

Introduction

The Chatham County Partnership for Children's (CCPC) distributed farmer's market vouchers to families and staff at the Siler City Head Start Center in a pilot project of the Partnership's Shape NC program. The goal of the project was to encourage fruit and vegetable consumption and sourcing of local foods among low-income families with young children. The project was implemented in the fall of 2012 and spring of 2013. In the fall of 2012 approximately \$1200 worth of vouchers were distributed, with a redemption rate of approximately 20%. In the spring, although fewer vouchers were distributed - \$740 worth - approximately 40% of those vouchers were redeemed at the market.

Site Selection

CCPC targeted the Siler City area for the pilot because it is a low-income area with approximately 50% Latino population. In addition, Siler City was home to a small, struggling farmer's market that was enthusiastic about participating in the project.

All Siler City preschools and childcare centers were invited to participate through a competitive application process and the Siler City Head Start Center was chosen. Centers were asked to fill out a brief application (*See Appendix A: Application*) so that Shape NC could assess readiness for the project. In addition to distributing the vouchers, the pilot center was asked to conduct additional activities of their own choosing to encourage healthy eating, as well as implement a curriculum to educate students about healthy local foods. The Siler City Head Start Center elected to create a vegetable garden as its complimentary activity.

This project required a great deal of administrative time and buy-in from the school and Head Start proved to be an excellent partner in this respect. Teachers, administrators, family service workers and parents all assisted with components of this project. If future pilots are conducted at smaller preschools or child care centers, capacity and buy-in will need to be carefully assessed.

Farmer's Market Administration

Shape NC Staff provided an explanatory handout for the vendors at the Farmer's Market and attended a meeting of the Farmer's Market Association to orient vendors to the project. A simple paper voucher for \$1 was designed and printed by Shape NC (*See Appendix B: voucher*). At the end of each market day, farmers were reimbursed for the vouchers by the treasurer of the Farmer's Market using the market's own funds. The Market then invoiced CCPC for those amounts as needed and was reimbursed. This system proved to be user-friendly for the vendors and the market.

Distribution of Vouchers at Head Start

The first pilot was implemented in the fall of 2012. Head Start administrators and teachers distributed \$10 in voucher packets to all families and staff - approximately 120 families and staff members - for a total of \$1200 worth of vouchers. Shape NC staff attended a Head Start parent meeting to introduce the program and begin distributing the vouchers. Parents who did not attend the meeting received their vouchers via their child's teachers. A simple sign out sheet was kept to track distribution.

Families had seven weeks in which to redeem the vouchers, between 9/22 and 11/3. Flyers prepared by Shape NC staff were distributed every Thursday by Head Start in both English and Spanish, to remind families to utilize the vouchers and describe a few items that would be available that week at the market (*see Appendix C, Flyers*).

The second pilot was implemented in the spring of 2013 with a slightly different system of distribution. Again, Shape NC staff attended a parent meeting to introduce the project and distribute vouchers. Families who did not attend were instructed to request the vouchers from their Family Service Worker and fill out a short survey in order to receive the vouchers. Of approximately 120 eligible families, 74 families requested vouchers. Families and staff were again issued \$10 worth of vouchers – a total of \$740 worth of vouchers. Families had eleven weeks in which to redeem the vouchers, between 4/6 and 6/15. Flyers were distributed bi-weekly in English and Spanish to encourage families to utilize the vouchers and to let them know what would be available at the market that week.

Kids Day at the Market

Shape NC coordinated a special “Kids Day at the Market” event in both the spring and fall seasons. The event was advertised through flyers in English and Spanish to Head Start parents as well as in the community through flyers and notices in local news outlets (See Appendix D, Kids Day at the Market flyer).

