

Oklahoma Senate Interim Study:

Improved Nutrition in State-Provided Meals

Eat Real

www.eatreal.org



The fastest way to end diet-related disease is to prevent it.

Eat Real

Founded by doctors

Eat Real was founded by two prominent physicians who recognized that our kids were getting sicker, sooner from ultraprocessed food-related and lifestyle diseases.

They sought an upstream solution to the looming American health crisis.

Our Medical Advisory Council includes leading experts in childhood nutrition, pediatric health, and mental health.



From top left:
Dr. Robert Lustig and Dr. Jordan Shlain (our founders)
Dr. Michele Meitus-Snyder, Dr. Deepti Agarwal, Dr. Bojana Weatherly, Dr. Hemalee Patel, Dr. Michael Goran, Dr. Christopher Palmer (our medical advisory council)

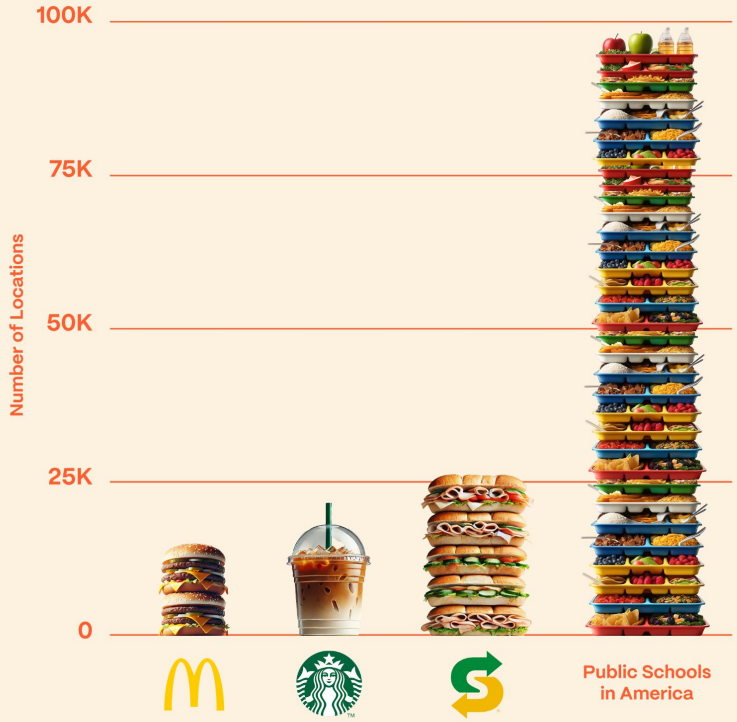
We start with our kids.

School cafeterias have the power to change the future...

for our kids.
for our communities.
for our food system.

We operate in K-12 because it's the place where we can transform eating habits as early in life as possible — and reach kids we couldn't anywhere else.

Largest Restaurant Chain in America



It’s true that America’s public schools already provide some of the most nutritious meals our kids eat.

