

Toyota Financial Services Celebrates Toyota Leadership Academy Scholars

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PLANO, Texas (June 9, 2022) – Toyota Financial Services (TFS) is working to grow equity in underserved communities by partnering with schools that seek equal access to quality education, tools and resources. At the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year, TFS launched the Toyota Leadership Academy, created in partnership with the Lancaster Independent School District (ISD) in North Texas. This program prepares students for personal, academic and professional success by providing a specialized curriculum designed to increase high school graduation rates, improve college, career and leadership readiness and introduce students to job opportunities in the global workforce.

Toyota Leadership Academy’s curriculum is rooted in the Toyota Way principles of Acting for Others and Showing Respect for People and incorporates educational best practices customized for students in each grade level, elementary through high school. Teacher and administrator feedback was essential in tailoring Academy course offerings. Over 200 Lancaster educators received training in new educational techniques.

“The Toyota Leadership Academy aligns with our district’s vision of every student being a success. Additionally, the program’s collaborative effort delivers significant benefits to our scholars,” said Dr. Katrise Perera, Lancaster ISD superintendent. “The program helps ensure our students have the skillset needed to thrive

in a global community, while equipping them with knowledge and resources they will utilize throughout their school career and beyond.”

Academy components are delivered via a unique hybrid in-classroom and virtual learning approach. Toyota team members provide mentoring to the students on campus and through online meetings.

“Mentoring is a vital part of the Leadership Academy,” said Darryn Hyman, manager of the Toyota Leadership Academy. “It allows Toyota team members to share real-world experiences with students. And, since we are able to leverage technology, students can benefit from mentors who aren’t even in the Dallas area.”



Lancaster ISD was an ideal partner to pilot Toyota Leadership Academy, based on the district’s size, location, the region’s economic need and, most importantly, its interest in exploring new solutions to benefit its student population. Lancaster educators, like so many around the nation, dedicate themselves to providing exceptional learning experiences while managing limited resources.

“Not everyone recognizes that most educators are highly proficient in finding innovative solutions to engage and inform students,” said Patonia Bell, chief of access and accountability, Lancaster Independent School District. “During COVID, we’ve had to embrace new technologies to support learning. And that’s on top of the already significant changes that teachers make each year to ensure their teaching methods are up to date. Our profession is constantly changing out of necessity. Teachers are always going that extra mile to help their students succeed.”

This focus on innovation and maximizing efficiency are attributes educators share with Toyota, renowned for its hyper-efficient production systems. When approached by TFS, Lancaster ISD leaders expressed an interest in joining with the company to develop innovative educational solutions.

“When Toyota gets involved with a community project, we try to share our knowledge as well as resources,” said Mark Templin, president and CEO of Toyota Financial Services. “We aim to partner with communities to understand their needs so that we can work together — bridging our expertise and theirs to create the right solutions.”

“At TFS, we view education as a priority. We’re focused on educating today’s students to build tomorrow’s leaders,” added Ellen Farrell, TFS group vice president, chief legal and compliance officer, and program sponsor. “We support students throughout the life of their education — from elementary to high school and beyond. Our education community partnerships help us develop programs that empower students to learn, achieve and succeed.”



The Toyota Leadership Academy’s first school year was a success. Over 60 first and second graders received special tutoring in reading from Toyota team members. These students saw improved reading comprehension scores. Math enrichment programs with additional tutoring helped 175 third and sixth graders. And 1,500 high school students received curriculum in their choice of business administration, engineering, cybersecurity or programming and software development. TFS is now working with Lancaster School District on program expansion, including introducing financial literacy courses.

At the close of the school year, TFS was proud to be a supporter of the Lancaster ISD STEM Expo Hack-a-thon. Lancaster High School teams competed to create an innovative STEM application that could better their community. The winning team of three students developed an application that would help adults track missing children and pets. TFS was proud to award each student a \$2,500 scholarship to be used for tuition at any accredited post-secondary institution of higher learning.

“There’s an African proverb that says it takes a village to raise children,” said Shelia Benskin, director of Career

and Technical Education for Lancaster ISD. “In education, we cannot do this alone. What I see with Toyota is that opportunity to bring other people into this large village with us to help our students pursue excellence in education and begin the journey to a future career in business and industry.”

The Toyota Leadership Academy is a further example of Toyota’s commitment to education. The automaker recently announced its Driving Possibilities program, a new nationwide \$110 million education and community-focused initiative to create innovative educational programs and improve access to opportunities where barriers exist. For more information on Toyota’s commitment to education, please visit [Toyota Newsroom](#).