



DMPS

**TEACHER
PATHWAYS**

HANDBOOK

2024-2025



Think. Learn. **Grow.**

www.dmschools.org

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PURPOSE

DMPS Pathways programs provide resources and supports to DMPS educators (and prospective educators) to advance their mastery of teaching skills while also deepening their understanding the rich and complex context in which our schools and our students operate.

Through the course of this programing, DMPS educators learn from the faculty of some of our amazing partner institutions in Central Iowa, adding credits or degrees to their portfolio and the knowledge and skills necessary to become the very best possible teachers for the students of our vibrant community.

DMPS Pathways programs exist to ensure that our teachers are the very best educators and leaders possible. Our students deserve nothing less.

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PREFACE

This Handbook is intended to act as a supplement to the 2024-2025 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 provisions of the District's various Pathways programs of the expectations and services available. By thoroughly reading this Handbook, the teacher Comprehensive Agreement, and the Handbook for All Employees, teachers working under a Pathways agreement 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 a Pathways agreement will receive one copy of this Handbook annually and are required to review this Handbook annually. In addition, teachers working under a Pathways agreement are required to certify that they understand their responsibility to comply with the requirements of their specific Pathways program. 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.

ORGANIZATION OF HANDBOOK

This Handbook outlines rules and procedures that apply to all Pathways programs up front, and then provides specific information about each existing Pathway in the sections that follow.

BASIC PURPOSE OF PATHWAYS

DMPS Pathways programs exist to pay tuition expenses for participant's coursework and degrees in exchange for participants' commitment to remain employed with the District for a set number of years. The basic principle is this:

You stay. We pay.

ENROLLMENT IN A PATHWAY

Eligibility to participate in and application to join each Pathway varies. The specific details about eligibility and how to apply are detailed in the individual Pathway descriptions in the next section of the Handbook.

WITHDRAWAL FROM A PATHWAY

If an educator wishes to opt out of the Pathway after completing any university coursework, they must fill out the Pathways Change Request form (link below). They will be required to reimburse the District for costs associated with their coursework, per DMPS Board policy and comprehensive agreement. See ***Prorated Repayment*** below for specific details on repayment amounts.

The **Pathways Change Request Form** is located on the Talent & Personnel Forms and Processes Page [HERE](#)

REMOVAL FROM A PATHWAY

If an educator does not successfully complete a year under their Pathway agreement, they will be removed from the Pathway program. Reasons why the District may choose not to continue an educator on a Pathway 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 Pathway agreement.

If an educator is removed from a Pathway after completing coursework, they will be required to reimburse the District for costs associated with their coursework, per DMPS Board policy and comprehensive agreement. See **Prorated Repayment** below for specific details on repayment amounts.

TAXABLE TUITION

Participation in a Pathway program means that the District pays tuition on the employee's behalf to the partner institution. This is considered *Tuition Assistance*. Federal tax law limits the number of dollars of Tuition Assistance that can be provided to an employee without tax implications. The first \$5,250 of tuition paid on behalf of an employee each calendar year (January-December) is tax-free. Any amount paid on behalf of the employee beyond \$5,250 in that calendar year will be reported as income for the purposes of calculating income tax on the employee's paychecks. This determination is made each time the Business office receives billing for an academic term (Spring, Summer, and Fall). The Business and Finance Office will communicate to Pathways participants when their total Tuition Assistance exceeds the tax-free threshold of \$5,250 and notify the employee of which paycheck the additional taxes will be applied.

REPAYMENT INSTANCES

Repayment of tuition paid on an employee's behalf occurs in two specific instances:

- If the employee leaves employment with the District before the end of their Pathway's commitment period, they must repay **all** tuition paid on their behalf. Note that a form of limited proration may apply to this repayment, as outlined below.
- If the employee fails a course, they must repay the tuition paid on their behalf **for that specific course**.

In all instances, repayment is made at the cost per credit indicated in the specific Pathway's description in this handbook.

