

# By Design

The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools

## How to Create your City's Story about the History of Your Public Schools

### We started with a question.

Why are our schools the way they are and what's preventing some of our students from thriving in school? While we had some theories, we began to realize that we didn't have a solid understanding of why certain policies and decisions were put in place decades ago and the effect of those policies and decisions on our students today.

Fast forward two years and hundreds of conversations later, and *By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools* was born. With this one-hour film, we hoped to create a shared understanding among Nashvillians of how we got to where we are as well as to provide space for conversations about where we go from here so that all our students can thrive in school.

### 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 film is intended to educate city leaders and the community and to generate awareness and advocacy to stimulate policy solutions for a better public school system where all students thrive. Learn more and watch the film at <https://nashvillepef.org/by-design>.

### How to Use this Guide

*By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools* highlights our city's story, but this story is not completely unique to Nashville. Cities and school districts across our country share similar histories of school desegregation, challenges with integration, and a duty to address the needs of a changing and growing population. We encourage you to find your city's own *By Design* story and to use this guide as a starting point.



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.

# A Roadmap for Telling your City's History of Public Schools



## Understand your intentions

Think critically about why telling the history of schools is **important to your city** and what actions you **want your audience** to take.



## Do your research

Leverage **historians, authors, reporters**, and other **experts** who have a deep knowledge of your city's political, social, educational, and cultural history.



## Use local voices to find the story

**Personal narratives of the lived experiences** related to your city's story - such as the students who originally integrated Nashville public schools featured in *By Design* - are invaluable. Use these interviews to **guide the themes and takeaways**.



## Identify the right moment

Every community has unique political forces that affect public discourse. Evaluate your local context for **complementary conversations, willing collaborators, and influential community leaders** to determine community readiness.



## Land the plane

Telling the history of your city's schools is not the end game. Determine **what other actions need to happen** - town hall convenings, discussions with policymakers, student voice events, etc. - to leverage the story to drive change.

