



SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS

Maths used to estimate and weigh pumpkins harvested

A school food garden for enhancing student engagement at

MOTHER OF GOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Originally a car park, this thriving food garden at Mother of God Primary School is now 6 years old. Considered by the Principal as the 'best part of the school!', Cultivating Community's food garden program provides students with hands on learning which teaches them how to grow their own food, reduce food waste and act sustainably.

This green space in Ardeer provides a 'chill out' area for students who need it, for transitioning kinder kids to primary school and is a delightful aspect of the school when walking prospective new families around the school. A parent who was a chef saw daikon seeds growing in the garden and with a child starting next year this made him very excited to be joining the school community.

"In the early days a girl lost her Mum and would spend the morning in the garden which helped with her grieving process."

Gerard Broadfoot, Principal

LEARNING ABOUT LIFE CYCLES UP CLOSE

Life cycles are all around us, they are part of us and part of every living thing. Seeing life cycles up close is an entry point for other learning including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). From planting seeds to learning about the seasons, students are immersed in the cycles of life from new growth to death and decay. In some cases the process is slow, and the changes are gradual, so students learn how to be patient.

One group of students planted the seeds to make a carrot cake, in the process they learnt that it takes time to grow, harvest and cook wholesome food. This real life learning makes all other learning relevant and embeds the 'paddock to plate' philosophy. Even the Principal has learnt all about genetically modified seeds.

Explaining and illustrating life cycles helps students to learn how to better care and respect for their environment and those around them. And in some cases it can assist with the challenges of life such as understanding and dealing with death and the changes that it brings.

EMBEDDING CULTURE



Life cycles in the classroom

Staff are very engaged in the program, making links back in the classroom with some teachers cooking in class with the produce that is harvested from the garden. Last year the art teacher used it as part of a Monet study of flowers. This year a new teacher has started using



Students getting the bed ready for planting seeds

the garden as a focus for mindfulness on a regular basis. Teachers are also using the space simply as a restful place to read and discuss a story.

“The food garden is an amazing resource for outdoor learning and a valuable community resource.”

Gerard Broadfoot, Principal

The students themselves love getting out in the garden and there are a lot fewer behaviour issues when learning outdoors. And the Kids Teaching Kids (www.kidsteachingkids.com.au) program opened up new opportunities for students at the school to engage with students from other schools.

Mother of God School

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Cultivating Community's first funded food garden project with schools was in 2000 working with kids from across three housing estates to grow food both at home and at school. From this very first seed sown 16 years ago the School Food Garden Program was born and has evolved into a program that still assists schools today to develop a food garden program that is tailor made to fit each school culture and community. To find out more about our program contact Cultivating Community today.

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