On this day Head Start provided transportation for families from the Head Start Center and Spanish-speaking teachers also attended to help parents who might have language barriers. During the fall event, a partner from Cooperative Extension provided samples for healthy, kid friendly seasonal recipes. CCPC brought a trailer full of toys and fun activities such as drumming and painting for young children. For the spring event the Chatham County Public Health Department was able to provide a large banner through its Community Transformation Grant funds for farmer’s market promotion. Both events were modestly well attended with 10-15 Head Start families attending as well as a small number of additional families from the community. These events proved very important for voucher redemption as approximately half of all vouchers redeemed both seasons were redeemed on this day.



Voucher Redemption

	Total Distributed	Total Redeemed	Total Redeemed Kids Day	Percentage Redeemed Overall	Percentage Redeemed Kids Day
Fall 2012	\$1200	\$241	\$131	20%	54%
Spring 2013	\$740	\$293	\$141	40%	50%

In the spring of 2013 fewer vouchers were distributed but a significantly higher percentage of those distributed were redeemed. Approximately 61% - or 74 families/staff members out of about 120 – requested the vouchers. During both seasons, about half of all vouchers redeemed were during Kids Day at the Market event. In the spring, families also had longer to use the vouchers – eleven weeks as opposed to seven weeks in the fall.

Complimentary Activities at Head Start

As noted earlier, the Head Start Center was asked to implement a number of activities during this pilot to educate their students about local fruits and vegetables and encourage healthy eating behaviors. Head Start created a vegetable garden in the spring of 2013. Students began by starting vegetable crops indoors and learning about them through the USDA's "Grow it, Try it, Like it" curriculum.

Parents and staff members collaborated on the garden's construction. A separate evaluation of the garden project will be available for further information. Shape NC obtained a \$500 mini-grant from a community partner for this project and provided technical assistance throughout the project.



Head Start also collaborated on a number of tracking and evaluation activities with Shape NC, detailed below.

Tracking Behavior

Several initial attempts were made during this pilot to gather data to assess whether the vouchers would be a catalyst for behavior change. Design, collection, and analysis of this tracking data proved to be extremely challenging, mostly due to extremely limited staff time and resources.

1. During the six weeks in the fall of 2012 that the vouchers were in distribution, teachers asked children each morning how many fruits or vegetables they had eaten at dinner the night before. The goal of this activity was to try to track whether consumption increased during the time the vouchers were in circulation. However, numbers varied so widely from classroom to classroom and the data was inconclusive. However, this activity did likely serve to raise the children's awareness about fruit and vegetable consumption at home.

2. In the Spring 2013 parents were asked to fill out a short questionnaire when they received their vouchers (See *Appendix E, Data Cards*). This questionnaire asked how many nights the family typically consumed fruits and vegetables at dinner and where they typically purchased fruits and vegetables. A follow up survey to track any changes in this behavior at the end of the voucher pilot was planned. However, limited staff resources became a barrier to implementing the follow up survey. Data in the baseline questionnaire has been assembled and may be useful to inform future projects (See *Appendix F, Fruit and Vegetable survey*)

3. The back of the vouchers had the following questions to be filled out at the time of redemption:

- a. Tell us what you bought at the market today
- b. Will you return to the market again?
- c. If not, please tell us why

All respondents reported that they would return to the market or left the section blank.

Answers to question a. are in the process of being analyzed and may provide further insights into the buying behavior of Head Start families that may be useful in future projects.

Project Resources

CCPC's private funds were utilized to support the vouchers. Shape NC funded staff time and stipends of \$100 for the Siler City Farmer's Market Association and Head Start Center for administrative costs. The Shape NC Coordinator at CCPC is a .4 FTE and is funded by Smart Start. The Shape NC Coordinator has a variety of other responsibilities in addition to this project, so extremely limited staff time was available for the coordination of this project. The CCPC's Executive Director and staff provided leadership and additional support. The Shape NC Advisory Committee, made up of community partners, meets at least four times a year and provided input throughout the project.

