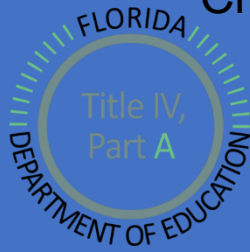


Florida School Food Access Toolkit

A Guide for K-12 Schools



Created in partnership with:



School Food Recovery

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Introduction

The intention of the School Food Access Toolkit is to share best practices learned from successful schools throughout the country. Whether it be the addition of a share table or a school food market, there are several innovative strategies to ensure students have increased opportunities to access healthy food, also known as food security.

Food security for children has always been a priority of schools. As Covid-19 continues to cause closures, unemployment and poverty to rise, food security has become more challenging for families across the country. According to Feeding America's brief "*The Impact of Coronavirus on Child Food Security*", the nationwide numbers of children experiencing food insecurity has increased from 11 million children in 2018 to approximately 18 million today. The high demand for food assistance is expected to remain at elevated levels for the foreseeable future. Schools, being the hub of the community are a vital part of the solution. We have the power to alleviate stigma, increase food access and awareness by continuing to expand the work we do to provide children with wholesome meals.

As you read through the toolkit, please know it is not a coincidence it has landed in your hands. While nothing worthwhile is ever "easy", rest assured you will find others who share your mission and passion to help lighten the load on this important journey. Students face so many challenges in education today. However, when they have their basic needs met, they come to class happier, healthier and equipped to learn, grow and blossom. Together we can do our part to create a community where no one goes hungry!



**One in Five
or 819,370 children
struggle with hunger
in Florida**

Data from Feeding Florida



**Florida's National Ranking
for Child Hunger**

Children's Defense Council State of Child
Hunger 2020

Ensuring Food Access can...

- Increase academic achievement and positive behavior
- Supports students physical and mental development
- Generally improve physical and mental health as children with proper nutrition are sick less often leading to fewer hospital visits
- Recent studies have demonstrated that nutrition affects students' thinking skills, behavior, and health, all factors that impact academic performance can also have long-term issues because hunger impairs physical and intellectual development.

Helpful Definitions

Food Insecurity - Lack of *consistent* access to nutritious food. Layoffs at work, unexpected car maintenance or an accident on the job can suddenly force a family to choose between buying food and paying bills. Working families across America face countless situations that can result in food insecurity and hunger.

Food Waste- Food waste or food loss is food that is discarded or goes uneaten. According to the Natural Resource Defense Council, NRDC, 40% of all food in America is wasted. School food waste mirrors these statistics.

Benefits of saving food:

- In Florida, up to 3 million tons of annual food waste could feed the 1 in 8 Floridians that lack consistent access to nutritious food.
- A family of four can save on average \$125 per month.
- Protect Florida's critical natural resources of land, water and energy, used to create otherwise good food that is wasted.

Food Recovery- Also commonly termed food share, food rescue or food salvage. Food recovery is the practice of gleaning or collecting wholesome food that would otherwise go to waste then redistributing it for the benefit of Americans in need of food and are otherwise unable to provide food for themselves.

Hunger- Defined as a feeling of discomfort or weakness caused by lack of food, coupled with the desire to eat. Chronic hunger prevents people from gaining enough calories and essential nutrients.

Food Share Table- A food share table is a place where students place unwanted, uneaten food items in the school cafeteria. Other students can then select these food and beverage items from off the table during a mealtime.

School Food Market/ Pantry - School Markets are essentially food pantries located on school campuses. Middle and high school models differ from a traditional food pantry in that they can focus on empowering teens with resources for themselves and their families.

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act of 1996 - Legislation which extends protections against civil and criminal liability to persons or organizations that make food donations except in cases of gross negligence.

