

# THE ABCS OF INCLUSIVE DINING IN SCHOOL MEALS



Amanda Warren  
Tracy Stuckrath



@thrivemeetingevents  
@stauntonschoolnutrition



@thrivemeetingevents  
@GotfoodgameSCSSN



@tracystuckrath

# "WE ALL SHOULD KNOW..."

...that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."

~Maya Angelou







# AMANDA WARREN

School Nutrition Program Director  
Staunton City Schools

## Background

- Award-winning School Nutrition Director
- 25+ years in Food Service & Management
- B.S. Industrial & Organizational Psychology
- Professional Food Safety & Nutritionist Certifications



# TRACY STUCKRATH

Food Inclusion Consultant  
thrive! meetings & events

## Background

Event planner, speaker and F&B advocate

## F&B Experience

Have food allergies and have ordered millions of dollars worth of food at events







Peanut-Allergic Teen  
(14) Dies of Severe  
Reaction that Began  
at School

Politicians Are Targeting  
School Lunches Just to Deny  
Trans Youth Protections

US teen dies of severe  
allergic reaction to  
nuts at high school  
dinner

AUSTRALIA

Students  
denounce  
bullying in New  
Jersey school  
district where  
teenager died by  
suicide

Williamsburg  
Appeal:  
Historic Win  
for Gluten-  
free and Food  
Allergy  
Rights



“ New study  
suggests universal  
free meals improve  
school climate ”

Task force weighs  
in on inclusive  
school holidays,  
dietary practices

Brilliant, Beloved  
College Student  
Dies of Nut Allergy  
Reaction



# WHAT IS FOOD?





# DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Ensuring everyone feels welcome!

- Removing barriers that impact academic success.
- Validating the uniqueness of each and every member
- Affirm individuality and multiple perspectives
- Honor the cultural identities and diverse perspectives



# WHAT DOES DEI HAVE TO DO WITH SCHOOL MEALS?



## **Nutritional Needs**

Food allergies, celiac disease, lifestyle preferences, religious practices, traditions



## **Food Access**

Reducing stigma, broadening reach, nutritional education



## **Disabilities**

Wheelchair uses, food allergies, celiac disease, diabetes, hearing, vision, neurodivergent



## **Cultural & Ethnic Awareness**

What and when students eat — patterns, foodways, and practices; voice & choice





# DIVERSITY IN FOOD



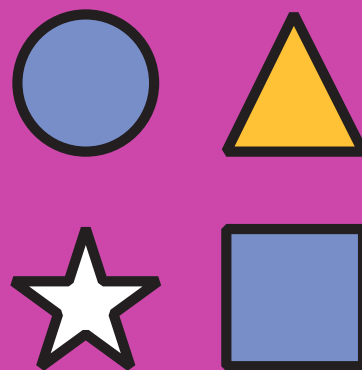
# A IS FOR "ACCESSIBILITY"

availability of nourishing, affordable, and suitable foods



## Pathways

It's not just what is on the plate.  
How do they get to the plate?  
Can they reach the food offerings?



## Options

Ensuring there are menu options that meet the dietary needs of many.



## Affordability

Socioeconomic resources of the buyers. Do they bring their own food or are they on the school lunch program?



# DON'T YUCK MY YUM

Let's Play a Game





# B IS FOR "BELONGING"

Everyone needs to feel seen at the table

- Enjoy lunchtime ⇒ more belonging ⇒ better academic & mental health
- Inclusion does not equate to exclusion
- As USDA federally funded programs
- Human part





# C IS FOR COMMUNITY

“When schools acknowledge and celebrate diverse cultures, customs, and cuisines, it strengthens the sense of belonging in school communities...”



The Task Force on Culturally Inclusive School Meals and Calendars



School lunch goes beyond the plate

# THE ABCS OF INCLUSIVE DINING IN SCHOOL MEALS

Accessibility, Belonging, and Community  
necessitate for us to take

## ACTION

To best serve all of our students

## BOTTOMLINE

Financial stewardship

## CARE

Simply the right thing to do

# Action

## USDA Guidelines for “Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs: Guidance for School Food Service Professionals”

The USDA Guidelines for *Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs: Guidance for School Food Service Professionals* governs how school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) accommodate children with special dietary needs. It also governs participants in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), the Special after-school snack component of the NSLP, and the Seamless Summer C



