

Nourishing young minds

By Jemma Jones

Toast, cereal, fruit, vegetables and sometimes an egg and bacon roll await students if they rock up to Tongala Primary School early enough.

This initiative is part of the school's Breakfast Club, offering a free breakfast to students every Tuesday to Thursday, ensuring no child starts their school day on an empty stomach.

Education support officer Brett Radley said the program not only evened the playing field for disadvantaged families who may not be able to provide breakfast for their children, but it also created a fun and safe environment for students to meet before school.

"It just has a great vibe, and it can switch a child's mindset from one thinking about what trouble may be at home to something that's nice," Mr Radley said.

Tongala Primary is just one of over a thousand schools across the country that make use of this program run by Food Bank Australia and state governments.

The original iteration of the group began in 2018 with Mr Radley, a few loaves of bread and a bit of Vegemite.

These days, eager students



With the help of education support officer Brett Radley, the club has grown exponentially over the past few years. The club now serves upwards of 50 students on the days it is open.

Photo: Jemma Jones

have put their hands up to become the chefs.

The club's customer base has grown since it began in 2018 to now serve between 50 and 60 students per day.

The number of students wanting to get in the kitchen and give cooking and serving a go has grown as well.

Each morning, a different group of students takes

charge, learning valuable skills such as toasting bread, flipping pancakes and even mastering the art of a delicious chocolate banana milkshake.

"We've got students who need support, and then we've got the leaders who are doing that community service at school, and they're learning real-world

life skills," Mr Radley said.

The school recently received a \$500 donation from the Australian Dairy Farmers Corporation towards the breakfast program, which will be enough to run the program for six months.

The generous donation has enabled an expansion of the menu to include treats such as egg and bacon rolls, breakfast wraps, doughnuts and cupcakes — offered as rewards for good behaviour.

The extra menu is open for three students from every class who exemplify the 'three Rs': respect, responsibility and resilience.

"For the students claiming the rewards, they're getting recognised for their work ... and for the students preparing, they get to learn a new skill and unlock a new recipe," Mr Radley said.

He said the program was yet to finish evolving, and he was hoping the teachers could benefit next.

"We're thinking if the kids want to learn how to make coffee, we could teach them how to be baristas to make coffees for the adults," Mr Radley said.

For now, though, Mr Radley takes satisfaction in knowing that students can focus on learning, their minds sharp and bellies full.



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The Centre – Twin Rivers Schools Echuca
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FREE ENTRY – Please register your attendance via the QR code or visiting: <https://www.trybooking.com/DCEMC>

Enquiries:
Leading Senior Constable Shane Roberts,
shane.m.roberts@police.vic.gov.au
Echuca Police Station: (03) 5483 1500

If an Attendance Certificate is required, please register at the CoolHeads Desk prior to taking your seat.

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