



# DMPS

**BUILDING  
LEADERS  
IN URBAN  
EDUCATION**

**BLUE CONTRACT  
HANDBOOK**

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**2020-2021**



Think. Learn. **Grow.**

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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, nine years into the Building Leaders in Urban Education Contract (BLUE), the entire plan has come to fruition. BLUE 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.

This year our sixth cohort of BLUE teachers will begin their Master of Science in Education at Drake University in Culturally Responsive Leadership & Instruction free of charge.

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 support that all new 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 become 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, appearing to read "Thomas M. Ahart".

Thomas M. Ahart

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

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Office of Human Resources

July 2020

## **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.

### **Human Resources**

*For questions about the specific rules and obligations of the BLUE Contract.*

Emily Behrens, Human Resources Manager

242-8126

[emily.behrens@dmschools.org](mailto:emily.behrens@dmschools.org)

### **Teaching and Learning**

*For questions about the professional development connected to the BLUE Contract.*

Jeremy Schwennen, Mentoring and Induction Coordinator

242-7924

[jeremiah.schwennen@dmschools.org](mailto:jeremiah.schwennen@dmschools.org)

### **Business and Finance**

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

Judi Martens, Business and Finance Manager

242-7750

[judith.martens@dmschools.org](mailto:judith.martens@dmschools.org)

### **Payroll**

*For questions about paychecks and salary when on the BLUE Contract.*

Emily Truitt, Compensation Manager

242-8120

[emily.truitt@dmschools.org](mailto:emily.truitt@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](mailto:jill.johnson@drake.edu)

# PURPOSE

The Building Leaders in Urban Education (BLUE) Contract provides comprehensive support for teachers in their first years as educators. While this Contract is designed to help the district better serve its students by providing professional development and coaching in those areas where teachers are most in need of support, it is also designed to compensate teachers at a higher salary to recognize the additional demands on teacher time, attract top talent, and keep these new teachers in the profession for the long-term; there are no throw-away teachers.

At the end of five years, 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 2020-2021 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 classroom teachers who are on an initial teaching license and do not possess a master’s degree.

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 through their first eight 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.

## **STARTING BLUE IN THE SECOND YEAR OF TEACHING**

A teacher may join the BLUE contract at the beginning of their second year of teaching if they wish. When teachers enter at this point, they will join the Year 2 cohort for the purposes of PD (they will attend PD with Year 2 BLUE teachers) and will start at Drake in the following year. In all other ways (including salary schedule, Extra Days, evaluation, and total number of years owed on the contract) they are considered a Year 1 teacher.

## WITHDRAWAL FROM BLUE CONTRACT

If, during years one and two working under the BLUE Contract, a teacher wishes to opt out of future years in the program they must fill out the BLUE Change Request form (link below). It is also expected the teacher speak with their supervisor and the Mentoring and Induction Coordinator.

If a teacher wishes to opt out of future years in the program after completing Drake coursework, they must fill out the BLUE Change Request form (link below). If a teacher opts out of future years of the BLUE Contract, 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 (page 8)* for specific details on repayment amounts.

BLUE Change Request Form: <https://fs3.formsite.com/HumanResourcesDMPS/ATCRequesttoChange/index.html>

## 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 (page 8)* for specific details on repayment amounts.

## EVALUATIONS

### Years One and Two:

During the first two years under the BLUE Contract, the District will evaluate teachers working under the BLUE contract a minimum of three times a year.

The District will formally observe, for the purpose of evaluation, each teacher working under the BLUE Contract at least two times during the first semester of each year and at least one time during the second semester of each year. The teacher's principal or associate principal will perform the evaluation.

### Years Three through Eight:

During years three through eight under the BLUE Contract, the District will evaluate teachers annually. The teacher's principal or associate principal will perform the evaluation.

## 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 Human Resources 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.

Request to Transfer Form: <https://fs3.formsite.com/HumanResourcesDMPS/bluexferrequest/index.html>

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Years One through Two and a Half (2.5):

During the first two and a half (2.5) years that a teacher works under the BLUE Contract, the teacher shall participate in a series of monthly professional development sessions provided by, and collaboratively developed with, the District.