Food Waste Reduction Education



Food waste is a global issue, rapidly gaining attention and action from governmental, nonprofit, and private interest organizations. [Winning on Reducing Food Waste](#) is a federal interagency commitment to a national goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. Currently, in the U.S.:

- An estimated 40% of food grown, processed, and transported will never be eaten.
- Food in the landfill creates methane gas – a potent greenhouse gas with 30 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide.
- A recent student plate waste study conducted by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) revealed student food waste during lunch to be on average, per student, per year, 39.2 pounds of food, and 28.7 cartons of milk. These numbers do not reflect any waste during breakfast.
- Meanwhile, 1 in 5 children in the state of Florida live in a household that struggles to put food on the table.¹
- In 2019, Florida schools served 145,641,625 breakfast meals and 291,090,254 lunches. .

Quick and Easy Solutions



Quick and easy fixes to increase student access to nutrition and decrease food waste USDA *What You Can Do to Prevent Wasted Food*:

1. **Schedule recess before lunch.** It can reduce plate waste by as much as **30 percent**.
2. **Offer lunch later.** Research shows that there is less food waste when lunch periods start at 12:00 pm or later than when lunch starts before 11:30 am.
3. **Give kids time to eat.** Twenty-one percent of students report not having enough time to eat at least sometimes. Observe meal periods to see if lines are too long or the time provided for eating is too short. Extending lunch from 20-30 minutes reduced plate waste by 1/3.
4. **Donate safe food.** Partner with your school food and nutrition services department, health department and local non-profit hunger relief organizations to donate safe and wholesome food.

As you can see, a variety of factors play a role in student food waste. An additional consideration is [Offer vs. Serve](#), as students go through the lunch line; they are required to take a minimum of three food items. This is reasonable as it provides enough calories to constitute a meal. Often students take food, and then for many reasons decide not to eat it. Without an option of a share table, schools are unintentionally teaching children to treat food as trash.

About the Program - Share Tables

In recent years share tables have increased in popularity as an effective way to both reduce food waste and offer children additional opportunities to access food. For a long time, schools did not believe they were “allowed” to have share tables. However, thanks to the promotion of the lesser known Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act 1996 (limits liability) and USDA memo (encourages the use of share tables), schools throughout the country are implementing share table initiatives as a solution.

Effective Share Table Programs:

- Empower youth to reduce greenhouse gases and feed the hungry
- Educate students about food waste through measuring their own impact
- Encourage actions to prevent wasted food
- Raise awareness about food insecurity in their community
- Repurpose food within the school or to local hunger relief organizations
- Minimize the cost to schools of wasted food and the associated environmental impacts

Step 1: Food Waste Audit

As the saying goes, “what gets measured get managed”. The World Wildlife Fund’s (WWF) experience in reducing food waste across other food service sectors has shown separating and measuring waste is one of the best ways to initiate waste reduction. The Food Waste Audit allows students to take the lead and gain insights from the data which is a first step in changing behavior. There are two primary options for a food waste audit. An informal, one-day audit will serve to gather data on the potential amount of food that can be recovered. Students set out a cart next to the cafeteria garbage can and ask students to place all unopened and unpeeled food items they planned to discard. The results are tallied, then entered into foodrescue.net (a free and easy to use resource) to learn the environmental impact and meals saved. The WWF Food Waste Audit(see Appendix) is a more in-depth audit which is great for classes or clubs.



Share Tables

Step 2: Create Your Steering Team

Meet with school administration, cafeteria managers, volunteers, students and those interested in starting the program to discuss the results of the Food Waste Audit, review the checklist for implementing a successful Share Table Program, logistics and planning. Share table programs must have approval from the Local Health Department. Please contact Florida Food Recovery Specialist, Melanie Mason for assistance. Melanie.mason@fdacs.gov



Step 3: Communicate and Launch

Once you've put everything in place, it's time to communicate the program details to students, parents, faculty and staff. Conduct a student assembly, review procedures with students on morning announcements, send emails and letters home to parents. See Appendix for templates.



Important points to communicate...

- Share Tables are not a food donation program, rather a food waste reduction activity.
- Share tables are designated stations where children may return whole and/or unopened food or beverage items they choose not to eat.
- These items are then made available to other children who may want or need another serving during or after the meal service.
- The USDA expressly allows children to take additional items from the share table, at no cost, to consume immediately or later in another location.

