

Blue Ribbon Teacher Designation

MNPS, in collaboration with the Nashville Public Education Foundation and community partners, annually honors teachers in our district with the Blue Ribbon Teacher Designation. This year, we will identify up to 25 extraordinary teachers for their work during the 2024-25 school year in student success and opportunity, instruction, and/or leadership.

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#)

Eligibility Requirements

- Full-time MNPS or MNPS charter school teacher for four or more years
- Instructs students 50% or more of the time
- In good professional standing/meets expectations, as confirmed by school leader
- Not previously designated as a Blue Ribbon Teacher
- A Level of Effectiveness and Observation Scores of at least a 3.0 for the last three consecutive years.

Nomination Options

Eligible candidates can:

- Self-nominate by completing the application
- Be nominated by peers who submit the [application](#) (fellow teacher, instructional coach, administrator) on the candidate's behalf; peers who nominate candidates are responsible for completing the essay, as well as securing and submitting artifacts on behalf of the candidate. *Note: To complete the application, you must have the (a) TN Teacher license for the applicant, (b) number of years teaching in metro or charter schools, and (c) total number of years teaching.*

Important Dates

- [Applications](#) will be accepted through August 18, 2025 at 8:00am.
- Blue Ribbon Teacher Designations will be announced in October 2025.

Informational Webinars

The MNPS Talent Management team will host webinars to provide support to Blue Ribbon Teacher applicants that will cover all aspects of the application process and offer a general Q&A session. Check your email for communication about this! Questions? Email BlueRT@mnps.org

Click on a category below for more details on the application

*Note: Teachers can apply in more than one category but will need to submit separate applications. **Previous winners should not apply again.** Please email BlueRT@mnps.org with questions.*

[Excellence in Student Success and Opportunity](#) – Blue Ribbon Teacher Student Success and Opportunity candidates identify and eliminate inequities by meeting the diverse needs of students.

[Excellence in Instruction](#) – Blue Ribbon Teacher Instruction candidates inspire active and powerful student engagement through the design of rigorous, engaging, and personalized learning experiences.

[Excellence in Leadership](#) – Blue Ribbon Teacher Leadership candidates empower and equip others to impact students and communities.

THINGS TO KNOW: Selection Process

Questions? Email BlueRT@mnps.org

Overview of Selection Process:

- Educators and Nominators review the application guidance and prepare materials.
- Educators submit materials in the application Microsoft form.
- The MNPS HR Talent Management team reviews applications for eligibility.
- The MNPS HR Talent Management Team de-identifies materials and creates scoring packages.
- Licensed educators from the support hub score de-identified essays, artifacts, and testimonials.
- The essays for eligible, highest scoring candidates are provided to Nashville community members for Blue Ribbon Teacher selection.

Tips for Success:

- Ensure all application materials are complete before starting the Microsoft Form Application. Feel free to click through the form and not submit it to ensure you have what you need.
 - *Why? The application can't be saved while working in it.*
- Ensure all electronic links are public and working. Perhaps send them to someone who is not on your school network to see if they can open them.
 - *Why? Applications with non-working links will not be scored.*
- Ensure that the essay stands alone and makes sense without the artifacts.
 - *Why? The final step in scoring is a community panel essay review. They do not see the artifacts and testimonials, so the essay must make sense alone.*
- Please avoid sharing school names and individual names.
 - *Why? Essays are de-identified to reduce bias. Too much redacting will interrupt the reader or listener.*
- Ensure you are at or below the word count or time requirements.
 - *Why? Submissions that are over the word or time limit will not be scored.*
- Provide a clear description of the work and impact.
 - *Why? Clear examples help people understand and connect to the work. Share more than what you do, share how you do it, and the impact your work has on others.*
- Ask someone to read or listen to your essay to provide feedback.
 - *Why? Others can provide feedback around where we need to elaborate or be clearer. When you listen to someone read your essay, you hear things that you might improve.*
- If you don't have a digital voice recording tool, use Microsoft TEAMS or a similar program with the camera OFF to record your spoken essay.
 - *Why? It's an easy way to generate an audio file. Submissions are de-identified, so keep that camera off!*

