

Mr. Roberto J. Alonso, Board Member

**SUBJECT: EXPLORING A POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP TO BRING LOCAL FRESH FRUITS AND PRODUCE TO OUR SCHOOL CAFETERIAS**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS**

To enhance student health, nutrition, and support for local agriculture, this board item aims to expand the availability of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables in school cafeterias. This initiative underscores the district's dedication to offering high-quality, nutritious meals while promoting sustainability and bolstering the local economy.

Eating locally grown produce offers numerous benefits, including improved nutritional value due to reduced transportation time, better freshness, and enhanced flavor. Since locally sourced produce spends less time in transit, it retains more nutrients and is less susceptible to contamination. Additionally, allowing fruits and vegetables to ripen naturally contributes to better taste and higher nutrient content, supporting healthier meal options for students.

To achieve these goals, this board item seeks to expand partnerships with local farms, agricultural organizations, and food producers. These collaborations aim to increase the availability of fresh, locally grown produce in school cafeterias while also supporting local farmers and contributing to economic growth in the community.

A key component of this initiative is the development of a comprehensive list of regionally available fruits and vegetables. The district will assess these items based on their nutritional benefits, seasonal availability, and suitability for school meal programs. This evaluation will help prioritize the inclusion of locally sourced produce in school menus throughout the year.

The district currently operates a test kitchen that allows for the development and refinement of recipes and meal options. This board item seeks to incorporate an expanded selection of locally grown fruits and vegetables into the test kitchen to allow students to provide feedback on new menu offerings. This process will ensure that meals featuring locally sourced ingredients meet both nutritional standards and student preferences before implementation in school cafeterias.

Beyond enhancing meal options, this initiative will also explore procurement models and strategies to streamline the purchasing process for fresh, locally grown produce. This will include reviewing current procurement practices, identifying potential local suppliers, and ensuring that purchasing methods align with the district's goals for cost-efficiency, sustainability, and quality.

Additionally, this board item seeks to expand agricultural education opportunities for students by fostering connections between M-DCPS schools and local farms. The district will explore opportunities for students to visit local farms, learn about agricultural practices, and gain a deeper understanding of how food is grown and sourced. Further, the district will assess the feasibility of creating internship and apprenticeship programs in partnership with local farmers and agricultural organizations, providing students with hands-on learning experiences that can lead to career pathways in agriculture, food science, and sustainability.

To maximize the impact of this initiative, the district will also consider launching an educational campaign aimed at informing students, staff, and families about the benefits of consuming locally grown produce. This effort will encourage greater participation in the expanded menu offerings while fostering awareness of the positive effects on health, local agriculture, and the community.

By pursuing a strategy to increase the use of fresh, locally grown produce in school cafeterias, this board item seeks to improve student health, support local agriculture, and promote sustainability. This initiative has the potential to enhance the district's food service program while aligning with broader educational objectives related to nutrition, community engagement, and economic development.

This board item requests that the Superintendent of Schools, in collaboration with the Miami-Dade Farm Bureau, explore the feasibility of a partnership designed to increase the availability of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables in M-DCPS cafeterias. The proposed collaboration would involve local farms, food suppliers, and community stakeholders. Additionally, the district will evaluate the integration of locally grown produce into the existing test kitchen to develop and pilot new menu items, while also exploring procurement strategies to facilitate the efficient sourcing of high-quality, locally grown food for students. Finally, the Superintendent will assess the viability of student farm visits, agricultural education initiatives, and internship or apprenticeship programs to further engage students in learning about food production and sustainability.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
MR. ROBERTO J. ALONSO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, request that the Superintendent of Schools to:

1. Explore district partnerships with the Miami-Dade Farm Bureau and local farms, agricultural organizations, and food producers to increase access to fresh, regionally grown produce;
2. Develop a comprehensive list of locally grown fruits and produce to be evaluated for nutritional value, seasonality, and suitability for school meal offerings;
3. Evaluate the feasibility of integrating a test kitchen for students to test new menu items and develop a marketing plan to educate students, staff, and families about the benefits of consuming locally grown produce;
4. Explore potential procurement models and strategies to facilitate the purchasing of fresh, locally grown produce. This includes reviewing current procurement processes, identifying local suppliers, and ensuring that the purchasing practices align with district goals for cost-efficiency, sustainability, and quality; and
5. Report back to the Board, with a comprehensive report detailing district partnerships with local farmers and locally grown food list, test kitchen integration, and procurement exploration of purchasing locally grown products for our schools at the June 11, 2025, Personnel, Student, School & Community Support Committee Meeting.