What Can and Cannot be Shared

THE SHARING TABLE

Any student may place unwanted **food or drink from their cafeteria** meals on the table.
Any student may take a helping of food or drink from the table **at no cost**.

Food you can share BEFORE YOU SIT:

- **Packaged Cold Food**
Milk | Boiled eggs | Melon cups | Cheeses
- **Wrapped Foods**
Breads/Bagels | Fruits and vegetables with edible peels (apples, peaches, grapes)



Food you can share ANYTIME:

- **Packaged Food**
Raisins | Vegetable packs | Cereal boxes | Crackers | Uncrustables™
- **Whole fruits that need to be peeled**
oranges | bananas
- **Juice boxes/bottles**



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

NOT ALLOWED:

- Food brought from home
- Hot food
- Unpackaged fruits and vegetables with edible peels (apples, peaches, grapes)
- Fruit cups that aren't commercially packaged
- Food that's been partially eaten or opened



**ALL share table items
MUST be unopened.**

This poster is intended as a guideline. Your county's share table rules may differ. Always work with your county's Department of Health to ensure all local health codes are met. Please refer to your share table monitor for further instructions.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Please note each county Health Department may have additional guidelines.



Additionally, “back of the house” supplies in the kitchen, such as unopened cans and jars of food can be donated to food banks, as well.

Before winter and spring breaks, ask your cafeteria manager if there are any items that have upcoming best buy dates during the break.

Some schools serve as emergency shelters during hurricane season and may have remaining food items.

Share Table Program Checklist

- Meet with administration, cafeteria manager, volunteer and those interested in starting the program to review logistics and plan.
- Review pertinent Food Rescue Policy
 1. County Health Department *Guidelines on Share Tables*
 2. Legal Fact Sheet: *Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act* (Appendix 1)
 3. United States Department of Agriculture's Memo, *The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs* (Appendix 2)
- Register your school. [Share Table Registration](#)
- Ensure you have proper supplies for your share table. Each school may require different supplies depending on their county's guidelines and/or implementation plan.
 - Refrigerator
 - Ice cart/tub with drainage to hold milk and perishable items
 - Temperature log
 - Cooler, if delivering to pantry
 - Share Table Monitor – adult or student
- Send out a program letter to inform parents, students, faculty and staff on share tables and their benefits.
- Communicate program to students and teachers. Conduct an Assembly for students:
 - Emphasize offer vs. serve - 3 food items required; one must be a fruit or vegetable
 - One action – eliminates greenhouse gases in atmosphere, while offering food to our own students, and feeding hungry in community
 - Share results of school's food waste audit
 - Explain school procedures – when to place items in cart, how to visit share table, etc.
- Launch Food Rescue – Volunteer maintain notebook to track food items shared/donated, temperature chart.
- Utilize [foodrescue.net](#) tracking tool to measure impact, share results with school and community. To get a good idea of impact, track data for a minimum of one week.
- Optional, however strongly recommended: Students conduct a Food Waste Audit. Choose to either collect all unopened and unpeeled food items that *typically* end up in the trash for a day, tally and enter data into [foodrescue.net](#) tracking tool. Utilize baseline data to share impact. Alternatively, perform an in-depth student food waste audit- WWF's *Guide to Conducting Student Waste Audit* (Appendix 5)
- Optional: Arrange for a 501c3 non-profit food pantry to receive donations.
- For questions or assistance, please contact elaine.schoolfoodrecovery@gmail.com

School Food Markets

What are school food markets?

Located on school campuses, school food markets are food pantries which provide students and their families ease and comfort in accessing food assistance. Community partners, food banks and school administrators and staff collaborate to create on-site community funded food pantries that offer convenience for students and their families throughout the school year. By changing the language from pantry to market, it reduces the impact of stigma on the program.

