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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
Thursday, Aug. 18, 2022

## **Principal® Foundation funds DART pilot to reduce transportation barriers for students**

*Harding and North students who do not normally receive free school transportation will be able to ride DART free to/from school*

Just in time for the first day of school, a new pilot program will test the impact of providing free transportation for all students at two Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS). Beginning August 24, Principal® Foundation is providing funding for all Harding Middle School and North High School students to ride DART free to and from school. As a result, North High School students and Harding Middle School students who would not normally qualify for free school transportation will be able to ride DART free any time during the 2022-23 school year.

The pilot builds on the existing DART and DMPS partnership by removing the transportation barrier for students who live too close to their school to qualify for free transportation. DMPS high school students who live within three miles of their school and middle school students who live within two miles of their school do not normally receive free transportation to and from school. This pilot will assess how taking away the transportation barrier for these students impacts attendance and student achievement throughout the school year.

“We work to shape a world where financial security is accessible to all people. So often there are barriers in place preventing people from seizing opportunity,” said Jo Christine Miles, director, Principal® Foundation and community relations. “A lack of transportation is a major barrier. We hope that this support will help pave the way for better student engagement, increased student persistence through graduation, and improved academic performance – all of which can lead to brighter and more secure futures for these students.”

“This innovative partnership enables us to do what public transit does best – break down barriers to access and opportunity,” said Elizabeth Presutti, DART Chief Executive Officer. “The principals of North and Harding are thrilled to have this support and have shared this will save them considerable time working to identify transportation solutions for students.”

DMPS contracts with DART to provide all middle school and high school students with the ability to ride free after 4:30 p.m. on weekdays and any time on days when school is not in session. DART also provides school transportation for many middle school and high school students who qualify for free transportation. Students who do not qualify for free school transportation can pay half fare to ride DART to and from school.

The pilot program for Harding and North schools will continue throughout the 2022-23 school year. More information is available by visiting [ridedart.com/dmps](https://ridedart.com/dmps).

The student transportation pilot is one of three DART projects to be funded through Principal Foundation grants. The other two will be announced in the coming months and also focus on improving financial wellbeing by removing transportation barriers.

#### **About DART**

Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) is Iowa's largest, and only, regional transit agency, providing service in and around Polk County. DART operates a family of transportation services, providing nearly 4.5 million annual rides that connect thousands of people every day to jobs, school, healthcare and other essential destinations. Twelve member governments make up DART's service area, where the agency carries out its mission to enrich lives, connect communities and expand opportunities for central Iowans. For more information about DART services, schedules, route changes, or directions to the nearest DART stop, visit the website at [ridedart.com](http://ridedart.com), download the free MyDART app or call 515-283-8100.

#### **About DMPS**

For more than 100 years, Des Moines Public Schools has provided an outstanding education to the students of our community. Today, DMPS is a leader and innovator in public education, offering families some of the best educational choices in Iowa as we become the nation's model for urban education. DMPS is Iowa's largest provider of K-12 education, serving more than 31,000 students, and one of the metro's largest employers with 5,000 teachers, staff, and administrators serving in 70 buildings in Des Moines.

#### **About Principal Foundation**

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