



# SCALING UP EXCELLENCE IN THE SCHOOL MEALS EXPERIENCE



Proceedings from a  
National Appreciative  
Inquiry Summit  
March 28-30, 2017

URBAN SCHOOL  
**FOOD**  
ALLIANCE

**NDC**  
NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL™



**This report serves as a record of the Nourish to Flourish School Meals Summit, which was convened by the Urban School Food Alliance and National Dairy Council. It is intended for the use of meeting participants — and all others who care about the nourishment and well-being of America's children — to help inspire, inform and invest in work that will foster excellence in the school meals experience.**



The Urban School Food Alliance (USFA) was created by school food professionals in 2012 to address the unique needs of the nation's largest school districts. The non-profit group allows the districts to share best practices and leverage their purchasing power to continue to drive quality up and costs down while incorporating sound environmental practices. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Dallas as well as Miami-Dade, Orange County and Broward County in Florida together offer service in over 4,765 schools to 3.1 million children daily. This translates to more than half a billion meals a year. The coalition aims to ensure that all public school students across the nation receive healthy, nutritious meals through socially responsible practices. To learn more about the Urban School Food Alliance or to support its work, please visit [www.urbanschoolfoodalliance.org](http://www.urbanschoolfoodalliance.org).



National Dairy Council (NDC), the nonprofit organization founded by dairy farmers and funded by the national dairy check-off program, has been committed to research-based nutrition education and communications since its start in 1915. NDC is dedicated to bringing to life the dairy community's shared vision of a healthy, happy, sustainable world — with science as its foundation. NDC's staff of registered dietitians, researchers, and nutrition experts promote dairy's role as part of a balanced diet as well as educate people about the farm-to-table, table-to-farm connection. NDC has helped launch groundbreaking programs to benefit the health and wellness of children and adults, including Fuel Up to Play 60, which provides increased access to, and encourages youth to consume, nutrient-rich foods and achieve 60 minutes of physical activity each day. NDC has also helped launch the Future of Food Partnership and The Great American Milk Drive, which both address food insecurity in America. For more information, visit [www.NationalDairyCouncil.org](http://www.NationalDairyCouncil.org) and [www.DairyGood.org](http://www.DairyGood.org).

COVER PHOTO, LOWER LEFT, COURTESY OF USDA

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Special thanks to the Summit Steering Committee, whose members provided invaluable guidance in designing the Nourish to Flourish Summit:**

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Eva Balazs, Maryland and Virginia Producers Cooperative Association  
Dennis Barrett, Urban School Food Alliance  
Shirley Brown, Rich Products Corporation  
Adam Brumberg, Cornell Food & Brand Lab  
Helene Clark, The Schwan Food Company  
David Cooperrider, Cooperrider & Associates  
Scott Dissinger, National Dairy Council  
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John Dugan, Fuel Up to Play 60 Student Ambassador  
David Duguid, National Dairy Council  
Julie Farris, Urban School Food Alliance  
Crystal FitzSimons, Food Research and Action Center  
Leslie Fowler, Urban School Food Alliance  
Eric Goldstein, Urban School Food Alliance  
Joe Green, The NPD Group  
Randy Green, Watson & Green  
Kern Halls, Ingenious Culinary Concepts  
Micheline Herrera, Urban School Food Alliance  
Sean Leer, Gold Star Foods  
Mark Leitner, National Dairy Council  
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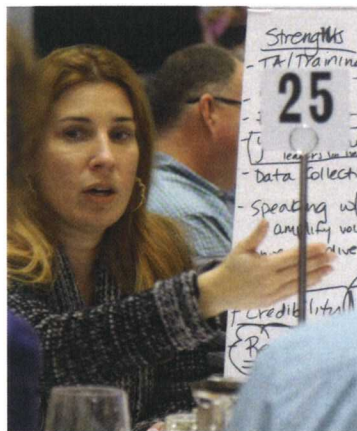


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**NOTE:** The summit featured open and free-flowing discussions of many topics related to school nutrition. Throughout the summit, federal, state, and local policies came up on multiple occasions. The National Dairy Council, as a federally-authorized research and promotion organization, neither engages in policy advocacy nor encourages others to do so. Therefore, items in this document related to policy or advocacy reflect interest from summit participants and may be the subject of future work by those groups, but NDC has not been, is not, and will not be involved in advocacy or attempts to influence government policy.



# FOREWORD A MESSAGE FROM THE SUMMIT CONVENERS

In March 2017, the Urban School Food Alliance and National Dairy Council convened a national summit of nearly 250 thought leaders and stakeholders committed to strengthening school meals throughout the United States. Importantly, students actively participated.

With school meals making a difference in the lives of millions of children from nearly 100,000 schools, the time was right to take the school meals experience to the next level. We wanted to make the case for the importance of school meals and take the opportunity to dream big.

School meals are one of the main proxies for the quality of life for our students. Our children will assume the mantle of leadership in this country. We owe it to them to provide a school meals experience that can instill a lifetime of healthy habits and bring an end to child hunger. This was the north star that guided our compass as we worked together during the summit.

Dr. David Cooperrider — the co-creator of a theory of change known as “Appreciative Inquiry” — facilitated the three-day summit. Encouraging collaborative participation, Dr. Cooperrider led attendees through a four-step process to discover, dream, design, and deliver their greatest aspirations for school meals.

At the heart of this dynamic, hands-on summit were participants — their thoughts, ideas and dreams. Participants asked: What’s best in the school meals experience? What’s next in the school meals experience? What’s possible for the school meals experience?

Working together, summit participants answered these questions and created a bold new vision for the school meals experience. Participants imagined a new national narrative, one in which all Americans — from the individual student to national leaders — value the integral role school meals can play in children’s lives.

Throughout the summit, two foundational ideas surfaced: school meals must be nutritious and something students want, and all students should have access to school meals. The end game is simple, but the stakes could not be higher. It is a matter of children’s and adolescents’ nutritional intake and health.

As we move forward from the summit, we are excited to continue working together and with others who wish to join this movement for enhancing the health and well-being of our greatest national resource — our children.

Everyone deserves the right to be nourished. Then, together we can flourish.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Eric Goldstein".

**Eric Goldstein**

Chairman, Urban School Food Alliance,  
and CEO, Office of School Support Services,  
New York City Department of Education



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jean Ragalie-Carr, R.D.N.".

**Jean Ragalie-Carr, RDN, LDN, FAND**  
President, National Dairy Council



A young boy with short dark hair is smiling warmly at the camera. He is sitting at a table in a school cafeteria, with a tray of food and a carton of milk in front of him. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The background shows other students and tables, slightly out of focus.

## WHY SCHOOL MEALS? WHY NOW?

**“Everyone in this room – particularly the young people – have an incredible voice they can add to this debate. It’s a voice that needs to be used at every level. Educate decision-makers to understand that the 20- to 30-minute portion of the school day for school meals is just as important as a math, science, language, or reading class.”**

Tom Vilsack, CEO, U.S. Dairy Export Council and Former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture





## THE CASE FOR SCHOOL MEALS REMARKS FROM TOM VILSACK

**Tom Vilsack — CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council and former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture — spoke to summit participants about the core value of school meals in all children's lives. A condensed version of his remarks follows below.**

There may be many meetings happening across the United States this week with many important people attending, but this summit is the most important one taking place.

We are the greatest nation on earth, yet millions of our children are challenged with food insecurity, poor nutrition, obesity and overweight.

