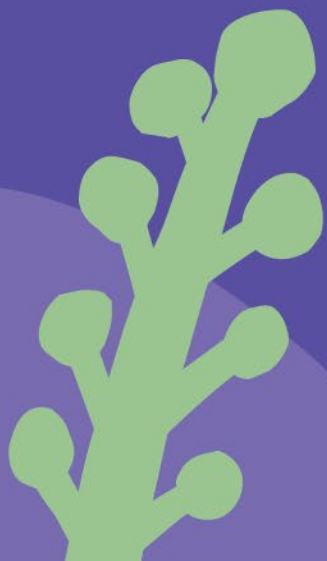


collaboration
culture
communication
courage

The 4C's behind the
business of child nutrition



Courage workbook 04

NextUp has partnered with LINQ to explore the 4 C's behind child nutrition. The 4 C's include:

- collaboration
- culture
- communication

→ **courage**

Meet the Panel

Katie Cossette
 Vanessa Hayes
 Roy R. Pistone II
 Shannon Soloman
 Jessica Shelly

Showing courage in the workplace isn't a new idea, but for food service professionals, it has never been more relevant.

From supply chain issues to staffing changes, the pandemic presented a [variety of challenges](#) for school nutrition teams. However, even in the face of constant uncertainty, food service employees focused on what matters most: feeding students.

In the final installment of "The 4 C's Behind the Business of Child Nutrition," a four-part video series hosted by [NextUp](#) and moderated by Shannon Solomon, a renowned, passionate leader in the restaurant business and K-12 education industries, school nutrition professionals expounded on the role courage plays every day in their departments.

Courage summary

PANEL MODERATOR

Shannon Soloman
School Nutrition Professional

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"It's the courage to get past the idea that this is the way we've always done something,"

Merriam-Webster uses 13 words to define courage: "Mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." This succinctly encapsulates the attitude the best food services leaders routinely use to lead their teams.

"There's no prototype for a pandemic," says panelist Vanessa Hayes, the director of school nutrition at Tift County Schools in Georgia. While feeding kids during a pandemic is certainly a challenge, Hayes and the other panelists recounted how they used courage to overcome problems big and small during the last several years.

In their panel discussion, Hayes and colleagues Jessica Shelley, Katie Cossette and Roy R. Pistone II, talked about the role courage played as they forged their own paths to meet the number one mission of all food service professionals: Feed Kids.

Keep reading to hear more from the conversation! 

Defining—and demonstrating—courage

PANEL MODERATOR

Shannon Soloman

School Nutrition Professional



There are many ways to show courage in your job, from big acts such as stepping up to challenge unfair policies to smaller gestures like praising an employee for doing an important task that's not specifically in her job description.

But just as important as defining courage is defining what it isn't. "Courage doesn't mean you are not afraid. Courage means you step outside that and you step over that fear and uncertainty and do it anyway," says Hayes.

"It's the courage to get past the idea that this is the way we've always done something,"

Showing up for students and staff

FEATURED SPEAKER

Jessica Shelley

MBA, SNS, REHS, Director of Student Dining Services for Cincinnati Public Schools in Ohio

Hayes urges her peers to "show up as your whole self [to your staff], not just the polished part." Giving workers a complete look at your struggles as well as your successes will create a team atmosphere they want to buy into, she adds.

Shelley says that as someone who likes to be in control, it took courage for her to do this with



her staff. But ultimately, she realized, "It's how we learn best – falling down flat on our face, doing it in front of your team."

Cossette was quick to correct Shelley, saying, "You weren't really failing; you were learning something."

"It's how we learn best – falling down flat on our face, doing it in front of your team."

Follow LINQ on LinkedIn to hear more from those making a difference in nutrition within their districts!



Overcoming challenges as a team

FEATURED SPEAKER

Roy R. Pistone II

Food Service Director at Citrus County



Even with all the uncertainty the spring of 2020 brought, the staff didn't blink.

Returning to work during the pandemic before vaccines were available was a scary and challenging time for food service workers. But again, the panelists detailed how they used courage to get through a variety of problems, from arming workers with makeshift masks to just finding students in the first place.

Even with all the uncertainty the spring of 2020 brought, Pistone remembers that he and his staff "didn't blink." He knew they just needed to create new solutions to combat problems they hadn't seen before.

Hayes reached out to neighboring districts to try to locate missing students, while Shelley recounted buying bandanas for her workers when masks were impossible to come by.

"I remember being terrified of going to work because of the fear of the unknown," Solomon says.

"You can't feed kids remotely," Shelley adds.

While the conditions of the pandemic have certainly changed since the spring of 2020, there are still repercussions, Hayes points out. When the 2020-21 school year ended, her staff was so exhausted that no one wanted to work in the summer, she says. Instead, she filled in with high school kids and realized a few unexpected benefits. Those students understood how hard their food service employees worked during the year and they valued their employment so much that they lined up to apply for the next summer's session, she adds. *"We made food service cool to them."*

Courage Key Takeaways

Take Chances



By leaning on his industry partners, Pistone was able to put together meal kits for his students.

Be your authentic self



Discussing your struggles or current challenges with staff can open the door for them to voice their own concerns. An added bonus? They just might come up with a solution you hadn't thought of.

When in Doubt, Keep Kids First



All leaders detailed hard decisions they faced, but they agreed that if every problem is solved by thinking of what's best for children, the solution might be easier to see.

Courage Resources

Explore more resources to support courage in your district's nutrition program.

Related Resource:

[Meet the 2021-22 Lunchroom Rockstars](#)

[Back to School with a Bang: Hot Marketing Tactics for School Nutrition Programs](#)