



Trent - Bringing a school garden back to life

What was your goal and what did you achieve?

I want to make the garden a better place because when I started there, the garden was desolate and I helped put pathways and some stuff in there, so instead of just having one path that goes to the chicken coop, there's a whole lot more that go through all the garden beds and it's a lot easier than stepping all over bark. It's being used a lot more now so I'm very happy about it.

The main aim was to just get the garden up and running before I leave next year to go to high school, so I just wanted it to keep going. I have a Garden Club which I started when I was in Year 6 because the teacher, whose class used to work in the garden, became the school counsellor and no-one was really looking after the garden. I got a bit disappointed about that because our groundskeeper left that year too, she was also our art teacher. So when I started it with Blake - he liked gardening as well - some kids came in and asked us what we were doing, and we said we're trying to get a couple of garden beds ready to plant some things in and water them and tilling the ground and everything, and they asked if they

could help. So originally we started off with seven, now we've got more than twenty so I'm very happy with that. I'm hoping they will keep going on without me and Blake.

We meet during lunch because our Principal doesn't give us time to do it by ourselves or anything like that, so in case we miss out on any important things we do it during lunch time. The club is self-organized by me and Blake.

He wants to be my financial advisor because the garden hadn't been used for so long and the school budget kept giving the school garden fund. They just kept giving it more money, I don't know how much exactly. Last time I saw it was a lot of money, so me and Blake write down a list and then we give that to the Principal. She goes out in her own time to Bunnings or to Vadoulis or wherever you buy seeds and seedlings, and buys them for us. Then we help the little kids plant them.

The produce is going on a Grow Free cart, well some of it is, some of it is staying to be cooked in our kitchen, our cart isn't ready yet. Hopefully next week we're getting a couple of tables set up

and we're going to bring some baskets there. The motto is 'Take what you want. Give what you can' and it's fresh fruit, vegetables - we have a list of what you can't donate - jams, meats, you can't sell anything. We're trying to convince our Principal to have the cart at school, she's a hard nut to crack. If she doesn't want to be cracked then we'll ask the local fodder store which is up on the main road if they would like to have it up there.

How have you promoted the garden?

I'm pretty sure everybody in the school knows about the garden because most of the teachers come up and ask what we're doing and how the garden's going. I've used word of mouth with the Garden Club but because some of them left to go do other things and some kids early on didn't know about it, and I wasn't really putting my lunchtime into effort, the Principal suggested to me that I make a poster. So I made a rough copy, she had a look at it and gave me some more suggestions, so I changed it up and then I made about 12 or 13 copies and posted them around the school and I had about seven kids come up to me that lunch and ask if they could join, so I was very happy about that.

Next steps?

I want to leave it in the hands of the Garden Club members. At the moment there's a girl in Year 3, her name's Charlie, she's really passionate about it, she kind of takes over from me. She's very happy, she likes playing with the garden and everything, she's very happy putting in plants and getting rid of weeds. She's good at sharing the load but not with me, I think she believes little kids are better than big ones.

Biggest success?

The Garden Club growing so it's that big now, and with so many plants we've got growing, there's a huge variety. We've got really good soil thanks to our chickens - the Principal gave the reception to Year 3s little tubs to put their compost in. They

come to me just before lunch and we put them into the compost, or if people are eating apple cores or something instead of putting them in the bin, they would go and put them in the compost bin. In fact it's so over full with food scraps that we can't keep up with its demand, it's overflowing.

I have been teaching Charlie to step up and become the 'Mayor' of the garden so she will keep going on during lunches. Students can come in and come out whenever they want. I've been very happy in the way that these little boys - they would often come in and pull everything out - but now because I've let them put some plants in, they've actually stopped that. They come in and help me water them, look after them and put some fertilizer on them, so I'm very happy with that.

What did you enjoy most?

I've enjoyed putting the plants in, and the old garden teacher came back for a short time as our Science teacher and he helped me with some planting. He also got the Science project with the little kids going, and so some of them came and joined the Garden Club too. Some little kids would come in and say 'ooh, we planted these, look at how big it's grown now' and I'm very happy about that, it's probably my favourite part of the project.

Your advice to other students?

Because we have an OSHC there, we don't have to keep going up there every day to keep watering the plants. Let any kid who wants to come in, come in and help. I would tell them any job is valuable in any sort of way, so if its watering the garden or catching caterpillars out of the leaves it wouldn't matter, it's still very valuable.

This case study was transcribed from an interview. These are Trent's words and opinions.