Why should we be concerned about this? And what can we do about it?

We should be concerned first because our kids are engaged in a competitive global economy. School meals connect to our youngsters' ability to achieve and learn. If they are the best learners, they will be better prepared for global economic competition. The economic security of our country — the very future of our country — is at the heart of what this summit aims to achieve.

Second, when nearly a third of our youth struggle with weight issues and one in six lives in a food-insecure household, they can confront health consequences at a young age and will likely enter adulthood and suffer from chronic diseases connected to obesity. Obesity

**For more information on school meals — including background, history, reach, and perspective — see the *Nourish to Flourish* briefing paper for attendees, which was provided to stimulate discussion at the Summit. Available at [www.nationaldairyCouncil.org/resource-library](http://www.nationaldairyCouncil.org/resource-library).**

costs this country \$190 billion a year in health care costs, with \$14 billion a year spent on health-related costs connected to childhood obesity. By avoiding those costs, our businesses, our industries and our companies could invest in research, wages, and training so that we can remain competitive. If you're interested in the health and welfare of our nation, you need to be concerned about school meals and school snacks.

Third, our national defense is at stake. A number of

retired admirals and generals have come to me deeply concerned about the future defense of this country. They remind me that the National School Lunch Program started because President Truman was concerned that kids in America weren't getting enough calories, that there weren't going to be enough strong-bodied individuals to be able to defend the country. The National School Lunch Program was established so we'd have healthy young people to defend our country. Today, retired and current military leaders are concerned about the core of kids we can draw into military service. Nearly 75% of the kids between 17 and 24 years of age are not fit for military service for a variety of reasons, principally their physical inability to do the job.

I hope I've made the case that this is important. Now I want to make the case that you can do something about this.

You already did. A number of years ago, this kind of coalition worked collaboratively with scientists, physicians, and other experts and decision-makers to create the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. We made a commitment to more fruits and vegetables, more wholesome and whole foods like dairy — and we made that commitment not only for school meals but also for school snacks. The vast majority of schools embraced these new standards and have done an incredibly good job.

We now have the opportunity to make sure our decision-makers understand the importance of high-quality foods. Everyone in this room — particularly the students, the young people — have an incredible voice they can add to this discussion. It's a voice that needs to be used at every level.

You can work at the local level to reduce food waste. Nearly a third of our food in this country — what our farmers raise and grow and risk so much for — is wasted. There's an opportunity to save money and redirect those savings into better-quality food. You can encourage more programs like farm-to-school and school garden



programs, which allow youngsters to get more nutritious food and also to appreciate those who raise food.

You can help others understand that it's not just about the school day. We have 30 million kids who get school lunch, many of them receive free or reduced-price lunch, and 13 to 14 million kids who get school breakfast, many who come from families that are struggling. When students leave school in May or June, over the next three months there's no meal they can count on. We have an opportunity to expand summer feeding, to have school districts incorporate summer feeding sites, to develop mobile feeding sites, to encourage decision-

makers to provide flexibility so that kids throughout the entire year have access to good food.

There are lots of ways you can educate decision-makers at every level to understand that the 20- to 30-minute portion of the school day for school meals is just as important as a math, science, language, or reading class. In doing so, you can help reconnect all of the people within the school district to all of the people who create the food. Let's recreate a sense of community in this country, a sense of connection to one another.

**That's the power you have. Use it.**

## STUDENT VOICES AT THE SUMMIT

Each of us has our own story about how we got here. Without adults to push us, we wouldn't be here.

On behalf of us and all students, thank you for taking the initiative to have us here. To hear all of the adults talk about student voice is really humbling.

Our generation is the future. Without our children being nourished, that future is for naught.

We will make a difference and change the school meal programs. By 2027, these ideas will be reality.

I'm grateful that you've treated us as equals. You've told us our voice is important and powerful."

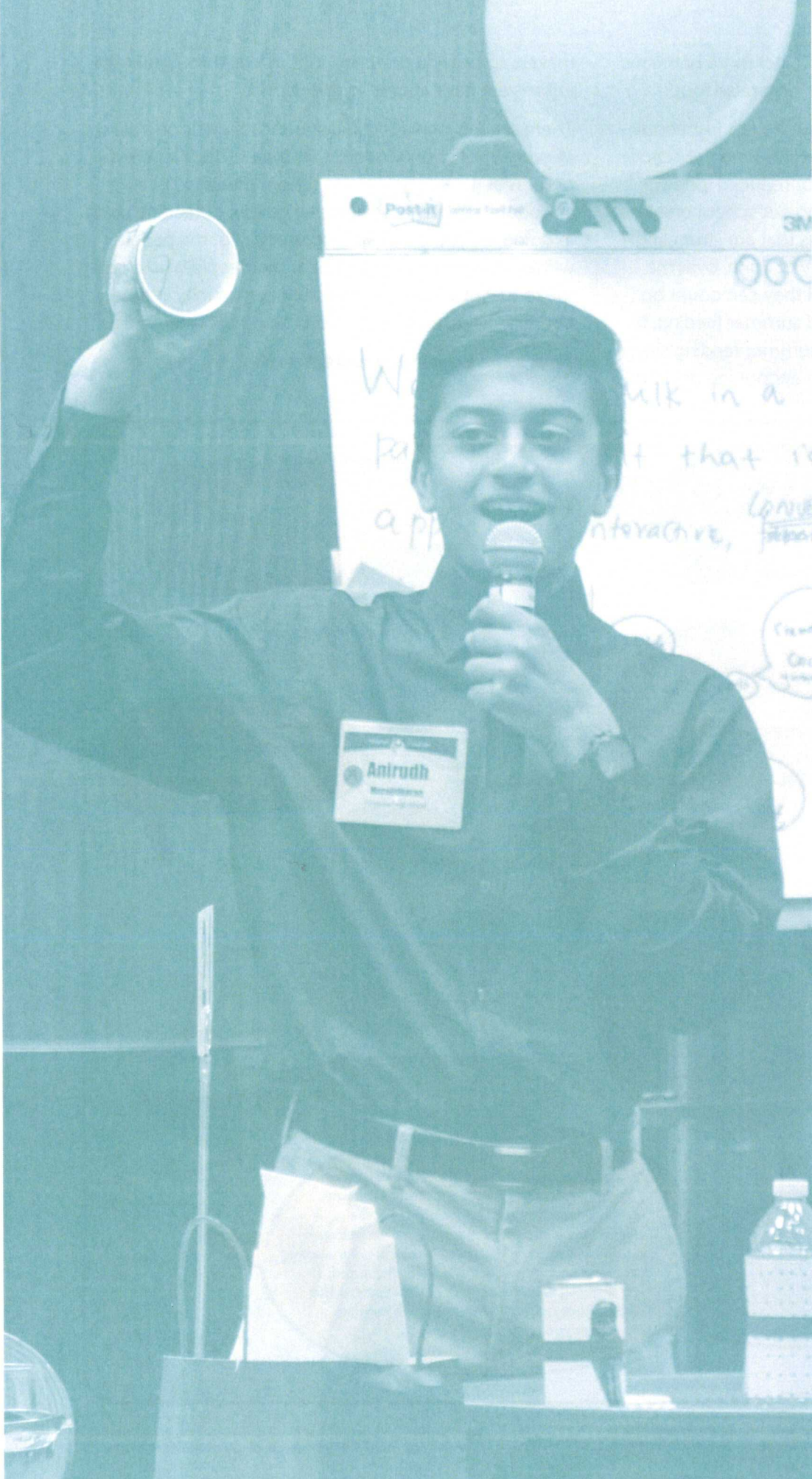
We kids came and let our voices be heard.

