

# Educational Mini Sessions - Thursday, June 25, 2026

Session 1 10:00 am – 11:00am

Session 2 11:15 am – 12:15 pm

Session 3 1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

Session 4 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

## SESSION 1

### ABC's of Processing

*Lisa Shoaf, Eligibility & Procurement Specialist, Davidson County Schools, Tysha Sherard & Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Service Food Distribution Division*

Come join your NCDA&CS team as we talk about what commodity processing is all about—from the bidding process to the product on the plate. Learn how items are accounted for and where the funding comes from.

### Capturing Culinary Legacies: Food Photography for Cafeteria Staff

*Lizzie Vetsch, Assoc. Account Manager & Arianne Branch, VP of Strategy & Content, Co-Founder, SEA Level Social*

You can capture stunning photos of your school nutrition program using just your smartphone, no fancy lighting or editing required! This webinar offers simple tips on what to photograph and how to showcase your program in the best light, helping you create engaging content with ease.

### The Voice of School Nutrition

*Dr. Ashley Powell, RD, SNS, FAND, SNA President-Elect (Director, Auburn City Schools)*

You are the voice of School Nutrition! Join us as we discuss how your stories, experiences, and membership with the School Nutrition Association creates a voice that reaches our students and communities!

### Let Us Play – Cultivate a Legacy of Leadership

*Lisa Caughman, MSc, HHP, CAPP, Founder, Lee Lees Life Lessons*

Continuing Lisa's Let Us Play series, this session introduces Positive Psychology pathways through play, reflection, and purpose. Participants leave with practical, heart-centered tools for their Rose Garden toolbox—resources designed to strengthen resilience, deepen connection, and support leadership that grows and endures.

### Coach or Manager – Which Are You?

*Marilyn Moody, The Culinary Coach, Consultant*

A manager is a title; it does not guarantee success. Coaching is an action, not a title, and actions result in successes! This session helps you identify the manager and coaching styles you exhibit and offers ways to improve your leadership abilities.

### Make It, Take It!

*Jessica Obrochta, SNS, Assistant School Nutrition Director, Brunswick County Schools, SNA-NC Nutrition Chair and Committee*

National School Lunch Week 2026 is a time to celebrate nutritious meals and the hardworking staff who make them possible. This class provides creative ideas for promoting the week, including fun activities, engaging themes, and marketing tips to excite students, staff, and the community. Learn how to make this week memorable while highlighting the importance of healthy eating in schools.

### True Leadership: Lollipop Moments

*Tiffany Lawrence, Senior Director of School Nutrition, Wake County Public Schools*

True leadership is not a title; it is the daily choice to influence, inspire, and guide others through "lollipop moments" that make someone else's life better. This session explores how every staff member plays a vital role in building trust, ownership, and morale, and how to lead from exactly where you stand to create a lasting impact on your team and students.

### 5 Habits for Unlocking Teamwork Excellence

*West Christian, School Food Handler, CEO*

Behind every successful school nutrition program is a team that shows up fully. This interactive session highlights five personal habits that help professionals bring their best selves to work. Participants will gain practical strategies in accountability, mindful communication, and intentional presence to enhance both personal performance and team culture.

## SESSION 2

### Let's Talk Farm-to-School

*Walter Beal, Division Director, NC Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Service, Food Distribution Division*

Learn how the NC Department of Agriculture (NCDA) can support Farm to School by connecting your school with local farmers and fresh, seasonal produce. Resources and guidance are shared to help school nutrition teams bring healthy, locally sourced meals to students.

### Creating a Legacy via Your Cafeteria Upgrade

*Kneeland Wright, SOS/Palmer Hamilton*

A PowerPoint presentation with before-and-after photos of cafeteria and serving area upgrades, including art, paint, and furniture. Learn how the process works, how to purchase, and have time for Q&A.

### Borrowed Courage: How Mentors + Moments Changed Us

*Gretchen Wilson, SNS, Director, Pitt County Schools & Tracie Samp, SNS, Lakeside/Multiteria Manufacturing*

Join us for a session designed to inspire your career in school nutrition and show the opportunities available through our professional organization. We'll share personal stories about leadership, including how Gretchen moved from operations to SNA leadership as President and ultimately transitioned into the industry. Participants will leave with practical insights, encouragement, and a vision for their own growth.

## ***Educational Mini Sessions - continued***

### **Eliminate Misconceptions & Barriers to Safe Special Diet Menus**

**Angela Gomez, RDN, SNS, Nutrition & Wellness Supervisor, Alhambra Elementary School District (Phoenix, AZ) & Consultant, National Peanut Board**

Special Diet menu planning can feel intimidating, but every student deserves safe, delicious meals. Join Angela Gomez, a K-12 Registered Dietitian with 8+ years of experience, to uncover misconceptions, remove barriers, and explore practical strategies for creating inclusive, confident Special Diet menus. Leave equipped, supported, and inspired to bring the magic of school meals to all students.

