

# Twombly Elementary Opens SmartLab to Ignite Curiosity and Inspire Future Innovators

*The Weld Trust Partnership Brings Cutting-Edge STEM Learning to Twombly Elementary*

FORT LUPTON, CO, UNITED STATES, June 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- With a crowd of excited students, educators, and community members gathered in celebration, Twombly Elementary officially opened the doors to its new SmartLab on Monday, May 12. The ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the beginning of a transformative chapter for the school—one that puts creativity, problem-solving, and hands-on STEM learning at the center of the student experience.

The new SmartLab offers a flexible, high-tech learning environment where students can build, test, and explore real-world concepts through engaging, project-based activities. Twombly Elementary Principal, Stephanie Mehnert explained that the lab was born out of both vision and necessity. "This year we needed to add a 4th round of specials to accommodate our growing school population," Mehnert said. "STEM was the choice myself and the team made to add for this school year. STEM can support students with cooperative group activities, problem solving, critical thinking, and communicating in a hands-on environment. SmartLab provided curriculum as well as the hands-on critical thinking activities we envisioned. With the support of The Weld Trust, we have been able to make this a possibility for our students at Twombly Elementary."

The SmartLab was made possible through a generous \$170,000 grant from The Weld Trust, a philanthropic organization that awards grants to nonprofits, schools and government entities in



Students, staff, and SmartLab representatives gathered with excitement as Twombly Elementary officially opened its new SmartLab!

the areas of health and education for Weld County residents.

"SmartLabs are designed to engage students through hands-on learning," shared The Weld Trust Chief Executive Officer, Jeff Carlson. "This project-based learning allows students to build critical thinking skills with a STEM curriculum. One of the long-term goals of The Weld Trust is to help remove barriers to learning for students to be successful in school. The interactive learning environment fostered by SmartLab allows students to learn in ways that are unique to their interests and keeps them engaged. Through constant advances in technology, kids are learning in all new ways these days."

"We are pleased to support a program that has adapted their approach to meet students where they are at, leading to more success in the classroom and also helps introduce students to career possibilities through the learning modules. This way of learning teaches vital 21st century skills in the classroom" Carlson noted.

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*Jeff Carlson, The Weld Trust  
Chief Executive Officer*

For Assistant Principal, Jamie Zupparo the launch of the SmartLab symbolizes the school's commitment to cultivating student potential through exploration and imagination. "Our new SmartLab isn't just a space—it's a launchpad for creativity, discovery, and the next generation of innovators," she said. "Each experiment and idea sparks endless possibilities. We are so fortunate to have this opportunity to provide our students with the tools and resources to explore, learn, and grow."

The lab's development was also made possible through the guidance of Twombly Elementary SmartLab Facilitator, RK Hancock IV who is a longtime advocate for STEM education. Hancock described the lab as a place where students are encouraged to be curious, brave, and imaginative. "My ultimate goal, as an educator, is to provide young scientists with a space that encourages curiosity, wonder, creativity, and exploration," he said. "Once young scientists are



A young learner at Twombly Elementary explores colorful building tools during a hands-on activity in the new SmartLab.

provided with this space, they will be inspired to continue the pursuit of exploring the unknowns of the world around them. The SmartLab provides this space and acts as a launching pad for creating the next generation of great thinkers.”

The significance of the event resonated beyond the school. Interim Assistant Superintendent, Johan Van Nieuwenhuizen underscored the district’s commitment to innovative education, stating, “The SmartLab at Twombly Elementary represents our commitment to providing students with innovative learning environments that prepare them for the future. It’s inspiring to see our community come together to support such transformative educational opportunities.”



Laughter and imagination take center stage as young students dive into hands-on exploration in the SmartLab.

Colorado SmartLab Representative, Kelley Fitzsimmons said she is excited to bring a SmartLab into this school, with the help of Van Nieuwenhuizen and The Weld Trust. “It’s just such a wonderful, incredible experience that I know these students will have a new perspective and a new way to think about learning,” Fitzsimmons said. “Like I mentioned, it’s really turning them from consumers of information to producers of information, and giving them the opportunity to experience different industries, different careers, and occupations that they never would have thought about had they not had the chance to explore within the SmartLab.”

As students sang and shared their projects with guests—many of whom enjoyed SmartLab activities, swag, and cookies—it was clear the event was not just a celebration, but a shared moment of pride and promise. With the SmartLab now open, Twombly Elementary joins a countywide movement to bridge access through innovative STEM education.

To see additional photos and learn more about Twombly Elementary, [read the Press Release from Fort Lupton Press.](#)

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SmartLab delivers turnkey, career-centered K-12 STEM programs that equip today’s students for tomorrow’s challenges. Every hands-on PBL learning environment integrates grade-appropriate STEM applications across industry pathways to create real career connections. SmartLab

programs include dedicated or flexible learning environments along with standards-aligned curriculum, professional development, and ongoing support. To learn how your organization [can become a partner, visit smarttablearning.com/partnerships/](#).

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The Weld Trust is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) foundation with a mission to promote excellence in health and education in Weld County, Colorado. Established through the legacy of North Colorado Medical Center, The Weld Trust provides funding through strategic grants that aim to improve the health outcomes and educational access of residents in the community. With a strong commitment to long-term, systemic impact, the organization partners with local nonprofits, healthcare providers, and educational institutions to support innovative and sustainable initiatives. [Learn more at www.weldtrust.org](#).

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Twombly Elementary School is a public elementary school in Fort Lupton, Colorado, serving students in the Weld Re-8 School District. Committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and academically rigorous environment, Twombly Elementary nurtures the whole child through high expectations, innovative teaching, and strong community partnerships. The school emphasizes collaborative learning, equity, and preparing students for success in an ever-changing world. With dedicated staff and a focus on student-centered education, Twombly Elementary is proud to support every learner on their path to excellence.

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