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

The increased redemption rate of the vouchers during the second pilot is encouraging. It seems possible that by the second season the Head Start community became more aware of the program and comfortable with redeeming the vouchers. Distributing vouchers by request rather than en masse the second season may also have contributed to higher redemption rates. The relatively high percentage of families who did take the time to request the vouchers and fill out the questionnaire required to sign them out (74 families, or approximately 62% of all families and staff at the Center) was also encouraging.

Feedback from the Farmer's Market was wholly positive. Vendors found the vouchers easy to use and appreciated the opportunity for increased sales and exposure to new customers.

The Kids Day at the Market Event was a key success of the project. It proved to be a helpful driver of voucher redemption rates and was well attended by families at Head Start. Publicity around the event also raised the profile of Chatham's Shape NC program and strengthened the program's relationship with partners. Given more resources and publicity, this event could potentially draw more families from the wider community. This would be a powerful way for Chatham's Shape NC program to expand its reach and encourage healthy eating throughout the community.

One way to increase redemption rates and further the goals of the project might be to increase outreach to parents at the participating center. Future projects could incorporate more parent education activities such as cooking demonstrations, newsletters, and nutrition presentations or classes.

The impact of the vouchers on fruit and vegetable purchase and consumption was inconclusive. A better methodology for collecting and tracking data around this question is needed. This was the most challenging aspect of this pilot project and the area that needs the most improvement should the program continue.

Application
Local Foods Voucher Pilot

You may email this application **by August 30** to: lexie@chathamkids.org
(Email a request for an electronic application to Lexie at the above address)

Or you may return a hard copy by mail to:
The Chatham County Partnership for Children
200 Sanford Highway, Ste. 4
Pittsboro, NC 27312 (please note we must **receive** the application by August 30)

Or you may fax a hard copy to:
919-542-0238

1. Name of Center:
2. Name of Director:
2. Total number of children served:
3. Please tell us about each of your classrooms:

Age group	Staff names and education and positions	Number of children

4. In the cover letter we've outlined the program and detailed the activities that your center will do for this program. Using the space below, please let us know if any of these components of the program might pose a difficulty for your center (and tell us why)

5. One component of this program involves undertaking a project during the winter that enhances your student's understanding of healthy foods. While you won't be asked to commit to a project until the winter, please give us some idea of one or two projects that might be of interest. You can use the bullets on the cover page or include ideas of your own:

6. Would you be willing to undertake a simple fundraising activity to help with expenses for the above project? What kind of activity do you think you might do?

7. Please tell us why you are interested in this project:

\$1

Siler City Farmer's Market

This coupon is good for \$1 off your next purchase
and is provided for you by:



\$1

\$1

Siler City Farmer's Market

This coupon is good for \$1 off your next purchase
and is provided for you by:



\$1

\$1

Siler City Farmer's Market

This coupon is good for \$1 off your next purchase
and is provided for you by:



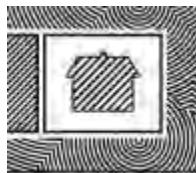
\$1

Expires June 16, 2013

\$ 1

Redeemable for fruit, vegetables, eggs, and meat only

Please tell us what you purchased from the market today!



Will you return to Siler City Farmer's Market?

Yes No

If not, please tell us why:



\$ 1

For Siler City Farmer's Market use only

Name of Vendor: _____

\$ 1

Redeemable for fruit, vegetables, eggs, and meat only

Please tell us what you purchased from the market today!



Will you return to Siler City Farmer's Market?

Yes No

If not, please tell us why:



\$ 1

For Siler City Farmer's Market use only

Name of Vendor: _____

\$ 1

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Please tell us what you purchased from the market today!



Will you return to Siler City Farmer's Market?

Yes No

If not, please tell us why:



\$ 1

For Siler City Farmer's Market use only

Name of Vendor: _____

Siler City Farmer's Market Coupons Are Back for Spring! See Your Family Service Worker to Get Yours!