The School Food Market Program typically distributes items such as: snacks, meal items, fresh fruit and vegetables. In addition to receiving food items, children and their families may also receive recipe cards, and nutrition education led by students. While community partners may offer additional resources the food bank, community partner and/or school may provide, such as on-site cooking instruction. There are primarily two models of school food markets designed to meet the needs of the school and the independence level of the students.

Primary and Secondary School Models

Primary School Model

- Operated by school staff and community volunteers
- Students received weekend snack packs
- Includes an emergency food pantry
- Can be paired with school events
- Distribution times determined by individual schools needs
- Items may be pre-bagged/bundled.

Secondary School Model

- Project based learning model operated by students and overseen by staff/faculty
- Can be run as part of a class or by a club
- Student ownership includes naming the market and creating a logo.
- On campus service hour opportunities are often available
- Markets include snacks, as well as individual and family sized items
- Offering after school snacks level the playing field for all

Source: Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, School Market Toolkit

Elementary school models are most like standard school food pantry models throughout the nation. Traditionally operated through the school to provide food to the families of children at the school. The school may advertise days and times in which families can visit or families may be referred to the pantry by school counselors or teachers. Families either pick up the food boxes once or twice a month, or weekly, depending on the operations of the specific pantry. Food is either picked up from or delivered to the pantry by a food bank. Volunteers sort the food and prepare it for distribution. Please note, middle schools can fall under either model depending on the maturity and readiness level of the students.

The secondary School Market *Students Helping Students* model encourages project-based learning. Supported and guided by their teacher or club sponsor, the student management team is empowered to solve an issue on campus which is important to them, their peers and their community. Student ownership begins with the design of the market, logo, and selecting the market name. Like a typical grocery store, student shoppers are free to choose what they need or want. Additionally, students operate the market when it is open.

By nature, the program is designed to **attract all students** by offering food items such as after school snacks. By including being open to all students any stigma associated with food assistance is dissolved.

“Adolescents have a need to serve others, so service is taught to care for the school community and the world outside the school. Through service, students learn the value of hard work, are exposed to lives and cultures different from their own and develop a sense of empathy.” - Maria Montessori

Studies have shown two main reasons teens are less likely to take advantage of community resources. Teens are either perceived as being dishonest when asking for help or believe they need to be 18 years old or accompanied by parents to access resources. Teens spend more time in school than anywhere else. Meeting teens where they are with the needed resources and support encourages both attendance and builds trust between the student and their teachers.

TEENS ARE NOT PROVIDED THE SAME RESOURCES AS ADULTS, BUT HOLD MANY SIMILAR RESPONSIBILITIES



More than 1 in 3 teens care for siblings everyday or almost everyday



1 in 5 teens earn family income at least monthly



1 in 5 teens cook everyday or almost everyday

NOT TO MENTION . . .

1 IN 5 TEENS ARE FOOD INSECURE



Source: SHFB School Market Survey Results, April 2019

Assessing Readiness



Commitment is the number one factor in ensuring your School Food Market is successful. Schools must be prepared to both *operate the program* and *maintain partnerships with their community partners*. Consider the following when determining readiness:

- Have we met with school administration to gain support of the program?
- Which staff member is best suited to take on the responsibilities of the School Site Coordinator?
- Have we located an easily accessible space on-campus for food storage or for the market space?
- Who are our existing community partners that would be interested in participating in this program? Local or regional Food Bank? Grocery stores, University clubs, Kiwanis clubs, UF/IFAS, PTA, etc.
- Which engaged students or student organizations are willing to operate with the market? SGA? FFA? 4-H? Provides students a great opportunity to receive volunteer hours while serving their immediate community
- Can we commit to this program for more than one year?

