



### Isabella Plains Early Childhood School

## Getting hands-on in the school kitchen

**Isabella Plains Early Childhood School takes pride in the wellbeing of the school community. That is why they were one of the first schools to sign up to Fresh Tastes, a free ACT Government service designed to assist schools to embed a culture that embraces healthy food and drink.**

While the school has focused on a number of action areas since late in 2013, one area that has been well supported by the school community and the principal is cooking food at school.

“Our principal has given us a classroom that has been turned into a kitchen,” said Louise McCormick, the school’s Fresh Tastes coordinator. “Now that we have a completely dedicated space that is well stocked, the teachers have said they are more likely to use it with the children.”

“With the help of Fresh Tastes and a special school budget to support the purchase of ingredients, we have the school pantry stocked and we also have two full cooking kits – one in the kitchen and one in the preschool area.”

“We had the Kids Pantry team come in and conduct cooking sessions with three groups in 2014,” said Louise. “They taught the children how to cut properly with a knife and the students made some healthy bircher muesli. They really helped to make it a fun experience.”

“We made sure that each section of the school had a teacher representative at the cooking classes so they could take away the skills and use them in their own classroom.”

**Teaching children the basics of cooking is an essential life skill and teachers have found that children are more likely to try the food that they have helped prepare.**

“After a cooking session, we post the recipe on our Facebook page and in our newsletter,” said Louise. “The children go home and tell their parents about the healthy food they cooked at school.”

The early childhood school, which offers a community hub of services for families with children from birth to age eight, also has three irrigated vegetable garden beds, two ducks and 11 chickens.

“The educators are using the gardens and eggs in cooking healthy recipes,” said Louise.

It goes to show that cooking classes can become a key part of the school curriculum at any age.

*Fresh Tastes is open to all primary schools across Canberra. Contact the Fresh Tastes team for information about how your school can get involved.*

