

Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department of Food and Nutrition Farm to School Program How to Coordinate Farmers' Markets and CSAs at Schools

CSA: CSA stands for “**community-supported agriculture**” whereby growers offer “shares” of their farm to community members. A seasonal subscription, paid in full at the beginning of harvest season, provides the subscriber a weekly or biweekly box of local, in-season, fresh produce and possibly flowers, eggs, meats, and other locally-produced items. This system benefits farmers and consumers by guaranteeing the farmers regular customers with minimal marketing cost while providing customers low-cost alternatives to high-quality, organic items.

Did you know?

Your food may have traveled over 1,500 miles to arrive on your plate!

The United States Department of Agriculture defines “**farmers’ markets**” as A common facility or area where several farmers or growers gather on a regular, recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and other locally-grown farm products directly to consumers.

MDCPS defines “**Local Food**” as food grown within the state of Florida, however “locavores” define it as food consumed within 100 miles of where it is grown and produced.



Students sample fruits at a Nautilus MS farmers' market



G.R.O.W. and Seriously Organic at TERRA Green Fest

CSAs, farmers' markets and school gardens are all great ways to help the environment by reducing “food miles” while also providing children and families fresh, local, affordable, and high-quality produce.

Schools and Parent-Teacher Associations can help support Farm-to-School programs by offering farmers' markets and CSAs at schools links to raise funds and awareness of healthy, sustainable eating habits.



Healthy Fundraisers: How to Make Your School a CSA Drop-Off Location

1. Gain approval from school administration to offer a CSA at the school.
2. Recruit volunteers and interested parents from the PTA and local community groups (churches, afterschool program, community centers, etc.)
3. Choose a local farm that offers a CSA:
 - Identify local CSA options (see attached list).
 - Contact each CSA to determine their capacity and identify their local, seasonal offerings.
 - Gather parents' and students' preferences about food offerings and prices
 - Determine which CSA is the best fit for your school
4. Distribute a sign-up list to parents to determine how many "shares" will be required.
5. Recruit parent volunteers who will distribute/sell the CSA shares at the school
6. Hold a meeting or phone call with the farm that coordinates the identified CSA:
 - Research the CSA application deadline application, drop off schedule, and prices
 - Ask farm if your school can become a drop off point
 - Inform farm of your desired number of shares
 - If you are using the CSA as a fundraiser, determine a share price with the Farm that would allow the school to meet fundraising goals while covering the Farm's costs and profit margins.
7. Create a flyer and distribute to parents and community partners/groups to inform them of the CSA options and drop off location. Include application forms for interested parents/ community members to complete and return by a given deadline if they would like to subscribe. The flyer should include: a definition of a CSA, benefits of using a CSA, how profits will be used by the school, where/when/how people can sign up
8. Notify the farm of the number and size of shares the school requires.
9. Notify the subscribers of where, when, and how the CSA shares will be distributed at the school.
10. Collect payment from subscribers and pay farm for desired number of shares.
11. Hold a pick-up for CSA share subscribers on a regular time and day each week. Ensure that you use a covered, shady area so produce can stay cold. If possible, keep produce in coolers or refrigerators until; subscribers pick up items. Encourage subscribers to bring their own re-usable bags and boxes to carry produce.

Creative Ideas:

- If your school does not have the human resource capacity to coordinate multiple shares of a CSA, order a large share from the farm and sell the produce at a weekly market using volunteers and students. Ensure a regular delivery from farm and determine appropriate prices that meet farm and school costs while still raising funds.
- Invite the farmers to give a presentation to your school administration or PTA on CSAs and locally-grown produce.
- Invite farmers or local organizations to present to students on local food, sustainable farming, community-driven food systems, and healthy eating.

How to Turn Your CSA into a Market

1. Gain approval from school administration and PTA
2. Locate a shady, covered, outdoor area on school grounds where market could be held. Ideally, this site should be visible from the street. Provide tables and chairs.
3. Ask your CSA contacts if they would be available to sell at a market.
4. If local growers are not available to sell at the market, try one of these creative solutions:
 - Recruit student and/or PTA volunteers to sell harvest from school garden and/or from CSA shares.
 - Utilize groups and “foragers” that represent growers and local farms. (See list for details).
 - Advertise and promote the market heavily to ensure a good turnout
5. Create a market schedule that coincides with South Florida harvest seasons, the school’s calendar, local grower availability, and parent/staff availability. The schedule should be regular and consistent (e.g. every Friday from 2-6).
6. Offer additional activities at markets, such as food demonstrations and health screenings to attract a larger crowd and build local capacity to prepare the locally-grown items, which may be new and unfamiliar to some parents and students. Link the market with any Farm to School offerings at the school to provide students an opportunity to try new, local items.
7. Promote your market widely: make announcements at school, hold PTA meetings, publicize the market through local media (newspapers, local TV news stations, and radio), advertise market on school signs/announcement boards, send home small flyers for parents with students, utilize Twitter, Facebook, the school web site, and other social media (ask students for help!), offer students extra credit if they bring parents to the market.



“Organic” is defined by the USDA as food produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water. Organic meat, poultry, egg, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones and who are fed exclusively on certified organic feed and pasture. Organic food is produced without using synthetic pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering (GMO), or ionizing radiation. (www.ams.usda.gov/nop/Consumers/brochure.html)

An example of a CSA share box full of seasonal, locally-grown produce.

