

Nature Play

Supports creativity and problem solving. Studies of children in schoolyards found that children engage in more creative forms of play in the green areas. They also played more cooperatively (Bell and Dymont, 2006). Play in nature is especially important for developing capacities for creativity, problem-solving, and intellectual development (Kellert, 2005).

- **Enhances cognitive abilities.** Proximity to, views of, and daily exposure to natural settings increases children's ability to focus and enhances cognitive abilities (Wells, 2000).

- **Improves academic performance.** Studies in the US show that schools that use outdoor classrooms and other forms of nature-based experiential education support significant student gains in social studies, science, language arts, and math. Students in outdoor science programs improved their science testing scores by 27% (American Institutes for Research, 2005).

- **Reduces Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) symptoms.**

Contact with the natural world can significantly reduce symptoms of attention deficit disorder in children as young as five years old (Kuo and Taylor, 2004).

- **Increases physical activity.** Children who experience school grounds with diverse natural settings are more physically active, more aware of nutrition, more civil to one another and more creative (Bell and Dymont, 2006).

- **Improves nutrition.** Children who grow their own food are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables (Bell & Dymont, 2008) and to show higher levels of knowledge about nutrition (Waliczek, & Zajicek, 2006). They are also more likely to continue healthy eating habits throughout their lives (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002).

- **Improves eyesight.** More time spent outdoors is related to reduced rates of near sightedness, also known as myopia, in children and adolescents (American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2011).
- **Improves social relations.** Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors (Burdette and Whitaker, 2005).
- **Improves self-discipline.** Access to green spaces, and even a view of green settings, enhances peace, selfcontrol and self-discipline within inner city youth, and particularly in girls (Taylor, Kuo and Sullivan, 2001).
- **Reduces stress.** Green plants and vistas reduce stress among highly stressed children. Locations with greater number of plants, greener views, and access to natural play areas show more significant results (Wells and Evans, 2003).

STEPHANIE ALEXANDER

KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM

The pleasurable food education philosophy

The purpose of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation is to introduce pleasurable food education to children during their learning years, in order to form positive food habits for life. The recipe for effective food education is

Pleasurable food education emphasises the flavours as well as the health benefits of fresh, seasonal, delicious food.

Dishes cooked reflect the vegetables, herbs and fruits grown, season-by-season, by the children in their organic gardens, and also reflect the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Kitchen educators emphasise balance and moderation, and endorse the concept of preparing fruit-based desserts 'sometimes-only'.

Pleasurable food education is designed to be fully integrated into the curriculum or learning framework as it offers infinite possibilities to reinforce literacy, numeracy, science, cultural studies and all aspects of environmental sustainability.

Pleasurable food education delivers observable social benefits to all children, including those with special needs.

Pleasurable food education encourages critical thinking, teamwork, an understanding of cause and effect, and increased levels of observation.

STEPHANIE ALEXANDER KITCHEN GARDEN PROGRAM

Research Evidence Findings:

- Strong evidence was found for significant improvements in students' food choices and kitchen lifestyle behaviours as a result of participation in the SAKGNP. Participating students, staff and school communities all reported positive observations of a range of contributions of the Program and the impact it had on the school and students.
- The SAKGNP model is reflective of the health promoting schools approach of the World Health Organization and learning and teaching best practice. The Program is consistent with the Australian Government's strategic policy agendas of preventive health, social inclusion, a national curriculum and environmental sustainability.
- Students in SAKGNP schools were reported to have developed basic skills in the kitchen and demonstrated increased willingness to try new foods, which are important steps in achieving behaviour changes associated with healthy eating. Cooking skills developed by SAKGNP school students included using kitchen equipment and tools, reading and following recipes, and kitchen safety and hygiene. SAKGNP school principals, staff and students reported that almost all students found garden and kitchen classes a source of enjoyment and fun.
- 20% of parents of initiative school children reported that students ate fruits and vegetables more often after participating in the SAKGNP.