### Legal

Laws on food safety, accommodation, and inclusion



### Ethical

Caring to do the right thing;  
Providing employee support



### Financial

Opportunity for financial gain  
Federal Reimbursement Rates



# Bottomline Impact of Dietary Need Inclusion

The data doesn't lie

**83%**

Food Allergic/  
Gluten-free  
guests will NOT  
eat at the same  
restaurant after a  
bad experience

**91%**

Food Allergic/  
Gluten-free guests  
WILL return to the  
same restaurant  
after a good  
experience

**38%**

Average of food-  
allergic guest's bill  
is estimated to be  
LOWER than a  
non food-allergic  
guests'

**60%**

Potential increase  
in a food-allergic  
guest's bill when  
offering options  
from all available  
categories

**24%**

Economic boost  
of becoming  
dietary  
accommodation  
friendly

← GLUTEN & ALLERGY-FREE PASSPORT →

CERTISTAR

CERTISTAR

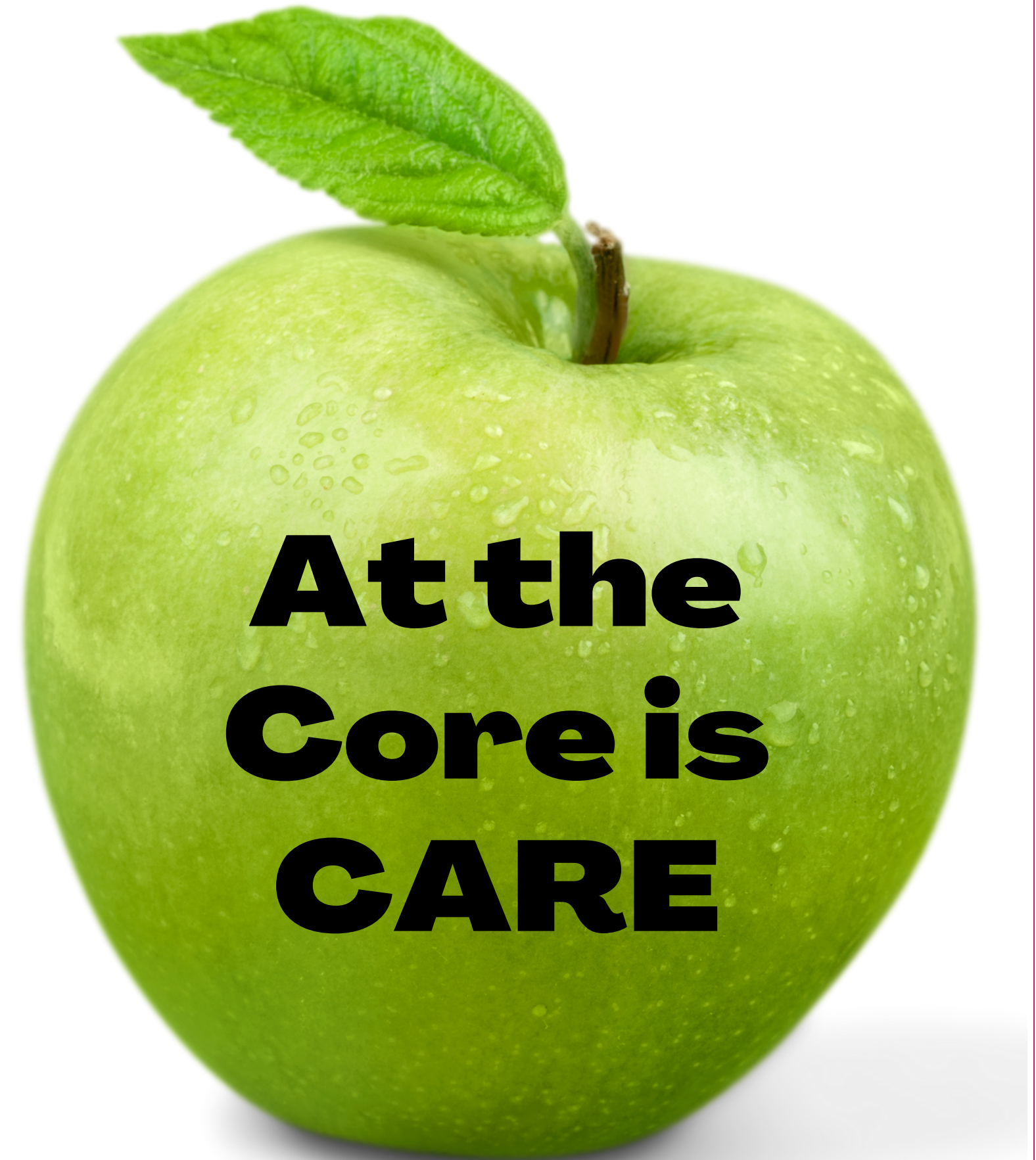
ALLERGYEATS/FOOD MANAGEMENT

**“You have no idea the blessing you have given me.**

Reading this brings me to tears...