### **Charlotte: Ready or Not Here We Come!**

**Fred Gilbert, SNS, CMS Supervisor & Melanie Dattero, SNS, Director of School Support Services, Wake County Public Schools**

This class highlights the Annual School Nutrition Conference happening in Charlotte—the first time it's hosted locally! Learn about volunteer opportunities, what those roles look like, and how to share excitement and energy with members nationwide.

### **Planning for the Future of School Food**

**Linden Thayer, Principal/Research Scholar, Maya Systems Design/SchoolCAMP at NC State University**

Explore opportunities to support student, staff, and environmental health through farm-to-school, scratch cooking, student leadership, family engagement, staff meals, recycling, plant-forward menus, and more. Find resources to turn passion projects into actionable programs.

### **Quality Control Manager**

**Heather Perry, SNS, Quality Control Manager, Union County Public Schools**

This session shares practical leadership lessons applicable at every stage of involvement. Participants gain strategies to grow as leaders, contribute with confidence, and strengthen the Association through intentional service and engagement.

## **SESSION 3**

### **Operational Excellence**

**Choncy Holman, Supervisor; Charles Chong; Clifford Ilderton – Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools**

CMS achieves operational excellence by standardizing processes, implementing accountability measures, and fostering strong communication across all kitchen sites. Focus is placed on staff training, streamlined workflows, and data-driven decisions to improve efficiency and consistency. Unified operations and continuous improvement ensure high-quality meals, reliable service, and a positive experience for students and staff.

### **Capturing Culinary Legacies: Food Photography for Cafeteria Staff**

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### **Beyond Exclusion: A Culinary Roadmap for Safe, Research-Backed Allergen Inclusion**

**Tessa Nguyen, Med, RD, TN Media, Founder & Principal**

This class will bring a flavor-forward culinary demonstration that bridges the gap between the latest food allergy research and global flavor. You'll gain a practical roadmap for safely incorporating the top nine allergens into inclusive, culturally diverse dishes while following evidence-based protocols.

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### **Serving Secret Sauce Daily**

**Christie White, Founder/Owner, What's 4 Lunch**

School Nutrition is the largest “restaurant chain” in the country, serving millions of students daily, yet many kitchens operate independently rather than as one unified program. This session shows how to apply the “Franchise Approach” with proven steps to streamline operations, improve efficiency, and create consistency across all sites. Participants leave equipped to strengthen staff retention, ensure accountability, and transform their kitchens into a high-performing program.

# *Educational Mini Sessions - continued*

## **SESSION 4**

### **Building Success: Step-by-Step Guide to Starting & Sustaining a Local SNA Chapter**

*SNA-NC District Directors & Jamesie Gentry, Whiteville City Schools Director, SNA-NC District Director Chair*

Learn the tools and strategies to establish and maintain a thriving local SNA chapter.

### **Getting Local on the Table**

*Cindy Southern Marion, DPI-NC Farm-to-School Consultant*

An in-depth dive into the ways to bring local foods into your school cafeteria. Finding the best fit for your district and its needs. How to specify what you want, find your source, procure it and get it delivered.

### **Straight Out of The Kitchen**

*Amber Sharpe, DPI- NC Consultant, Culinary Arts Chair & Jessica Jones, Supervisor, Wake County Public Schools, Culinary Arts Co-Chair*

Let's review the intricacies involved in culinary competitions, exploring both the essential "dos" and the critical "don'ts" to ensure you're well-equipped for a triumphant and successful culinary journey and experience.

### **Let Us Play – Cultivate a Legacy of Leadership**

*Lisa Caughman, MSc, HHP, CAPP, Founder, Lee Lees Life Lessons*

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### **Mastering Difficult Conversations**

*Marilyn Moody, The Culinary Coach*

This session helps you identify your style of conflict management and provides ideas for addressing other styles effectively. Participants gain strategies to improve communication and create a more positive work environment.

### **Dining Commons Modernization**

*Will Maddox, Manager - Education Partnerships, AmTab Manufacturing*

During this session, we'll share how thoughtfully designed dining commons and serving spaces can: create a more welcoming dining experience for students and staff, improve traffic flow and operational efficiency inside the cafeteria, and increase participation and overall satisfaction.

### **Master the Menu You Have – Commercial Equipment Skills**

*Christie White, Founder/Owner, What's 4 Lunch*

For anyone working in or managing a school kitchen, this session focuses on mastering the commercial equipment you already have—convection, steam, combi, and holding units. Learn how equipment settings, timing, and workflow impact food quality, consistency, efficiency, and staff confidence. Participants leave with skills to reduce errors, streamline service, and consistently execute menus while building a strong foundation for future program success.

*All educational session times are subject to change.*