I see how much you care about children and youth in America. You want to make change happen, and you're making it happen right here.

My father was deployed in Afghanistan, and my mother was not really available. I didn't eat every day. I thought that was normal for a kid. I was made fun of for being so skinny. I want to tell them 'thank you for making fun of me because now I'm here at the summit fighting for all kids.' We're the result of the influences on us, the teaching we receive. Thank you for fighting for kids, for meals. It's important.

MILK!





## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: FROM DISCOVERY TO DELIVERY

**"We know the power of images of the future. When we get clear with our language and intentions for the future, we can design for the future. When we get clear about our vision for the future, that's when we can get clear with action. There's nothing more powerful than a community discovering what it cares about and creating clear images of the future."**

David Cooperrider, Co-creator of Appreciative Inquiry, and Professor, Case Western Reserve University



# THE APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH

**To appreciate means to value, to understand and identify those things worth valuing. To inquire means to study, to ask questions, to search.**

The Nourish to Flourish Summit was designed and led by Dr. David Cooperrider, the co-creator of "Appreciative Inquiry," a collaborative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. Building on a system's strengths, Appreciative Inquiry brings very large groups of people together to answer

unconditional positive questions: what's best, what's next, and what's possible?

The Nourish to Flourish Summit had four goals:

- 1. Stimulate greater investments** in high-quality, nutrient-rich foods that will allow students to thrive.
- 2. Increase opportunities** for students to have high-quality meals and meal experiences.
- 3. Develop a culture** where a positive meal experience is valued for its vital contributions to fueling learning, feeding every child's



**David Cooperrider** is the Fairmount Minerals professor of Social Entrepreneurship at the Weatherhead School of Management and the faculty director of the Center for Business as Agent of World Benefit at the Fowler Center for Sustainable Value, Case Western Reserve University. As the co-creator and creative thought leader of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Cooperrider's groundbreaking work has led countless businesses, organizations, and even religious leaders to understand how to consider a whole system and all its parts in order to develop strengths-based, solution-focused management philosophies that work. Cooperrider has served as an advisor to senior executives in business and societal leadership roles, including projects with five U.S. presidents and Nobel Laureates. He has been a consultant and advisor to businesses and organizations in the U.S. and internationally, including the Boeing Corporation, McKinsey, Verizon, the American Red Cross, United Way of America, the U.S. Navy, the United Nations, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

## WHAT IS APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY?

**Appreciative Inquiry is a completely different way of working together with a large group of people to create real outcomes.**

**THE WHOLE SYSTEM PARTICIPATES.** Appreciative Inquiry brings together a cross-section of as many internal and external stakeholders as possible.

**THE TIME TOGETHER IS TASK-FOCUSED.** Rather than an educational event or conference, an Appreciative Inquiry summit asks participants to roll up their sleeves and accomplish real work.

**PARTICIPANTS THINK GLOBALLY TOGETHER BEFORE ACTING LOCALLY.** Future scenarios are put into historical and whole-system perspective. This enhances shared understanding, creates a greater commitment to act, and increases the range of potential actions.

**PARTICIPANTS SELF-MANAGE THEIR WORK, USING DIALOGUE AND DESIGNING FOR THE FUTURE.** Taking shared responsibility for their collective work, participants focus on creating "what's best and what's next."

**PARTICIPANTS LOOK FOR COMMON GROUND.** Rather than managing conflict and difference, Appreciative Inquiry asks the continuity question: What are those things from our past that we all want to keep and strengthen, even as we move into a new and changing future?

**PARTICIPANTS COMMIT TO ACTION.** Because the whole system is involved, it is easier to make decisions more effectively and rapidly. As they commit to action, everyone takes ownership for the valued future.



success regardless of race or economic status, and nurturing a healthy and vital community experience in our schools.

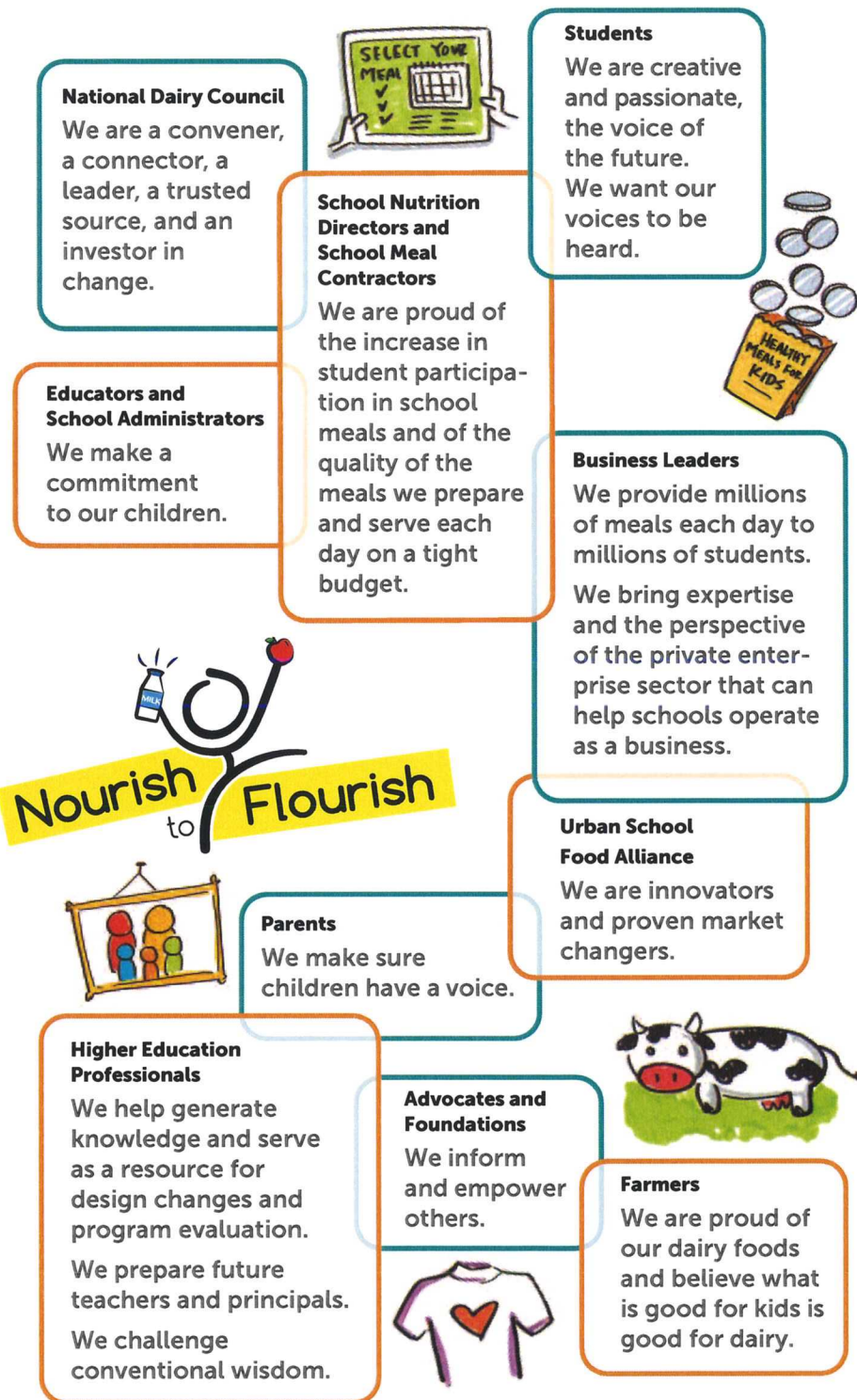
**4. Scale up excellence** across the country to speed the spread of innovations in the school meals experience and to look for ways to grow participation, to become more sustainable economically, ecologically, and socially, and to tell the whole story of the wide spectrum of benefits of the school meals experience.

