

ST. LOUIS CITY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Free & Reduced  
Lunch

Food  
Deserts

# FOOD DESERTS

...are areas, rural and urban, where it is difficult to obtain healthy, fresh, and affordable food, especially for those without a vehicle. The USDA defines a food desert as “not having access to a full-service grocery store within one mile” for urban areas and, “not having access to a full-service grocery store within 10 miles” for rural areas. Frequently three components go into identifying a food desert: actual proximity to a grocery store, access to a vehicle, and the number of low-income households.

This portion of the book will look at the number of households affected by food deserts in the St. Louis City School District, focusing on areas that are both low income and low access (more than 1 mile away from a grocery store without a vehicle).

# ST. LOUIS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT: FOOD DESERTS

**15%** of households in the St. Louis City School District live within a food desert.

Roughly 52,500 people live within and are affected by a food desert. Out of those 52,500 people,

**92%**

which means about 48,715 people are without easy access to a vehicle; **7% are children**. Nearly 55% of the 52,500 are defined as both low access and low income.

Most of the areas defined as food deserts by the USDA are concentrated on the eastern side of the district.

# FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

...or the National School Lunch Program, is a United States federal act that provides low-cost or free school lunches to qualified students. Families with an income at 185% of the federal poverty line qualify for the reduced meal, and families with an income at 135% of the poverty line qualify for the free meal. The National School Lunch Program serves roughly

**30.5 million children a day.**

This portion of the book will look at the Free and Reduced Lunch level in the St. Louis City School District. The school district has a total population of approximately 348,189; 28.5% of which is younger than 19.

# ST. LOUIS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT: FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

**87%** of students in the St. Louis City School District are on Free and Reduced Lunch.

Out of the 22,608 students the school district serves in public schools, 19,758 children and teens participate in the National School Lunch Program. This means the families of 19,758 students are at least at 185% of the federal poverty line.

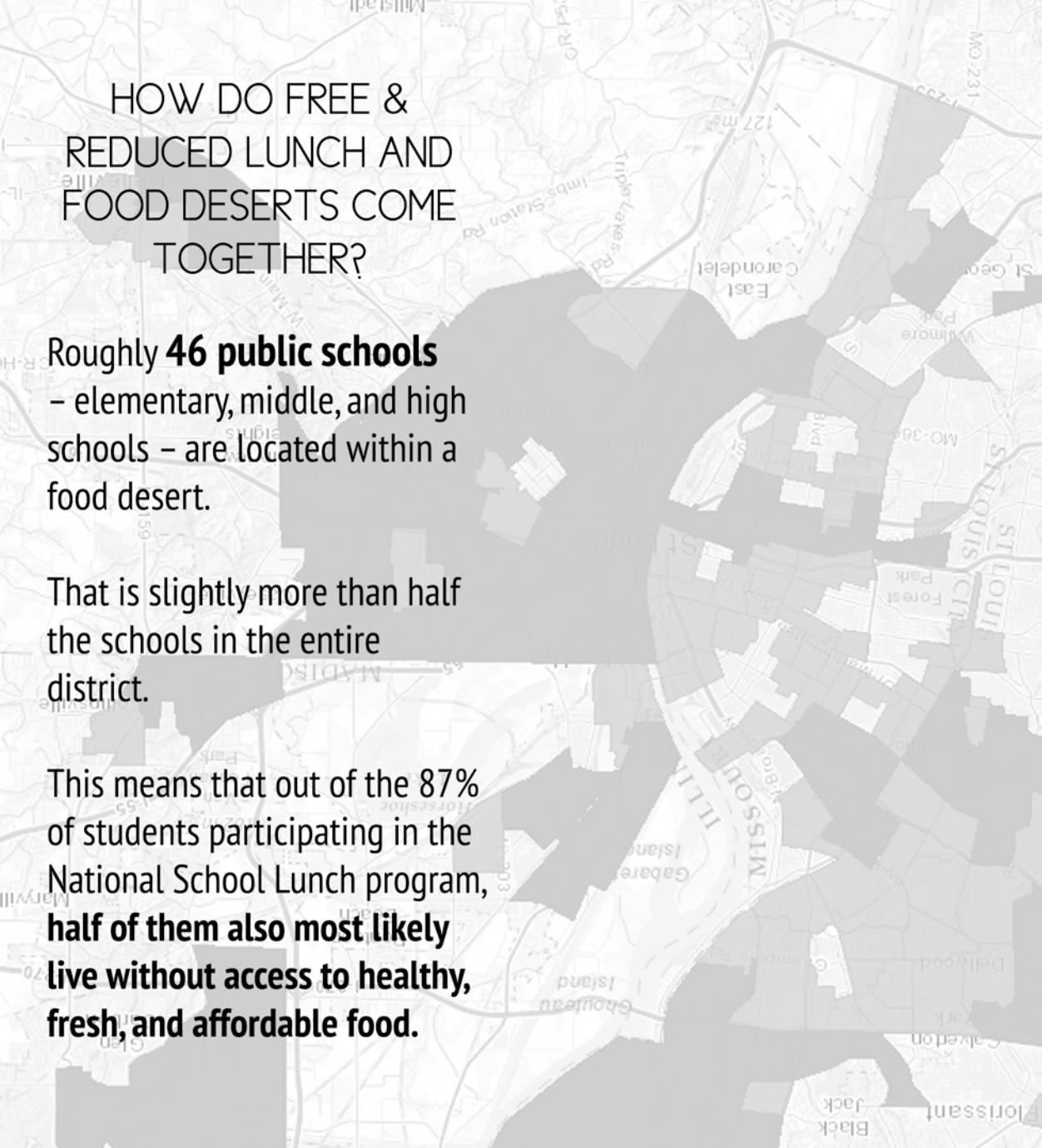
Only **3** out of the **70 public schools** in the St. Louis City School District have Free and Reduced Lunch percentages under 50%, and only **1** school has less than 40%.

## Number of Students Participating in Free and Reduced Lunch By Grade:

Elementary: 10,733 students/about 91% of elementary students

Middle: 3,091 students/about 89% of middle school students

High: 5,934 students/about 81% of high school students



# HOW DO FREE & REDUCED LUNCH AND FOOD DESERTS COME TOGETHER?

Roughly **46** public schools

- elementary, middle, and high schools – are located within a food desert.

That is slightly more than half the schools in the entire district.

This means that out of the 87% of students participating in the National School Lunch program, **half of them also most likely live without access to healthy, fresh, and affordable food.**