



DMPS

**BUILDING
LEADERS
IN URBAN
EDUCATION**

**BLUE CONTRACT
HANDBOOK**

2021-2022



Think. Learn. **Grow.**

www.dmschools.org

It is the policy of the Des Moines Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you believe you have (or your child has) been discriminated against or treated unjustly at school, please contact Carol Wynn-Green, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager, 2100 Fleur Drive, (515) 242-7709, carol.wynn-green@dmschools.org.



Think. Learn. **Grow.**

...becoming the model for urban education in the United States.

Dear DMPS Teachers,

In the spring of 2012, the DMEA and DMPS leadership embarked on a bold plan to provide the most progressive teacher development opportunity in the country. Now, ten years into the Building Leaders in Urban Education Contract (BLUE), the entire plan has come to fruition. DMPS teachers are experiencing robust mentoring and support in their first years, with additional professional development focused on supporting their efforts to effectively serve our most challenged learners. These teachers then advance to powerful learning and leading experiences as they obtain their Master of Science in Education at Drake University in Culturally Responsive Leadership & Instruction free of charge. This year our seventh cohort of BLUE teachers will begin their work, even as previous BLUE program participants assume more and more leadership roles throughout our district.

In the United States, teachers need just four years of college to become licensed teachers. The work of teachers, especially in an urban environment such as Des Moines, is complex, challenging, and demanding. A four-year degree simply is not sufficient to adequately prepare you for the success that we want for you and our students. The BLUE contract is designed to provide you access to continuous learning that all teachers need to develop into the best teachers in the country and to meet the needs of a diverse student population, many of whom live in poverty and whose first language is not English.

I'm proud of the BLUE contract and of our teachers that have signed on for this opportunity. I expect the BLUE teachers to continue becoming the next generation of leaders for DMPS – both in and out of the classroom. The BLUE contract will support you in becoming the best of the best. My goal with the BLUE contract is to improve teacher development; improve teacher longevity; elevate the professionalism of our teacher corps; and most importantly, improve results for our students.

Thank you for stepping up to take on the challenges and the many rewards of being a DMPS BLUE teacher!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas M. Ahart".

Thomas M. Ahart

Thomas M. Ahart, Ed.D. | Office of the Superintendent

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Office of Talent and Personnel
August 2021

POINTS OF CONTACT QUICK REFERENCE

A large number of DMPS staff support the success of teachers on the BLUE Contract. Depending on the nature of your questions, the best available answers can come from several key individuals.

Talent and Personnel

For questions about the specific rules and obligations of the BLUE Contract as well as professional development connected to the BLUE Contract.

Jeremy Schwennen, Mentoring and Induction Coordinator

242-7924

jeremiah.schwennen@dmschools.org

Business and Finance

For questions about billing at Drake and tax implications of the BLUE Contract.

Erica Armstrong, Business and Finance Manager

242-7750

erica.armstrong@dmschools.org

Drake University Programming

For questions about courses and systems at Drake in relation to the BLUE Contract.

Dr. Jill Johnson, Professor

515-271-3992

jill.johnson@drake.edu

PURPOSE

The Building Leaders in Urban Education (BLUE) Contract provides continuous learning and leading opportunities for teachers in their early years as educators. While this Contract is designed to help the district better serve its students by providing professional development and course work in those areas where teachers are most in need of support, it is also designed to help compensate teachers at a higher salary by connecting teachers with free-of-charge master’s degree coursework, attract top talent, and keep new teachers in the profession for the long-term; there are no throw-away teachers.

At the end of three years on the contract, teachers will have earned a master’s degree through curriculum collaboratively developed among the district, the DMEA, and Drake University. These courses develop teacher efficacy and commitment to equity throughout our educational system. Upon completing the program, teachers will be uniquely positioned for career success as an educator in an urban setting and be well-equipped to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student body. Further, the support structures and professional development opportunities provided by the district will create more opportunities for District teachers and administrators to collaborate in the interest of building social capital and organizational effectiveness.

The BLUE Contract exists to ensure that our teachers are the very best educators and leaders possible. Our students deserve nothing less.

