

Milliken Intermediate School Celebrates Opening of SmartLab STEAM Learning Space

Weld RE-5J's newest SmartLab empowers hands-on innovation, collaboration, and career readiness for Colorado students.

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[EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- Milliken Intermediate School, part of the Weld RE-5J School District, celebrated the grand opening of its new SmartLab STEAM learning space on October 24—a milestone that drew students, families, district leaders, and community partners together to witness the school's latest investment in future-ready learning.

Well before the ribbon was cut, the energy inside the SmartLab told its own story. Students clustered around robotics kits, practiced coding challenges on tablets, and tested early engineering designs with the kind of excitement typically reserved for field days or school assemblies. For many, it was their first glimpse at a space built specifically for exploration—one where trying, failing, redesigning, and trying again is part of the learning journey.

“

We are proud that Milliken Intermediate has this opportunity to lead this important work and look forward to expanding these opportunities across the district.”

Scott Nielsen, Superintendent of Schools



Milliken Intermediate School leaders, staff, students, and community partners celebrate the official ribbon cutting of the school's new SmartLab, made possible through support from The Weld Trust and the Weld RE-5J School District.

Funded through support from The Weld Trust and the Weld RE-5J community, the SmartLab introduces a hands-on, project-based environment that integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. The new space aligns with the district's broader vision to prepare learners for a world increasingly shaped by innovation, digital fluency, and rapid change.

As the ceremony began, district and school leaders

emphasized that the SmartLab represents more than new equipment or upgraded technology—it reflects a community commitment to empowering students with opportunities they have never had before.

“This space will truly be a launchpad for learning for every student that walks through the doors,” said Nate Sassano, Weld RE-5J Board of Education Vice President. “This lab supports the Board's vision to prepare students to be successful in a rapidly changing world and represents the heart of what education is all about: curiosity, creativity and the courage to explore. Here our students will have that chance to code, design, and dream... Today we celebrate a community that believes in its students and the future.”

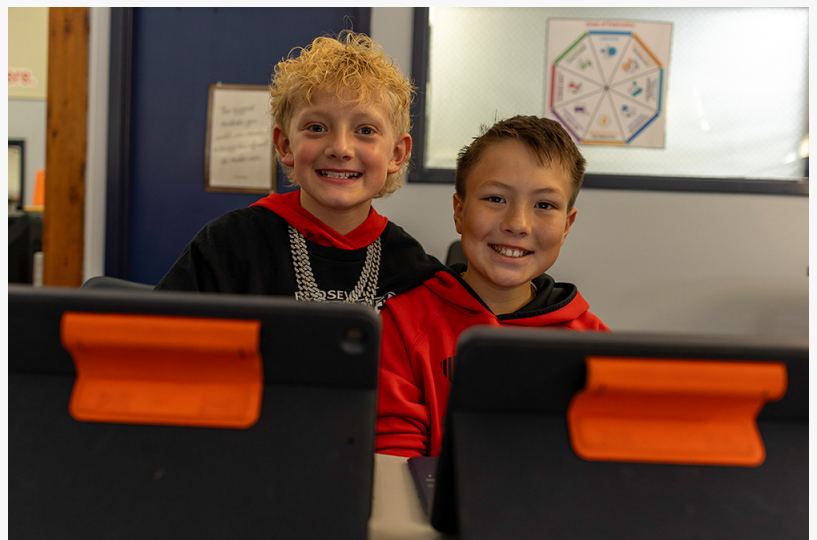
For Superintendent Scott Nielsen, the SmartLab brings to life the kind of learning environment that educators have envisioned for years: “This is a space where you can ask questions, wonder together, and imagine new solutions. The opportunities you have here to plan, to create, to communicate, will help prepare you to thrive and compete in an ever-changing world.”

Principal Alan Plaisance shared that the SmartLab was part of the school's vision long before the building opened. Seeing students already engaging in meaningful, hands-on challenges has affirmed the school's direction. “To see the work that students are doing and being excited about the learning, I'm excited to see what is ahead of us,” he said.

The space has quickly become a centerpiece for project-based learning on campus—something SmartLab and STEM Facilitator Courtney Wehage has witnessed firsthand during the first quarter



Milliken Intermediate School students collaborate on an engineering challenge in the new SmartLab, using hands-on building kits to explore design, problem-solving, and creativity.



Milliken Intermediate School students explore digital learning tools in the new SmartLab, a hands-on space designed to foster creativity, collaboration, and career-connected learning.

of the school year.

“It is incredible to see the creativity already happening in this room,” she said. “Our SmartLab kits tie to careers, so students can discover where they’re passionate and then dig deeper. This is an amazing gift that we have been given, and we are ready for the challenge to continue making things even better for students across 5J.”

As students demonstrated early projects for visitors—coding small robots, designing 3D models, and building engineering prototypes—it became clear that the SmartLab is already doing what it was created to do: make learning visible, meaningful, and connected to real-world skills.

Dr. Jennifer Berry, CEO of SmartLab, highlighted the long-term significance of this kind of learning.

“The SmartLab at Milliken Intermediate is more than a classroom—it’s a space where curiosity becomes capability,” she said. “When students design, build, and test their ideas, they gain more than technical knowledge; they gain confidence, creativity, and a belief in their own potential.”

Equipped with robotics systems, digital media tools, engineering kits, interactive technologies, and structured project pathways, the SmartLab gives students the chance to engage deeply with problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and iterative design. These skills will support them not only in STEM fields but in any future academic or career path they pursue.

The investment at Milliken Intermediate is part of a larger district effort to expand career-connected learning and STEM opportunities for students in Johnstown, Milliken, and surrounding communities—ensuring that learners develop the knowledge and confidence needed to thrive in high-demand fields and contribute meaningfully to the future workforce.

Weld RE-5J School District

Weld RE-5J School District serves the communities of Johnstown and Milliken, Colorado, providing students with rigorous academics and innovative learning opportunities that prepare them for college, career, and life. The district is committed to developing future-ready learners who think critically, act responsibly, and contribute positively to their community. [Learn more at www.weldre5j.org](http://www.weldre5j.org).

SmartLab

SmartLab is the leader in designing and implementing project-based, career-connected learning environments that inspire students to engage in STEM, develop critical thinking skills, and prepare for future careers. SmartLab partners with schools and districts nationwide to create hands-on learning experiences that cultivate curiosity, collaboration, and confidence. [Learn more at www.smartlablearning.com](http://www.smartlablearning.com).

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