

Have You Heard?

Red Clay Superintendent Merv Daugherty was among a roundtable discussion with USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue in Washington D.C. on Sept. 21, 2018. (See photo below)

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Secretary Perdue called the meeting to learn more about how USDA can best assist and enable their efforts to serve nutritious meals to our nation's children.

The meeting was part of the Secretary's ongoing efforts to explore reforms that will make school meals more appealing by giving control back to local school food professionals who know the children best. "School officials have expertise critical to the conversation of school meal reform," said Perdue. "USDA is committed to giving schools the common sense flexibilities they need to serve nutritious meals kids will want to eat."

Dr. Daugherty was one of four school superintendents quoted nationally on the topic:

- "I believe strongly in serving my students with a well-rounded education, and proper nutrition is a critical piece of that education," said Dr. Daugherty. "I understand the importance of nutrition, and work to ensure all students can access healthy meals. In Red Clay, we have worked to find a balance of following federal standards, serving meals that students enjoy, and maintaining costs. I thank the Secretary for calling this meeting and look forward to working with him to find some common-sense regulatory changes to better serve students."
- "Every day, school meals fuel the academic success of America's future generations. School Nutrition Association welcomes this opportunity to join our partners in discussing ways to strengthen school meal programs and ensure students have access to nourishing, appealing meals. We greatly appreciate Secretary Perdue's continued dedication to reducing unnecessary burdens and streamlining the complexity of school meal programs so that our members, working in school cafeterias nationwide, can focus on serving students," said School Nutrition Association President Gay Anderson.
- "School boards have an integral role in implementing school meal programs but we should not be the cupcake police," said Neil Putnam, National School Boards Association Director and Vice President of the Mitchell Board of Education, South Dakota. "I appreciate U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue's interest in hearing directly from locally elected school board members who are on the front lines of providing affordable nutritious meals to students. In my view, increased flexibility and decreased regulations will help local school districts reduce food waste and costs and will increase student participation in school meal programs."
- "As directors of large urban school nutrition programs, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue ways the Department can simplify federal administrative requirements and help our schools continue to meet current nutrition standards for our nation's children, design desirable meals, take better advantage of in-season fruits and vegetables, increase student participation, reduce plate waste, and control costs," said Cincinnati Public Schools Director of Food Services Jessica Shelly and Miami-Dade County Public Schools Food and Nutrition Officer Penny Parham in a joint statement.

The Secretary's roundtable was held in advance of the publication of the final rule on Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements, targeted for release later this year. The [interim final rule](#) published in November 2017 gave schools flexibilities for the milk, sodium, and whole grain requirements for school year 2018-2019.

"We are looking ahead for more ways to help local operators run world-class school meal programs," said Perdue. The Secretary added that increasing program efficiency and accountability is a priority for USDA, as it makes the best use of taxpayer dollars.

USDA Acting Deputy Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Brandon Lipps expects to meet with more school meals partners and customers through the remainder of the year. USDA encourages local feedback and seeks to provide the tools and flexibilities school meal programs need to improve customer service.