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PREFACE

This Building Leaders in Urban Education (BLUE) Handbook (hereinafter referred to as the “Handbook”) is prepared for informational purposes only. This Handbook is intended to act as a supplement to the 2021-2022 Comprehensive Agreement between the Des Moines Independent Community School District (hereinafter referred to as the “District”) and the Des Moines Education Association (hereinafter referred to as "DMEA"). In addition, this Handbook is intended to act as a supplement to the District’s Employment Information Handbook for All Employees (hereinafter referred to as the “Handbook for All Employees”).

This Handbook is a resource to help inform teachers working under the BLUE Contract of the expectations and services available. By thoroughly reading this Handbook, the teacher Comprehensive Agreement, and the Handbook for All Employees, teachers working under the BLUE Contract will be informed of benefits and opportunities as well as potential consequences for failure to meet the District’s expectations that are outlined in the Board Policy, Employee Handbook, and Iowa Teaching Standards.

The policies contained in this Handbook may be changed or amended at any time. Teachers working under the BLUE Contract will receive one copy of this Handbook annually and are required to review this Handbook annually. In addition, teachers working under the BLUE Contract are required to certify that they understand their responsibility to comply with the requirements of the BLUE Contract. Violations of this responsibility may constitute cause for disciplinary action. A copy of this Handbook will also be placed on SharePoint and the District website to facilitate efficient notification of amendments throughout the year, if any.

ELIGIBILITY

The BLUE Contract option is available to any regular full-time certified and regular part-time certified teachers who are completing their second-year initial license and transitioning to their standard license following completion of the two-year DMPS Induction program.

It is the mutual expectation and understanding of the District and DMEA that part-time teachers working under the BLUE Contract will participate fully in the requirements of the BLUE Contract.

DURATION OF BLUE CONTRACT

It is the intent of the District, and of teachers choosing to work under the BLUE Contract, that the teacher shall continue working under the BLUE Contract for six years of employment as a teacher with the District.

ENROLLMENT IN THE BLUE CONTRACT

The District will allow any teacher who is eligible for the BLUE contract the option of agreeing to work for the District under the terms of the BLUE Contract. Teachers working under the BLUE Contract will receive documentation, including this Handbook, of their decision to work under the terms of the BLUE Contract.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BLUE AND INDUCTION

All teachers on their initial license will participate in the district’s Induction program. Induction prepares teachers for success through monthly professional development on subjects including onboarding, equity, and pedagogy. At the conclusion of Induction, all teachers will be given the opportunity to join the BLUE Contract.

WITHDRAWAL FROM BLUE CONTRACT

If a teacher wishes to opt out of the contract after completing any Drake coursework, they must fill out the BLUE Change Request form (link below). They will be required to reimburse the District for costs associated with the teacher's coursework toward their master's degree, per DMPS Board policy and comprehensive agreement. See **Appendix** for specific details on repayment amounts.

The **BLUE Change Request Form** is located on the HR Forms and Processes Page [HERE](#)

REMOVAL FROM THE BLUE CONTRACT

If the teacher does not successfully complete a year under the BLUE Contract, they will revert to the traditional contract for subsequent years. Reasons why the District may choose not to continue a teacher on the BLUE Contract may include, but are not limited to, tardiness or absences that the District determines are excessive, poor evaluations, and difficulty or inability to perform the requirements of the BLUE contract.

If a teacher is removed from the BLUE Contract after completing Drake coursework, they will be required to reimburse the District for costs associated with the teacher's coursework toward their master's degree, per DMPS Board policy and comprehensive agreement. See **Appendix** for specific details on repayment amounts.

TRANSFERS

It is the intent of the District to keep teachers in their original assignment. The District may allow teachers one transfer between buildings during their time on the BLUE contract. Teachers may request permission to transfer by filling out the Request to Transfer Form (below).

Additional transfer requests will be considered by the Director of Personnel for Certified Staff on a case-by case basis and will be based on the needs of the teacher and the needs of the school system as determined by the District.

During times of reduction in force, the District may transfer teachers to accommodate its reductions. This reduction in force transfer will not be considered as the teacher-initiated transfer.

The **BLUE Request to Transfer Form** is located on the HR Forms and Processes Page [HERE](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Semester One:

During the first semester that a teacher works under the BLUE Contract, the teacher shall participate in a series of three informational sessions provided and collaboratively developed by the District and Drake in order to coordinate admission to, course selection in, and logistics for the degree program at Drake. The dates for these sessions are provided in the **Appendix**.

