

Group Discussion Takeaways

From the 2025 Fellowship Graduation on January 27, 2025

How do we help staff understand the importance of scratch cooking and change the minds of staff, especially those that have been in the district for a long time?

- EMPOWER
 - **Get staff involved and invested** – for example, gather recipe ideas from staff or even create a competition within the school sites for coming up with a new recipe using a specific ingredient.
 - **Introduce new recipes intentionally** – for example, hold cooking demonstrations with managers to try new recipes, show them that they can prepare them, and create more buy-in.
 - **Give staff the tools and confidence they need with training** – leverage professional trainers; ensure everyone has the fundamentals of knife skills and culinary math.
- INSPIRE
 - **Put the focus on the students and how changes will benefit them** – make sure all staff have a chance to do front line work to see students' responses; emphasize the importance of school food for children's health and the critical role of the cafeteria as a classroom for nutrition education.
 - **Build understanding of the how's and why's of school nutrition policies and procedures to increase buy-in** – for example, through the Healthy School Food Pathway Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship.

The Chef Ann Foundation is a 501c(3) non-profit dedicated to promoting whole-ingredient, scratch cooking in schools. Scratch cooking enables schools to serve the healthiest, tastiest meals so that kids are well-nourished and ready to learn. To date, we've reached more than 13,500 schools and 3.3 million kids with healthy school programming.

- **Demonstrate the impact of changing from processed to scratch-cooked foods** – for example, review processed food nutrition labels and have staff guess what different ingredients are.

How do we share the story and importance of healthy school food and impactful meal programs with parents & administrators?

- **COMMUNICATE AUTHENTICALLY**
 - **Meet people where they are** – for example, “code switch” with a parent to speak from the perspective of one parent to another (so you’re not talking about ADP and CEP, etc).
 - **Invite parents into your world** – when they ask questions as to why X, Y, or Z isn’t happening, acknowledge the issue, explain what barriers are in your way, and what progress you have made or hope to make.
 - **Be transparent in what you do** – you truly care and have students’ best interests in mind, so frame issues from the perspective of care and be authentic.
- **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS & LEVERAGE CHAMPIONS**
 - **Ask for parents’ support to feed their kids** – explain that if parents keep sending them to the program, you can make the progress they want to see; you can’t “Build it and they will come,” you need them to come along with you on the journey.
 - **Find your allies** – Parents, principals, the school board, and other stakeholders can all be valuable champions; call out the importance of your program and give them talking points to help tell your story and correct misconceptions, if needed. Taste testing with the school board and putting real, delicious school food on the catering menu can be great pathways to partnership.
 - **Lift up student voices** – for example, students share how they selected their plates on the morning announcements.

- **SHOWCASE YOUR WORK & PROFESSION**

- **Consider how you use social media** – if your district has a communications person or department, make sure you partner with them; if you can have one for your department or can make it part of someone's job, even better.
- **Look for opportunities to bring the community into your program or to bring your program out into the community** – for example, hold a food show with your vendors and invite parents, provide concessions at an open enrollment tour where families can visit various school options for their children, or participate in a city tour where mayors, city board members, etc visit 3-4 different schools.
- **Own and share your professional credentials and role as a national leader** – for alumni, tell the story of the Fellowship to highlight your expertise and passion to your team and potential hires (who you can train up as the next leaders), as well as external stakeholders; use your own and others' titles/credentials (e.g., Chef, Dr., RDN).

How do we continue the momentum of what we've learned and been able to accomplish as we celebrate the end of the Fellowship program?

- **STAY CONNECTED**

- **Ideas of how CAF could facilitate connection** –
 - Have an annual reunion trip for Fellows (in-person or virtual, with in-person preferred) and regional gatherings as more cohorts graduate.
 - Create a listserv or message board for questions, connection points, and to continue highlighting career/capstone project updates from alumni (i.e., "Where are they now?")
 - Help connect Fellowship alumni who are interested in learning more from each other – for example, ask graduates to identify three presentations they

are interested in learning more about on the post-survey and facilitate those connections with suggested action steps.

- **Ideas of how Fellows could cultivate connection –**
 - Connect with their own and other cohorts via conferences, regional gatherings, and other avenues.
 - Create their own content and spaces to connect.
- **SPREAD THE LOVE**
 - **Give back to future cohorts** – graduates could serve as “Angels” to new Fellows to help them on their journeys and to stay connected; leverage where one Fellow excels to support where another needs help.
 - **Get other people excited about the school food profession** – get involved with local community colleges and be a mentor for others coming into or growing in the field.
 - **Step up to leadership roles** – take on local/regional/state leadership positions (e.g., SNA) and bring your learnings to state agencies, conferences, etc.
 - **Help your team continue to learn & grow** – participate in the Healthy School Food Pathway Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship (if it’s in your state) or sign your staff up for School Food Institute courses.