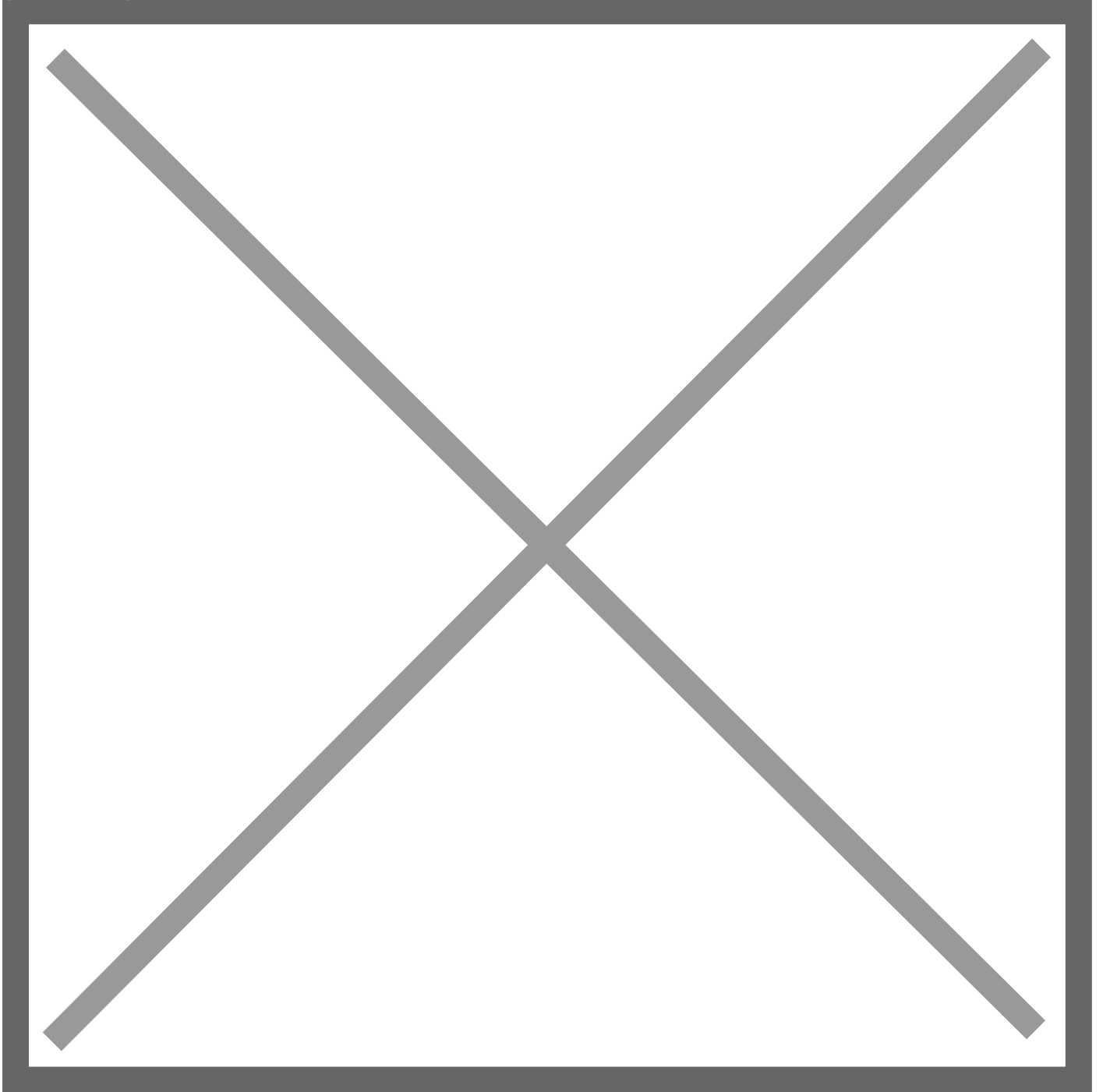


Driving Possibilities: From Curiosity to Career

August 13, 2026

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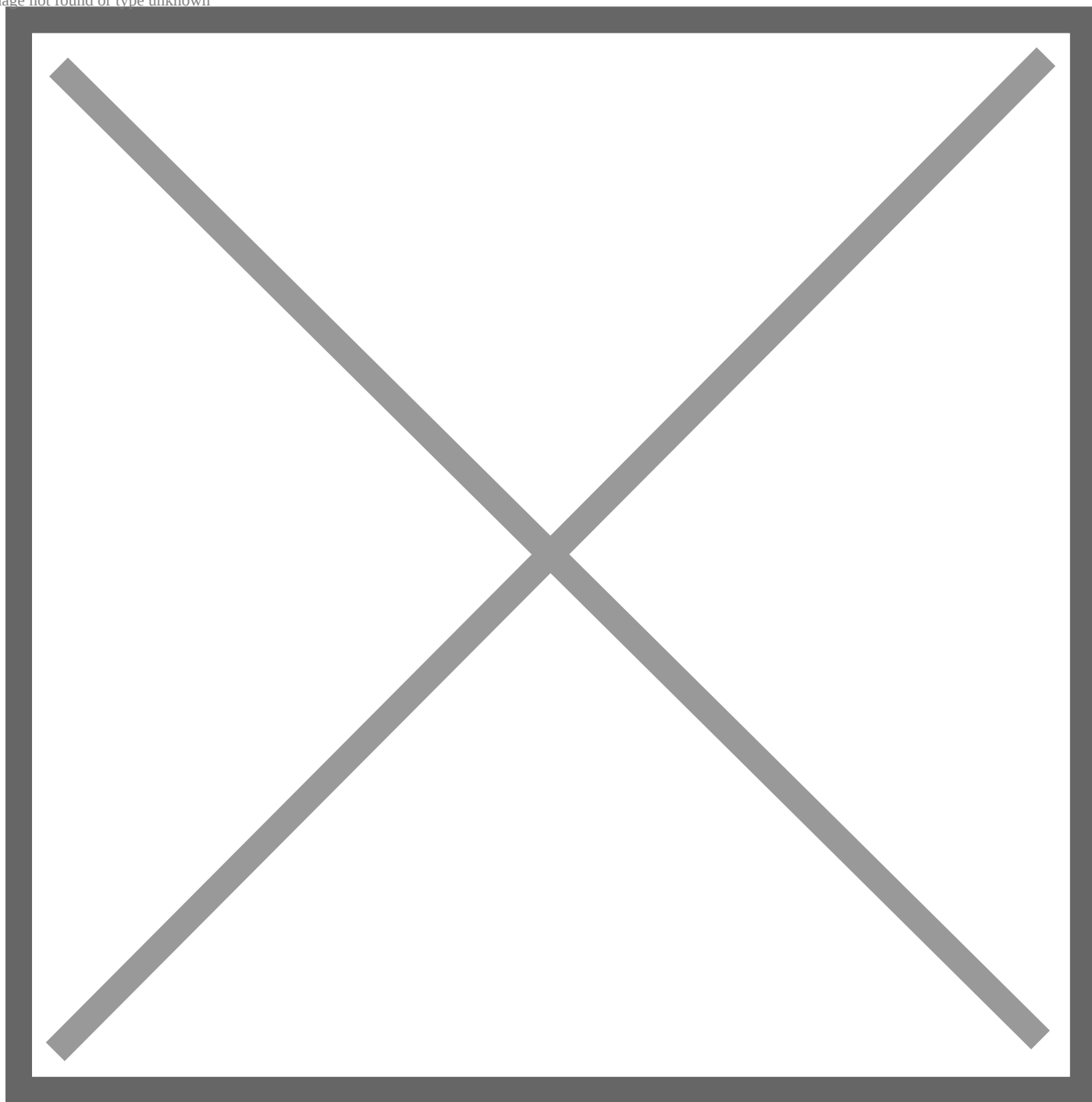
Middle school is a critical stage where students begin forming ideas about what they are capable of and what paths are available to them. In a classroom in Michigan, what started as a lesson quickly turned into something more.

Middle school students huddled over battery-powered car kits, testing circuits and watching their creations come to life. Just weeks earlier, many had little exposure to engineering beyond the classroom. Now, they were asking thoughtful questions about batteries, electrical systems, and the design and technology that power modern vehicles.

During a field trip with Toyota engineers, those questions became even more specific. Students who had once been quiet were now fully engaged, connecting what they had learned in class to what they were seeing in real time.

You could see the shift. Curiosity had turned into something more focused, something tangible. For the first time, many students weren't just learning about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math); they were beginning to see themselves in it.

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Connecting with Students – Brian Schneidewind, VP of Powertrain at Toyota R&D, engages with students.

Through the From Curiosity to Career program, students are introduced to STEM not as an abstract concept, but as something real and accessible. Hands-on learning combined with direct interaction with engineers helps students connect classroom concepts to real-world applications.