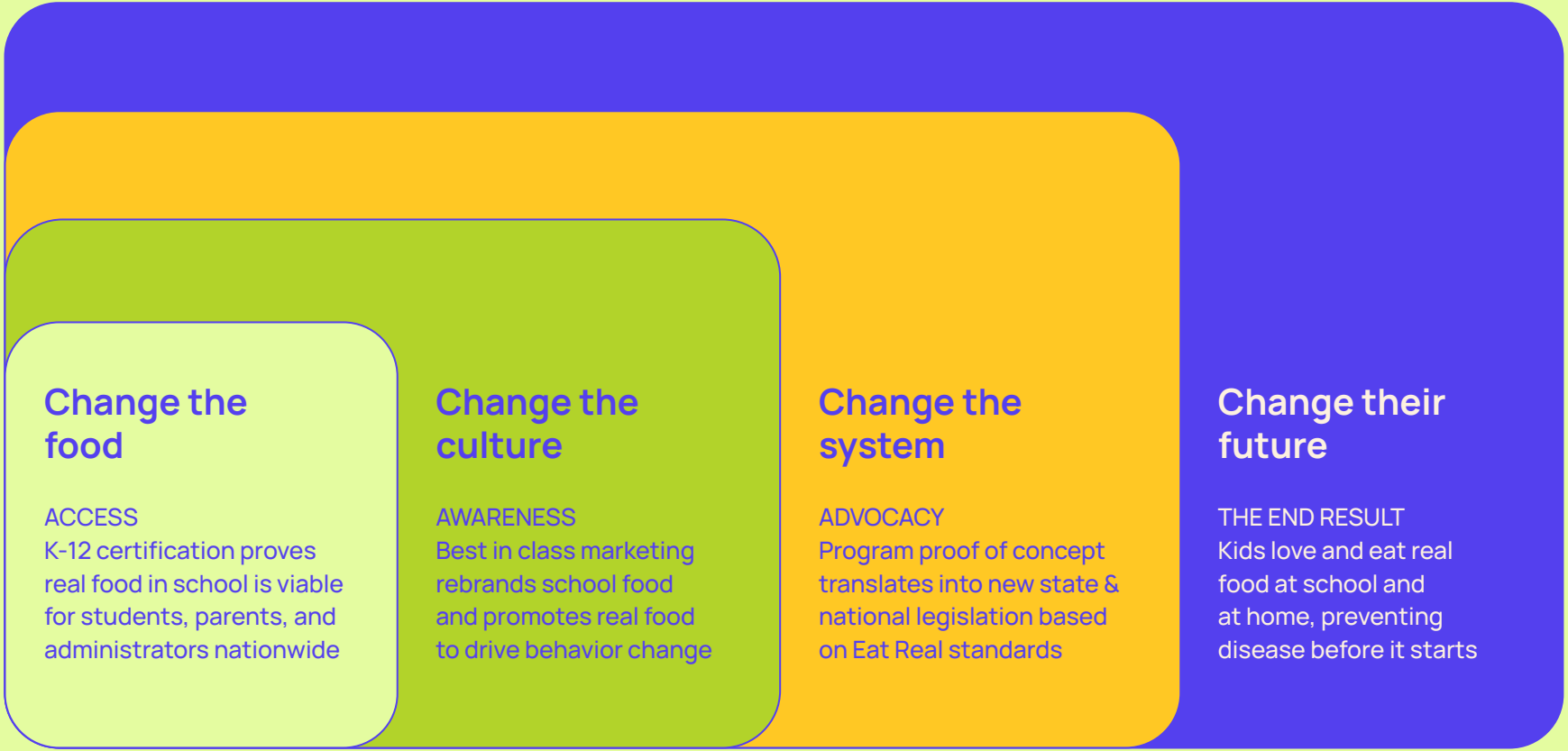
But that’s not saying much — or doing enough.

American nutrition standards are still well below what doctors and experts know is best for our kids.

Eat Real's K-12 school food certification program is a fast, proven, and scalable way to transform cafeteria menus nationwide.



