

Co-curricular activity

The multicultural kitchen garden: Clayton North Primary School

The Multicultural School Gardens project is an innovative program that focuses on creating multicultural gardens and cooking programs in Victorian schools. At Clayton North Primary School (CNPS), a multidisciplinary approach to the kitchen garden encourages whole school, authentic learning opportunities, ultimately building knowledge and lifelong skills. In addition, it brings together learners of different age groups and ethnicity, celebrates cultural diversity, strengthens links with local community groups and incorporates concepts of environmental sustainability.

The multicultural kitchen garden integrates values education into all areas of the curriculum. As students participate in activities and interact with their peers and the community, they are encouraged to identify the values in their physical, cultural and social environments and learn personal development skills.

Year levels

Early years (5–7 years), Middle childhood (8–11 years)

Explicit values focus

- Understanding, tolerance and inclusion
- Care and compassion
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Self-reliance
- Teamwork
- Honesty

Key Learning Areas

Multidisciplinary

School profile

Clayton North Primary School is a government school located in Clayton, Victoria. The school presently has a student population of 205 children ranging from Prep to Grade 6. Students come from families from throughout the world, and 65 per cent speak a language other than English at home, enriching the cultural diversity of the school. Some parents are students at the local university and have attained high levels of education in many different fields. Many parents have brought their children to Australia in the hopes of providing them with more opportunities. Their children's academic achievement is of great importance to them and they are very appreciative of the efforts made by the school staff on behalf of their children. They provide the school with positive feedback and a great deal of support and students generally work hard to fulfil their parents' hopes for them. However, these strong family expectations can sometimes limit the opportunities for interaction among different multicultural groups.

Reason for co-curricular activity

Benefits to the local and wider community

Clayton North belongs to a multicultural community that can boast over 60 different cultures within the school. The development of a multicultural kitchen garden provides an opportunity for minority ethnic groups, who may be marginalised, to participate in a community project, developing strong values of teamwork and acceptance. The garden includes edible plants from various countries represented within the community, and the inclusion of these plants allows for the sharing of knowledge, develops an understanding of each group's homeland and respect for their culture.

Combining planting and harvesting with the cooking of multicultural dishes provides opportunities for families to experience food from other cultures and develops skills of self-reliance in students. It allows them to share with their neighbours and take pride in what they can contribute to society.

It also provides a link to shy or 'hesitant' members of the community who develop a sense of ownership and pride at what they can achieve when working alongside others.

Support from the local community

The kitchen garden project has been recognised as highly valuable to the community by local government members and church groups. Working bees, which were poorly supported in the past, are now well attended and there is a general sense of pride and positive expectancy from the successful development of this project. The local community, having demonstrated their support, has taken on the role of mentor for students, encouraging responsibility and self-reliance through their involvement.

Volunteers and community based groups

The school garden is well supported by the local community who currently provide many volunteers to facilitate the healthy lifestyles programs implemented at the school. We presently have volunteers from the following groups who have, in an atmosphere of teamwork, contributed their efforts to the development of the garden.

- Community Volunteers Australia
- Gould Group
- CSIRO
- Red Cross
- Local church groups
- Parents and friends of Clayton North
- Alexanders Aged Care residents
- Local kindergartens
- Monash University students
- Local residents (not part of the school parent group)

Development of knowledge and pleasure of gardening

Practical workshops that develop an awareness of gardening methods and environmental sustainability were implemented. Gardening in a water wise climate is a main focus. Opportunities for students and parents to experience the therapeutic benefits of gardening are encouraged.

Educational relevance to the community

- Developing an awareness of healthy diet and nutrition
- Developing independent skills in the production of healthy food
- Awareness of other cultures and their contributions

Implementation and development

Action	Student activities	Staff activities (in addition to classroom lessons)	Community activities
Development of garden plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wish lists • Thinking tools, eg mind mapping, Y-charts, Blooms Taxonomy • Classroom lessons on planning tools, eg grid work, scale drawing • 3D models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan/Timeline • Role development • Wish list • Team planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise • Workshops • Resourcing
Building of garden structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing list of equipment needed • Sourcing donations by writing letters of request • Working bees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of jobs for working bees • Sourcing of materials/donations • Liaison with community businesses • Working bees • Development of proposals and expressions of interest to access funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Volunteers Australia (CVA) workers • Donations of material • Working bees
Planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student workshops eg, composting, water saving strategies, worm farming • Peer teaching • Roles and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gould group workshops • Volunteer expertise
Harvest Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvesting of vegetables • Advertising of event • Development of environmentally 'friendly' celebration activities • Invitations to community members • Newspaper and newsletter articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media liaison • Community liaison • Resource collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation on day
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of project using thinking tools, eg SCOT analysis, PMI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of project using thinking tools, eg SCOT analysis, PMI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of project using thinking tools, eg SCOT analysis, PMI

Outcomes

The multicultural kitchen garden has encouraged students':

- responsibility for their own learning and the self-reliance to access information to aid them in the future
- independent thinking skills
- self-confidence within the school and in the community
- understanding of the values needed as an individual and member of a community
- ability to communicate, share, include others and feel part of a group to achieve something tangible
- understanding of what can be achieved through teamwork
- responsibility for their actions and an acceptance of how others rely on them
- enthusiasm for learning
- interaction with the local community and the ways in which they can contribute to it as members.