As Cooperrider explained to summit participants, Appreciative Inquiry recognizes that leading change is all about strengths. It offers tools for rapidly elevating a community's strengths, assets, and capabilities. It drives greater impact by bringing people together — the concentration effect is maximized through multiplying the strengths of people in the room. It provides a way to create real outcomes for the challenges facing society. Appreciative Inquiry says we can build a better world.

The Nourish to Flourish Summit was about engaging participants, all of whom have a role in the complex ecosystem of school meals. The goal was not just to generate good team feeling. Rather, the primary goal was to come out with collective action with a focus on the future. While there was a diversity of opinions, participants looked intentionally and thoughtfully for common ground where they could work together toward win-win-win solutions.

## THE WHOLE SYSTEM IN THE ROOM

At an Appreciative Inquiry summit, the whole system participates. Having the “whole system in the room” — with as many internal and external stakeholders as possible — means more diversity, more “macro” collaboration, more voices, more ways of looking at the task. The Nourish to Flourish Summit convened representatives from virtually every group involved in school meals. Together, they rolled up their sleeves and got to work. Here are a few of each group’s “proudest prouds” and “strongest strengths.”





# THE 4-D CYCLE

Throughout the three-day summit, participants were asked to consider personal and professional questions, to think realistically and aspirationally about school meals. Beginning with the Discovery progress on day one and culminating with the Delivery process on day three, participants had the opportunity to dig deep into the current reality and potential future of the school meals experience.

Summit participants considered questions such as:

- What are your most important signature strengths? How can you leverage these strengths and bring them into the work at this summit?
- What attracts you most to the work of this summit?
- If you were asked to tell the story of school meals, how would you make the human and national case for school meals? What real-life examples would you share?
- If you could put the proud spotlight on just one area of innovation that looks promising for advancing the experience, cost effectiveness, or growing participation rates of school meals, what innovation or progress moment would you highlight?
- Where else might we draw learning, inspiration, and insight for advancing the future of the school meals experience and its growing success?
- What is the smallest step we could take following this summit that might have the largest impact in realizing elements of your desired future? What is one bigger, braver, and bolder thing we might consider?

## DISCOVERY

**ON DAY ONE**, nearly 250 participants, including students, gathered at tables organized by stakeholder groups. Working together, they identified their group's "proudest prouds" and "strongest strengths."

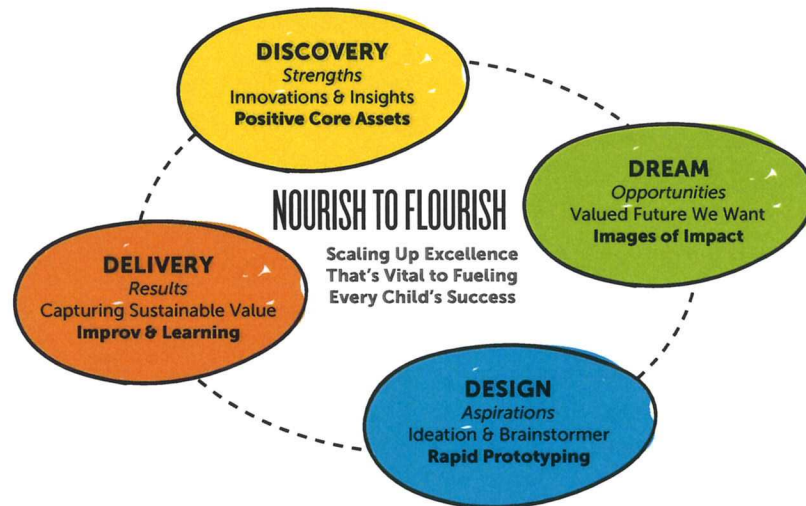
(For a snapshot of their "proudest prouds," see page 8.) Continuing on day one, participants worked together to imagine the future they want to create individually and collectively. Their "dream presentations" were short skits about the school meals experience of the future.

## DREAM

Here are just a few of the scenarios Summit participants imagined.

- Students order what they want using an app. A server delivers the food to the students. Food is custom-ordered and prepared to

- What's the most inviting room in the house? The kitchen — the smells, tastes and interaction! Students want to come to the school's kitchen-like cafeteria. It's visually bright with plants and open, clean tables. The aromas appeal. The taste is "crave-able." "It's your mom's kitchen but in a school setting!"
- School meals are now part of the school curriculum, and every student cycles through the kitchen to learn to cook. All kids get to eat at school, and there's no cost to families.

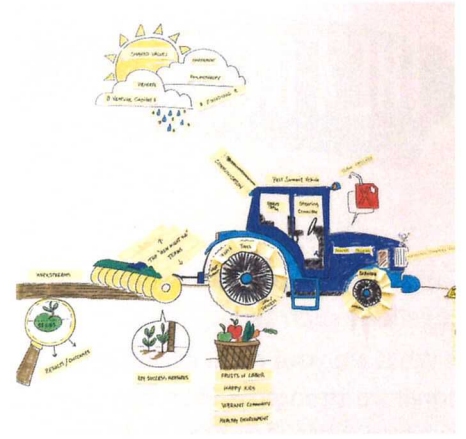


meet each student's individual desires. Students want the food they get, so no food is wasted.

- Students gather for lunch in a student union. Every day there's an activity menu. Wellness check, culture club, homework 911, computer lab, and vocational classes on lifestyle cuisine are all things you can do while eating lunch.

- The cafeteria innovates, creates, and advances food culture. Students are involved in planning, cooking, and cultivating food. There's a garden, vegetable center, and composting station. A biology teacher talks about the life cycle of a plant and then takes students to look at the plant and learn about composting.





- Product lines designed by kids are the jewels of all schools.
- With family-style seating, students sit at the table, and servers bring plates of food to them. Kids eat as much or as little as they want. Leftovers are put in containers in the fridge. When students leave school, they take home as much as they'd like for their families.

## DESIGN

**ON DAY TWO**, participants were greeted with “opportunity areas” based on the discoveries and dreams they shared the previous day. Participants voted with their feet and joined the group that interested them the most.

As they brainstormed ideas related to their opportunity area, participants were encouraged to generate bold, wild ideas and to think of themselves as co-creators of the future.

Each group then designed a rapid prototype, a visual representation of their idea in action. Participants created drawings, storyboards, 3-D models, role-plays, and more.

At the end of the day, teams gave mini-presentations on their rapid prototypes, and participants on other teams offered feedback (via sticky notes) on how to strengthen the idea.

# OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Based on day one conversations, the following visioning questions were posed on day two. How might we...

**Change** culture through a national narrative?

**Design** the cafeteria of the future?

**Articulate** our environmental and sustainability framework to ignite innovation and new sources of value and participation in school meals?

