Toyota Tennessee Donates $100,000 for STEM Education in Jackson-Madison County

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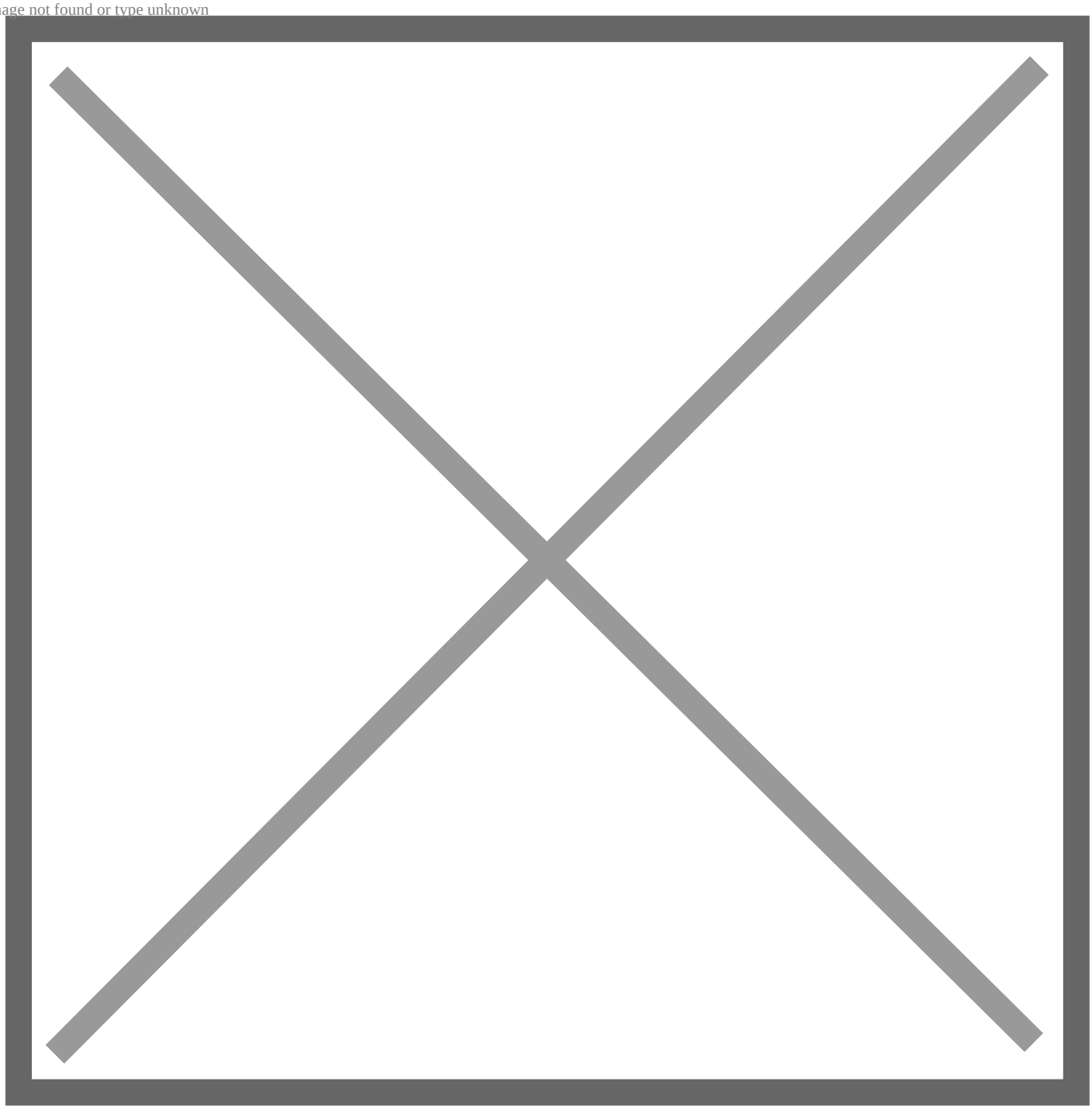

JACKSON, Tenn. (March 11, 2026) – Spend a few minutes talking with Nyla Sanchez, a seventh grader at Malesus STEM Innovation Center, and it is easy to see how students benefit from hands-on learning.

In her middle school classroom, the Toyota Engineering, Manufacturing, and Mechatronics (EM^2) Institute, students learn to apply math and science in real-world ways — from building an electric car to preparing it for race day. As a result, her grades are up, and Sanchez better understands how ideas translate from the classroom to the real applications.

“Learning in an immersive, hands-on environment, it’s helped me become a better student,” said Sanchez. “We work with so much interesting stuff, but we’re still meeting the necessary standards of science and math.”

This educational model is expanding beyond middle school. High school students across Jackson-Madison County will soon have access to the same advanced manufacturing technology, thanks to a $100,000 donation from Toyota Tennessee. This grant will support a new STEM lab at Jackson Central-Merry Early College High School to prepare learners for in-demand jobs that are close to home.

“The Toyota EM^2 Institute gives students access to real-world skills that open doors to incredible careers right here in West Tennessee, and we see the value of expanding this opportunity to high school students,” said Todd Williams, president of Toyota Tennessee.

Classes will focus on advanced manufacturing, robotics, mechatronics, industrial maintenance and other emerging technologies. In addition to classroom instruction, students will experience real manufacturing environments, collaborate with mentors and learn technical problem solving.

“The expansion of the Toyota EM^2 Institute to JCM Early College High reflects a shared vision for innovation, workforce development and long-term community growth,” said Dr. Marlon King, superintendent for Jackson-Madison County Schools. “Today’s announcement is further proof of a unified community standing behind its schools. Toyota is more than a global brand — it is a corporate neighbor invested in the future of Jackson-Madison County.”

Enrollment in the high school program is happening now, and classes will begin in Fall 2026.

For more than two decades, Toyota has been a major employer and community partner in West Tennessee. The plant’s 450 team members build nearly 2.5 million engine blocks and transmission cases and housings a year. This grant continues the manufacturer’s long-standing commitment to strengthening communities and expanding access to high-quality STEM learning.