



Centre name: Cabramatta Early Learning Centre

Project name: Community Garden Project

Why: The community garden aims to provide space for those who would not have the opportunity to grow food at home as well as helping children and families to reconnect with nature. Enhance teaching and learning, increase social interaction and community involvement, increase garden knowledge, cultivate a deeper connection with the values of food and life cycles. To give children the opportunity to learn to respect, take care and appreciate the natural environment by immersing themselves in the garden.

How: 1. We will ask for the permission to use the land next to the centre's outdoor playground. If the request is denied, we will use the centre's outdoor space (near the worm farm or the compost bin) for the project.

2. We will send out surveys for families to allow them to contribute ideas about what to be planted in the garden, as well as gaining some ideas on interested participants. Families may be able to donate plants or seeds from their own garden to the centre project.

3. We will discuss and do some research on the materials we can use for the garden bed, whether it can be pallets, bricks, or other materials that are cost effectively, durable, and sustainable.

4. We will construct a community garden which will be available for families during/outside centre operating hours. We will use the community garden to foster relationships with educators, children, and families by allowing families to come in with their children (at their own times) to look after and harvest the food. This will create a strong connection between the centre, children, and families.

5. We will obtain further professional development in order to continue with the sustainable practice. This can be done through trainings, workshops, incursion/excursion. Educators will use the knowledge acquired from such professional development to deliver sustainable programs on an ongoing basis.

6. We will promote sustainability practices at the centre by teaching children about the environmental stewardship (responsible in taking care of the garden).

7. We will use the community garden to improve children's knowledge of fruits and vegetables and enhances their consumption of home-grown food plants (nutrition and healthy eating) (EYLF Outcome 3.2).

Outcome: We are still waiting for permission to use the land next door so have proceeded to create the garden within the centre.

We conducted a survey of parents – 100% of those surveyed said they were interested in having a community garden on the premises. Approximately 66.7% said they don't have a vegetable garden at home. Approximately 75% suggested we should grow vegetables and herbs, 25% suggested fruit growing. We found a growing space - sunny site away from the main play area. Next step was planning the actual garden which included working out the size and shape of the garden bed, materials for the construction, plants and soil, budget and fund raising. We went to the networking events and gathered ideas for our gardens and got support from our local garden centre. Children and families were involved in designing our



garden. We discussed our favourite fruit and vegetables and how the garden will look and feel when completed. The children's enthusiasm and drawings inspired others to help in the garden. Two garden beds were purchased, and plants and soil were donated by the local garden centre. Strawberries were grown in repurposed milk containers on the back of our music wall keeping them safe from snails and other predators

Children learnt to respect, take care and appreciate the natural environment by exploring and learning about the life cycles of fruit and vegetables. They also learnt to appreciate how food is grown, how long it takes, when it is ready to harvest and enjoyed the preparation and cooking the food they grew and sharing a meal together.

"learn to plant, put seed, and then wait....and the sun comes and it grows and watering it" - child

Families were encouraged to help by supporting their children to care for the plants.

"Families and children have responded very well to the whole project. Great seeing the children excited when the plants grow. The garden project has also encouraged me to build my own knowledge and skills with maintaining and teaching the children about the garden" – Educator

"My daughter's involvement in the garden has been very exciting. It has talking points for us every single day upon drop-off and pick -up. We are very thankful to the team who have above and beyond in providing this wonderful experience for the children and to teach them about nutrition" - Parent

