

Building Thriving Schools for all Nashville Students: *Our Collective Responsibility for Equity in Education*



Nashville
Public Education
FOUNDATION

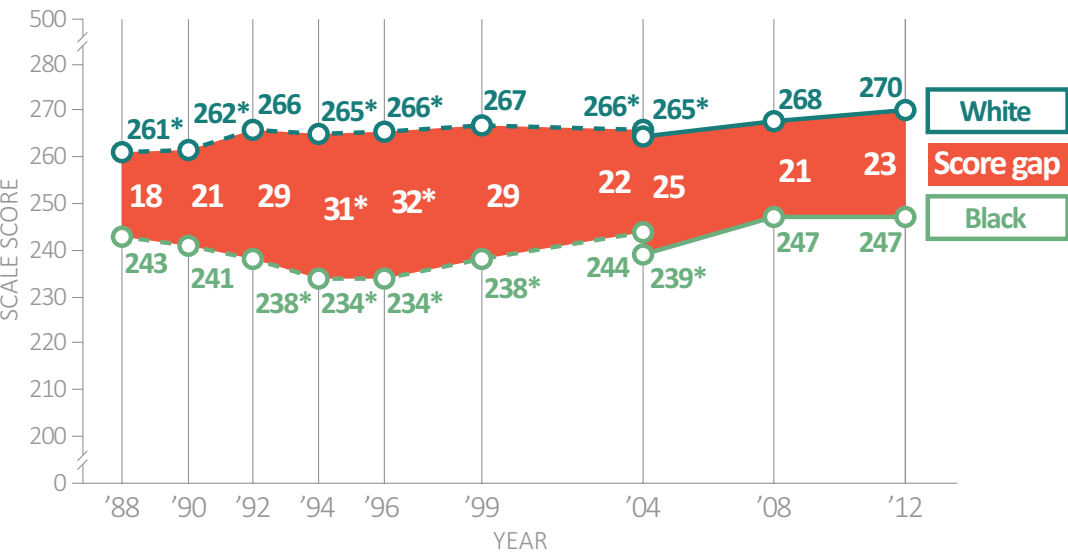
In November, the Nashville Public Education Foundation released the [Thriving Schools](#)¹ framework to expand the conversation around school success and focus on conditions that must be present for all students to thrive. Yet simply changing the conditions by themselves will not create the equitable outcomes we all want to see. Our schools were designed within a larger system of social institutions—including housing, law enforcement, criminal justice, health care, and employment—that collectively inhibit the ability for students of color and their families to build wealth and gain access to other resources that help them to succeed. **At the same time we work to address school conditions, we must also identify and dismantle the inequities baked into our schools and communities that prevent too many of our students from thriving.**



Educational equity means that all students have the resources and supports to succeed in their education, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, language, or any other factor. Equity is not about providing equal opportunity. It is about removing barriers and targeting supports based on each individual student circumstance.

In our public schools, we see inequities play out in a multitude of ways. Students of color are [four times as likely to never receive grade-level-appropriate assignments](#)² as their white peers. Black students are [disciplined at rates significantly higher](#)³ than other students, and the disciplinary actions tend to be harsher. Students of color and students from low-income families are more likely to have [less experienced](#)⁴ and [less effective teachers](#)⁵ than their white and more affluent peers. They also are more likely to attend school in buildings that are [older and have more maintenance needs](#)⁶. All of this of course paves the way for inequitable outcomes for our students.

Trend in NAEP reading average scores and score gaps for white and black 13-year-old students



*Significantly different (p<.05) from 2012.
NOTE: Black includes African American. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin. Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scores.

Despite massive reform efforts and millions of dollars of investment in public education, achievement gaps between black and white students have remained relatively stagnant for over 30 years.



These are just some of the ways we perpetuate institutional racism in our schools and communities. Education policy certainly affects inequities, and we must continue to identify and dismantle policies at the local, state, and federal levels that lead to inequity in our schools. At the same time, we must also build awareness among all stakeholders about the inequities that exist in schools and amplify the voices of families and communities of color to inform how schooling must change to meet the needs of their students.

We know we don't have all the answers. We invite you to engage with us and inform us as we explore ways to dismantle inequities in our schools. NPEF will actively be advocating for these changes in our community and collaborating with others who are working to dismantle inequity. We believe we can and must change the very structures on which our society is built to meet the needs of all our students and families.

To advance equity in our schools, NPEF believes we must:

Talk about how race and racism play out in our schools and build the capacity of district and city leaders to talk openly and comfortably about the effect of racism and implicit bias on education

Assess how existing city structures, programs, and systems perpetuate inequities that prevent low-income students and students of color from thriving in school

Evaluate and dismantle zoning patterns that perpetuate inequity and promote affordable housing in affluent communities

Overhaul the way we fund public schools; increase and direct funding so that it addresses the unique contexts of individual students and communities

Prioritize equity by identifying and communicating equity goals for our students in collaboration with families and stakeholders

Support our teachers and leaders in developing and delivering culturally relevant curriculum that meets the needs of each student





Resources on Education Equity

[Glossary of Education Equity Terms](#)⁷, The Aspen Institute.

Diagnosing inequities in schools: [Resource Equity Diagnostic for Districts](#)⁸, Alliance for Resource Equity, 2020.

Understanding inequity in Nashville schools: [Making the Unequal Metropolis](#)⁹, Ansley Erickson, 2016.

Understanding structural racism: [The Color of Law](#)¹⁰, Richard Rothstein, 2017.

Setting equity goals: [Six Goals of Educational Equity](#)¹¹, IDRA, 2020.

Talking about race and racism in education: [Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations about Race](#)¹², Beverly Daniel Tatum, Updated 2017.

Equitably funding education: [How Money Matters for Schools](#)¹³, Learning Policy Institute, 2017. [Investing for Student Success: Lessons from State School Finance Reform](#)¹⁴, Learning Policy Institute, 2019.

Supporting teachers: [Teach and Transform](#)¹⁵, Liz Kleinrock, [The Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards](#)¹⁶, Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018.

Evaluating school zoning: [Housing Costs, Zoning, and Access to High-Scoring Schools](#)¹⁷, Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, 2012. [Education Equity Relies on Housing Policy, Not Just Choice](#)¹⁸, Urban Institute, 2016.

¹ thrivingschoolsnashville.org, ² ntp.org/publications/view/student-experiences/the-opportunity-myth, ³ brookings.edu/research/disproportionality-in-student-discipline-connecting-policy-to-research, ⁴ learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/CRDC_Teacher_Access_REPORT.pdf, ⁵ ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20174008/pdf/20174007.pdf, ⁶ uscrr.gov/pubs/2018/2018-01-10-Education-Inequity.pdf, ⁷ assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf, ⁸ educationresourceequity.org/packs/media/documents/diagnostic-0433cc47c78ef88b9d538a1f9cb6e1b7.pdf, ⁹ press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo22340580.html, ¹⁰ epi.org/publication/the-color-of-law-a-forgotten-history-of-how-our-government-segregated-america, ¹¹ idra.org/equity-assistance-center/six-goals-of-education-equity, ¹² beverlydanieltatum.com/published-works, ¹³ learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/how-money-matters-report, ¹⁴ learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/investing-student-success-school-finance-reforms-report, ¹⁵ teachandtransform.org, ¹⁶ tolerance.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/TT-Social-Justice-Standards-Facilitator-Guide-WEB_0.pdf, ¹⁷ brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0419_school_inequality_rathwell.pdf, ¹⁸ housingmatters.urban.org/articles/education-equity-relies-housing-policy-not-just-choice



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