



Food Paradigm Overview

Building sustainable school food systems that nourish kids and communities.

THE PROBLEM

Schools want to serve better food, but the system makes it difficult.

Across North Carolina, many schools rely on heat-and-serve, pre-packaged meals not by choice, but because the system was built for convenience, not nourishment. Limited kitchen infrastructure, rigid procurement, staffing constraints, and dependence on large vendors make fresh, scratch-cooked meals difficult to serve, even when schools want change.

The stakes are high:

- About 1 in 5 children in North Carolina face food insecurity
- More than half of North Carolina students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals
- About 1 in 3 North Carolina children ages 10–17 are overweight or obese

For many children, school meals make up as much as half of their daily calories. School food shapes health, learning, behavior, and long-term outcomes.

OUR SOLUTION

We partner with schools to design and implement practical, financially sustainable meal programs built around fresh ingredients, scratch cooking, and long-term systems change.

- Identify barriers and opportunities
- Design scratch-cooked, whole-food menus
- Support procurement, kitchen operations, and budgeting
- Engage students, families, and staff
- Build systems schools can sustain

CURRENT WORK

Food Paradigm is currently partnering with two schools in North Carolina.

- A nonprofit early childhood center serving 100 children through a real-food, garden-connected meal pilot
- A public charter K–8 school redesigning breakfast and lunch for more than 500 students through a scratch-cooking transition

These partnerships are designed to test, refine, and demonstrate what sustainable school food transformation can look like in North Carolina today.

ABOUT FOOD PARADIGM

Food Paradigm is a North Carolina-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2023 to help transform school food systems.

Our goal is simple: healthier kids, stronger schools, and a better food future for North Carolina.

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