

Dalia Kinsey, RD, LD

Dishing Up Diversity + Her New Podcast



DALIA GIVES US THE DISH

on diversity in dietetics, professional branding, and her new podcast

1. Here is a little bit of background info on Dalia, her career path, and current position.

Dalia Kinsey, RD, LD is from Brunswick, Georgia. She attended Georgia State, studying Nutrition and Dietetics. Dalia did not want to be out the expense of not working for a year during her dietetic internship, so she decided to work for the Georgia Department of Public Health District 4 WIC because they were offering eligibility to apply for the DPH internship program if you committed to working for 2 years after obtaining the RD credential. During this time, Dalia was a WIC nutrition counselor. She was grateful to have financial help and experience to equip her to enter the workforce after her internship. Dalia, like many other dietitians, boldly admitted that she questions how much some internships prepare students to go right to work after graduation. She is grateful that she had the opportunity to gain work experience while offsetting the cost of the internship. Dalia currently works as a registered dietitian for Bibb County School District in Macon, Georgia.





2. Dalia tells us about the challenges and successes her district has faced this year.

"Because our district is relatively large, it is challenging to get a clear consensus from the students regarding product preferences or menu changes. We've been making progress with student focus groups this year; we use these meetings as an opportunity to highlight how important personal food preferences are and how difficult it is to make decisions that will please all of our customers. The students have really taken to heart that we are responding to their feedback but if their opinion isn't popular, the change they'd like to see isn't likely to be executed."

"One of our proudest achievements this year is bringing more nutrition education to the classrooms. We are working with the cooperative extension office to deliver school garden based lessons at multiple locations. The students that participate in the school garden programs get an opportunity to practice public speaking, reading for comprehension, and functional math problems. We've also worked with consumer science instructors this year on NSLP compliant recipe development projects for students prior to participating as a district in our state's student chef competition."

Photo: Dalia participating in Bibb County School District's Back to School Bash. The celebration is intended to decrease the number of students who are absent on the first days of school by ensuring they have the supplies and resources needed for a great start to the year. The event offers community resources, free uniform vouchers, free school supplies, free health physicals, snacks and more to help remove barriers from our families that may impact school attendance.

<https://www.forkidstodo.net/event/back-to-school-bash/>





3. Dalia has been a strong voice in the field of dietetics, supporting, encouraging, and educating others on diversity. Let's talk more about diversity in dietetics.

Dalia is the daughter of a mother who is half Cuban-half Jamaican and a father who is Black American.

When Dalia arrived at Georgia State University, a program that prides itself for its diverse student body, she was surprised to see that the room changed once everyone broke into their core programs. Suddenly she went from a sea of diversity and an exciting mix of international students, to a room full of, dare I say, "stereotypical female dietitians." We have all noticed a theme or assumption that a dietitian is a white, petite, physically-fit female, usually with type-A personality traits, who is highly organized and a go-getter. The general atmosphere toward inclusion in the program was off putting and discouraging for Dalia, who felt like she was out of place and questioned if she made the right decision pursuing dietetics. Dalia did not let this defeat her though. On page 4, Dalia tells us how she became a voice in educating others and encouraging diversity in the field.

We as professionals have the important responsibility of continuing to encourage new views from people of different backgrounds, from all over the world. We are on the right path though, because just over the past few decades, the field has become more diverse than ever. If you attended FNCE ® 2018, you can agree that male dietitians were in strong representation, adding to our organization's growing diversity. There are various new Member Interest Groups (MIGs) within the Academy that inspire diversity and serve as a platform for our evolving team of professionals. In June 2018, The Academy introduced groups like the National Organization of Men in Nutrition and Dietetics (NOMIN), The Muslim Religion MIG, and the Filipino Americans in Nutrition and Dietetics (FADAN).



4. Dalia tells us a little more about the challenges that she has faced as a minority professional and the forward direction that our field is making towards a more diverse future.



"Throughout the course of my program, we were repeatedly told that obesity is a result of low education and ignorance about healthy habits. Whenever the focus was on high rates of obesity in the black community, the assumption always was that ignorance and lack of education was 100% to blame. What I heard, even if the exact words were not said, was 'black people aren't even smart enough to figure out how to feed themselves properly.' I felt like I was paying to be insulted. The black diaspora is very diverse. Whenever I tried to explain that assuming that black people are culturally homogeneous in this country was really inaccurate, my input was not received. I felt very unheard. My options felt limited to glossing over insulting comments or being labeled difficult and hypersensitive. It was really difficult for me to manage the added psychological stress of an unwelcoming learning environment while I was juggling the expected challenges of simultaneously working and studying full-time.

