



SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS **Advisory Council** MEET THE MEMBERS

Program Year 2026





CRYSTAL KALAHAR

Marana Unified District

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Urban
- Enrollment: >10,000
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: District 38%, ranges from 19%-73%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (520) 682-4774

Email: c.l.kalahar@maranausd.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

20 years in the Child Nutrition Programs, and I am in my 12th year with Marana USD.

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

I love that no two days “at work” are the same.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

Coordinating 19 buses with over 310 stops (5 days a week) across our district to ensure that kids in our community did not miss a meal while we were learning remotely.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

The biggest change I would like to see is more time for kids to eat and enjoy their food. I believe if we started teaching mindful eating and modeling focused time for meal teams without mindless distractions while spending more time educating them about good nutrition and the mind body connection could positively impact health outcomes for years to come.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

I enjoy learning from other nutrition folks. All of us work in school food service and share so many of the same challenges and successes within vastly different operational systems, leadership styles and district/community support. I find inspiration hearing about how we all approach the day to day needs differently; from that inspiration, I find solutions that I may have found out of reach before. I like to think my experience will have a similar positive impact.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

Curiosity! I always want (need) to know why. Finding solutions only happens for me once I understand the “why” behind the “what”.



ELENA HILDRETH

Yuma Union High School
District

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Urban and rural
- Enrollment: >10,000
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: >75%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (928) 502-4771

Email: ehildreth@yumaunion.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

30+ years

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

Making a difference in a child's life with good food and a happy, safe environment.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

Replacing after school snack with after school supper. I also championed giving the students more of a voice by implementing regular scheduled meetings with student leadership.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

Scratch kitchen and in-house bakery with made to order stations

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

Representing students and providing them a bigger voice in how regulations are established and determined.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

My passion for building successful operations.



HEATHER WILLIAMS

The Leona Group;
American Charter Schools
Foundation & Kaizen
Education Foundation

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public charter schools
- Urban & rural
- Enrollment: <2,500
- Food service type: Catered meals
- Free/reduced %: 51-75%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (480) 540-6826

Email:

Heather.williams@leonaschools.com

How long have you been working in school food service?

I began my journey into school food service 11 years ago when my family moved to Colorado. Prior to school food service I spent 20 years in long-term care food service.

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

For me, it's about knowing I can make a difference in a student's life, whether it's by providing their only meal of the day or offering a warm smile and greeting as they pass through the line.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

While I wouldn't claim to have perfected it, I take pride in my work with caterers to deliver quality food service that not only meets compliance standards but also addresses our students' cultural needs.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

Offering a program that teaches our students not only how to grow and prepare food, but also how to strengthen communities through gardening and supporting those in need.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

I believe we should foster a collaborative relationship among our local schools, providing support through training, sharing ideas, and seeking assistance when needed.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

I hope to bring my skills in building strong working relationships, my knowledge of policies and procedures, and my problem-solving abilities to effectively meet student needs.



IRIS TIRADO

Concordia Charter School

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Private charter schools
- Urban
- Enrollment: <2,500
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: 70%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (480) 461-0555

Email: itirado@concordiacharter.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

29 years.

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

Working with kids and teaching them about food and where it comes from.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

The most recent is the farm-to-school program at Concordia Charter Schools and the development of a scratch cooking kitchen.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

Is currently happening, a scratch cooking program with local purchasing.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

Work to help others achieve a great food and nutrition program.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

My experience can help others.



JENNIFER GORDON

Laveen Elementary District

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Urban
- Enrollment: 2,500-9,999
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: 51-75%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (602) 237-9100, ext. 3044

Email: jgordon@laveeneld.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

17 years

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

Knowing that what we do every day matters in the lives of so many school-aged children. Growing up in a food insecure household, I am passionate about providing nutritious meals and nutrition education to students and reducing the stigma associated with school meals.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I have two very meaningful initiatives. The first is implementing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district-wide in my school district. The second is our clean label initiative and our partnership with the Life Time Foundation. My team and I have worked hard to strategically eliminate ingredients of concern through the implementation of more speed scratch and scratch cooking as well as the development of purchasing guidelines

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

I would like to convert our operations to a centralized production approach so that we could focus on more scratch cooking and baking. I'd also like to do more with branding and merchandising.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

I have been a part of the SNPAC since its inception and have found that contributing my ideas and voice helps to elevate the meaningful work done between the state and local levels for the students of Arizona

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

I bring innovation, vision and strategic thinking to the SNPAC. I also bring several years of experience at both the state and local level to the table, which can help with decision-making and providing insight and identifying gaps or areas of opportunity.



LINDSAY AGUILAR

Tucson Unified School District

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Urban
- Enrollment: >10,000
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: 51-75%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (520) 225-4728

Email: lindsay.aguilar@tusd1.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

20 years

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

Impacting the lives of children through food and nutrition.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

Launching our food services social media initiative on Facebook and Instagram to market and promote our meal programs and department initiatives and engage our stakeholders.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

New kitchen equipment with more positions to support increased fresh food preparation, as well as serving area renovations to make cafeteria's more appealing and less institutional looking. My other top priority would be providing nutrition education as a common core subject in K-12.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

I joined the SNPAC to contribute to positive improvements to the important relationship between HNS and operators. This is important to me since this relationship is essential for the success of child nutrition programs in our state.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

Operational experience in a large school district, program and fiscal management, program compliance, and skills in collaboration, leadership, and development.



