



April 20, 2021

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PRESS RELEASE

Eat REAL Awarded \$242,766 Grant From California Dept of Food & Agriculture

*Office of Farm to Fork gives the nonprofit funding from their inaugural
Farm to School Incubator Grant Program*

Richmond, CA, April 20, 2021 – Leading food nonprofit organization [Eat REAL](https://eatreal.org) was awarded a \$242,766 grant from the California Dept of Food & Agriculture's Office of Farm to Fork inaugural Farm to School Incubator Grant Program. The grant will support Eat REAL's efforts to provide access to high-quality, nutritious food in school meal programs and further their work with Mt. Diablo Unified School District, Vacaville Unified School District, and North Monterey County Unified School District.

The new grant will run from June 2021 until March 2023 and funding will be used to:

- **build upon the successful pilot Eat REAL Certification Program in Mt. Diablo** Unified School District, an evidence-based program that empowers school districts to source nutritious meals from sustainable regional food systems
- deepen its existing work with **Mt. Diablo Unified** and **Vacaville Unified**,
- expand its work to **North Monterey County Unified**

"The pandemic has exposed the vast weaknesses of our current food system across schools, so this award could not have come at a more pivotal time in our kids' lives," says Dr. Jordan Shlain, Eat REAL Board Chair, "This work will provide stable access to high quality, local, nutritious food starting with some of our highest need communities, and create a scalable, replicable model for the rest of the country to follow."



Using an equity lens, Eat REAL will increase school procurement of whole and minimally processed California grown or produced foods by assessing the usage and nutrition of whole foods in each district's meal programs and creating customized action plans to shift school meals toward whole foods. The Eat REAL programs offered through this new grant will improve student, school staff, and community engagement via farm-to-school activities, and also increase collaboration and coordination between districts, regional agriculture partners, and the organization.

The goal is to seed sustainability and resilience in the school system for long-term integration of farm to school programming. Following the grant period, Eat REAL will publish case studies on each district's ability to achieve sustainable farm to school infrastructure, which will support the replication and scaling of Eat REAL's Certification Program to other districts across California.

Building on its prior work with the food industry, Eat REAL has been focusing its mission on bringing its certification to K-12 schools and raising awareness on the value of real food since 2019. Modeled after the LEED Green Building Certification, Eat REAL's certification program is built on comprehensive evidence-based standards that support continuous improvement. Through their collective efforts and understanding of the food system, Eat REAL empowers school district food service leaders to increase access to high quality, real food options and provides education and support that inspires students, schools, and communities to value real food.

To learn more about Eat REAL and how you can help, visit www.eatreal.org and subscribe to our newsletter. Be sure to follow Eat REAL on social media at @EatREALCertified.

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About Eat REAL:

Eat REAL® is a 501(c) (3) Public Health nonprofit organization based in Richmond, California. Eat REAL is dedicated to transforming food in K-12 schools, creating a healthier next generation and planet. Launched in 2012, Eat REAL Certified is a nutrition and sustainability best practices certification program working with school district food service leaders to raise the bar and make food in schools more nutritious and sustainable. Eat REAL's core program currently supports 237 schools, reaching over 116,000 students.