

A review of the Kitchen Garden Program took place in Term 4, 2015. Brian Marshall and Jane-Ann Natar conducted interviews with students in the program; volunteers; the Kitchen and Garden specialists; and teachers involved in the program. Finance committee also provided some input.

Key Findings

- The Kitchen Garden program is highly valued for its impact on students, volunteers and teachers. All groups reported that students, in particular, have increased knowledge and interest in growing their own produce, eating a greater range of foods and cooking some of the recipes.
- A strong sense of pride was expressed, regarding this program operating at Woodend. It was widely felt that having this program in the school provided great opportunities for students to learn important life skills. The specialists, Monina and Amanda have been the program specialists since its inception in Term 4, 2009 and have created a strong team approach. The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation has acknowledged Monina and Amanda across the state for their knowledge, skills and commitment to the program.
- It was acknowledged that while there are many exciting and pleasurable aspects to managing a garden and cooking meals, there are also many routines, which are not so exciting but just part of what needs to be done. While understanding this, there was still an overall sense, that the program could be more engaging for older students.
- Views were expressed, that students would benefit from more planting and harvesting experiences; that most of the garden time was taken up with the pressing need for weed and pest control.
- Volunteers felt they benefited from the knowledge of the specialists and the experience of being in the kitchen and garden. There was a sense that volunteers might be able to contribute more during the sessions and also outside the sessions if more and varied opportunities were provided.
- Teachers reported that they did try to connect other classroom based learning with what was being learnt during the sessions. They expressed a desire to do this more powerfully in the future.
- It was reported that some equipment and resources needed to be refreshed or replaced. The specialists reported on the large workload and challenge in terms of keeping within the budget and trying to create productive spaces and creative solutions. The need for better resourcing was acknowledged by teachers, volunteers and specialists.
- All groups in some way expressed a desire for greater shared ownership of the program. Some of that feedback was about sharing the load for getting things done more efficiently. Some was about better harnessing the energy and ideas from all groups. In particular it was acknowledged, by many, that managing a very large garden, making it productive, and also needing to create engaging activities was difficult for one person to do alone and not sustainable nor desirable.

- There was a sense that the program deserved a higher profile across the school and that we could do more as a school to promote it and show how it connects to other learning.
- The cost of the program is significant and it was felt by finance committee that to justify the funding, a stronger connection with learning programs must continue to be developed. It was also felt that over time a slight but achievable reduction in the cost of the program would make it more financially sustainable.
- Overall it was felt we now have a great opportunity to create a more powerful program. Over the past 6 years, as our understanding of the program has evolved it has become more evident that our next steps, towards a more powerful program are about more shared ownership.

Recommendations

1. The program is seen by all as more than just the sessions with specialists. The program is promoted and understood to be not just about growing harvesting, preparing and sharing, but fundamentally about developing understandings of sustainable practices, biodiversity, and about supporting concept development in Science, Health and PE.
2. We applaud the efforts our specialists, teachers and volunteers have put into creating a valued program. It is recommended that the role of coordinator be reinstated at a more intense level to support the recommendations of this review. We want to now reorganise ourselves so that more creative energy is able to be put into improvements by specialists, teachers and volunteers by sharing the ownership and defining the role of teacher, specialist and coordinator as follows:
 - a. The Teacher:
 - i. has overarching responsibility for engaging their students with the program. They are responsible for designing learning opportunities to meet the learning needs of their students and to help students to connect kitchen and garden experiences with the big ideas in the curriculum. The specialists are the major support for teachers by delivering specific expertise required in the program and managing the major resources: the garden and the kitchen.
 - ii. has overarching responsibility for managing students and volunteers during the garden and kitchen sessions, in collaboration with the specialists. The teacher may devise activities to complement or supplement those organised by the specialists and direct students to complete them. The teacher may manage how the class and volunteers achieve the specialists' requirements for the session. This also includes managing the session so that the specialist is given the opportunity to provide their expert input.
 - iii. has access to the Tools for Teachers resources and the SAKG Foundation website.
 - iv. is responsible for organising and managing volunteers.