Opening a School Market



1. Identify a School Site Coordinator

The School Site Coordinator is a staff member who oversees program operations and collaborates with the food bank and community partner(s). While teachers and club sponsors often taken on this role, anyone committed to dedicate the necessary time each week to successfully operate the program can fulfill this role. The Site Coordinator will be responsible for the following:

- Incorporating and supporting students in running the market
- Placing food orders for the partner and completing other paperwork (great student job)
- Receiving deliveries and coordinating distributions (another great role for students)
- Food Safety Certification
- Quality control and food safety (students are a great help with this)
- Regular communication with the partner and food bank

Opening a School Market

2. Meet with School Administration/District To Form Your Steering Team

Meet with those interested in starting the program to discuss logistics, plan, and review the checklist (p. 19) for implementing a successful School Food Market Program. In gaining the support of school administration, be prepared to share the essential information central to your intention:

- Impact of food security on students.
- Explain the concept of a school food market and provide examples from other schools. See resources for examples.
- If you have already sought out partners, introduce them to your on-campus and off-campus partners.
- Provide specifics on how you envision the market will operate.

3. Connect with Partners

a. Food and Nutrition Services

One of the most important partnerships is with your School Cafeteria Manager. The manager can be helpful in ensuring procedures for distribution of food and food safety are followed. Established guidelines as to when the Cafeteria serves food and when the Market can offer food so as not to be in competition with the cafeteria need to be considered. While each district is different, a meeting with your Cafeteria Manager is one of the first to have.

b. Regional or Local Food Bank

Your regional or local food bank can be the best resource for your school providing a food source providing a food source (often free or at a reduced cost), organizations model as well as potential assistance with fundraising, and training on health and safety practices, and volunteer recruitment . Schedule a meeting with your local food bank or pantry to communicate your plans, discover available resources and learn about the process for working together.

In Florida, contact the regional office of [Feeding Florida](#) or [Farm Share](#) to identify a partnering food bank. Additionally, the [Bytes to Bite App](#) can show you the food bank closest to your school. If you are working with a Feeding Florida member food bank, please include the School Market Program Manager to ensure that everyone involved is completely aware of their roles and responsibilities.

c. Community Organizations- Non-Profit and For Profit

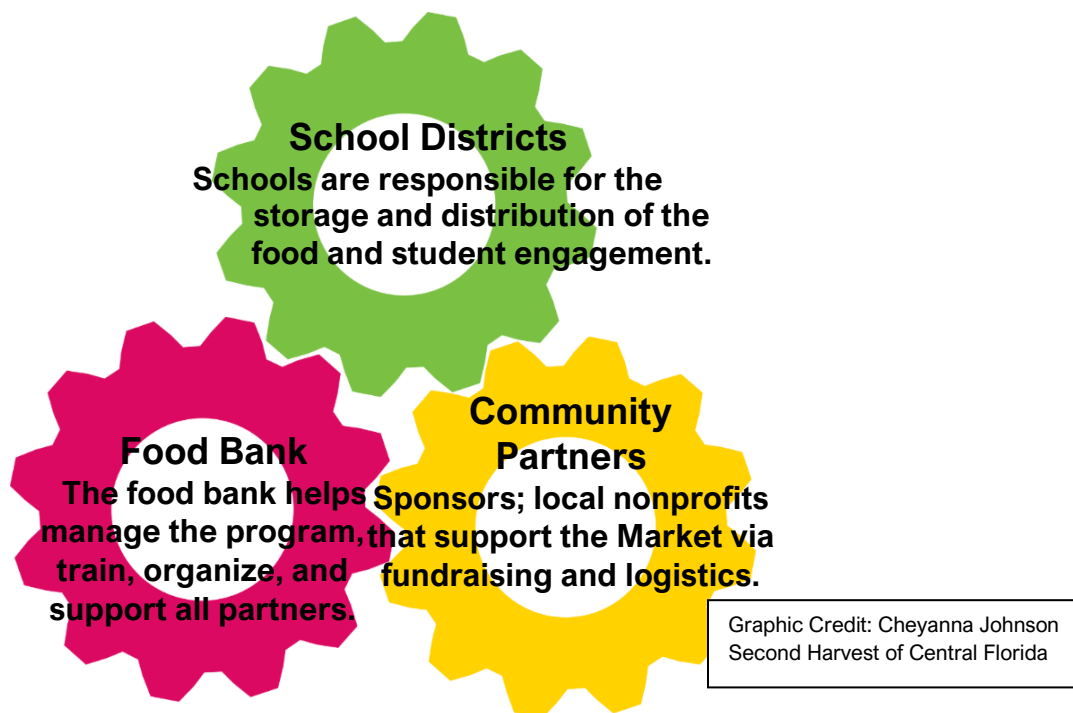
Connect with community partners to ensure the success and sustainability of your School Market Program. Community organizations can offer a wide range of support to the School Site Coordinator through additional volunteers, financial support for the market, shopping for and picking up food orders, as well as delivery to the school. Once a potential partner has been identified, schedule a planning meeting to discuss the logistics and details of the program. Community partners may also be able to sponsor market signage, shelving and refrigeration.