**Create** a venture capital fund to support innovation and student entrepreneurship?

**Establish** nutritious food in our school meals programs?

**Elevate** student voice and co-creation?

**Leverage** technology to increase meal participation?

**Increase** purchasing efficiency through widespread cooperation?

**Elevate** the milk experience?

**Determine** guiding principles to help increase momentum for change in the school meals environment?

**Educate** and inform thought leaders and stakeholders about innovative solutions to improve the school meals experience?

**Speed** innovation by creating a shared platform of best practices?

**Build** deeply woven roots between education and school meals – and between school meals and education?

**Advance** the needed rigorous, evidence-based research and new metrics?

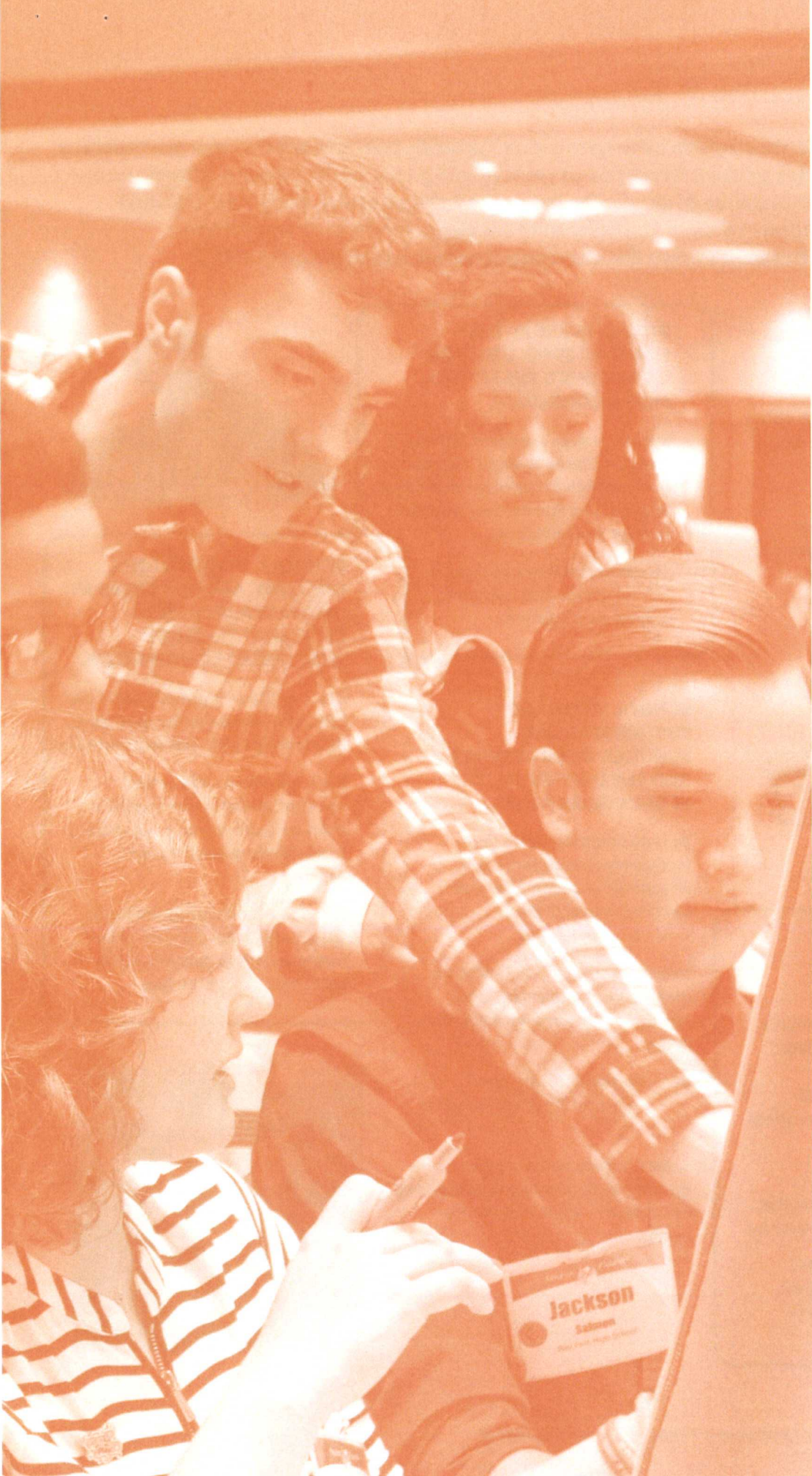
**Excel** with post-Summit momentum, strategic vision, and connected community?

## DELIVERY

**ON DAY THREE**, participants were asked to think about how to put their rapid prototypes into action, how to deliver their vision. Each team came up with an aspiration statement — a look at the longer-

term impact of the opportunity area, its ultimate value, end-result influence, and sense of purpose. See “The Future of School Meals” (pages 11–14) for an overview of what participants envisioned.





# THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL MEALS: WHAT PARTICIPANTS ENVISIONED

**“We don’t just have jobs: we have passions. Our kids are our passion. If we don’t do what’s right for them, then shame on us. We need to provide the best we can do but also find new opportunities to do it better.”**

Leslie Fowler, Director of Nutrition Support Services, Chicago Public Schools, and Board Member, Urban School Food Alliance



# THE SCHOOL MEALS EXPERIENCE IN 2027

Working in small groups throughout the three-day summit, participants — representatives of the diverse stakeholder groups invested in reimagining the school meals experience — generated strategies for positive change. By the end of the summit, they had created visionary but concrete ideas to take the school meal experience into the future.

**Here's how Summit participants envision the school meals experience in 2027.**

## SCHOOL MEALS ARE SEEN AS A NATIONAL TREASURE.

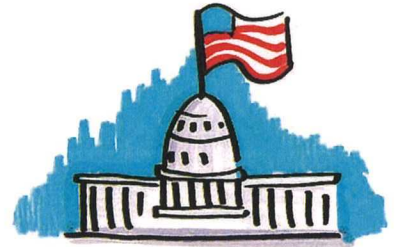
All Americans understand the power of school meals as the **cornerstone of healthy children and a strong education.**

Schools serve as the epicenter of a **culture of wellness** radiating out into the community.

## STUDENTS ARE AT THE HEART OF EVERY DECISION CONCERNING THE SCHOOL MEALS EXPERIENCE.

**Student voices are heard, valued, and considered at every level and in every sphere.** Schools, communities, and industry leaders seek out and respect student input.

Students feel they can **change school meals**, thus leading to **greater participation.**

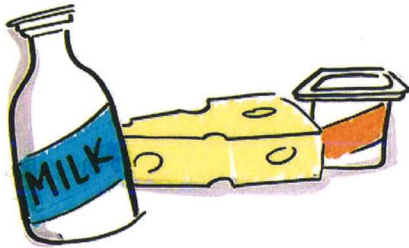


## SCHOOLS, DISTRIBUTORS, INDUSTRY, AND GOVERNMENT INCREASE PURCHASING EFFICIENCY THROUGH WIDESPREAD COOPERATION.

**Great nutrition is provided at lower cost, and schools enjoy profitable relationships with industry partners.**

Business leaders and school nutrition leaders work together in an **entrepreneurial environment** to positively impact student wellness.

A venture capital program funds **sustainable innovation** in school meals and helps new industries scale the small to the big.



