The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program

www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au
Key investigators:
Lisa Gibbs, Petra Staiger, Mardie Townsend, Lisa Gold, Karen Block, Susie Macfarlane, Britt Johnson, Obioha Ukoumunne

University partnership:
University of Melbourne & Deakin University

Funding support: Stephanie Alexander
Kitchen Garden Foundation, VicHealth, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, Deakin University, and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
The SAKG Program

Developed by Stephanie Alexander

Links the garden, the kitchen and the table

Aims to have a positive influence on:

- children’s food choices
- attitudes towards environmental sustainability
- working relationships with other children and adults
How does the SAKG Program work?

• children in grades 3 to 6 – ongoing

• 40 minutes per week in the garden

• 1.5 hours per week in the kitchen

• classes led by specialist staff

• small groups supported by adult volunteer

• share meals they create from their produce
Example of a school kitchen:
Example of a school garden:
Evaluation questions

• willingness to try new foods
• capacity to describe food experiences
• dietary intake
• appreciation & enjoyment of wide range of food
• skills, knowledge and confidence in the kitchen and garden
• environmental understanding
• social and learning environment of the school and connectedness to community
• extension of program benefits to the home
• feasibility, acceptability and costs
Socio-ecological Model

- **Public Policy**
- **Community** (cultural values, norms)
- **Schools** (environment, ethos)
- **Interpersonal** (social network)
- **Individual** (knowledge, attitude, skills)
Health Promoting Schools Framework

- Curriculum, teaching and learning
- School organisation, ethos and environment
- Partnerships and services
Methods

- 6 program & 6 comparison schools

- **Opt in survey recruitment**: 770 children, 562 parents and 93 teachers

- **Adult focus groups** - teachers, volunteers, parents

- **Child focus groups**
Analyses

- **Qualitative:** Thematic inductive analyses of qualitative data

- **Quantitative:** Random effects linear regressions adjusted for school clustering

- **Economic:** Invested resources and stakeholder values measured and valued using standard cost estimates
Key findings – JNEB paper

• Increased child willingness to try new foods

• Changes in dietary intake inconclusive

• Food literacy increases for program and comparison schools
Additional findings

• Greater levels of cooking enjoyment
• Increased child knowledge, confidence and skills in cooking and gardening
• Engagement of ‘non-academic learners’
• Links between program schools and the community
• Transfer of program benefits to the home environment
Feasibility, acceptability & costs

• Challenges – ongoing funding & volunteer support
• Integration with curriculum helps overcome competing priorities
• Program schools on average generated $1.93 of additional resources for every $1 of government program funding
• All agreed that program was worth the effort required to maintain it.
Impact of Research
- Policy and Practice

• Stephanie Alexander Foundation program improvements
• Prospective SAKG school principals – informed decision making
• SAKG Program distributed nationally
• SAKG and evaluation framework adopted by Jamie Oliver in UK
• SAKG evaluation framework adopted in NZ for Garden to Table program
Relevant papers


Lisa Gibbs
lgibbs@unimelb.edu.au

Jack Brockhoff Child Health & Wellbeing Program