



# Nashville Public Education FOUNDATION

## What we do: This Project

Advocating for Change	●
Promoting Excellence & Innovation	
Supporting MNPS	
Convening Stakeholders	●

## What We Did:

NPEF collaborated with education experts, leading historians, community and state leaders, and students from defining moments in Nashville’s public school history to tell the story of our schools’ history and create the documentary.

# By Design:

## The Shaping of Nashville’s Public Schools

### What it is:

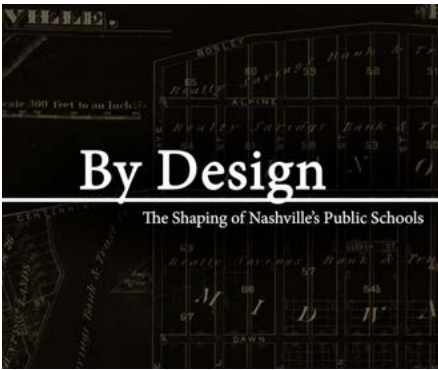
*By Design: The Shaping of Nashville’s Public Schools* is an hour-long documentary produced by the Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF) examining historical moments of public schooling in Nashville dating back to the 1800s.

The film explores the effects of city policies and community priorities on schools and illustrates how our history has created and maintained inequities. Aside from education policy, the film aims to educate on the decades of intentional decisions and policies around housing, transportation, and the economy that marginalized the Black community and continue to marginalize non-white communities within our city. The documentary also illustrates how schools and a school district alone cannot combat all issues facing children, which include food security and affordable housing, access to quality healthcare and related services, and gainful employment and opportunities to create wealth.

Interviewees for the film’s historical references included Dr. Linda Wynn, Assistant Director for State Programs, Tennessee Historical Commission; Dr. Ansley Erickson, historian and author of *Making the Unequal Metropolis*; and David Ewing, local historian. The film also included first-hand testimonials from policymakers, former teachers, and former Nashville public school students, including five of the original 16 Black students who desegregated Nashville schools in 1957. The documentary was produced by NPEF in partnership with Nashville-based video production company Moving Picture Boys. Consulting partners and collaborators included Dr. Crystal deGregory, the Nashville Public Library, and Metro Archives.

NPEF premiered the film at the Belcourt Theatre on June 29, 2021, followed by a panel discussion with the Tennessean’s David Plazas, historian Dr. Ansley Erickson, and researcher Dr. Rich Milner. NPEF held additional screenings of the film across the city with the intent to provide ample opportunity for all Nashvillians to view the documentary in person and in community. NPEF also invited the community to screen the film through personally-hosted viewings with family, friends, coworkers, faith groups, and others.

A significant goal of the film was to spark conversation and community-wide solutions to help address inequities in our school system. NPEF created a [Watch Guide](#) to jumpstart discussions after viewing the film, and an [Action Guide](#) to provide concrete steps Nashvillians can take to use the information from the film to work towards a system where all students thrive each day.



# By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools

## The Impact:

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Nearly 2,000 Nashvillians attended screenings across the city prior to the film's public release in fall 2021.



Hundreds of Nashvillians viewed the film in personally-hosted screenings with coworkers, faith groups, friends, and other social and professional organizations.



To date, 95% of survey respondents stated projects like *By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools* are important for our city and schools.



Ninety-five percent of respondents shared that the film taught them something they did not previously know about Nashville, inspired them to learn more, and motivated them to have conversations with friends, families, coworkers, and others in their community about the themes in the film.



The film was covered by several local news outlets, furthering NPEF's goal of sparking conversation about our shared history, the inequities perpetuated for students, and how we can move forward to find solutions as a community.

## Why it Matters:

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Three years ago, NPEF began having conversations about why some students are thriving in our schools while others are not. These conversations revealed a need to explore how our schools were designed from the start to understand who they serve well and whose needs they are not meeting. This documentary helped create a space for community conversations about the systems and structures that were put in place generations ago that are still impacting our schools today, and to drive toward community-wide solutions about how to prevent inequities in the future.

NPEF believes it is critical to examine our history for several reasons: to educate the community to develop a shared knowledge of where we have been, to dispel misconceptions about why inequities in our system have developed, and to properly recognize the intentional and unintentional effects of policy decisions and political will on our students over time. NPEF created *By Design: The Shaping of Nashville's Public Schools* to not only examine our history, but to act as a catalyst for important community action and systemic change in Nashville to create a system that provides an equitable, just education for all students.

## How To Get Involved:

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Watch the trailer and film, available at <https://nashvillepef.org/by-design/>.

Host a watch party at your place of work or at a club, faith community, using our [Watch Guide](#).

Check out the [Action Guide](#) to explore advocacy actions you can take today.