## SCHOOL MEALS ARE SUSTAINABLE, AND SCHOOLS WORK ACTIVELY AND THOUGHTFULLY TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE.

By reducing food waste and increasing options for re-use, all schools drive progress and innovation to achieve **zero landfill waste** from cafeterias.

Stakeholders in the supply chain, green school movement, and private foundations work together in this **collaborative initiative.**

Because cafeterias are now **sustainable**, financing for school meals is **more efficient.**

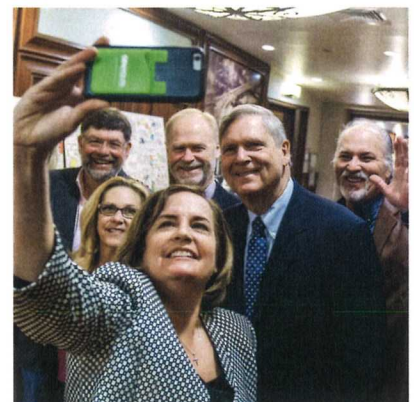
Small improvements in every school — supported and championed by students — contribute to the overall **health and sustainability of the planet.**

## STUDENTS CONSUME MORE MILK AND OTHER GOOD-FOR-YOU FOODS.

**Milk is a focal point of the cafeteria,** either through single-serve milk in innovative, kid-appealing packages or through a milk bar with custom mixing, specialty coffees and smoothies.

**Students' daily consumption of milk, fruits and vegetables, and other nutrient-dense foods has skyrocketed.**

**Kids help in the kitchen and the school garden, and they feel great about being in both the cafeteria and the kitchen.**

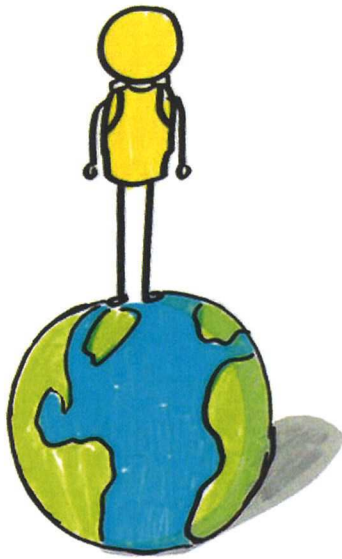




## NUTRITION AND EDUCATION WORK TOGETHER HAND IN HAND.

Nutrition education is part of the classroom, and the cafeteria features learning experiences so **students know where good food comes from.**

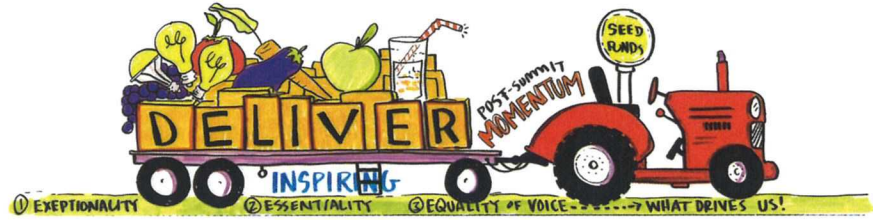
U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Education **work together** locally, regionally, and nationally.



## THE CAFETERIA IS A FUN, VIBRANT, INTERACTIVE, AND WELCOMING PLACE FOR THE ENTIRE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

A hub for nutritious eating and positive eating experiences, **the cafeteria brings the entire school community together** for culinary excellence.

An app lets students order foods, “rate my plate,” earn rewards, play games, and more – and **student feedback via the app** is used to develop new recipes and menus.



## MORE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL MEALS, WHICH ARE FREE FOR ALL STUDENTS.\*

A revamped version of the National School Meals Program, the “**Nourish to Flourish Act**” makes all school meals – breakfast, lunch, supper, and summer feeding – free for all students.

Without the stigma that arises from means testing, **universal meals** develop social cohesion in the school learning community.

The **elimination of red tape** reduces program costs, generating savings that can be used to improve meal quality.

The legislation authorizes **state grants to spur innovation** in local food procurement, alternative breakfast delivery, and nutrition education.

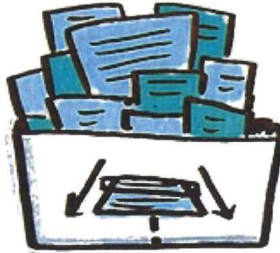


## EVERYONE WORKS TOGETHER TO CREATE A POSITIVE SCHOOL MEALS EXPERIENCE FOR ALL STUDENTS EVERYWHERE.

**Hundreds of organizations unite** to drive real and sustainable changes to school meal programs accessible to all students in the United States.

Aligned with the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, the Nourish to Flourish manifesto – which aims to **instill a lifetime of healthy habits and bring an end to child food-insecurity** – is accepted, embraced, and signed by 100% of school districts and stakeholders from families to the highest levels of government.

## CREATING VENTURE CAPITAL



\*NOTE: These goals reflect discussion by groups at the summit that are able to engage in advocacy. National Dairy Council does not engage in advocacy and so expresses no view of these goals. NDC will not be involved in funding, directing, or participating in any efforts toward these goals.

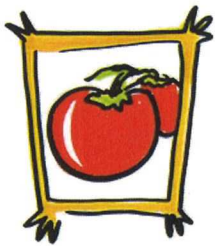


# GUIDING PRINCIPLES for the Nourish to Flourish Movement

Participants envision a future in which school nutrition is the cornerstone for building a lifetime of healthy habits and is the vehicle for ending child hunger. All children have year-round access to safe, sustainable, personally relevant, nutritious foods to enhance their opportunity to learn, be healthy, and succeed. The following nine principles – a work in progress – guide the new movement.



**Environmental Responsibility:** Every school district should grow some fruits and/or vegetables. Sustainability should be addressed across the full cycle of stakeholders.



**Technology and Innovation:** Technology and innovation should be continual, fluid, adaptable, and used at a level that will engage students.

**Resource Support:** We seek public and private partnerships. We educate parents to be our partners and champions. We engage the entire community.

**Nutrient-Rich Food:** School meals should be nutritious, taste great, and be visually appealing.



**Education in Food and Nutrition:** Nutrition education should be integrated into the curriculum and should connect students to real-world experiences to teach life skills.

**Empowered Students:** Students should be involved in every decision-making process regarding the school meals experience.



**Eating Experience:** Students should have a proper amount of time to eat. The eating experience should be comfortable to kids, as if they are in their own kitchen.

**Decision-Maker Education:** Guidance should be adaptable, flexible, and able to be implemented at the local level. School meals should reflect balance in nutrition, but the choice of what to eat belongs to the individual child. Nutrition standards should be realistic and based on science.



**Self-Organization:** Anyone can implement transformations that support and align with these guiding principles.





# THE WORK AHEAD

“It’s so very complex what we do: serving millions of meals and balancing budget cuts and so many changing views on nutritional excellence, and then making those foods attractive, tasty, and appealing.”

