

# EAT YOUR WORDS

An investigation into food literacy as a  
means of stimulating an appetite for  
learning and engagement

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The research project was undertaken to investigate whether a broader understanding of food - food literacy – helps to foster not only an increased interest in what is grown, cooked and eaten, but stimulates a wider interest and engagement in life.

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Food and identity:

‘Knowing food isn’t solely the means to a meal, it provides a fundamental means for making sense of our place in the world’

(Vileisis, 2008, p.52)

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Key definition of food literacy:

‘The ability to understand where food comes from and how it is produced, appreciate the cultural significance of food, make healthy decisions and recognize the implications – social, environmental, political, cultural and economic of the food we eat.’

(Yamashita, 2008, p.5)

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John Dewey (1859-1952)

Theories relevant for engagement and learning  
and supportive of food education

‘The earth is the final source of all man’s food’

(Dewey, 1900, p.19)

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SITE DETAILS	Kitchen garden	Healthy food ethos	Cooking program	Cafe or shop on site selling resultant produce	Interviewees role
Primary 1 (P1)	yes	yes	yes	yes	Principal (P) and Canteen manager (N)
Primary 2 (p2)	yes	no	limited	no	Garden co-ordinator (D)
TAFE 1 (T1)	no	no	yes	yes	Program Manager (S) Literacy Teacher (L) Literacy Teacher (J) Personal Development Teacher (B)
TAFE 2 (T2)	yes	yes	yes	yes	Senior Educator- Youth Programs (C)
Youth program Affiliated with TAFE 3 (T3)	yes	yes	yes	yes	Youth Worker (K)

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Research questions, semi-structured interviews

- What are the facilities and your role at site?
- What are the food related programs at site?
- In your view what is the impact of food related programs on student engagement?

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Major themes to emerge.....

- Sense of connectedness
- Relevance of applied learning
- **Transformation in students**



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*They go home and they present meals to their mothers. They cook for their families, they have friends over, they want to cook. It's like within it all if you're not the next head chef that's fine with me, but you're going home and now you're cooking better things for yourself. You're making better choices and you're also educating the people in your family about it.*

*K, Youth worker, T3.*

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The preliminary analysis, findings and discussion of the resultant material tends to suggest that a better understanding of food does have the capacity to engage students in a meaningful and relevant way to the world they live in.

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