The Siler City Farmer's Market will open again on Saturday, April 6. Once again, Smart Start is offering all Head Start families and staff \$10 worth of coupons to use at the market.

See your family service worker to get your coupons and ask for more details on how to use these coupons for fresh, free food from the market this spring. Coupons will be given out through the end of April and can be used through June 16. The market is open Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm.





¡Los cupones para el Mercado de Agricultores de Siler City están de vuelta esta primavera!
¡Visite a su trabajador social familiar para obtener los tuyos!

El Mercado de Agricultores de Siler City estará abierto nuevamente desde el sábado 6 de abril. Una vez más, NC Smart Start le ofrece a todas las familias y personal de Head Start cupones por un valor de \$10 utilizables en el mercado.

Visite a su trabajador social familiar para obtener sus cupones y mayores detalles sobre cómo utilizarlos para conseguir alimentos frescos y gratuitos en el mercado esta primavera. Los cupones serán entregados hasta finales de abril y podrán ser utilizados hasta el 16 de junio. El mercado abre los sábados de 9am a 1pm.



Calling All Families with Young Children!

Appendix D

Kids Day at the Market

Siler City Farmer's Market

Saturday, October 13, 2012, 9:30-1

**118 West Second Street (right behind
the Courtyard Cafe)**

Demonstration of kid-friendly recipes using seasonal produce, from Phyllis Smith of the Chatham County Cooperative Extension



Arts and crafts and other activities geared toward kids under five, sponsored by the Chatham County Partnership for Children

Support our local farmers!

Farmer's Markets are a great way to get young children interested in eating healthy local foods. Join us for a fun-filled morning at the market!



¡Cambié sus vales por hortalizas!

Appendix D-Spanish

Mercado de los Niños

en el Mercado de Milperos de Siler City

Sábado 13 de octubre, 2012, 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Aprenda
recetas de
cocina para
sus niños,
apetitosas
y con
verduras de
temporada.
Phyllis
Smith con
la
Extensión
Cooperativa
del



118 West Second Street (Atrás de la
cafetería Courtyard Café)

Habrá manualidades
y otras actividades
para niños y niñas
menores de 5 años,
dirigidas por la
asociación pro-
familias, Chatham
County Partnership
for Children

**¡Apoyemos a
los
agricultores
de nuestra
localidad!**

Los Mercados de Milperos son una forma increíble para hacer que sus niños se interesen en comer productos saludables y cultivados localmente. ¡Venga y disfrute con nosotros una mañana de alegría en el Mercado!



**Siler City Farmer's Market Coupons
Spring 2013**



SMART START is offering coupons to CHATHAM COUNTY families with young children who are not yet school age (babies-preschool). The coupons can be used at the Siler City Farmer's Market through **June 15, 2013**.

The market is open on Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm.!

Please provide the information below and on the back of the card in order to receive your coupons. Thank you!

Child's Name: _____ child's age: _____ DOB: _____

Parent's name: _____

Parent's address: _____

How many people live in your house? _____

How many children live in your house? _____

How many of these children attend school in grades K-12: _____

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Parent's name: _____

Parent's address: _____

How many people live in your house? _____

How many children live in your house? _____

How many of these children attend school in grades K-12: _____

How often do you and your family eat vegetables at dinner time?

Once a week Three times a week Every night

Other: _____

Where do you usually buy your fruits and vegetables?

Wal-Mart Grocery store Convenience store

Tienda Other: _____

Please return this completed card to receive **\$10 in coupons to use here at the SCY Farmers Market.**

Participation is voluntary.



How often do you and your family eat vegetables at dinner time?

Once a week Three times a week Every night

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Cupones para el Mercado de Agricultores de Siler City Primavera 2013



SMART START le brinda a su familia cupones utilizables en el Mercado de Agricultores de Siler City hasta el **15 de junio de 2013**. El mercado está abierto los sábados de 9 am a 1pm. ¡El **6 de abril de 2013** es el día de apertura del mercado!