Excellence in Student Success and Opportunity

The Excellence in Student Success and Opportunity category recognizes innovative ways educators support students and impact outcomes. Candidates for this category are teachers who excel at culturally relevant pedagogy, cultivate classrooms of belonging, and create avenues for flourishing for all students.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Candidacy Components	Application Requirements
<p>BRT <i>Excellence in Student Success and Opportunity</i> candidates have worked to identify and eliminate inequities by meeting the diverse needs of children in their care. These educators impact outcomes for students and personify the MNPS principles of equity (p.11): commit, collaborate, frame, nurture, empathize, build, challenge, support, listen, persist.</p> <p>Candidates have worked for student success and opportunity by committing to changing outcomes for historically marginalized students. In the journey toward success and opportunity, committing to impacting student outcomes is key. BRT candidates in this category create the conditions in which each student participates, prospers, and reaches their full potential. They interrupt inequitable practices, examines biases, and take accountability for historic inequities and advancing solutions to address root causes of those issues. In this work, they discover and cultivate the unique gifts, talents, and interests which every student possesses. The voice of each learner is acknowledged, appreciated, respected, and distinct in these teacher’s classrooms. This leads to student learning.</p> <p>Candidates have worked for student success and opportunity by providing culturally relevant and celebratory learning experiences. Traditional curricula can focus on the identities and experiences of dominant cultural groups. Many students do not see themselves or the strengths and achievements of their cultures in a traditional curriculum. BRT candidates in this category have intentionally created learning experiences that connect with the identities and strengths of students from different cultural groups. They have also worked to help students build the skills they will need (i.e., literacy, critical thinking, cultural fluency) to thrive across cultural boundaries while maintaining individual cultural identities. Students in their classrooms feel valued and have a sense of belonging. They also are connected to the cultures of others. These teachers have acknowledged, appreciated, respected, and accentuated the cultural and racial identities of each learner.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Essay (written or recorded)</u>: In an essay under 1500 words OR in a self-recorded audio file under 3 minutes, describe how you have increased success and opportunity for students. Explain how you have met student needs in these areas: 1) addressing inequities to impact outcomes and/or 2) producing culturally relevant learning experiences. (See descriptions of each in the left column.) How have your practices set historically marginalized students up to thrive? How have you created classrooms where students, who otherwise struggle, experience academic success and real belonging? How does your classroom personify student success and opportunity? 2. <u>Teaching/Learning Artifacts</u>: Provide an artifact or set of artifacts from a relevant learning experience. Your artifact(s) should show how you have supported changing outcomes for students <i>AND/OR</i> created opportunities to accentuate student cultures and identities to support their success. Artifacts may include (but are not limited to) a lesson plan and its materials or learning tools, highlighted student outcomes, or a completed student work product(s) or project. Include a written explanation that clearly connects your artifact(s) to student success and opportunity. 3. <u>Impact Testimonial</u>: Include 1-3 short testimonials in your submission. The testimonials may come from students, families, or peers/leaders who have observed your efforts. The testimonials should communicate how your work has changed outcomes for students. Testimonial formats may include (but are not limited to) student surveys or feedback tools, student reflections/writings, thank-you notes or letters, or recorded video/audio statements. <p style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;">Questions? Email BlueRT@mnps.org</p>

Excellence in Instruction

The Excellence in Instruction category honors educators who design innovative learning experiences and drive outstanding academic outcomes for students. Candidates for this category are creative educators with proven track records of student academic success. They provide rigorous, engaging, and personalized learning experiences for all students.

