

Ms. Luisa Santos, Board Member

SUBJECT: FOOD FOR THE FUTURE FRAMEWORK UPDATE

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

**PLAN: SAFE, HEALTHY, & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS
RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, & INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS
EFFECTIVE & SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONAL PRACTICES**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) remains committed to the physical, emotional, and mental health of its students and employees. Supporting a student body of 320,000 pupils and a workforce of 33,000 employees, the District ensures the welfare of a vast community across its daily operations.¹

A keyway M-DCPS supports the health, academic success, and overall well-being of its students is through nutritious school meals. Between breakfast, lunch, and after-school meals, the District serves over 225,000 daily meals across 358 serving sites.² The U.S. Department of Agriculture directs the nutritional standards that compose school meals, such as the inclusion of a fruit or vegetable, whole grain-rich foods, and a meat/meat alternative.³ Complimenting national nutrition guidelines, M-DCPS' Department of Food and Nutrition is committed to decreasing reliance on ultra-processed foods by prioritizing whole ingredients, scratch cooking, healthier fats, and reduced sugars. It has already reduced additives and highly processed ingredients to an extent that exceeds federal and state guidelines.⁴

M-DCPS has also demonstrated stewardship in sustainable cafeteria initiatives that minimize food waste and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. During the 2025-2026 school year, M-DCPS piloted composting programs in 7 schools and diverted 20,587 pounds (10.3 tons) of waste from landfills.⁵ Additionally, 114 schools established Share Tables, which help address food insecurity while also promoting reduced food waste in cafeterias.⁶

¹ Dotres, Dr. J. L., Diaz, L., & Riaz, Dr. O. (2026, May). Statistical Highlights 2025-2026. Miami; Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

<https://api.dadeschools.net/https://api.dadeschools.net/WMSFiles/171/MDCPS%20Highlights/SH2526.pdfWMSFiles/171/MDCPS%20Highlights/SH2526.pdf>

² Department of Food and Nutrition (2025, October 29). Reimagining school meals: Food for the future policy framework [Miami-Dade County School Board Workshop Presentation]. M-DCPS - Eduvision. <https://m-dcps.eduvision.tv/default.aspx?q=X3Y5NcZVhADz%252fuyrAU4X53fJBhsJkHGh7orwU%252f0YSfxT83%252flahepdynE2tfJF5l>

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2024, July 1). National School Lunch Program Meal Pattern. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/nslp-meal-pattern-2024.pdf>

⁴ Department of Food and Nutrition (2025, October 29). Reimagining school meals: Food for the future policy framework [Miami-Dade County School Board Workshop Presentation]. M-DCPS - Eduvision. <https://m-dcps.eduvision.tv/default.aspx?q=X3Y5NcZVhADz%252fuyrAU4X53fJBhsJkHGh7orwU%252f0YSfxT83%252flahepdynE2tfJF5l>

⁵ Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Office of Resource Efficiency and Optimization. (2026, May 19). *Zero Waste Town Hall* [Town hall presentation]. Country Club Middle School, Miami, FL, United States.

⁶ Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Office of Resource Efficiency and Optimization. (2026, May 19). *Zero Waste Town Hall* [Town hall presentation]. Country Club Middle School, Miami, FL, United States.

At the School Board Meeting of July 23rd, 2025, the School Board unanimously approved School Board Agenda Item H-9, the Food for the Future Policy Framework. As outlined in Item H-9, the “Food for the Future Policy Framework” has four pillars as outlined below:

1. **Improve Student Health Through Balanced Nutrition:** Students and employees must have access to water dispensers in our cafeterias and menus that feature reduced sugar, whole carbs, healthy fats, and minimal processing.
2. **Support Local and Sustainable Food Sources:** Students and employees must have access to fresh and local foods, and cafeterias that minimize waste.
3. **Foster Student Engagement and Nutrition Literacy:** Students and employees must be continuously involved in menu development and feedback mechanisms and engaged in nutrition education.
4. **Accountability:** M-DCPS must continuously review and regularly report qualitative and quantitative metrics to assess the success of our initiatives.

These efforts align with, and are in some cases the result of, the directives set forth by our School Board, including but not limited to: annual Agenda Item, School Board Endorsement of School Lunch Hero Day in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), as proffered by Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, effective April 22, 2026, April 16, 2025, April 17, 2024, and April 19, 2023; Agenda Item H-11, Waste-Cost Realignment and Efficiency Review, as proffered by Ms. Luisa Santos, effective December 17, 2025; Agenda Item H-5, Support for Students and Families During Government Shutdown, as proffered by Dr. Steve Gallon II, effective November 19, 2025; Agenda Item H-6, Exploring a Potential Partnership to Bring Local and Fresh Fruits and Produce to Our School Cafeterias, as proffered by Mr. Roberto J. Alonso, effective April 16, 2025; Agenda Item H-8, as proffered by Mr. Joseph S. Geller, Explore the Feasibility of Establishing a Partnership with Miami-Dade County for the Development and Implementation of an Early Childhood Recycling and Waste Reduction Curriculum, effective March 19, 2025; Agenda Item H-7, Proposal to Establish a Task Force to Evaluate the District’s Food Program, Federal Child Nutrition Guidelines, and Food Safety Standards, as proffered by Mr. Roberto J. Alonso, effective November 13, 2024; Agenda Item H-9, Food Waste in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), as proffered by Ms. Luisa Santos, effective October 11, 2023; Agenda Item H-9, as proffered by Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Environmental Sustainability in all M-DCPS Schools, effective December 15, 2022; and Agenda Item H-3, Elimination of Food Waste and the Exploration of Food Sharing Programs, as proffered by Dr. Steve Gallon III, effective April 17, 2019.

This item seeks the Board’s approval to direct the Superintendent to provide an update on initiatives and progress aligned to the “Food for the Future Framework” since the Board’s approval of a comprehensive review of District practices aligned with said Framework at its July 23, 2025, meeting.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. LUISA SANTOS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to:

1. Provide an update on initiatives and progress aligned to the “Food for the Future Framework,” including but not limited to:
 - a. The implementation of long-term nutrition goals that reduce reliance on ultra-processed foods and prioritize whole ingredients, scratch cooking, healthy

- fats, and reduced sugar to support student health, well-being, and academic success;
- b. The progress of composting, share table implementation, and food donation programs across the District, including the number of participating schools, total waste diverted, existing and potential partnerships, and, if deemed feasible, proposed timeline for District-wide adoption;
 - c. Students' feedback regarding menu items and food quality, including the Student Nutrition Ambassador Committee and any additional feedback mechanisms;
 - d. Existing and newly established initiatives to source locally-grown produce, including the measurable impact of these partnerships;
 - e. The feasibility of reducing or phasing out single-use plastics in cafeteria operations districtwide, with immediate focus on individually wrapped food items, utensil packaging, and related plastic waste;
 - f. External certifications or designations the Department of Food and Nutrition is pursuing or has received;
 - g. The status and timeline for the deployment of an online dashboard to track, compare, and publicly report student health metrics against state and national benchmarks, aggregated qualitative and quantitative student feedback, nutritional composition of served meals, and key sustainability indicators;
 - h. Facility, equipment, staffing, and operational resources necessary to support implementation of the above initiatives, including any anticipated capital, human resources, and operational investments; and
2. Provide this update to the board during a Committee Meeting no later than October 2026.