Who is eligible to participate?

One of the defining factors in the success of the School Food Market program is ALL STUDENTS are eligible to participate. This serves to alleviate any stigma associated from being labelled or enrolled in a food assistance program. Limiting access often creates stereotypes of participants. It's just food. Whether a child's family has enrolled in free or reduced lunch is not the end all be all to determine which students are hungry.

Who does what?

The responsibilities of the School Market program are divided between the School, Food Bank and the Community Partner(s). Working together creates a more sustainable program. Communication between all three is key. Here is a breakdown of the basic responsibilities that each partner will have:



Student Involvement

High School and Middle School

- The School Food Market is a perfect project-based learning experience for students. It offers students the opportunity to practice skills essential for roles such as: Management, Marketing/Advertising, Food Safety, Volunteer Coordinator and Nutrition Education.
- Most importantly, by creating a student owned and operated market, stigma associated with assistance is minimized. *A key finding from the study on Teen Hunger by the non-profit Urban Institute revealed teens fear stigma around hunger and actively hide it as much as they can.* All students are welcome and have an incentive to visit the market as after school snacks are offered to satisfy active and growing teenagers.

Best Practices

- One of the best ways to engage students is by creating a class to operate the program. Several schools have been able to incorporate the program into a Culinary Arts, Agriculture, Civics, Peer Counseling and Sociology/Research based service-learning courses. This ensures program sustainability, a set time to operate the program, credit for the students, while offering an interactive classroom.
- Alternatively, a student club or group such as: NHS, SGA, Beta Club, 4-H, FFA, etc. can operate the Market during the school day.

Market Management

- "Hire" a team of students to operate the market. Students can apply for jobs such as: Manager, Marketing/Advertising, Food Safety Management, Volunteer Coordinator, Nutrition Education.
- Advertising and marketing are run by students. Students select the name of the market and design the logo which can be used on market signage and bags for the market.
- Health or culinary classes can be involved in creating recipes or hosting cooking "demos" and nutritional signage for the School Market.
- Creating a regular schedule with student feedback ensures that students can access and be knowledgeable about their resources and its availability.
- Offer volunteer hours for working in the market.
- Consistent Market Hours (minimum of one day after school) .
- Allow participants to choose items - no pre-bagged items.

Physical Site Models

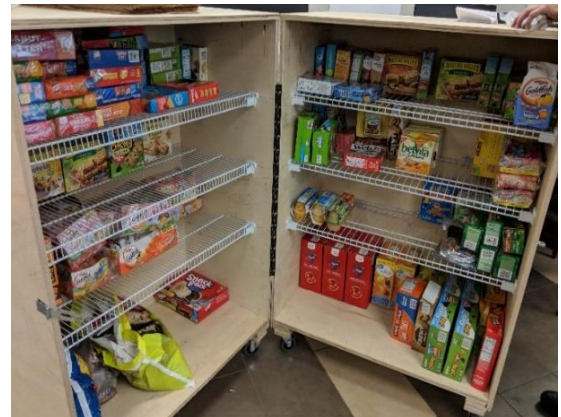
Permanent School Market

This model is ideal for schools with available classroom or closet space. Students or families shop the market during established market hours. As the market expands, frozen, refrigerated items, and produce can also be included. When the market is run by students, it is preferable that it is open daily and accessible for students and school staff.