INSTRUCTION	
Candidacy Components	Application Requirements
<p>BRT <i>Excellence in Instruction</i> candidates inspire active and powerful student work and success through the design of rich learning experiences.</p> <p>Innovative candidates have motivated students to engage rigorous work. They have created student tasks that seem difficult to tackle but too interesting to ignore. In short, these teachers have made rigor worthwhile, and students have jumped in. Engaged learners in these candidates' classrooms have shown <u>critical thinking</u>, <u>creative problem-solving</u>, <u>clear communication</u>, and <u>collaborative engagement</u> with perspectives other than their own.</p> <p>In addition to making rigor accessible and worthwhile, BRT candidates have personalized supports that make success reachable. These teachers have made wise and intentional use of instructional techniques to personally connect students to the learning. Consistently organizing the content so that it is meaningful and relevant to students, these educators see increased levels of engagement. Because these classrooms consistently value learning experiences where inquiry, curiosity, and exploration are central, they have ensured access to the curriculum. Additionally, they have provided high-quality, personalized feedback to help students improve outcomes. They have also helped students become better evaluators of their own practices. As a result, students are better able to identify their next-steps and direct their learning.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Essay (written or recorded)</u>: In an essay under 1500 words OR in a self-recorded video under 3 minutes, describe a powerful learning experience that you designed for your students. In the context of this BRT pathway, a qualified candidate in this category consistently delivers powerful learning experiences that meet four criteria: 1) the challenge is ambitious but appropriate (the work demand is rigorous, not way too easy or way too difficult); 2) the challenge is exciting; students are motivated to jump-in and work hard; 3) the work connects to student lives and interests; the teacher makes effective use of instructional techniques to ensure that all learners are connected to the content and find it accessible and interesting; 4) students <i>demonstrate</i> high-level learning; their work-outcomes <i>exhibit</i> the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conceptual understanding (students show specific content knowledge, but they also exhibit bigger ideas about a discipline or the world around them) b) Critical thinking (student thinking progresses up <i>Bloom's ladder</i>) c) Collaboration with other perspectives (students navigate diverse perspectives, either with peers or content materials) d) Effective communication (students express learning in purposeful ways) 2. <u>Student Work Product</u>: Accompany your essay with relevant student work. Your submission must be digital – i.e., images or video of the product. You may also submit associated learning plans if helpful. 3. <u>Impact Testimonials</u>: Include 2-3 student testimonials (written or recorded). Students should reflect on what or how they learned and why they enjoyed the experience. <p style="text-align: right;">Questions? Email BlueRT@mnps.org</p>

Excellence in Leadership

The Excellence in Leadership category honors the innovative ways that educators exhibit the behaviors described in the [MNPS Teacher Leadership Framework](#). Candidates for this category are teacher leaders who have supported educator development and student learning in their schools.

LEADERSHIP	
Candidacy Components	Application Requirements
<p>BRT <i>Excellence in Leadership</i> candidates empower their colleagues and equip them to be more impactful. They do this work without serving in administrative positions and while attending to their classroom responsibilities.</p> <p>Teacher Leadership candidates have Prioritized Talent. These teachers create a culture of belonging with peers, collaborate with colleagues, and inspire collective ownership of a shared vision. They have modeled hope and optimism during times when their colleagues have experienced self-doubt or discouragement. They are focused on the vision for the school and have nurtured feelings of belonging and inclusion by affirming their peers' voices and perspectives.</p> <p>Teacher Leadership candidates have Driven Instruction. These teachers orient toward results, recognize and develop rigorous instruction, and focus on continuous improvement. They have used their voices to advocate for the supports their peers require and/or to celebrate the efforts of their peers publicly. They have helped colleagues improve their instruction through learning-focused conversations and other reflective practice.</p> <p>Teacher Leader candidates have Managed Operations. These teachers strategically plan and manage toward goals and build partnerships. They have also helped colleagues navigate some critical but non-student-facing duties of the work (e.g., communicating with parents, steering through Schoology, etc.). In these different ways, teacher leaders have equipped their colleagues to serve students more effectively by ensuring goals are clear and peers are working together to serve students.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Essay (written or recorded)</u>: In an essay under 1500 words OR in a self-recorded video under 3 minutes, describe what you have done this year to embrace, guard and grow your colleagues. Discuss <i>specific</i> ways you have embodied one of the teacher leadership roles in the MNPS Teacher Leadership Framework: Prioritizing Talent, Driving Instruction, or Managing Operations. (See descriptions of each in the left column and in the linked Teacher Leadership Framework.) 2. <u>Leadership Artifacts</u>: Provide an artifact or set of artifacts that give evidence of your leadership. Artifact types include (but are not limited to) collaboration artifacts that reveal your time and leadership efforts on behalf of colleagues; resources you have created and distributed for peer/staff use; tools or devices you have designed to drive coaching, collaboration, or feedback conversations; and communications you have made to affirm and celebrate individuals or groups. 3. <u>Impact Testimonial</u>: Submit 1-3 testimonials from peers who have benefitted from or observed the profound impact of your leadership. The testimonial(s) should identify and explain specific efforts on your part to lift your colleagues well. The format for the testimonial may be recorded instead of written if desired. <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">Questions? Email BlueRT@mnps.org</p>