

Toyota Drives Student Success with \$5.8 Million Investment in Northeast Mississippi

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BLUE SPRINGS, Miss. (Sept. 18, 2024) – Having the right tools and resources to learn is key for students in every community, but critical needs extend beyond school supplies.

As part of Toyota USA Foundation’s Driving Possibilities initiative, grants of up to \$5.8 million over five years to Lee County and Pontotoc City Schools give students and teachers access to innovative tools and programs designed to provide foundational skills, build confidence, and align them with an individualized path to success.

“We believe all students deserve equal access to opportunities and a pathway to high-growth careers, no matter their background,” said Ana Meade, vice president of social innovation at Toyota. “Through Driving Possibilities, we aim to create limitless possibilities for all in our work with communities to address barriers so that everyone can participate in the quality STEM jobs of the future.”

Driving Possibilities is Toyota’s national approach to workforce readiness and community engagement. In Mississippi, Toyota is collaborating with the CREATE Foundation and the University of Mississippi on this groundbreaking approach to changing the culture of education. By working with local community and education partners, the Driving Possibilities team identified areas where support is needed to help close educational gaps through innovative, hands-on STEM programming while addressing the essential needs of students and families.

“As a leader in the community, Toyota is looking forward to working with Lee County and Pontotoc City Schools through the Driving Possibilities model for STEM Education,” said Aaron Foster, plant vice president of Toyota Mississippi. “The tailored plan will help enhance educational opportunities from PreK through 12th grade while integrating STEM into the everyday life of our students and teachers.”

Lee County Schools will embed STEM programming into everyday curriculum at the middle school level while customizing an intentional professional development program for its middle and elementary school educators. Meanwhile, just 25 miles west, Pontotoc City Schools will launch a holistic and inclusive Newcomer Program, which will provide students, teachers and families resources and tools for English-language learner translation services.

“Toyota is leading the way on helping us create Mississippi’s next generation workforce. When industry and education work together, the possibilities for our children and our economy are endless,” said Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann. “We appreciate Toyota’s substantial investment in these districts and hope this example will spur other similar partnerships across the state.”

Mississippi is the ninth site to launch the Driving Possibilities initiative. To date, nearly \$72 million has been announced through multi-year grants with local and national nonprofits, education partners and the communities where Toyota team members live and work. The initiative is funded by Toyota USA Foundation with additional funds provided by Toyota Motor North America (TMNA) and Toyota Financial Services (TFS).

In 2022, the Toyota USA Foundation’s Driving Possibilities initiative was launched as a unique way to bring together educators, local and national nonprofits, industry and communities to create limitless possibilities for all. With more than 65 years of active community support across the U.S., efforts span the PreK-12 education continuum, with a foundation in the model developed in the West Dallas area. This is the largest and most comprehensive social innovation effort in Toyota’s history.