Educators and program leaders observed a clear shift. Students became more engaged during lessons tied to real-world experiences. Some who had previously struggled to stay attentive were now actively participating, asking

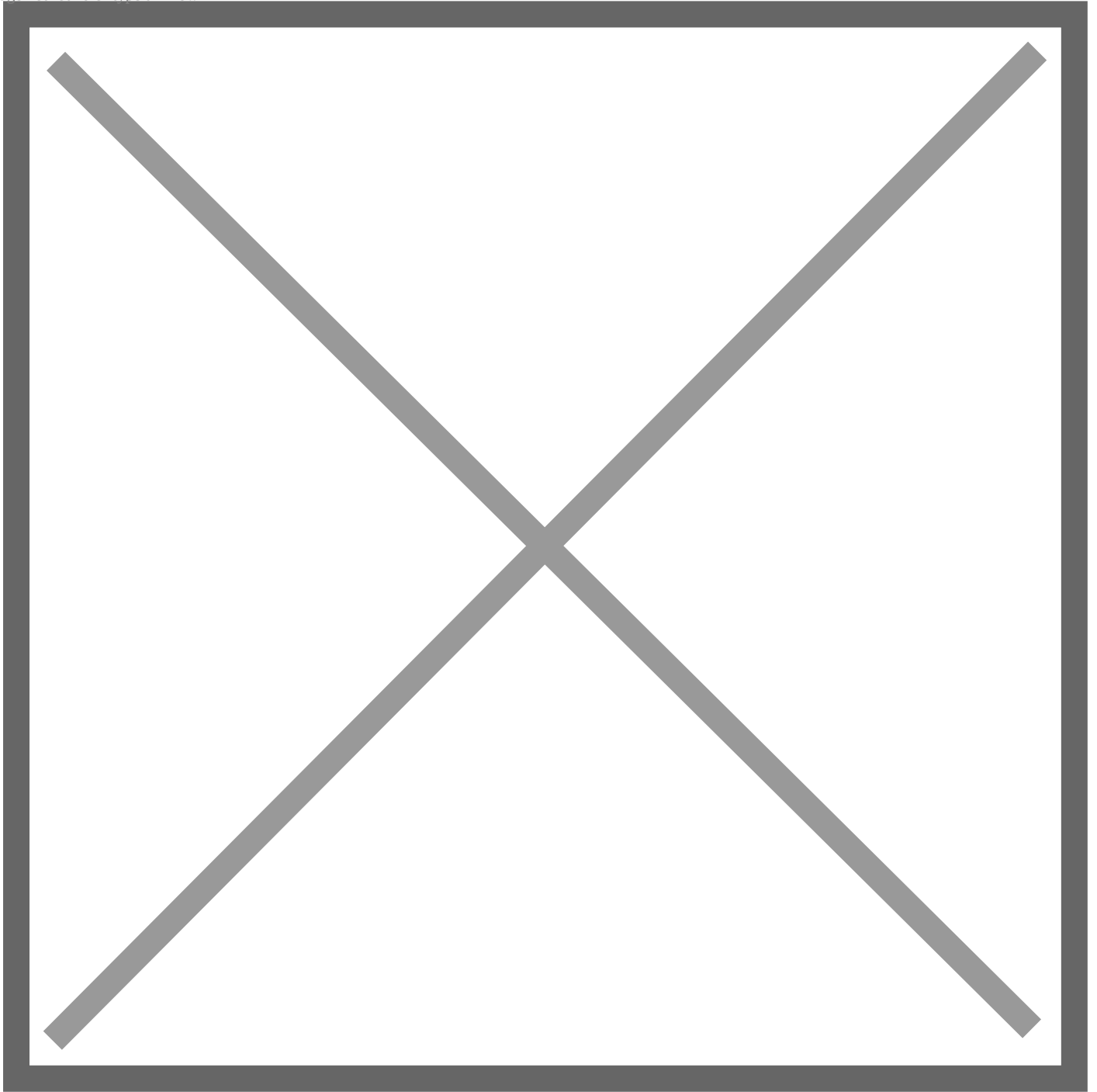
questions, exploring ideas, and showing genuine curiosity.

More importantly, students began moving from general interest to specific thinking. Instead of saying “I like STEM,” they were identifying pathways and designs through robotics, mobility projects, and engineering exercises.

“The goal is not to lock students into a career choice, but to expand their sense of possibility and help them make more informed choices as they move through school,” Mia Lanier-Durkins, career and technical education coordinator of experiential learning at Washtenaw Intermediate School District.

That shift is reflected in the national data, with students showing a **19-point increase in confidence** after participating in Driving Possibilities programming.