PRORATED REPAYMENT

Teachers who begin coursework for a Pathway program but withdraw (or are removed from) the Pathway before the end of their commitment period are required to repay the cost of their coursework. This repayment is prorated based on the amount of the retention agreement 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 Commitment Period	Percent of Expenses to be Reimbursed
4 or more	100%
3 years	75%
2 years	50%
1 year	25%

PARTICIPATING IN MULTIPLE PATHWAYS

If an employee earns a degree from a Pathway program and wishes to participate in another Pathway program that confers a degree, they may do so only if at least two full calendar years have passed between the completion of DMPS-funded coursework in one Pathway and the beginning of DMPS-funded coursework in another. This period is referred to as the “Cool Down” period.

Employees wishing to join a non-degree Pathway (such as BLUE ELL) while participating in a degree Pathway may do so, provided that they accept that the requirements of both Pathways will be in force while participating in both.

PATHWAY: BLUE MSE (Including BLUE EdS)

Degree

This Pathway grants a participant a Masters of Science in Education in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction. For those already in possession of a master's degree, this Pathway grants an Education Specialist's degree in the same area of emphasis. Depending on electives, this may also include the ability to apply with the Iowa BOEE for an additional endorsement to add to an existing teaching license.

Partner Institution & History

BLUE MSE is a partnership with Drake University. The 24-25 school year marks the beginning of the 10th cohort in this partnership.

Eligibility

Employees who hold their standard license or equivalent authorization may join the BLUE MSE (master's degree) or BLUE EDS (specialist's degree) Pathway.

Duration

This Pathway requires a 6-year Retention agreement that begins the year coursework begins. Coursework generally occurs during the Spring and Summer of the first year, the Fall, Spring, and Summer of the second year, and the Fall of the third year.

Program Cost

BLUE MSE is a 32-credit program and BLUE EDS is a 30-credit program. The rate per credit is \$330 through Spring of 2025 and changes to \$350 starting in the Summer of 2025.

Cohort Size and Frequency

This Pathway starts a new cohort every spring. This Pathway has a large number of seats (approximately 50 per cohort).

Included Resources

This Pathway includes textbooks and parking permits. Textbooks are leased from the university and must be returned at the conclusion of each course.

Enrollment

Employees can access the BLUE MSE/EDS Pathway in one of two ways:

- 1) All Initial License educators are offered a seat in the program at the conclusion of their Mentoring and Induction period, contingent upon being authorized to convert their initial licensure to a standard license.
- 2) Career (standard licensed) educators can apply in the Fall of each school year for any available seats in the cohort beginning the following Spring. Information about the program and process will be communicated to all staff via email when applications open.

Salary Advancement

Salary advancement for teacher-contract Employees on this Pathway is managed directly between DMPS and Drake through the Pathway coordinator. All credits taken as part of BLUE are submitted for salary advancement to DMPS and the only time transcripts need to be submitted is upon degree conferral.

PATHWAY: BLUE EdD

Degree

This Pathway grants a participant a Doctorate of Education in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction.

Partner Institution & History

BLUE EDD is a partnership with Drake University. The first cohort began in the summer of 2023.

Eligibility

Employees who hold their standard teaching or administrative license or equivalent authorization **and** a master's degree or higher may join BLUE EdD.

Duration

This Pathway requires a 7-year Retention agreement that begins the year coursework begins. This count begins with the first Fall of the program. Coursework generally occurs during the Summer before the first year, then Fall, Spring, and Summer of each of the next three years.

Program Cost

BLUE EdD is a 42-credit program. The rate per credit is \$430 for Cohort 1 and changes to \$450 starting with Cohort 2.

Cohort Size and Frequency

This Pathway starts a new cohort every three years. The next cohort will begin classes in Summer of 2026. This Pathway has a small number of seats (approximately 12 per cohort).

Included Resources

This Pathway includes textbooks and parking permits. Textbooks are leased from the university and must be returned at the conclusion of each course.

Enrollment

Employees can access the BLUE EdD Pathway by applying in the Spring of every third school year for any available seats in the cohort beginning the following Summer. Information about the program and process will be communicated to all staff via email when applications open. Note that due to the limited number of seats, this is a highly competitive application process.

Salary Advancement

Salary advancement for teacher-contract Employees on this Pathway is managed directly between DMPS and Drake through the Pathway coordinator. All credits taken as part of BLUE are submitted for salary advancement to DMPS and the only time transcripts need to be submitted is upon degree conferral.

