**2015 Interview with Principal and Teachers on APS Kitchen Garden Program.**

“The fact that we have a garden, in a school in the inner west, where land is in such a premium, is an incredible gift. We have a rare opportunity at Annandale Public School to give our children the opportunity to grow, harvest, prepare, cook and share fresh seasonal food. Our program has been proven highly successful with the students in Stage 2 who have been lucky enough to experience it, but we need funding for trained staff and facilities to allow all our students to reap the benefits of this program.” Mr. Dace Elletson, Acting Principal, Annandale Public School.

**What are some of the essential skills the Kitchen Garden program teaches young children?**

* Enhancing NSW K-6 syllabus outcomes by developing knowledge and skills associated with growing fresh food, harvesting from the school garden, preparing healthy food, and using green waste.
* Integrating the ***Sustainability*** cross curriculum priority into all Key Learning Areas.
* Improving learning outcomes in all KLAs by using the school kitchen and garden as engaging teaching and learning resources.

**Why are these skills so important?**

It is important students get to experience learning by doing, discovering and exploring. The garden and the kitchen add an engaging dimension to the school and help to consolidate syllabus outcomes in virtually all Key Learning Areas. Rather than just being in the classroom, it’s like having an exciting weekly excursion right here on the school grounds.

Furthermore, we areteaching our future generations about environmental sustainability, ecology, healthy eating and responsible citizenship. Students are absorbed and engaged in learning about these concepts through such hands on, meaningful and fun experiences.

**With 1 in 4 Australian children now obese, how does the program educate children about healthy eating?**

By growing, harvesting, preparing and eating fresh, unprocessed food, students enjoy the process; taking ownership of each step and ultimately appreciating the taste of the healthy dishes they have prepared together. They learn to understand the importance of growing food locally and making healthy food choices.

**What have some of the key learnings from the Learning Garden been for the children?**

* Understanding the things plants need to survive and grow. Identifying different stages of plant life and different types of plants.
* Understanding the role invertebrates, birds and other wildlife have in the garden ecosystem.
* Undertaking science investigations of the environmental conditions effecting different plants in the learning garden.
* Designing and constructing structures and equipment such as pots/ garden beds/ pest traps/ seed packets etc out of recycled materials. Applying measurement skills and creativity.
* Organising and running a harvest stall.
* Monitoring and graphing data including rainfall, temperature and how it affects plant growth and food production.
* Understanding the environmental benefits of recycling organic waste by composting and worm farming.
* To understand the importance of biodiversity, habitat and ecological balance when it comes to sustainably producing food and resources.

**What are the key learnings from the kitchen been?**

How to work in a cooperative team and managing time. Applying measurement skills and knowledge. Reading and interpreting recipes. Observing changes in foods when heated, mixed. Safety and hygiene. Eating together. Table manners. Cleaning up! Tasting different foods. Even thought it’s noisy and busy with 30 students in one kitchen and dining area, children are engaged, calm, happy and productive.

**What is your aim for the program?**

To ensure the program continues to be successful and sustainable for years to come. To ensure the program complements improved student learning and student well being at the school. To help the school community thrive as a passionate, harmonious and productive system of hearts and minds.

**How will you achieve this?**

We need maintain the supply of dedicated volunteers who help with supervising small groups in the kitchen and garden. We need a steady supply of funding and promotion, lead by an amazing team of fundraisers, business sponsorship and community grants. We need support from every sector of the school community; staff, parents, students, local business and organisations. We need to maintain ongoing professional development.