Eat Real's big bet: creating measurable, enduring nutrition at scale



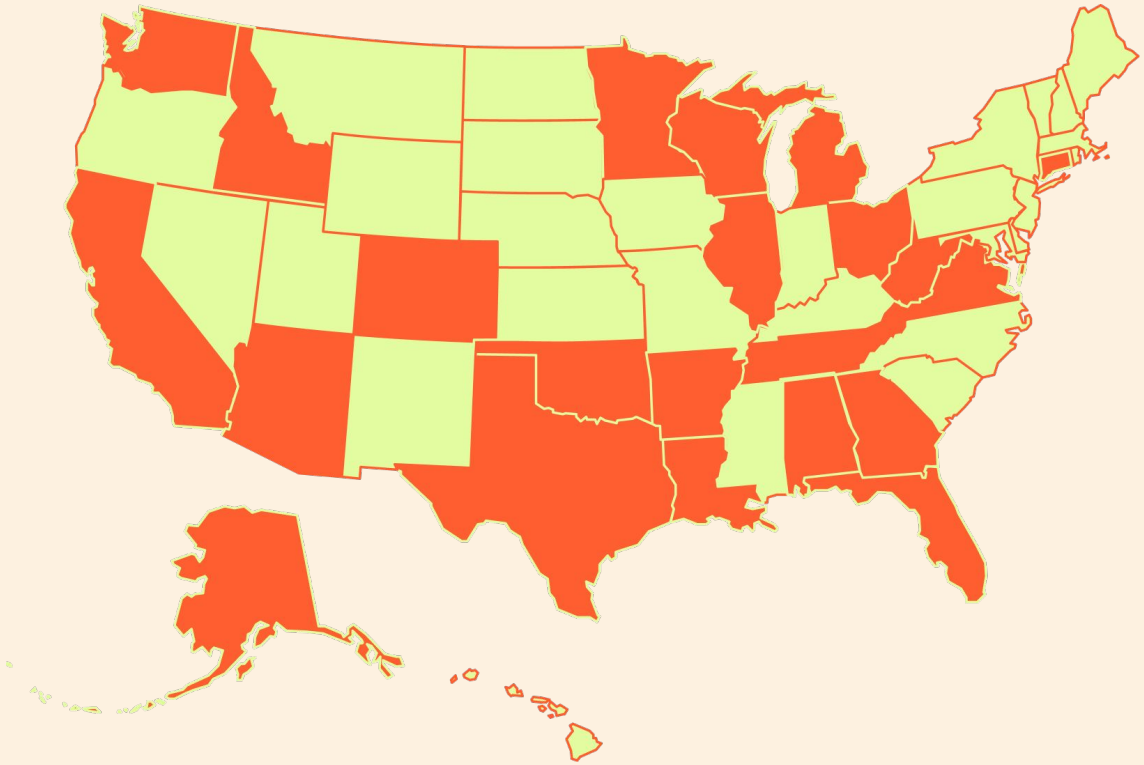
Our reach, as of the 2026-27 school year

23
states

85
school districts

1,300 - 300,000+
student enrollment size

2,200,000
students reached



Improving menus for >100K Oklahoma students

Oklahoma City Public Schools

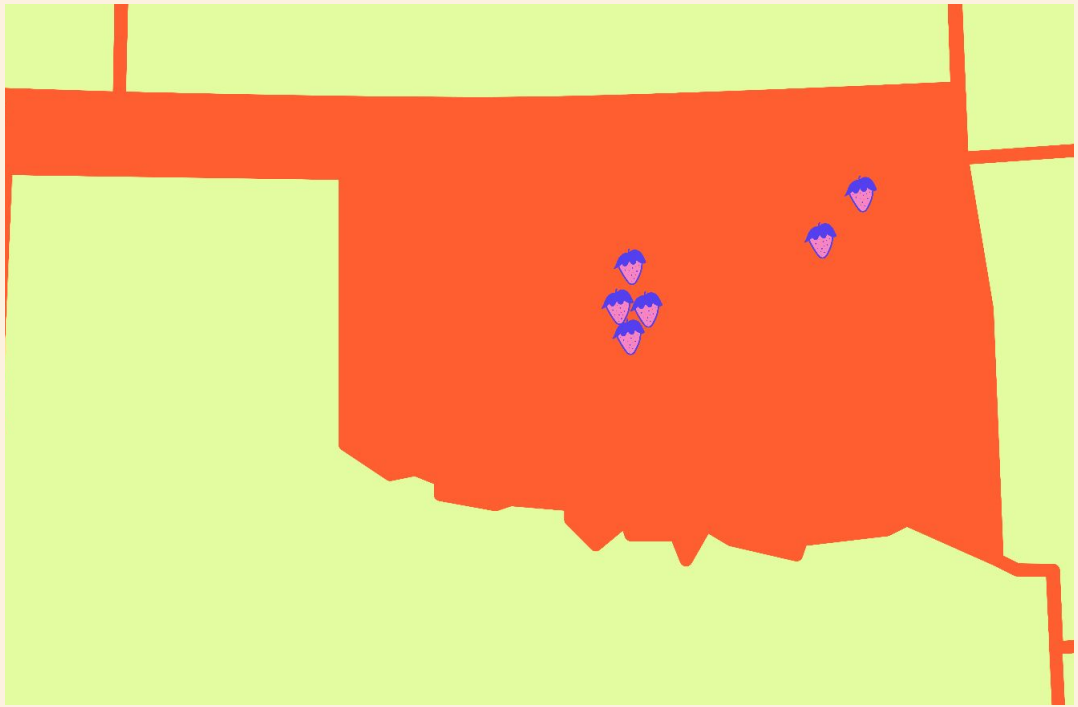
Mid-Del Public Schools

Bixby Public Schools

Edmond Public Schools

Moore Public Schools

Stillwater Public Schools



Experience with 80+ leaders nationwide points to three key obstacles to scaling real food at school

No clear framework or path to change

USDA's Child Nutrition Program standards still fall woefully short of protecting kids' health, leaving lots of room for ultraprocessed food to be the norm. There's also no clear migration path to help districts operationalize sourcing, cooking, and serving real food.