### Years Two and a Half (2.5) through Five:

Beginning in the second semester of the third 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.

### Years Six through Eight:

Teachers who successfully complete the Master's Degree in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction will remain with the District for the remainder of their eight-year contract, serving under the BLUE Contract as teachers, teacher-leaders, mentors, or in other roles.

## 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 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 BLUE PD, the BLUE program coordinator will work with the BLUE 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 only be taking the required core classes at Drake during Years 3, 4, and 5 of the 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 master's degree from 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.

### **COMPLETION OF PROGRAM**

If, under the terms of the BLUE Contract, a teacher successfully completes eight years of teaching as well as the District's professional development program, earning a master's degree, the District will renew the teacher for year nine on the Certified Teachers Salary Schedule.

If, after beginning the master's program, a teacher leaves employment prior to completing eight years of District service, the teacher 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.

### **ANNUAL CALENDAR**

During years **one through four**, teachers working under the BLUE Contract shall have two additional days of service for the purpose of participation in professional development activities that are established collaboratively through the BLUE Steering Committee.

These days for 2020-2021 have been identified as August 10 and 11. Content and specifics for these two days will be communicated by the Mentoring and Induction Coordinator in early August. Note that one of these days (August 10) is an EQ Day option for non-BLUE Contract teachers. Per agreement with DMEA, this day is being used as a BLUE Contract day for BLUE teachers in years 1-4. These teachers can still choose to take advantage of the EQ day being offered on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

During years **five through eight**, teachers working under the BLUE Teaching Contract shall have one additional day of service for the purpose of participation in professional development activities that are established collaboratively through the BLUE Steering Committee.

This day for 2020-2021 has been identified as August 11. Content and specifics for this day will be communicated by the Mentoring and Induction Coordinator in early August.

### **ATTENDANCE AND LEAVES**

It is the mutual understanding and expectation of the District, Association, and teachers working under the BLUE Contract that the teachers working under the BLUE Contract shall attend and participate in all scheduled professional development activities and additional workweek activities.

Employees using appropriate leave pursuant to Article XI of the Comprehensive Agreement will not be expected to attend the professional development activities or workweek activities on the day(s) absent.

Attendance of the requisite professional development activities is expected and may be excused for building required parent teacher conferences. For all other absences that do not fall under Article XI, the teacher under the BLUE Teaching Contract must notify the Mentoring and Induction Coordinator via e-mail and c/c their building principal 24 hours prior to the absence.

One absence from professional development activities will be granted per year. If the absence is unavoidable, completion of a designated make-up assignment can be used to make up the absence.

## **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.

## **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 eight 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.

## APPENDIX

### Repayment of Coursework

Teachers who begin coursework at Drake but withdraw (or are removed from) the BLUE Contract before the end of their eighth 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:*

<b>Years Remaining of Eight Years of Service</b>	<b>Percent of Expenses to be Reimbursed</b>
4-8 years	100%
3 years	75%
2 years	50%
1 year	25%

### 2020-2021 Session Dates for Years 1 and 2

Professional Development for BLUE Contract teachers in years 1 and 2 are located on the table below. All sessions run from 4:00-7:00 and take place at 1917 Dean Avenue.

*Please note that both Elementary and Secondary groups will meet on the same night this year.*

<b>Session</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>
1	Monday, August 24	Monday, August 31
2	Monday, September 14	Monday, September 21
3	Monday, October 5	Monday, November 9
4	Monday, December 7	Monday, December 14
5	Monday, January 11	Monday, January 25
6	Monday, February 1	Monday, February 15
7	Monday, April 5	Monday, April 12
8	Monday, May 3	Monday, May 10

### 2020-2021 Sessions for Year 3

Professional development for Year 3 happens only in the fall semester and is focused on onboarding to Drake (since classes begin in the spring). Three sessions will occur, consisting of...

1. Meeting with Jill Johnson in the middle of August (virtual) to discuss paperwork for admission to Drake
2. A meeting with your advisor at Drake (multiple options will be available)
3. A full cohort meeting at Drake (likely in late November or early December) to discuss logistics and final preparations