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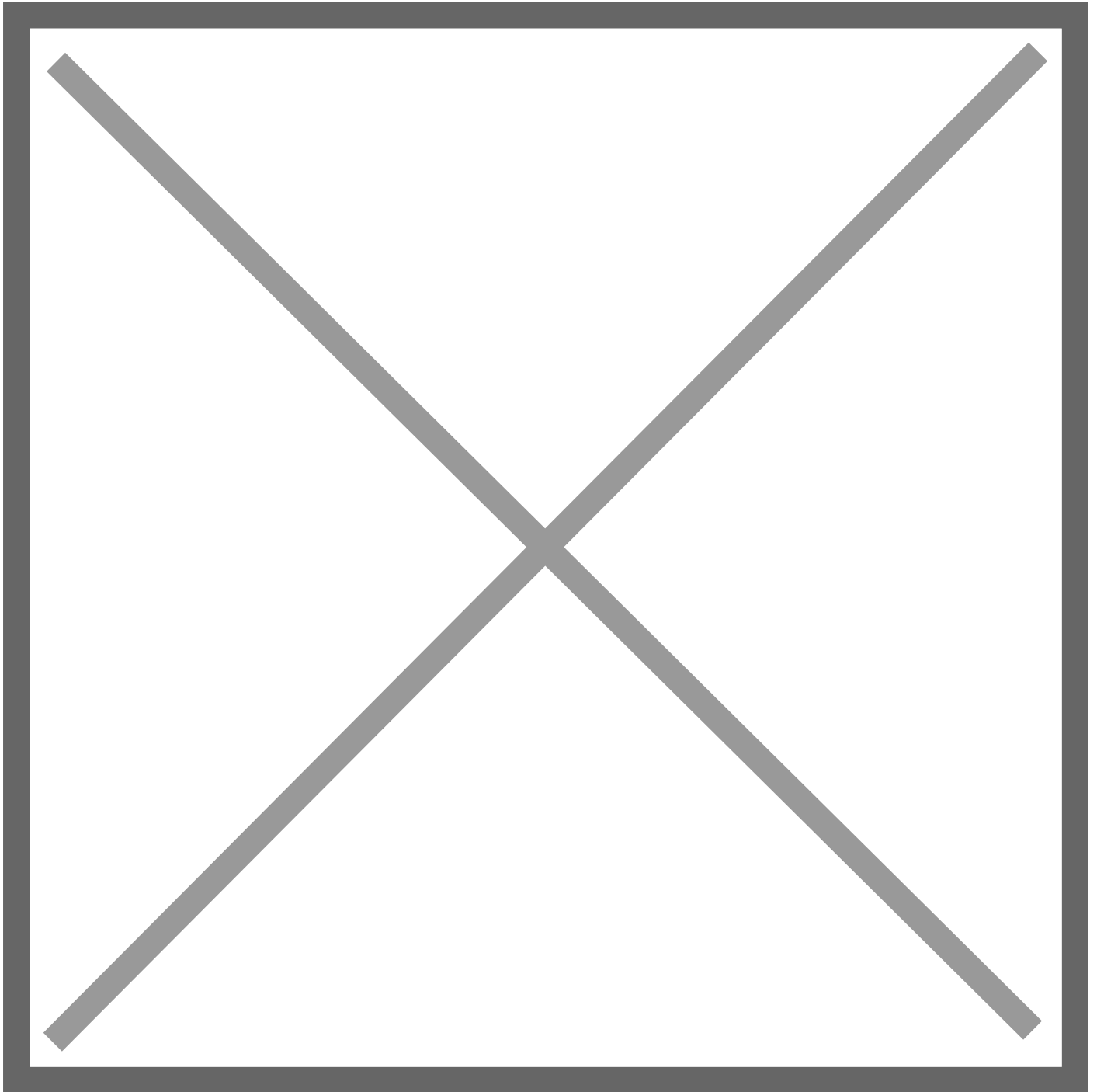
Real World Exposure – Nathan Rowley, manager of Powertrain at R&D, walks through an exercise with students.

Toyota's Role: Turning Exposure Into Opportunity

Through Driving Possibilities, a Toyota USA Foundation Inc initiative, Toyota is helping bridge the gap between education and workforce readiness by bringing real-world experiences into the learning journey.

By connecting students with engineers, tools, and real applications of STEM, the program helps make career pathways more visible and attainable. This is crucial at a stage when students are still shaping their sense of identity and potential.

These experiences are not about defining a single path, but about expanding possibilities. They give students the confidence to explore, ask questions and imagine a future they may not have considered before.



Join the Conversation

Behind every statistic is a moment like this, when a student begins to see what's possible for their future. From curiosity to confidence, these experiences are helping shape the next generation of innovators.