Mobile School Market

Inspired by the Scholastic Book Fairs, the mobile school market is ideal for schools with limited space. The shelving units are designed specifically by Second Harvest of Central Florida and built by The Mission Continues Orlando Veterans [units for schools](#). Shelving can be adjusted to best meet market needs. Please note, a food-safe storage space is required for excess food.



Food Safety Procedures

For the safety of your students and their families the food safety guidelines below have been shared by *Second Harvest of Central Florida*. All volunteers and student workers will need to provide training on procedures and how to handle food safely. Your local or regional food bank may require specific food handling procedures – inquire to find out. The National Restaurant Association and Feeding America teamed up to develop a food pantry-specific guide called “[ServSafe Food Handler Guide for Food Banking](#).” The guide covers topics such as: personal-hygiene, proper sanitation and sterilization, cross-contamination, and time-temperature measures. It is strongly suggested that a Food Safety and Cleaning Process Checklist which cover the procedures for every area be posted in the pantry and volunteers go through at the end of every shift.



Food Safety guidelines for the market:

- Store all products at least 6 inches above the floor, 2-inches away from the wall, and 12-inches from the ceiling.
- Floors should be swept, and shelves should be washed regularly, as bacteria tend to flourish in dust and dirt.
- Rotate your stock and institute a FIFO (“first in, first out”) system. Be sure to check dates, especially on items such as baby food and infant formula.
- Shelving should be non-porous. If using wood shelving, seal shelves with polyurethane to protect against spills.
- Always keep the area locked and secured when distributions are not occurring.
- Make sure regular, periodic pest control, by a licensed pest control company occurs.
- Space should be well-ventilated, with air conditioning, if available.
- Dry foods should be stored between 40-80 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Refrigerated items should be kept between 34-40 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperature log may be required.
- Keep dry products away from direct sources of heating/cooling.
- Make sure that heat-producing pipes are insulated.
- Use fans to improve ventilation, if necessary.
- Non-food items such as paper products, personal hygiene products, and cleaners are not be stored the same area as food.
- Freezers and refrigerators require periodic cleaning and defrosting.
- Maintain accurate records for the Department of Health visits (temperature checks, cleaning schedule, items in and out and dates, etc.)



Marketing



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As you prepare for THE grand opening, keep in mind your campus School Food Market is brand new. Very few students, families, faculty and staff will know about you. The marketing campaign is designed to offer the who, what, where, when and why of the market, as well as assist in recruiting volunteers. Significant time, energy and enthusiasm will be dedicated to launch.

Here are a few suggestions shared by schools who created successful launch:

- Create a flyer/ poster including essential information. [Canva.com](#) is free and has some great templates to work with.
- Hang flyers/ posters in high-traffic areas throughout campus
- Contact your on-campus media outlets(newspaper, school e newsletter, social media, parent emails and parent link phone calls, website, etc.) and schedule a meeting to promote the market.
- Ask for market coverage in the news sections and include ads for the market
- Create graphics or short video PSAs that can play on TVs and kiosks around campus, as well as on the morning announcements, and shared on school social media.
- Chalk messages on sidewalks. Include the market's location, hours of operation, and a contact email address on all distributed materials.



School Checklist

Please carefully read through the requirements for schools to become a School Market site. Completion of these steps ensures a successful program.

- If applicable, submit application to join School Market Program to Program Manager.
- Identify a School Site Coordinator
- Identify a food storage or market space
- Establish a Student Advisory Council or Student Group to oversee the market
- Choose your School Market model
- Identify a community partner for the program
- Discuss operation plans with community partner
- Help students design a logo and name for their market
- School Site Coordinator obtains Food Safety Certification Schedule & completes training at the Food Bank
- Complete program agreements and paperwork
- Develop operating procedures for School Market
- Advertise your markets to students and families
- Schedule a grand opening!

now you're ready!