Summit Participant





## FROM VISION TO REALITY: WHAT'S NEXT

**Summit participants identified a continuum of next steps to make their collective vision a reality. Here's how they plan to go from dreaming to delivering.**

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**Refine the guiding principles, and develop a comprehensive version 1.0.**

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**Build a task force for each strategy created at the summit.**

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**Reach out to other individuals and organizations; invite them to join the movement and come on board as partners!**

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**Reach out for student voice in a variety of ways.**

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**Establish a baseline: Where are we now? What are the gaps? Where do we need to go?**

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**Spread the word.**

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**Seek funding.**

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**Develop models/templates.**

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**Identify states, districts, and schools that can develop and launch pilots.**

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**Evaluate research results.**

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**Identify higher education partners to develop curriculum.**

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**Set new standards. Draft the Nourish to Flourish Act. (NOTE: NDC will not be involved in activities or funding related to such drafting.)**

## REFLECTIONS on the Summit

As the summit came to a close, participants reflected on what had transpired. There was great energy in the room as participant after participant spoke to the power of the convening, as reflected in some of the comments.

Closing the summit, David Cooperrider reflected, "There is great power in bringing together key stakeholders and asking them to dream new dreams. Three facts about human beings are key to the success of the Appreciative Inquiry process. First, we are all exceptions, and to the extent that our leadership methods lift up the **exceptionality** of each person, we're stronger. Second, **essentiality** is key — we need to feel that others notice our contributions. Third, it is important to have **equality of voice**.

"In whatever group we find ourselves in, we should have the right and the responsibility to contribute our full voices for a better future and a better world. These three things — exceptionality, essentiality, and equality of voice — create momentum."

**"Six years ago when we started Urban School Food Alliance, it was people in a room from large school districts with some of the same challenges. We believed working together would make us stronger. We realized it wasn't just about our six districts: it's about the whole landscape. Moving ourselves forward is no longer the goal. The new goal is to help all districts improve: efficiencies, marketing and participation."**

Leslie Fowler, Chicago Public Schools and Urban School Food Alliance

**"The passion and the commitment among participants for driving change was very apparent. We are excited about the many work groups that were formed to take the best ideas advanced at this national summit forward in order to scale up excellence in the school meals experience, which is vital to fueling every child's success."**

Jean Ragalie-Carr, RDN, LDN, FAND, President, National Dairy Council

## JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

**We're looking for other individuals and organizations to join the Nourish to Flourish movement. If you're committed to creating a nutritious, appealing, and sustainable school meals experience for all young people in America, please join us! For more information, email [David.Duguid@dairy.org](mailto:David.Duguid@dairy.org).**



MILK  
BAR

DIY  
SMOOTHIES

CHAI  
LATTES

## RESOURCES

“There was a phrase used a long time ago: children should be seen and not heard. This statement is so false. We have amazing kids with amazing ideas — and the fact that we’re all open to each other gives me great hope.”

Kevin Moore, Florida Dairy Farmer



# SCHOOL MEALS SUMMIT: MEETING AGENDA



## Scaling Up Excellence in the School Meals Experience That's Vital to Fueling Every Child's Success

March 28-30, 2017 | Chicago Marriott O'Hare Hotel | 8535 West Higgins Road | Chicago, IL



### Day One (March 28): DISCOVERY of the Positive Core of School Meals Nationally

#### BREAKFAST

- Welcome and Opening Addresses
  - Eric Goldstein, Chairman, Urban School Food Alliance
  - Jean Ragalie-Carr, President, National Dairy Council
- The Appreciative Inquiry Summit – David Cooperrider, Summit Facilitator
  - 7 success factors of large-group methods
  - How we will work together
  - The AI “4-D cycle” and our agenda
  - Opening AI interviews
- Hearing from Our Student Leaders

#### BREAK

- Roundtable Discovery of Strengths and Leading Innovations, Part I

#### LUNCH

- Roundtable Discovery of Strengths and Leading Innovations, Part II
  - Identifying “proudest prouds” and “strongest strengths” in common stakeholder groups
- Positive Image, Positive Action – David Cooperrider

#### BREAK

- Moving from Discovery to Dream: Images of the Ideal Future We Want to Create
- Creative Presentations: What Does “Nourish to Flourish” Success Look Like – Impacts and Achievements?

#### NETWORKING AND EVENING RECEPTION

### Day Two (March 29): Moving from DREAM to DESIGN

#### BREAKFAST

- Welcome and Opening Reflections
  - Tom Gallagher, Chief Executive Officer, Dairy Management Inc.
  - Tom Vilsack, Former Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture



- Introduction to the Design Phase
- Opportunity Areas for Action (Moving from Dream to Design)
- Move into “Design Studios”
  - Participants vote with their feet to select the Opportunity Area they most want to work on

#### BREAK

- Design Studio, Part I – Build New Groups Around Opportunity Areas
  - Brainstorm in groups: “How might we . . . ?”
  - Clustering most promising opportunities for designing

#### LUNCH

- Design Studio, Part II – Rapid Prototyping
  - Presentations of early prototypes
  - Presentations and feedback
  - Gallery walk to review and share feedback on prototypes – what’s best?
  - Conversation on “ways to strengthen”

#### BREAK

- Design Groups Refine and Strengthen Prototypes Based on Feedback
- Introduction to Action Planning to Move Prototypes Forward
- Insights and Reflections

#### NETWORKING AND EVENING RECEPTION

### **Day Three (March 30): DESIGN to DELIVERY**

#### BREAKFAST

- Welcome and Opening Reflections – Summit Steering Committee
- Moving to Action: Short-Term, Moderate-Term and Long-Term Planning

#### BREAK

- Presentations: Highlights and Headlines
  - Each group’s next steps to build momentum and organizational action
  - Aspiration statements of impact and the value we see in the future
  - Our “going forward” strategy
- Open Microphone Reflection Time and Closing Appreciations



# ASPIRATIONAL STATEMENTS DEVELOPED AT THE SUMMIT

**Opportunity Area:** Change culture through a national narrative. Tell a story, communicate that school food is good food, supports education, health, national defense, etc.

**Name:** Every Kid Eats

**Aspirational Statement:** People talk about school meals as a national treasure and the cornerstone of healthy children and a strong education. They recognize that nutritious school food helps ensure that all children are healthy, food secure, ready to learn, and successful. All stakeholders confidently use the right tools to convey the value of school meals. The general public and elected officials are knowledgeable about school meals and materially support continuous improvements and investments as a means of strengthening our nation. A tradition of annual celebrations reinforces that the best food in town is in your local schools.

**Opportunity Area:** Design the cafeteria of the future – a hive of activity, classroom, improved physical space, prototype of ideal, etc.

**Name:** Cafeteria Redesign: The Hub – not just a meal but an experience

**Aspirational Statement:** A fun and interactive space where the school community gathers for culinary excellence — darn good food. This place supports the mind, body, and soul through exercising all components of healthy lifestyle choices. It's a customizable and adaptable space that fosters a sense of community and allows all to refuel and recharge.

**Opportunity Area:** Articulate our environmental and sustainability framework to ignite innovation and new sources of value and participation in school meals (waste to wealth, nature's health, etc.).

**Name:** Zero Waste for a Better School Place

**Aspirational Statement:** All schools drive progress and innovation to achieve zero landfill waste from school cafeterias by 2027. This collaborative initiative includes all stakeholders in the supply chain, Green School movement, federal organizations and private foundations; student involvement is an integral part of achieving and sustaining this goal. By eliminating landfill waste and making our cafeterias sustainable, we will enhance the school meal experience and create financial efficiencies. We believe small improvements in every school contribute to the overall health and sustainability of the planet.