Years One through Three:

Beginning in the second semester of the first year that a teacher works under the BLUE Contract, the teacher will start coursework that will count toward the teacher's Master's Degree in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction at Drake University. This coursework is expected to be completed in December of the teacher's third year on the contract. Those teachers who already possess a master's degree will instead work towards their Specialist's Degree in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction alongside the same cohort.

Years Four through Six:

Teachers who successfully complete the Master's Degree or Specialist's Degree in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction will remain with the District for the remainder of their six-year contract, serving under the BLUE Contract as teachers, teacher-leaders, mentors, or in other roles. Professional development during these years is strongly encouraged but optional (see **INDIGO Pathway**, below).

CREDIT EARNING PROCEDURES

Like any other teacher, teachers on the BLUE Contract are eligible for salary advancement through the accumulation of graduate credits. BLUE Contract Teachers will need to complete a Course Approval for Salary Advancement Form before taking courses and then will use the Transcript Upload for Salary Advancement Form to confirm their completion of those courses.

The **Transcript Upload for Salary Advancement Form** and the **Course Approval for Salary Advancement Form** can be found on the HR Forms and Processes page [HERE](#)

BLUE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION CONDITIONAL LICENSURE: THE GREEN PATHWAY

Growing and Retaining Educators for Exceptional Needs

Some teachers are entering the BLUE Contract through a special pathway we call the GREEN pathway. These teachers have signed on to DMPS as teachers of special education through a conditional licensure and need to start coursework right away in Year 1 (during Induction) in order to secure the appropriate teaching credentials. Teachers on the GREEN path have the same expectations as any other BLUE teachers with the following exceptions:

- In the event that required coursework at Drake conflicts with scheduled Induction PD, the Mentoring and Induction Coordinator will work with the teacher to make alternative arrangements.
- Courses taken at Drake to complete the necessary Special Education licensure will count towards the Master's Degree in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction as electives, meaning that GREEN path students will typically only be taking the required core classes at Drake during Years 1, 2, and 3 of the BLUE contract.

- While the standard BLUE Contract teacher can have up to 32 credits paid for by the district, teachers on the GREEN pathway option can have up to 45 credits paid for by the district as determined by the Plan of Study submitted to Human Resources.

BLUE AFTER DRAKE: THE INDIGO PATHWAY

Implementing Nonracist practices and Disrupting Injustice for Groups within our Organization

After a BLUE contract teacher has completed their degree program at Drake, they have no additional PD or coursework requirements. For those wishing to continue their work in antiracist educational practices, a series of rich, varied, and optional experiences exist in what we call the INDIGO pathway. Participation in INDIGO path activities is voluntary, and teachers may engage in as many or as few of the various opportunities as they wish. Watch the BLUE Bulletin for details on INDIGO pathway opportunities as they are announced.

COMPLETION OF PROGRAM

If, under the terms of the BLUE Contract, a teacher successfully completes six years of teaching as well as earning their master's degree (or specialist's degree), the District will renew the teacher on the standard teacher contract for the following year.

If, after beginning the degree program, a teacher leaves employment prior to completing six years of District service, the teacher will be required to reimburse the District for costs associated with the teacher's coursework toward their degree, per DMPS Board policy and comprehensive agreement (see *Appendix*).

STEERING COMMITTEE

The PD Steering Committee for the Alternative Contract will consist of 6 members (District: 1 chair + 2 employees on the alternative contract; DMEA: 1 representative + 2 employees on the alternative contract.) This committee shall meet at least bi-monthly (every two months) during the regular school year. The committee shall be responsible for executing the professional development required under this article, including ensuring Induction properly prepares teachers for BLUE and the development of INDIGO pathway experiences.

DRAKE CONSIDERATIONS

While a teacher on the BLUE contract is attending courses at Drake, DMPS pays the associated tuition and fees. If a teacher completes the full six years of the BLUE contract, they do not have to repay any of this money.

However, if a teacher fails any of this coursework, they will be responsible for reimbursing DMPS for the tuition of the failed course. This reimbursement can be deducted from teacher paychecks or can be paid outright via cash or check. Human Resources will contact teachers to make repayment arrangements in these circumstances. Failed courses must be made up, and as long as the make-up course is passed, DMPS will pay its tuition. Repeated failure of courses may result in discharge from the BLUE contract, conditional enrollment at Drake, or other consequences.

