

City Schoolyard Gardens (CSG) & CCS Partnership Overview

February 9, 2021

Update on the Current Cultivate Charlottesville Request

The School Nutrition Department is excited and grateful to continue partnering with City Schoolyard Gardens/Cultivate Charlottesville. Through the pandemic, this partnership has been as vital as ever in serving our students. There has been some confusion around the funding request that was submitted because the School Nutrition Department did not initiate the request and is not seeking additional funding at this time. However, we remain fully supportive of Cultivate's work to promote food justice; and therefore, it is recommended that the current request for funds be directed toward the Food Equity initiative to be managed by Cultivate Charlottesville. CCS School Nutrition will continue to collaborate with Cultivate regarding ways that these funds can benefit students and promote food equity in our schools. CCS is especially supportive of Cultivate's work to address food insecurity and support Charlottesville families on days when the schools' meal program does not operate.

Successful Grant Collaborations to Date:

- A previous Farm to School grant was used to start the Harvest of the Month program which has operated continuously since inception (grant obtained prior to current CCS staff).
- CHS Gardens and urban entrepreneurship, marketing classes, supported in part by \$2,000 grant from Whole Kids Foundation
- A Shaping Futures Grant for \$100,000 per year over the next five years has allowed Cultivate to purchase knives, cutting boards, measuring cups for all CCS kitchens. Since the pandemic, a new oven was purchased for Johnson's kitchen and coolers were purchased to assist with the new feeding program in the community. CCS Nutrition Director Carlton Jones has also continued meeting with youth interns who are paid via the grant. Goals yet to be fully achieved under these grant funds include:
 - New equipment and message boards for the CHS serving line to better communicate meal options and improve presentation to better serve students
 - Provide more healthy meal options over the course of the grant.
 - Track the number of students who take healthy meal options
 - Update the menu based on student led focus groups.
- Local on the Line program incorporating fresh local foods into the menu and tastings, supported in part by a \$2,000 grant from the Chef Ann Foundation's "Project Produce."

Partnership Highlights to Date:

- City Schoolyard Garden Programs K-12 (gardens physically at all schools except Walker)
- Harvest of the Month program enables all students to try different fruits & vegetables. Cultivate purchases the crop on a monthly basis. They prep and use volunteers to distribute in the schools. The nutrition staff cooks the monthly or keeps it warm if necessary.
- CSG has organized some of the student led nutrition groups. The Nutrition Director meets with the students to discuss the nutrition program, how the food is prepared, and changes that could be made to enhance the students' experiences.
- We have increased the amount of fresh vegetables that are served on the line - during the pandemic with our push-out in the community we are still serving double fruit portions

- Farm to School Week has been an opportunity to collaborate on new menus. CSG has helped with marketing and shared some of the cost and had volunteers on hand to help.
- Cultivate Charlottesville staff have helped out with meal distribution in the community when there have been staffing or volunteer shortages

Planned Next Steps:

- Pursuing additional grant opportunities
- Farm to School Coordinator position (to be employed by CSG/Cultivate Charlottesville)

Examples of CCS Nutrition Collaboration & Changes Working with Students:

- Carlton Jones met with high school students last year and they felt that we had some healthy options, but the items were not always available. The nutrition department purchased software that will allow students to pre-order some of these items.
- We received feedback that not enough meatless options were being offered. We increased our weekly options of meatless items and offer a second choice when a meat product is being offered.
- Student feedback has led to menu changes. For example, a staff member organized and led a student group at Walker. CCS Nutrition Director Carlton Jones and Jordan Johnson with Cultivate Charlottesville met with the group on a regular basis. This led to students helping to plan the menu and the students having a better understanding of the nutrition program.
- Through the Harvest of the Month Program we realized students liked fresh cabbage. We now feature fresh cabbage on our menu on a regular basis.