Por favor proporcione los datos solicitados a continuación y en la siguiente página ¡Gracias!

Nombre del niño: _____ Maestro del niño: _____

Nombre del padre: _____

Dirección de correo del padre: _____

¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar? _____

¿Cuántos niños viven en su hogar? _____

Cuantos de estos niños asisten a la escuela en grados K-12: _____

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Cuantos de estos niños asisten a la escuela en grados K-12: _____

¿Qué tan a menudo usted y su familia consumen vegetales a la hora de la cena?

Una vez a la semana Tres veces a la semana Todas las noches

Otra: _____

¿Normalmente dónde compra sus frutas y vegetales?

Wal-Mart Supermercado Mini-Súper

Tienda Otro: _____

Por favor entregue esta tarjeta con los datos completos a la Trabajador Social Familiar y recibirá **\$10 en cupones** para el Mercado de Agricultores de SCY.

La participación es voluntaria .



¿Qué tan a menudo usted y su familia consumen vegetales a la hora de la cena?

Una vez a la semana Tres veces a la semana Todas las noches

Otra: _____

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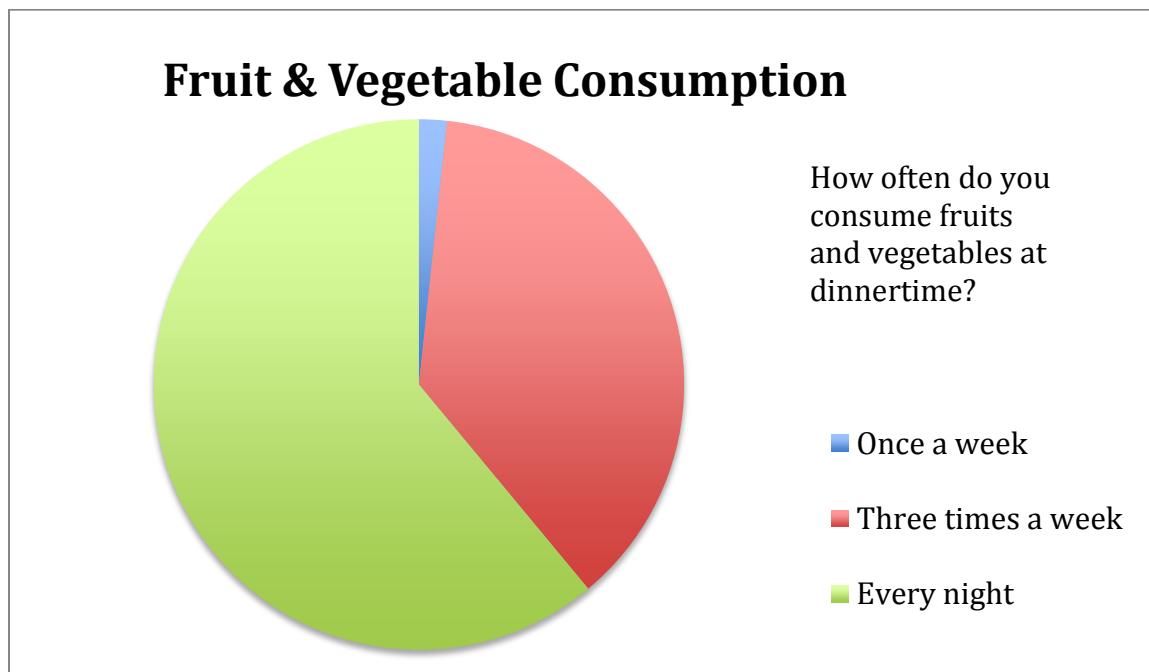
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Siler City Head Start Families - Snapshot of Fruit & Vegetable Consumption

