

Expanding Equity through STEM Learning Opportunities in Southern Dallas County School Districts

Texas Instruments Foundation grants more than \$4 Million for investments in Cedar Hill, DeSoto, and Lancaster independent school districts



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DALLAS, March 24, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- **Educate Texas**, an initiative of **Communities Foundation of Texas**, announced today more than \$4 million in investments from the **Texas Instruments (TI) Foundation** for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) educational programs and opportunities in three school districts in southern Dallas County -- Cedar Hill, DeSoto, and Lancaster. These districts are located in an area south of Interstates 20 and 30 -- where more than one-third of residents live in poverty and where students historically lack the academic advantages of their peers in other Dallas districts to the north.

Educate Texas and the TI Foundation have partnered for nearly a decade with the **Lancaster Independent School District** to transform it into a STEM district -- embedding STEM teaching, thinking and problem-solving skills across the entire school district. Since then, the TI Foundation has invested more than \$10 million in Lancaster ISD, including a new, three-year, \$1.015 million grant for teacher and principal training in STEM reading and writing, social and emotional support due to the COVID-19 pandemic, dual language teaching, and instructional training for faculty and parents.

"In Lancaster ISD, the STEM grants have made a positive impact on the curriculum for over 7,500 students," said **Shemeka Millner-Williams, Lancaster Independent School District Interim Superintendent**. "We are excited to continue the long-standing partnership with Educate Texas and the TI Foundation that has been so beneficial to the students of Lancaster ISD. We are equally excited to now leverage the gains that we've experienced through this partnership with our neighboring districts to advance STEM education in southern Dallas County even further."

The TI Foundation has also awarded \$3.02 million in initial grants to Educate Texas to develop STEM districts in **Cedar Hill and DeSoto ISDs** -- home to approximately 17,000 students. Both Cedar Hill and DeSoto have grown more than 40% in the past 20 years, and they are becoming increasingly important to local workforce needs. These new grants will build on the learnings from the Lancaster investments and will be used for professional development training of teachers and principals, creating curricula founded in STEM-based concepts, and preparing students for college and STEM careers. The districts are also within 15 miles of Lancaster, which will enable sharing best practices to lift up students in all three districts for the betterment of southern Dallas County.

"Cedar Hill ISD is extremely grateful for the generosity of Texas Instruments, a global giant in STEM. This grant from the TI Foundation has the opportunity to be transformative in our classrooms and throughout the community," said **Dr. Gerald Hudson, Cedar Hill Independent Superintendent**. "Since receiving this grant, we have often referred to it as a 'gamechanger' because it will create opportunities that did not previously exist. Our scholars will have the opportunity to lead STEM efforts, not only in Dallas County and North Texas, but throughout the United States and globally."

"We are so honored and excited to be a part of this effort to increase and improve STEM access and education in our community," said **Dr. D'Andre J. Weaver, DeSoto Independent Superintendent of Schools**. "Through our recently introduced strategic plan, we have a focus on curricular innovation to ensure that we, here in DeSoto ISD, are providing our students the highest-quality, enriched learning experiences. Introducing STEM-based learning and coaching DeSoto ISD teachers and scholars to embody and exercise a STEM mindset provides a pivotal shift to our educational philosophy, which will propel us into the future of learning in DeSoto ISD."

"When we began to work with the TI Foundation and Lancaster ISD in 2012 to create a STEM district, we expected the successes and outcomes there to serve as a rigorous STEM learning and teaching model that could be scaled to other Texas school districts," said **George Tang, managing director of Educate Texas**. "We're thrilled that the original expectation is now being realized with renewed efforts in Lancaster ISD, and with expanded support to Cedar Hill and Desoto ISDs. This opportunity allows us to help build thriving communities, extending our impact to the lives of thousands more students and ultimately inspire and prepare them for great futures."

The results of the investments in Lancaster ISD by the TI Foundation and the work with Educate Texas demonstrate improved outcomes for students:

- Lancaster ISD has increased Algebra 1 proficiency by 51% since 2012, now exceeding state standardized test scores vs. trailing it by 24% previously.
- Lancaster ISD increased grades 3-8 math proficiency by 26% since 2012, eliminating its 13% gap with the state.
- The Texas Education Agency accountability rating for Lancaster ISD went from a "D" in 2012 to a "B" in 2019.
- From 2013 to 2017, the number of Lancaster ISD teachers with advanced degrees nearly doubled; it now exceeds the state average by 10 percentage points.
- Lancaster ISD students are now accepted at higher rates to a broader selection of colleges and universities with highly selective admissions.

"We have seen Lancaster ISD be transformed through the STEM district program and are excited about the potential to build upon those efforts for Cedar Hill and DeSoto ISD students, teachers, school leaders and communities," said **Andy Smith, executive director of the TI Foundation**. "As with Lancaster ISD, the intent of these new grants is to reshape the teaching and learning of STEM subjects across all grade levels to better prepare students from pre-K through 12th grade and, ultimately, for postsecondary and career success."

Since 2010, the Texas Instruments Foundation has invested more than \$50 million specifically in STEM education to improve math and science learning outcomes and opportunities for students of color in North Texas who historically face economic and educational barriers. As the COVID-19 pandemic has widened economic and educational gaps for students and families in south Dallas and North Texas, much more work is needed to provide all students with



equitable access to educational resources and to ensure success in virtual and hybrid classroom learning environments. The aim of the investments by the TI Foundation includes ensuring principals have the support and training they need to achieve good outcomes for their students; setting teachers up for success in their classrooms; and equipping students with the resources they need to acquire the right skills and master the fundamentals of reading, writing, math and science.

About Communities Foundation of Texas

Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT)'s vision is thriving communities for *all*. CFT works locally and across the state through a variety of charitable funds and strategic initiatives. The public foundation professionally manages 1,000 charitable funds for individuals, families, companies and nonprofits in addition to powering several key initiatives such as Educate Texas at CFT, W. W. Caruth, Jr. Fund at CFT and CFT's North Texas Giving Day. CFT has awarded more than \$2 billion in grants since its founding in 1953. Learn more at cftexas.org. Follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/CFTexas), Twitter (twitter.com/GiveWisely) or Instagram (instagram.com/communitiesfoundationoftexas/).

About Educate Texas

Educate Texas, an initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas, is a trusted change agent in Texas education, working through programs and policies to ensure every Texas student is prepared in the school, in the workforce, and in life. Since 2003, Educate Texas has partnered with school districts, institutions of higher education, businesses, community and civic organizations, state agencies, and policymakers to strengthen the public and higher education systems for all Texas students. Learn more at edtx.org. Follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/educatetexas), Twitter (twitter.com/educatetexas) or LinkedIn (linkedin.com/showcase/educate-texas/).

About the Texas Instruments Foundation

The Texas Instruments Foundation, founded in 1964, is a non-profit organization solely funded by Texas Instruments providing philanthropic support for educational and charitable purposes primarily in the communities where TI operates. Committed to supporting educational



excellence, the foundation works to create measurable, replicable programs and initiatives. The focus is on providing knowledge, skills and programs to improve STEM education and increase the percentage of high school graduates who are math and science capable. More information can be found at ti.com/giving.

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