**Opportunity Area:** Create a venture capital fund for innovation and student entrepreneurship.

**Name:** Symphony: The harmony between funding and school food innovation

**Aspirational Statement:** Aspirational statement: Orchestrating diverse partners in an entrepreneurial environment to fund sustainable innovation that transforms food and nutrition, increases average daily participation (ADP), improves the school food experience, and is integrated into the educational pathway of students. We have created a vehicle for change and innovation within a school nutrition landscape engaging children at every stage of the process. As venture capital has developed new industries, we are combining the funding, training, funds matching, metrics tracking, and the ability to scale the small to BIG. It's where business leaders meets school nutrition leaders to positively impact the wellness of our youth. Symphony is the gateway to bring the (global) community together and help the small make a big impact.

**Opportunity Area:** Establish good food in our school meal programs – food quality, food trends, more nimble, etc.

**Name:** Good Food

**Aspirational Statement:** Recognizing that student achievement begins with good food and starts with knowledge, passion, and commitment, we provide national accreditation and certification programs that lead to world-class cohesive and consistent standards that have measurable impact metrics. The benefits of this program extend from the cafeteria to better education and understanding in classrooms to accomplish the true goal of school meals.



**Opportunity Area:** Elevate student voice and co-creation.

**Name:** C3: Student Collaboration and Co-Creation

**Aspirational Statement:** Aspirational statement: *Inspiring, engaging, and empowering the nation's future to make a difference to health and well-being ....* The voice of the nation's young people is important to our nation's future. C3 aims to ensure that this is heard and considered at every level of governance...to have a place at the roundtable of decision makers and policy...to ensure this participation is taken seriously by our leadership. C3 represents the student and child at school and in the community. This is the voice of our future, the bright ideas and passion embodies fresh thinking and social care and responsibilities at every level. Without this voice our nation will not progress. Embracing and empowering student voice will help improve our nation's chances of becoming great in health and education.

**Opportunity Area:** Leverage technology, social and digital, to increase meal participation. Improve experience for students, educators, food operators, etc.

**Name:** FOOD MATTERS

**Aspirational Statement:** FOOD MATTERS creates excitement for students, their families, and the community around adopting a healthy lifestyle. Never before has this information lived in one interconnected ecosystem, which houses content related nutrition, food origin, and student feedback. Information is pooled together to create a customizable and engaging experience for all. FOOD MATTERS facilitates conversation, drives excitement, and improves participation in school nutrition programs.

**Opportunity Area:** Increase purchasing efficiency through widespread cooperation.

**Name:** Phoenix Rises

**Aspirational Statement:** Maximize efficiencies in the procurement process by aligning stakeholders around the common application process for the ultimate benefit of student health and performance, resulting in profitable relationships with industry partners.

**Opportunity Area:** Elevate the experience of milk.

**Name:** Choose Milk, Choose Health

**Aspirational Statement:** Milk is the cornerstone to delivering a nutrient-rich diet to improve the overall health of America's students. The greater dairy community, farmers, processors, distributors, and health thought leaders are committed to continually improving the experience that students have with milk. We are elevating that experience in schools by:

- Locally building the relationships between students and dairy farmers and milk processors. Every student will have a deep appreciation and knowledge of the value of milk in their life.
- Nationally improving the product to maximize student appeal, including fat content, flavoring, and nutritional profile. Improving the packaging with containers that are easy to use, sustainable, and with relevant kid appeal.
- In every school building, providing custom options for each student to enjoy the milk of their choice. We are adapting the latest technologies in refrigeration, dispensing, and mixing of beverages.
- Encouraging policy makers to utilize a nutrient-based costing model in decision making.

Through collaborative partnerships we are improving child nutrition by increasing the daily consumption of milk and the delivery of its nine essential nutrients!

**Opportunity Area:** Determine guiding principles for our growing movement – shared beliefs, values (“We hold these truths to be self-evident...”).

**Name:** Guiding Principles

**Aspirational Statement:** Aligned with the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, the Nourish to Flourish manifesto has been accepted, embraced, and signed by 100% of all school districts and stakeholders from families to the president of the United States. It is an iconic vision and promise that unites all efforts and initiatives to ensure the success of America's children through the development of healthy habits and the elimination of childhood hunger.



**Opportunity Area:** Empower and change policy – simplify regulations based on science, offer free meals to all, raise quality meal experience.

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**Name:** Access Policy

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**Aspirational Statement:**

- The National School Meals Program reimburses schools for every breakfast and lunch served to students at no cost. Reimbursements are adjusted regionally based on cost of living. School divisions will also receive reimbursement for meals provided at no cost to children 18 and under through afterschool and summer enrichment programs. The program authorizes grants to states to spur innovation in the areas of local food procurement, alternative breakfast delivery, and nutrition education.
  - The National School Meals Program reduces food insecurity, enhances health, promotes the establishment of healthy habits, supports academic achievement, and reduces disciplinary issues, tardiness, and absenteeism. Without the stigma derived from means testing, meals become opportunities for the development of social cohesion in the school learning community. By eliminating hunger in the classroom, we enable our students to become better learners, preparing them to compete more effectively in the global economy and contribute to national security interests. By enhancing their long-term health outcomes and reducing obesity, health care savings are realized.
  - The elimination of application, certification, and verification reduces program costs, generating savings that can be used to improve meal quality. The end of unpaid meal charges frees administrators from the bill collector role and makes schools more welcoming to parents, increasing parental engagement.
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**Opportunity Area:** Speed innovation by creating a sharing platform of best practices.

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**Name:** SNBP: School Nutrition Best Practices

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**Aspirational Statement:** School Nutrition Best Practices (SNBP) is the premier resource for school nutrition professionals. A conduit to identify, validate, document, share and apply resources and knowledge for success – enabling all students to have access to great food every day.

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**Opportunity Area:** Build deeply woven roots between education and school meals, and between school meals and education.

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**Name:** Nourish to Flourish in Schools Campaign

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**Aspirational Statement:** The Nourish to Flourish in Schools Campaign is a national campaign that establishes schools as the epicenter of the culture of wellness radiating out into the community.

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**Opportunity Area:** Advance the needed rigorous research, evidence base, and new metrics.

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**Name:** Empowering Action Toward Student Success (EATSS)

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**Aspirational Statement:** Continuous, rigorous measurement and evaluation empower “Nourish to Flourish” projects, activities, and ongoing programs by evaluating their effectiveness, efficiency, and ability to generate positive outcomes. The process of measurement utilizes metrics important to various audiences and facilitates the devotion of resources to successful endeavors as well as termination of those activities that do not fulfill their potential. Measurement is consistent and adaptable to fit the specific goals of each initiative. Schools and other stakeholders are using the data they need to continuously improve student nutrition, health, and well-being in a culture of measurement and evaluation that Empowers Action Toward Student Success.

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**Opportunity Area:** Excel with post-summit momentum, strategic vision, connected community.

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**Name:** Post-Summit Momentum

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**Aspirational Statement:** The engine that sustains momentum, provides strategic vision, and connects the community of Nourish to Flourish.

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**Opportunity Area:** Simplify regulations in an effort to improve school meals.

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**Name:** **Healthy Student Coalition**

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**Aspirational Statement:** The Nourish to Flourish Healthy Students Coalition is comprised of hundreds of organizations that are united to drive real and sustainable changes to school meal programs that are accessible to every student in the United States. The coalition will work to simplify regulations and policies that impede the purpose of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to ensure that the country's youth is well nourished, healthy, educated, and prepared to enter the workforce and defend the country in times of crisis.

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URBAN SCHOOL  
**IF** FOOD  
ALLIANCE

**NDC**  
NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL™