

Rollingstone State School observes a Veggie Victory!



Transforming Students Eating Habits

[Pick of the Crop](#) has boosted students' willingness to try and enjoy veggie packed meals at Rollingstone State School.

In late 2023, they became the first Townsville state school to join Pick of the Crop. With a vision to enhance student knowledge and understanding of healthy food choices through hands-on learning, the small school has seen a notable increase in enthusiasm for gardening and cooking.

Rolling Vision into Reality

Rollingstone State School could not wait to join Pick of the Crop to support their educational, nutritional, and community engagement goals.

The schools' educational objective is to integrate gardening, plant production, and cooking into the curriculum. They want to educate students about fresh produce and equip them with knowledge and skills to appreciate the importance of veggies and fruit. Additionally, they strive to foster community engagement by involving parents, local farmers, and other community members in continuing to sustain and build upon their Pick of the Crop goals now and into the future.

Innovating Sustainable School Gardens

A priority in 2023, the school established a hydroponics system to trial crop cultivation and engage students in designing the system as part of their Maths and Design and Technology units. Students measured, printed, designed and assembled two different hydroponics systems for monitoring and comparing growth.

Through persistence and enthusiasm, the students created a traditional vegetable garden that consisted of two shade houses and an open garden bed plot.

The school received seedlings from a local grower, which saw crop diversity flourish ensuring students got the opportunity to try novel produce that families would not normally find at local grocers or supermarkets.

How Rollingstone State School has integrated Pick of the Crop into the Curriculum

Maths – Measuring plant and root growth and graphing; measuring quantities and working ratios for hydroponics and veggie gardens. Recipe budgeting; weighing and measuring ingredients for cooking.

Design & Technology - 3D printing design to build garden and hydroponic designs.

Health – Healthy eating recipes; food hygiene and safety.

Plant to Plate - Play and Cooking

The students quickly began to reap the benefits! The hydroponics systems produced fast-growing crops, much to their delight – successfully producing various tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, kale, beans, silverbeet, basil, mint, squash, zucchini, eggplant, beetroot, Bok choy, spring onion and koli rabi.



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In response to the amount of produce, weekly cooking classes across P-6 were established, with students also cooking for special events, like Harmony Day.

Most excitingly, students utilised the harvested produce to prepare nutritious meals, working together to write recipes to use the produce. They have created many diverse 'plant to plate' recipes, including:

- Bean and beef stir fry
- Dumplings
- Wraps and sandwiches
- Fried rice
- Lettuce and marinated pork wraps
- Caesar salad
- Silverbeet pesto pasta, and
- Healthy burgers.



Roll on Healthy Habits for students

A great example of the impact of the actions happening in Rollingstone State School is highlighted by one student who started cooking classes and would regularly refuse to try new foods especially when it came to veggies. Being among peers and getting immersed in gardening, picking and cooking produce, the student became curious.

After cooking regularly for a couple of weeks, the student was preparing fried rice which provided a sensory experience using touch, sight, hearing and smell. The fried rice smelt pleasant and stimulated the student to think "if it smells nice, it might taste nice". So they decided to taste it, and to everyone's surprise, they loved it!

At home, the student asked their parents to make fried rice for dinner, and now they continue to show curiosity by exploring different cuisines. Their proud parents have expressed immense gratitude to the school champion for helping their child discover a love for nutritious food. As a family they can now enjoy visiting a wide variety of restaurants that they were not able to do so in the past. What an outcome!

Veggie Victory for this school

in 2024, it has been phenomenal to witness Rollingstone State Schools students' willingness to design, build, produce, harvest, prepare, cook, and eat recipes packed with fresh school garden produce.

Schools, like this one, play an integral role in supporting students to develop healthy dietary habits for life, impacting the entire school community.

Pick of the Crop is truly enabling schools across North Queensland to love their veggies and fruits!

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