I do see that things are improving. In the future I hope that my experience will become less and less relatable to Gen Z students and beyond. I'm so excited to see organizations like Diversity in Dietetics popping up.

(<https://www.diversifydietetics.org/>)

When I attended this group's first Atlanta meetup it was validating to hear other people's stories and to know that I was not alone. The need to feel seen and heard, to be part of a tribe, is universal. Feeling like an outsider in spaces where you'd hoped you would be welcome is demoralizing; but just knowing that you are not the only one working through that experience is comforting. Prejudice erases the individual and subjects you to sweeping assumptions that invalidate your personal experience. It is dehumanizing."

An example of an assumption that Dalia faces-- People assume that Dalia is the first in her family to go to college because she is black, but it is actually because she comes from a very religious family that views secular things, like school, as a distraction from religion. The belief is that more secular education you obtain the less interested you become in religion.

Dalia found home with the field of school nutrition though. She saw so much diversity in the teams in school nutrition. "School nutrition likes to level the playing field for everyone, because that is our goal with feeding the kids too." She made it clear that school nutrition is where her heart and passion lies. It is her home and she does not intend on leaving it.

"I feel so lucky to be a part of this sector of dietetics; I really feel at home. We as humans have a craving and hunger for meaning in life. I am so fortunate to have been able to find my meaning in school nutrition."



4. We asked Dalia, "How do we continue to work towards diversifying our field and learning from each other?"

"I want people to feel empowered to speak up for themselves and others when something bothers them and I want for allies to be able to ask questions when they want to ask questions. We should always be learning from each other and we should keep an open dialogue. I think what we need most is to create spaces where people can speak freely. We should also be thinking about ways to give a platform to the people that you don't see enough of, making an effort to give everyone a voice. When we notice that some groups of people are underrepresented, we need to speak up. When we notice alienating or prejudicial content or verbiage in presentations or educational materials, we need to say something."

5. Branding and social media has become so necessary in nutrition, especially for entrepreneurs and influencers. Dalia tells us how she created a brand for herself.

"I am still in the process of clarifying what my brand is and learning how to communicate that more effectively through social and print media. I follow Marie Forleo and other branding and business coaching gurus for help. One thing that she emphasizes is creating trust through transparency and allowing your unique qualities to shine in lieu of taking on a super buttoned up voice in your messaging that may not match your personal style. My advice to everyone working on personal branding would be to tap into all the resources that are available online targeted toward entrepreneurs and small business owners. A lot of the advice targeted toward that audience applies equally to personal branding."



Dalia does it all-- she even makes food pun shirts, aprons, and apparel. Check it out at <https://shop.spreadshirt.com/school-nutrition-rd> 



6. **Spoiler Alert:** Dalia Kinsey has a podcast COMING SOON!


With the increasing popularity of podcasts, we are so excited that a registered dietitian is creating a podcast all about school nutrition.

Dalia's podcast "School Nutrition Dietitian" launches this August. Her podcast focuses on sharing the school nutrition story from the point of view of the professionals behind the scenes and on the front lines. Whether you are new to school nutrition and eager to learn best practices or a seasoned pro who needs a little inspiration, SND is for you. Since the podcast is also meant to serve as a platform to advocate for greater representation of dietitians in school nutrition, guests with a background in dietetics will be featured often.

Dalia attended the podcasting session at FNCE® that was lead by Kate Agnew, APD, Communications Assistant of Dietitian Connection and Melissa Joy Dobbins, MS, RD, LDN, CDE, and CEO of Sound Bites, Inc. The session expanded on the do's and don'ts of podcasting. It shared best practices, including podcast technology and equipment, maintenance, and the creation of engaging audio content. Dalia admitted that "when starting a podcast, you might be embarrassed of your initial product, but ten years down the road you will see where you started and how you've improved."

Dalia's goal is to connect with people and share tips with the rest of the country. There is a place and a need for dietitians on podcasts. School Nutrition Dietitian launches in August and will release an episode every week.

The podcast trailer is officially up. You can subscribe now at

 <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/school-nutrition-dietitian/id1275808617?mt=2>

If you'd be interested in being a guest on the podcast, or if you would like to recommend a topic please email dalia@schoolnutritiondietitian.com