

Latest News About The West Dallas STEM School



WDSS Vision: "As a model for collaboration, the WDSS brings community into school and school into community through a place-based, STEM-focused curriculum, a learning ecosystem that leverages research, nonprofit organizations' involvement in the school, and the voices of school and community stakeholders in its direction."

Dallas ISD Approves Partnership's Public School Choice Application



The Dallas Independent School District has given the West Dallas STEM School an official green light to proceed as one of the [newest Transformation and Innovation schools](#). The STEM-focused PreK-8 school will open in the 2021-22 school year with 7th and 8th grades, supported by ongoing collaboration from SMU, Toyota, Dallas ISD, and the West Dallas community.

In January 2020, the West Dallas STEM School partnership submitted a Public School Choice application to propose the opening of a STEM-focused PreK-8 campus on the site of the current Pinkston High School. Key characteristics of the STEM school include: place-based and community-embedded, provision of wraparound services and close collaboration between in and out of school providers.

Toyota and other key industry partners will continue to advance the direction of the school and the SMU Simmons School of Education and Human Development will serve as a key partner in teacher preparation, ongoing professional learning, and research and evaluation. This application was a major milestone in the work of the partnership, and we wish to thank everyone who has had a hand in this work. View [application](#).

Equipping Nonprofits to Serve the STEM School



A key feature of the West Dallas STEM School is a strategic collaboration with the nonprofit sector to provide embedded or nearby social services that will directly support PreK-8 students, families, school staff, and the broader community.

A portion of the \$2 million planning grant made to SMU by Toyota has been sub-granted to convene three cohorts of nonprofits to increase their learning and readiness capacity for possible participation in the school. A pilot cohort of six nonprofits – AVANCE North Texas, Brother Bill's Helping Hand, Dallas Afterschool, Mercy Street, The Concilio, and Wesley-Rankin Community Center – met for five months during the 2019 spring semester to engage in planning and capacity building work. [Read more.](#)

Collaborating with Gabe Allen Elementary School on Professional Learning



In the spring of 2019, the West Dallas STEM School partnership began collaborating with Gabe Allen Elementary School's principal Sheila Ortiz Espinell to support teacher learning.

Members of the professional learning design team, led by SMU Simmons' Annie Wilhelm, PH.D., and Dallas ISD's Shannon Terry, Ph.D., met with Ms. Ortiz, her leadership team and the faculty to learn more about their school and their vision for where the school was headed. Through those

conversations, they jointly decided to focus professional development on writing and project-based learning (PBL). [Read more.](#)

Dean Knight Responds to Dallas Morning News Commentary



The strength of a dedicated partnership between SMU Simmons, Dallas ISD, and Toyota to create a new STEM school in West Dallas will create new opportunities for students and their families, says Dean Stephanie L. Knight in a commentary published in The Dallas Morning News, November 26, 2019.

Her op-ed was written in response to a city-wide challenge issued by the chairman of the Dallas Citizens Council to bridge the economic divide found in under-resourced areas. Toyota awarded a \$2 million planning grant to the Simmons School for the development of a new STEM pre-K through eighth-grade school, and Dallas ISD anticipates opening the school in 2021. [Read more.](#)