The District will pay for up to 32 credits at Drake as part of each BLUE contract teacher's degree program (up to 45 credits in the case of GREEN pathway teachers). Credits taken beyond these maximums will be charged to the teacher by Drake at the district's reduced rate of \$330 per credit if taken during the three terms (Spring, Summer, Fall) immediately following graduation.

APPENDIX

Repayment of Coursework

Teachers who begin coursework at Drake but withdraw (or are removed from) the BLUE Contract before the end of their sixth year on the contract are required to repay the cost of their coursework. This repayment is prorated based on the amount of the contract completed, as outlined in DMPS School Board policy language:

For teachers working under the Alternative contract provision of the Comprehensive Agreement, reimbursement is required if (1) cost of tuition, fees, and similar payment are incurred by the District for payment of the master's degree level course and (2) the teacher voluntarily leave the Alternative contract prior to completing eight years of service to the District. The reimbursement amount will be calculated on a pro rata basis as follows:

Years Remaining of Eight Years of Service	Percent of Expenses to be Reimbursed
4-6 years (BLUE Contract) 4-8 years (GREEN Pathway)	100%
3 years (BLUE and GREEN)	75%
2 years (BLUE and GREEN)	50%
1 year (BLUE and GREEN)	25%

2021-2022 Session Dates for Year 1

Informational sessions for BLUE Contract teachers preparing to begin at Drake in early 2022 are located on the table below. All sessions run from 4:00-6:00 with locations to be communicated via the BLUE Bulletin.

Session	Date	Focus
1	September 9	Admission to Drake, Q&A
2	October 14 or 19 (choice)	Elective Selection, Scheduling, Q&A
3	December 16	Final Logistics, Q&A

APPENDIX 2: CHANGES TO BLUE FOR 2021-2022

Eligibility

All teachers (regardless of degree held) are eligible to start BLUE as part of their first year on a standard teaching license. This is a change from previous practice that limited eligibility to only those without a master's degree.

Start of Contract

Teachers begin the contract in their first year on a standard license (typically Year 3 of teaching). This is a change from previous practice when teachers joined the contract in Year 1.

Length of Contract

Teachers remain on the contract for 6 years. This is a change from previous practice that held teachers to an 8-year commitment. Note that there is no functional difference in terms of end of contract (teachers still typically end BLUE in their eighth year of teaching)—the contract simply begins two years later than it did in the past.

Years 1 and 2

Teachers participate in Induction for two years before starting BLUE in their third year. This is a change from previous practice when BLUE began in year 1, but the professional development experience in Induction is highly similar to that of previous years' BLUE Years 1 and 2 professional development.

Calendar

BLUE contract teachers work the standard 195-Day teacher calendar (or whatever calendar is appropriate to their teaching assignment). This is a change from previous practice wherein BLUE contract teachers worked 1 or 2 additional days per year.

Salary Schedule

BLUE Contract teachers are paid according to the standard teacher Salary Schedule located on the DMPS website. This is a change from previous practice where BLUE contract teachers had a unique lane on the Salary Schedule. This change means that BLUE Contract teachers can and should submit their completed coursework to the Human Resources department for lane advancement (see *Credit Earning Procedures*).

Two groups of teachers in 21-22 are receiving slightly modified salary as part of the transition from the previous salary model for BLUE to the new, unified model where all teachers use the same salary schedule. Teachers who are starting BLUE (what would have been BLUE Year 3 in the old model) and teachers who are starting their third year in BLUE (what would have been BLUE Year 5 in the old model) are receiving an additional \$1,000 in salary as noted on your contract from HR under "Induction Enhancements." This is a one-year benefit designed to offset potential salary shortages from the pay expected under the previous BLUE salary model.

Evaluations

In the previous BLUE model, teachers on all years of the contract were evaluated annually.

In the new model, teachers on the BLUE Contract are evaluated on the same three-year cycle as any other career teacher. This means that a BLUE Contract teacher can expect to be evaluated in their first year on the contract (Year 3 of teaching) and their third year on the contract (Year 6 of teaching).