

CookShop Gets Cooking: Inside CookShop's Annual Conference

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Last week, the Food Bank kicked off the 18th year of our signature nutrition education program with a day-long conference, training teachers and educators to bring our CookShop program to students and parents in public schools throughout New York City.

A testament to the Food Bank's continued commitment to nutrition education, CookShop will now be bringing the knowledge and tools to adopt a healthy diet on a limited budget to more than 135,000 low-income children, teens and adults through interactive workshops and peer-led social marketing.

This year, the Food Bank was proud to introduce important updates to CookShop. The CookShop Classroom for Elementary School curriculum, for example, now links nutrition education lessons directly to core subjects like math, language arts and science, and, importantly, to the school meals children have access to every day. CookShop for Families not only engages parents and guardians in workshops that complement the Classroom curriculum, it now also incorporates important skills like budgeting and meal planning.

This year's keynote speakers – USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon and United Federation of Teachers (UFT) President Mike Mulgrew – joined Food Bank President and CEO Margarette Purvis at the conference, showing their support and appreciation for the teachers, parent coordinators and school staff who make CookShop a reality.

"We live in challenging times, and teachers can play such a vital role, not only in ensuring that children won't go hungry, but that they also eat healthy foods," said Under Secretary Concannon.

Remembering the recipe prepared during his visit to a CookShop for Families workshop in the Bronx, Michael Mulgrew told us, "I don't know what it's called, but I still make it." The UFT President further praised the hands-on CookShop curriculum for making learning accessible to all students, including those in special education.

Perhaps best of all, the conference gives us a great opportunity to hear from the CookShop teachers and educators directly about what they most value in the program.

"This is an excellent idea - to link [the lessons] to math, science and language arts," said six-year CookShop veteran Millie Peguero, referring to recent updates to the curricula she will be implementing in her Manhattan kindergarten class. "We've already noticed that the apple lesson, for example, coincided with a science lesson on fruits of the season, so we use that as the science lesson that day."