1. How often do you and your family eat vegetables at dinner time?

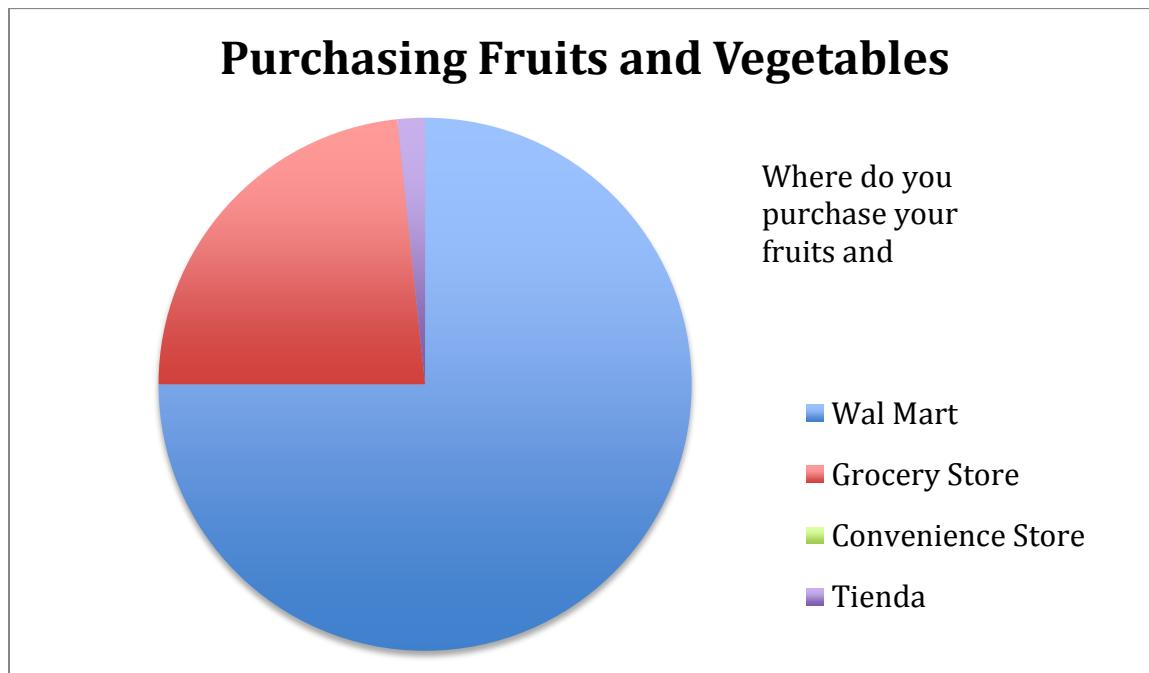
Sixty families and staff members answered the questions “How often do you and your family eat vegetables at dinnertime.” 39 of those responses were in English and 21 in Spanish. 60% of respondents overall reported that they consume fruit and vegetables at dinner time every night. 36% responded three times per week. Difference between responses in Spanish and English was minimal.



	Total responses	Total and % of English responses	Total and % of Spanish responses	% Overall
Three times/wk	22	15 – 40%	7 – 34%	36%
Every night	36	23 – 60%	13 – 62%	60%
Once a week	1	1-		

2. Where do you purchase your fruits and vegetables?

Sixty-one families and staff members responded to the question asking them where they purchase their fruits and vegetables. 40 of those responses were in English and 21 in Spanish. While Wal Mart was the overwhelming favorite for both English and Spanish speaking respondents, there were marked differences in the two groups with 43% of English speaking respondents also reporting that they use grocery stores and less than 1% of Spanish speaking respondents reporting that they use traditional grocery stores.



	Total responses	Total and % of English responses	Total and % of Spanish responses	% Overall
Grocery Store	17	16 or 43%	1 or .05%	28%
Convenience Store	0	0	0	0%
Wal-Mart	55	34 or 85%	21 or 100%	90%
Tienda	2	1	1	2%
Other				

* This is the total number of families who gave an answer to this question on the data card. Many families chose more than one answer to this question