Erosion of kitchen infrastructure

Over the last five decades, the facilities and staff needed to achieve scratch cooking have been stripped out of schools nationwide, as the food industry made the case that a 'heat-and-serve' processed food model could feed more kids with less operational hassle.

Lost connection to local food systems

There are so many opportunities to strengthen the supply, scale, transport, and processing of local food from growers to growing kids. Reliable and enduring training, infrastructure, and funding is needed to accomplish true re-regionalization.

OK's school food leaders are doing great work

Highest Scoring Standards



Minimal Processing
Encouraging scratch cooking and minimally processed products
OK Median score: 53% vs 56% nationally



Healthy Fats
Encouraging fats from the healthiest possible sources
OK Median score: 50% vs 71% nationally



Fresh Choices
Increasing the volume and variety of fresh fruits and vegetables served
OK Median score: 50% vs 68% nationally

Lowest Scoring Standards



Sustainable Produce
Championing local sourcing that and agricultural re-regionalization
OK Median score: 17% vs 55% nationally



Whole Grains
Encouraging intact whole grains and 100% whole-grain products
OK Median score: 25% vs 50% nationally



Waste Prevention
Implementing prevention and recovery strategies that put resources to their best use
Median score: 17% vs 55% nationally

Median score reflects 4 districts with completed assessments

But it would take 213 years for us to reach every district in the country.

And not every school food director has the leadership skills to make this change.

Yet every student deserves it.



We need to rewrite our nation's school nutrition standards.

Oklahoma can be a leader in the real food movement.

The 10 Eat Real Standards

Reduced Sugar	Menu Variety
Whole Grains	Sustainable Produce
Fresh Choices	Responsible Proteins
Healthy Fats	Waste Prevention
Minimal Processing	Real Food Education

Example: Real Food, Healthy Meals Act (AB 1264)

Eliminating harmful ultra-processed ingredients in schools

Eat Real co-sponsored AB 1264 (Gabriel), which removes the most harmful ultra-processed ingredients from California school meals. Backed by broad bipartisan support and strong advocacy from Eat Real and our partners, it passed nearly unanimously and was signed into law in October 2025.

Phase out of harmful ingredients in schools begins in 2029; full implementation expected by 2035.



This is the investment playbook we've seen accelerate real food adoption nationwide.

Invest in Farm to School and Food is Medicine programs

To reconnect schools to their local food producers.

And to educate parents and students about the importance of real food to health.

Modernize school food infrastructure

To make sure schools have the cooking facilities and skills to prep, cook, and serve their own food.

Without kitchens, chefs, and recipes, food "products" remain the only option.

Implement Free Meals for All Kids

To eliminate the stigma for kids who rely on school food, so we nourish those who need it most.

And to make sure every district has the reliable funding to invest in purchasing real food on a regular basis.

Investing in health is investing in learning, too.



Medicine has always known you cannot separate the body from the brain. Yet somehow, we've spent decades separating the lunchroom from the classroom.

A new study published in Public Health Nutrition found that students in Eat Real-certified schools saw a 5.51 percentage point increase in English Language Arts scores — sustained over three years — and fewer students falling below math standards.

Feed children real food and they think better.

It should not have taken a study to prove something every grandmother already knows.

The time for Oklahoma students is now.



48th in academic outcomes nationwide

34th in childhood obesity rate nationwide

›25% of Oklahoma children live in food-insecure households

1 in 3 OK kids aged 12 to 17 are considered prediabetic

Sources: Oklahoma Center for Education Policy; Food Bank of Eastern OK; oklahoma.gov CDC



Change
the food.
Change
their lives.