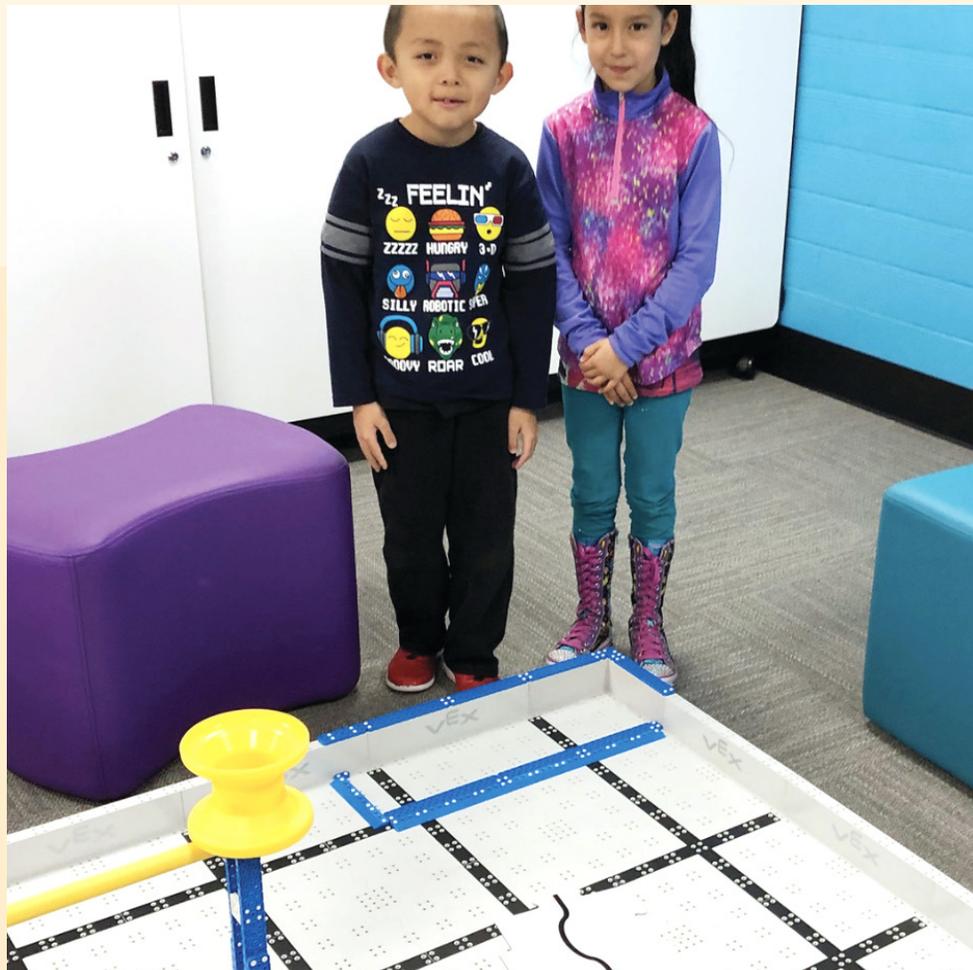


CASE STUDY: SWANSON & THOMPSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO ALL CHILDREN



When Swanson Elementary School in Arvada, CO opened its SmartLab HQ, second-grader Caleb Vo had one thing to say: “I am just blown away by this.”

Additionally, Austin Overby, a third-grader at Thomson Elementary School, exclaimed, “Once you figure it out, it’s cool. I like expressing myself through the computer.”

In 2019, both Swanson and Thomson Elementary Schools opened their SmartLab HQs—a student-led, STEM-focused project-based learning program that helps students develop essential skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and perseverance.

These two schools are part of Colorado’s Jefferson County School District, which plans to open additional SmartLab HQs in two more elementary schools, one in a middle school and another in a high school.



By building these K–12 STEM pathways, students will develop foundational STEM skills during elementary school so they can take higher-level STEM classes in middle and high school.

With this essential foundation, students will graduate with the skills they need to solve tomorrow’s problems. “Employers

are looking for people who can be problem-solvers and critical thinkers,” said Natalie Berges Tucker, Thomson Elementary School Principal. “The SmartLab HQ is a great breeding ground for that.”

Additionally, these critical 21st-century skills the students are learning today will carry them through their entire lives. Said Shannon Feely, Swanson’s Digital Teacher Librarian, the students’ new skills “could lead to a cure for cancer, an end to cyber bullying, and a new way to protect oceans from pollution.”

Since opening the SmartLab HQs, teachers have seen students become risk-takers and collaborators. Furthermore, learning in a SmartLab HQ “levels the playing field for students from low-income families,” explains Swanson Elementary Principal, Kristina Carothers.

The education investments were made possible by partnering with a few organizations, including the Gill Foundation, JeffCo Public Schools, and the JeffCo School Foundation.

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