the already crowded curriculum.

Class teachers need to be encouraged and directed to link in with the kitchen garden program. This is why it is important for them to be at each garden and kitchen session, preferably without a group so that they can observe and interact with their class.

TIMETABLES

Timetables need to be put in place well before classes begin. We made adjustments during this year as we progressed in our first fully operational year in the program.

We have 4 garden classes and 2 kitchen classes during the week at this stage.

Time tables also impact on the volunteers, so we are always mindful of changes and give our volunteers notice.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between myself, the Principal, School Council, Staff, volunteers and our families is very necessary.

Talk, talk, talk up the program whenever you get the chance.

We use the weekly school bulletin and assemblies to disseminate information.

ADAPTABILITY

You have to be adaptable and prepared to make changes as needed. Be prepared for the times when a volunteer can't make it, or if the weather is too bad to go outside. Have systems in place to allow for these occasions. During this year's Arts Week we got creative and in the kitchen had fun with different ways of presenting food, while in the garden made banners to display at The School's Kitchen Garden Open Day Celebrations.

All of this ensures that the program is well entrenched in the school.

Slide 5:

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We formed a committee and had some *fantastic* working bees.

We could not have built the gardens and the kitchen without the help from our parents and friends.

They now have a feeling of ownership and connectedness to the program.

In the initial setting up stage we enlisted the help of one of our committed and vibrant parents to set up the volunteer bank systems and to engage other parents and friends in the program.

Slides 6&7:

VOLUNTEERS

What amazing people they are.

Time spent advertising, recruiting, inducting, supporting and celebrating our volunteers is a major part of making it work.

I believe that the volunteers gain so much through their involvement in the garden and the kitchen. The children learn so much from them.

Slide 8:

SUPPORT & FUNDING

We invested a lot of time and effort into seeking funding and sponsorship in the beginning.

Some of the sponsors shown on this slide have been major sponsors, and a few continue to support us in small ways. Last year, a local building construction company, Hickory LifeBuilt gave us a generous \$15,000

donation towards fitting out the kitchen. Bovis Lend-Lease spent a community day building and painting. We have a partnership with Rotary, and receive assistance with on-going costs of materials and equipment. Also we were successful with our applications for grants, such as Mitre 10, and the Government's Community Water Grant, and this went towards water tanks and an extensive drip irrigation system as well as equipment for the garden.

Support and funding is an on-going part of the Kitchen Garden Program, to ensure that the [program is maintained.

Slide 9:

FUTURE

As our school is coming to the end of the 2 year cycle with SAKGF we are currently planning for the future sustainability of the program.

We have a small kitchen garden budget, and the children pay towards the ingredients for the cooking. We seed save and seek donations whenever we can, but there is always going to be some on-going costs for potting mix, straw, seeds and equipment.

Our greatest costs in the future will be staffing costs.

Because the program is now so entrenched in the school and has such a good reputation, the community would certainly be up in arms if it didn't continue!

Slide 10:

Reflection

I wish to finish on a positive note. It had been an amazing journey and I have learnt so much. I love what I do because of the impact I see the program is having on our future generation.