

By Design

The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools

ACTION GUIDE

WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

Creating an equitable, just school system where all students thrive will take collective action from all of us. Whether *By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools* provided information that was entirely new to you, or if you are already well-steeped in the work of dismantling school- and city-based inequities, your voice, passion, and commitment is needed.

The purpose of learning about our history is not to invoke guilt or shame. It is to build a shared understanding of how we got here so that each of us, in our own unique roles in our community, can work to create a better future for all Nashvillians. It will truly take all of us to develop and implement the types of solutions necessary to ensure every

student has what they need to thrive each day. After watching *By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools*, become a champion for the film by using this guide as a starting point for taking action.



Top photo credit: Nashville Public Library, Metro Nashville Archives



Nashville
Public Education
FOUNDATION



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About the Film

By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools is a documentary produced by the Nashville Public Education Foundation examining historical moments of public schooling in Nashville dating back to the 1800s. The purpose of the film is twofold. First, **to educate city leaders and the community** about how public policy formed the basis for the education system we know in Nashville today, with an emphasis on the inequities that have been created and perpetuated both directly and indirectly. Second, the film is intended to **generate awareness of the importance of a just, equitable school system** and to stimulate community-wide conversations about collective solutions for a better system where all students thrive. This guide serves as a starting point to stimulate these conversations, providing **action steps you can take to get involved** after viewing *By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools*.



Photo credit: Eldred Reany / The Tennessean-USA TODAY

The film features **the expertise of local and national historians** on the development of our city's municipal systems and public schools and identifies key moments that shaped our schools. It features **first-hand accounts of policymakers** who provide insight into historical decisions and priorities influencing the experience of those moving through Nashville's public school system. And it features **testimonials from former Nashville Public Schools students and teachers** on the forefront of integrating our public schools, in addition to more recent student experiences in our schools.

These accounts allow us to take a look back at our history and collectively acknowledge where we have been so we can decide as a city where we want to go.

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Become a Champion: take action today

Get Involved

- ☐ Watch [*By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools*](#) with your family
- ☐ Read [Making the Unequal Metropolis](#) by Dr. Ansley Erickson, [A Walk Down Historic Jefferson Street](#) by Ed Kindall, and [Rac\(e\)ing to Class: Confronting Poverty and Race in Schools and Classrooms](#) by Rich Milner
- ☐ Start a book club with the books listed above and visit [Alkebu-Lan Images bookstore](#) on Jefferson St. for more great titles about the Black experience
- ☐ Share about the film on social media along with one thing you learned from it, using the hashtag #ByDesignFilm
- ☐ Read NPEF's [Thriving Schools Framework](#) and review the Thriving Schools [Advocacy Guide](#)
- ☐ Watch NPEF's [webinar](#) "Inequities of the Nashville Youth Experience" featuring Vanderbilt University's Dr. Maury Nation
- ☐ [Host a screening](#) of the film for friends, coworkers, students, your PTO group, or others in your community and lead a discussion afterwards
- ☐ Keep up to date on important national and local education topics by checking out [Chalkbeat TN](#), [the 74](#), and [the Education Trust in Tennessee](#)
- ☐ Review Tennessee's state [strategic plan](#) for education to understand the state's priorities and consider if they align with yours
- ☐ Listen to WLPN's podcast [The Promise](#), Season 1 and Season 2, and the New York Times' podcast [Nice White Parents](#)
- ☐ Watch Nashville Public Television's [documentary](#) *Facing North: Jefferson Street, Nashville* and [series](#) *Memories of Nashville*
- ☐ Take a teacher out for a cup of coffee and ask them what you can do to help them reduce inequities for their students

Photo credit: Nashville Public Library, Metro Nashville Archives



Become a Champion: take action today

Engage Further

- ☐ Write a letter to your [council member](#) urging them to use an [equity framework](#) as they develop city policy
- ☐ Write a letter to your [school board representative](#) urging them to adopt district-wide equity policies and metrics
- ☐ Write an op-ed for a local publication about the importance of creating an equitable school system where all students thrive
- ☐ [Learn about](#) the inequities perpetuated by Tennessee's BEP funding formula for education, and advocate for more funding and improvements to the BEP
- ☐ Host regular coffee chats or other meetups with friends and coworkers to discuss ways to help create an equitable school system where all students thrive
- ☐ Watch [By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools](#) with any Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training or other groups at your place or work or other community organization
- ☐ Volunteer to be on a School Improvement Planning team by contacting your [principal](#)
- ☐ [Learn about](#) the inequities prevalent for students in Nashville as they navigate college and career after graduation

Dive Deeper

- ☐ Host a screening of [By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools](#) at your place of work or other organization, if adequate space is accessible, that is open to the public (contact info@nashvillepef.org to get started)
- ☐ [Follow NPEF](#) to find out about additional learning opportunities this summer and fall that will explore other topics broadening and deepening the conversation on the history of public education in Nashville
- ☐ [Learn about](#) recent laws in several states prohibiting instruction in public schools on the role of race in our history and how these laws impact students



The Nashville Public Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works to remove barriers to educational experiences by highlighting success, serving as a critical friend to Metro Nashville Public Schools, convening stakeholders, and advocating for change so all students can thrive in school.