I hate this allergy more than anyone could know and almost dying a year ago...has me in a prayerful state for attending events.

**I have no words that could show enough gratefulness.”**







**"I LEARNED I  
WAS POOR ON  
THE NEW  
LUNCH LADY'S  
FIRST DAY AT  
WORK."**




- Psychologist Kenneth Payne, *The Broken Ladder: How Inequality Affects the Way We Think, Live, and Die* (2017, p. 11)



# CONNECT WITH US

## Amanda Warren

Staunton City Schools  
540-332-3920  
awarren@staunton.k12.va.us

-  @stauntonschoolnutritionts
-  @gotfoodgameSCSSN
-  [bit.ly/SCSSSchoolNutrition](https://bit.ly/SCSSSchoolNutrition)

## Tracy Stuckrath

thrive! meetings & events  
404-242-530  
tracy@thrivemeetings.com

-  @thrivemeetingsevents
-  @tstuckrath
-  @tracystuckrath
-  @thrivemeetingsevents
-  [thrivemeetings.com](https://thrivemeetings.com)



# RESOURCES

Links we shared and used throughout the session

## **Civil Rights Advocacy**

<https://www.foodallergyawareness.org/civil-rights-advocacy/schools/usda-regulations/>

## **Maximizing potential: A school-based conception of psychosocial development**

<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1132&context=educationpubs>

## **US teen dies of severe allergic reaction to nuts at high school formal**

<https://7news.com.au/news/disaster-and-emergency/teen-girl-dies-of-severe-allergic-reaction-to-nuts-at-high-school-formal-c-9668250>

## **USDA Extending its ban on sex discrimination**

<https://www.them.us/story/republicans-school-lunches-trans-kids>

## **Conversation Starters For Designing More Inclusive School Meals Programs**

[conversation-starters-designing-more-inclusive-school-meals-programs](#)

## **Task force weighs in on inclusive school holidays, dietary practices**

<https://augustafreepress.com/news/task-force-weighs-in-on-inclusive-school-holidays-dietary-practices/>

## **Advancing an Inclusive Approach to School Meals**

<https://www.gothamgazette.com/130-opinion/7956-advancing-an-inclusive-approach-to-school-meals>

## **Peanut-Allergic Teen Dies of Severe Reaction that Began at School**

<https://www.allergicliving.com/2022/05/11/peanut-allergic-teen-dies-of-severe-reaction-that-began-at-school/>

## **New study suggests universal free meals improve school climate**

<https://www.foodservicedirector.com/operations/new-study-suggests-universal-free-meals-improve-school-climate>



# RESOURCES

Links we shared and used throughout the session

## **Creating an inclusive school dining room**

<https://www.seatableuk.com/single-post/2015/08/13/creating-an-inclusive-school-dining-room>

## **Stigma Free Lunch: School Meals and Student Discipline**

<https://www2.census.gov/ces/wp/2022/CES-WP-22-23.pdf>

## **School lunch: Does it bring a sense of belonging or social anxiety?**

<https://www.ksl.com/article/50459154/school-lunch-does-it-bring-a-sense-of-belonging-or-social-anxiety>

## **The Cafeteria: Creating a Positive Mealtime Experience**

<https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/Cafeteria-Mealtime-Info-Sheet.pdf>

## **RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH**

[https://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/rethinking\\_school\\_lunch\\_guide.pdf](https://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/rethinking_school_lunch_guide.pdf)

## **Students who love lunchtime are more likely to feel belonging at school**

<https://news.byu.edu/intellect/students-who-love-lunchtime-more-likely-to-feel-belonging-at-school-says-byu-study>

## **Creating a Comfortable Cafeteria**

[http://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/s3.everymomentcounts.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/12165314/Comf\\_Cafeteria\\_Info\\_Brief EMC\\_2020.pdf](http://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/s3.everymomentcounts.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/12165314/Comf_Cafeteria_Info_Brief EMC_2020.pdf)

## **What Does Food Have to Do With Belonging and Schools?**

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sense-belonging/202203/what-does-food-have-do-belonging-and-schools>

## **10 Eye-Opening Statistics on Restaurant Food Allergen Attitudes & Practices**

<https://get.apicbase.com/statistics-food-allergies-restaurant-allergen-practices/>