PATHWAY: BLUE ELL

Degree

This Pathway does not grant a degree. However, this Pathway will grant participants the ability to apply with the lowa BOEE for a K-12 ELL teaching endorsement to add to an existing teaching license.

Partner Institution & History

BLUE ELL is a partnership with Drake University. The 24-25 school year marks the beginning of the second cohort.

Eligibility

Employees from identified schools who hold their standard teaching license or equivalent authorization may join BLUE ELL. Each year, new schools are identified for participation based on ELL enrollment and licensure data analyzed by Teaching & Learning Directors.

Duration

This Pathway requires a 4-year Retention and Stay agreement that begins the year coursework begins. This agreement is unique in that it requires the employee to not just remain with DMPS, but to remain at their current school for its duration. Coursework generally occurs during the Spring, and Summer of the first year, then the Fall, Spring, and Summer of the second before ending in the Fall of the third year.

Program Cost

BLUE ELL is a 18-credit program. The rate per credit is \$350.

Cohort Size and Frequency

This Pathway starts a new cohort every year. The next cohort will begin classes in Spring of 2025. This Pathway has a moderate number of seats (approximately 25 per cohort).

Included Resources

This Pathway includes textbooks. Textbooks are leased from the university and must be returned at the conclusion of each course.

Enrollment

Employees can access the BLUE ELL Pathway by completing an interest form in the fall once the opportunity has been announced for their school. While new schools will be offered the opportunity to join each year, schools selected in previous years will also have access to seats in subsequent cohorts.

Salary Advancement

Salary advancement for teacher-contract Employees on this Pathway is managed directly between DMPS and Drake through the Pathway coordinator. All credits taken as part of BLUE are submitted for salary advancement to DMPS. Because BLUE ELL is not a degree program, no transcripts will be required, but a lane change from BA to MA (or from MA to PhD) must be completed through the traditional DMPS salary advancement process.

PATHWAY: GREEN

Degree

This Pathway is an addition to the BLUE MSE/EdS Pathway. It grants a participant a Masters of Science in Education in Culturally Responsive Leadership and Instruction. For those already in possession of a master's degree, this Pathway grants an Education Specialist's degree in the same area. Through electives taken before the degree coursework, this includes the ability to apply with the Iowa BOEE for a special education endorsement to add to an existing teaching license.

Partner Institution & History

GREEN is a subset of the BLUE MSE partnership with Drake University. The 24-25 school year marks the beginning of the 10th cohort in this partnership.

Eligibility

Employees who hold their standard license or equivalent authorization may join the GREEN Pathway once hired for a position that requires a special education endorsement that they do not currently possess.

Duration

This Pathway requires a 8-year Retention agreement that begins the year coursework begins. Coursework generally occurs during the Fall, Spring, and Summer of the first two years to complete the special education endorsement coursework, then the Spring and Summer of the third year, Fall, Spring, and Summer of the fourth year, and the Fall of the fifth year to complete the degree coursework.

Program Cost

GREEN is a program ranging from 33-45 credits, depending on the needs of the special education endorsement. The rate per credit is \$330 through Spring of 2025 and changes to \$350 starting in the Summer of 2025.

Cohort Size and Frequency

This Pathway starts a new cohort every fall. This Pathway has a variable number of seats, based on demand.

Included Resources

This Pathway includes textbooks and parking permits. Textbooks are leased from the university and must be returned at the conclusion of each course.

Enrollment

Employees can access the GREEN Pathway by applying for and being hired for a teaching position that requires a special education endorsement (K-8 Strat 1, 5-12 Strat 1, K-12 Strat 2 ID, or K-12 Strat 2 BD) that they do not already possess. The employee will apply for a conditional license in that area with the Iowa BOEE and coursework in GREEN will begin at the same time as the new teaching position begins.

Salary Advancement

Salary advancement for teacher-contract Employees on this Pathway is managed directly between DMPS and Drake through the Pathway coordinator. All credits taken as part of GREEN are submitted for salary advancement to DMPS and the only time transcripts need to be submitted is upon degree conferral.

PATHWAY: PURPLE MAE

Degree

This Pathway grants a participant a Masters of Arts in Education in School Administration. This will include the ability to apply with the Iowa BOEE for an Administrator’s License and Evaluator Approval.

