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Health promoting schools - lessons from a national evaluation of a kitchen garden program

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Abstract

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schools, lessons, health, national, kitchen, promoting, program, evaluation, garden

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Heather Yeatman, K Quinsey, D Condon-Paoloni, J Dawber, Simon Eckermann, D Fildes, J Green, P Grootemaat, D Morris, and W Nielsen

11.15-11.30 Health Promoting Schools – lessons from a national evaluation of a kitchen garden program

Presenter: Heather Yeatman, University of Wollongong, NSW

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Background: The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden (SAKG) program aims to promote pleasurable food education in 178 Australian primary schools.

Aim: To evaluate the program components of the SAKGNP with a view to informing future health promotion in schools initiatives.

Methods: A cross section of Program schools (N=28). Semi-structured interviews (N=86) were undertaken with school based personnel and key stakeholders (N=29), together with focus group discussions with students (30 groups; N=229) and surveys of teachers (N=62) and volunteers (N=60).

Results / Discussion: The SAKGNP model incorporated many aspects of the Health Promoting School framework, including: a 'vision'; program champions; engaging the wider school community; involvement of specialist staff and volunteers; linkage with other school programs; and integration across the curriculum. Program enablers (e.g. clear implementation requirements) were barriers for others (e.g. 'too inflexible' or 'limited adaptability').

Key areas identified – recognition and integration of the program & specialist staff within the school; specialist skills to recruit and support volunteers; (building & health) project management skills; and articulation of the program within the Australian Preventive Health agenda.

Conclusion: Structured program-level evaluation can provide useful insights into health promotion in schools.