PATTI BILBREY

Scottsdale Unified School
District

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Urban
- Enrollment: >10,000
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: 25-50%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (602) 370-2664

Email: pbilbrey@susd.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

24 years in Child Nutrition.

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

The diversity of what we do, from nutrition, business, and customer service angles, which harmoniously work together support our kids in the best way possible! I also love that we have a supportive SN community where we lift each other up, mentor each other and share best practices with one another.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

In our Scottsdale Nutrition Initiative, we worked with a parent group to revamp our menus to eliminate potentially harmful ingredients. Through the process, we were able to educate our parents on the guiding principles and regulations we must follow and change the misleading perception they had of school food programs, ultimately converting them to our promoters and cheerleaders!

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

Oh, how I could give you so many answers, but if I had to pick one priority, it would be the ability to add a robust nutrition education segment to guide and teach students how to make healthy choices. But we cannot forget scratch cooking and Healthy Free Meals for All.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

When there is honest and transparent conversation around opportunities, successes and challenges, there becomes a better understanding from all sides on where we can work together to become more successful. I was excited to join to not only share my voice, but to hear the voices of others and work together as a collaborative and dynamic group.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

I believe a strong level of collaboration between SFAs and the State Agency is critical as we move forward with our programs. Our world has changed a bit, and we need to be future focused, and solutions based. I am a critical thinker and look to find solutions that meet all our needs. I bring a unique depth of knowledge I've learned from colleagues all over the nation. I enjoy advocating for our program needs and promoting our program to our communities.



RICHELLE YAZZIE

Chinle Educational Resource
Center

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Rural
- Enrollment: <2,500
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: >75%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (928) 349-9916

Email: ryazzie@lukaschool.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

I have been working in Food Service for 13 years.

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

Knowing that our hard work is making a difference for children and families and that we are contributing to the greater good. I also enjoy the significant variety of job duties. There are no boring days!

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I have experience returning to a school that was previously terminated, and I am proud to say I have accomplished the goal of bringing the school back to par.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?



SHANNON GLEAVE

Glendale Elementary School
District

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Urban
- Enrollment: 2,500-9,999
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: >75%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (623) 237-6249

Email: sgleave@gesd40.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

I have been in food service for 17 years.

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

I love the people in foodservice! I love how our employees genuinely love the students they serve and try their best to create healthy meals that they enjoy.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I am very proud that our district is 100% CEP. Kids should not have to worry about having money for lunch

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

I want to incorporate more scratch cooking with an emphasis on the culture of the community. I would also like to find ways to be more eco-friendly with our serving utensils.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

I feel it is important to have a good interaction between the state department and the schools. Regulations are important but successful implementation is critical and having a good connection between the two entities helps with collaboration and problem-solving.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

I have years of experience as a food service director.



SHANON QUINN

Cave Creek Unified District

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- Public school district
- Urban
- Enrollment: 2,500-9,999
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: <25%

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (480) 575-2437

Email: squinn@ccusd93.net

How long have you been working in school food service?

20 years

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

I enjoy interacting with the students. There is nothing better than seeing kid's faces light up when we serve them their favorite lunch.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I am proud of the work I do in collecting food to donate to our local food banks. I have enjoyed helping our high school student council with various food drives throughout the years. Hunger affects every community and I am proud that I can assist our high school students with their charity projects.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

I would love to have an employee whose primary job is teaching nutrition in the classroom. Nutrition education at a young age is so important so I would love to be able to make a daily connection between the classroom and the cafeteria.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

I joined to collaborate with other school districts on current issues and challenges facing our Child Nutrition programs. I am excited to meet and interact with the committee and make some new friends.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

I will bring my ability to learn and work well with others.



SHANNON REINA

Salt River Pima-Maricopa
Community Schools

LEA CHARACTERISTICS

- BIA school, charter school, Headstart
- Rural
- Enrollment: <2,500
- Food service type: Self-operated
- Free/reduced %: CEP

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: (480) 362-2077

Email:

Shannon.Reina@saltriverschools.org

How long have you been working in school food service?

I have been in school food service for 17 years.

What do you enjoy most about working in school food service?

I enjoy the opportunity to make a difference, sharing nutritious meals and nutrition education with children could have a huge impact on their future.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I am very proud of the work we do with indigenous foods! Salt River Schools has committed to offering students recipes that are culturally relevant or contain ancestral ingredients at least once a week!

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

100% scratch-made meals, using farm-fresh ingredients from local farms. I would also love to have a central garden that provides enough fresh fruits and veggies to serve all our sites! That would be a dream come true. I would also like to provide lessons on farming and have classes that allows students to help in the garden.

Please explain why you joined the SNPAC. Why is it important to you?

I feel it is important to support each other as we all share similar struggles.

What do you think are the best skills that you bring to the SNPAC?

Patience, understanding, and a genuine love for school nutrition with an awareness of the positive impact we have on the Educational System. I bring love and appreciation to all who work in School Nutrition!