Partner Institution & History

PURPLE MAE is a partnership with the University of Northern Iowa. The 24-25 school year marks the beginning of the 2nd cohort in this partnership.

Eligibility

Employees who hold their standard teaching license or equivalent authorization may join the PURPLE MAE Pathway.

Duration

This Pathway requires a 6-year Retention agreement that begins the year coursework begins. Coursework generally occurs during the Fall, Spring, and Summer of the first year, and the Fall, Spring, and Summer of the second year.

Program Cost

PURPLE MAE is a 35-credit program. The rate per credit is \$539 for cohort 1, with cohort 2 and beyond pricing still in negotiations.

Cohort Size and Frequency

This Pathway starts a new cohort every other Fall. This Pathway has a small number of seats (approximately 12 per cohort).

Included Resources

This Pathway includes textbooks.

Enrollment

Employees can access the PURPLE MAE Pathway by applying in the Spring of every other school year for any available seats in the cohort beginning the following Fall. Information about the program and process will be communicated to all staff via email when applications open. Note that due to the limited number of seats, this is a highly competitive application process.

Salary Advancement

Salary advancement for teacher-contract employees on this Pathway is managed by the employee and must follow the DMPS Salary advancement and course pre-approval process. Note that only a single pre-approval is needed for courses in this Pathway—employees do not need to fill out a new pre-approval form for each course taken.

PATHWAY: PURPLE EdD

Degree

This Pathway grants a participant a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership.

Partner Institution & History

PURPLE EdD is a partnership with the University of Northern Iowa. The first cohort of the partnership began in the Fall of 2024.

Eligibility

Employees who hold their standard teaching or administrator's license or equivalent authorization and a master's degree or higher may join the PURPLE EdD Pathway.

Duration

This Pathway requires a 7-year Retention agreement that begins the year coursework begins. Coursework generally occurs during the Fall, Spring, and Summer of each of three years.

Program Cost

PURPLE EdD is a 48-credit program. The rate per credit is \$558 for cohort 1, with cohort 2 and beyond pricing still in negotiations.

Cohort Size and Frequency

This Pathway starts a new cohort every third Fall. The next cohort will begin in Fall of 2027. This Pathway has a very small number of seats (approximately 5 per cohort).

Included Resources

This Pathway includes textbooks.

Enrollment

Employees can access the PURPLE EdD Pathway by applying in the Spring of every third school year for any available seats in the cohort beginning the following Fall. Information about the program and process will be communicated to staff via email when applications open. Note that due to the limited number of seats, this is an extremely competitive application process.

Salary Advancement

Salary advancement for teacher-contract employees on this Pathway is managed by the employee and must follow the DMPS Salary advancement and course pre-approval process. Note that only a single pre-approval is needed for courses in this Pathway—employees do not need to fill out a new pre-approval form for each course taken.

PATHWAY: RED – VIKING TEACHER PROGRAM

Degree

This Pathway grants a participant a Bachelor's of Arts in Special Education. This will include the ability to apply with the Iowa BOEE for a teaching license with a special education All-Strat endorsement.

Partner Institution & History

RED is a partnership with Grand View University. The 24-25 school year marks the beginning of the 1st cohort in this partnership.

Eligibility

Employees who do not hold a teaching license or equivalent authorization may join the RED Pathway.

Duration

This Pathway requires a Retention agreement that begins when coursework begins and extends 4 years beyond graduation. Coursework generally occurs during the Fall, Spring, and Summer for two years, with a potential third year based on previous coursework.

Program Cost

RED is a variable-credit program that covers up to 105 credits. The rate per credit is \$375.

Cohort Size and Frequency

This Pathway starts a new cohort every other fall. This Pathway has a small number of seats (approximately 10 per cohort).

Included Resources

This Pathway includes textbooks. Textbooks are leased from the university and must be returned at the conclusion of each course.

Enrollment

Employees can access the RED Pathway by applying in the Spring of every other school year for any available seats in the cohort beginning the following Fall. Information about the program and process will be communicated to staff via email when applications open. Note that due to the limited number of seats, this is a highly competitive application process.

Salary Advancement

Participants in this Pathway are not yet on teacher contracts while taking coursework, so no credits are submitted for salary advancement as part of the RED Pathway.