- b. The Garden Specialist:
 - i. is responsible for providing expertise and guidance on what needs to be done in the garden at any given time; how it might be best done; knowledge of the plants, horticulture, and ecosystem of the garden.
 - ii. is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and productivity requirements of the garden and communicating these to teachers and other staff so teachers and other staff may orchestrate action, including outside the specialist session times as required.
 - iii. is responsible for working collaboratively with the Kitchen Specialist to ensure the kitchen requirements may be met.
 - iv. is responsible for communicating on line what's happening in their sessions
 - v. is responsible for inducting volunteers into safe practices in the garden
 - c. Kitchen Specialist:
 - i. is responsible for providing knowledge and expertise in terms of: culinary skills; understanding food and food processing; creating recipes.
 - ii. is responsible for managing and maintaining the kitchen, including equipment and consumables.
 - iii. is responsible for organising what will be prepared and shared during the kitchen session, then communicating how this will best be done and providing expertise during the kitchen sessions.
 - iv. is responsible for working collaboratively with the Garden Specialist to ensure the kitchen requirements may be met.
 - v. is responsible for communicating on line what's happening in their sessions.
 - d. The Program Coordinator will:
 - i. liaise with teachers and specialists to ensure the objectives of the program are being met.
 - ii. coordinate and support the implementation of the review recommendations.
 - iii. orchestrate special activities in the garden and kitchen eg music performances, art classes, cooking classes....
 - iv. provide line management performance and development feedback for the specialists.
 - v. will once a semester seek feedback from volunteers, students, teachers, and specialists on the operation of the program.
3. Progression through the program needs to be better built in. It is recommended that teachers work collaboratively with the specialists:
- a. to define a clear progression of proficiencies that students should demonstrate as they become more experienced... eg knife licence, pruning licence are revisited and implemented fully.

- b. to define a clear progression of experiences that ensure that Yr 5 students have some different experiences compared with Yr 3 students...
 - c. and volunteers in creating projects that work for a range of purposes and can be done together with volunteers at different times and well as during the sessions. eg construction of furniture and beds; trellises; art works; creations for resale; recipe experimentation; devising packaging and labels for products; propagation for community plantings etc
- 4. The garden is more readily available for all to use.
 - a. Lunchtime limited access is provided to students via the senior students' in the Citizenship Program providing supervision. Students inducted by garden specialist and coordinator.
 - b. The garden (and kitchen) is accessed by classes beyond the specialist session, when it is necessary to continue to do what needs to be done during that period of time.
 - c. Visits to the garden and the kitchen are promoted. All classes are encouraged to use the garden as a resource ... READ and WEED time!! Relax and Enjoy; music concerts; art lessons; photography. Rules are established by the classes in collaboration with the specialist.
 - d. List of jobs and ideas on the garden noticeboard is created by specialists, teachers, coordinator, students and volunteers... all crossed off as they are done...
- 5. There should be rich identification of living things in the garden. Plants, mini beasts (birds/ rodents??) should be identified by photo labels. The labels should be produced by classes and clearly show what is what and what the life cycle / seasonal cycle looks like. It should be highly evident that the garden is a rich learning space.
- 6. The kitchen could be a richer learning space. For example, collections of food stuffs (eg beans) for comparison... more measuring equipment, recipe books, art ...
- 7. Worn or poor quality items are replaced and upgraded in the kitchen. A periodic clean is part of the routine in the kitchen.
- 8. Kitchen recipes reflect the Right Bite policy.
- 9. Better budget is provided for classes to access the garden:
 - a. for equipment to be kept up to enable more effective interaction with the garden. ... eg better magnifiers and bug catchers, better tools.
 - b. Curriculum budget will be available to help teachers create more effective resources for classes to use...
 - c. Spaces, and equipment including storage, need to be developed and organised for classes to more effectively use at any time (outside the program time).
- 10. Volunteers:
 - a. volunteer roster on Facebook (posted by Monina) continues to support the process of organising volunteers

- b. are provided with induction into how the program works. Special sessions are created for cooking and garden training eg pizza night or dad's night
 - c. may be call on at other times, not just for when sessions occur with specialists.
 - d. opportunities are given for volunteers to generate projects which benefit the program.
 - e. are given a wider variety of tasks in the garden
11. The profile of the program is increased: regular newsblog posts are planned for in a systematic way eg classes cycle through this responsibility. Other activities are organised to promote the program ... pizza night... performances in the garden.
 12. Produce is for sale as part of the headset... classes may create market stalls periodically. Some things may be grown at home for this purpose. The canteen may be able to utilise product and some cooking during sessions may be done for the canteen (and may be funded by the canteen)
 13. Families are invited to be part of the harvest and also for the bulk processing of the harvest.
 14. The propagation shed is fully developed so that it is able to be used regularly.
 15. Teachers explore other planting spaces... use classrooms; use outside areas around the school; use home gardens etc
 16. Composting is developed effectively so that there is compost created for use and / or sale...
 17. Seating and aesthetics are improved in the garden ... noise dampening strategies are explored in the kitchen
 18. Yr 6/7 classes access the specialists for limited sessions.
 19. Excursions forms include Kitchen and Garden specialists' notification.