



March 22, 2019

Eric Mineweaser  
Warren County School District  
6820 Market Street  
Russell, PA 16345

RE: Sole Source Vendor Certification Letter

Dear Mr. Mineweaser,

This letter is in response to your request that Creative Learning Systems certify our status as sole source vendor of the SmartLab™ technology education learning environment and instructional system (hereafter, “SmartLab”).

Creative Learning Systems is the creator, manufacturer, and sole distributor of the SmartLab program. The SmartLab cannot be purchased from any other vendor. Creative Learning Systems offers the SmartLab program as a complete system with a single price for whole-unit purchase. Since developing the first technology lab for a U.S. school in 1987, Creative Learning Systems has designed and implemented more than 800 SmartLab programs in the United States and Canada.

The SmartLab is of such a unique nature that there is currently no equivalent competing product. Numerous fundamental differences exist between the SmartLab and that which is offered by other providers of technology education and STEM programs. Several of these differences are summarized below:

- 1) ***SmartLabs emphasize personalized learning, academic connections and the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.*** The SmartLab program is designed to support personalized learning where every learner is empowered to pursue appropriate levels of challenge and explore topics of personal relevance. Another cornerstone of the SmartLab approach is the view of technology as a tool to be applied to workflow rather than as an isolated set of skills. Learning engagements are linked to core academic knowledge and integration of multiple technologies is encouraged. SmartLab projects emphasize critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, collaboration, project management and self-direction. In contrast, other technology education and STEM programs offer collections of “modules”; these are independent units of instruction that are largely prescriptive and rotational. Specific knowledge and skill sets are emphasized and are not adaptable to the aptitudes and interests of each student.
- 2) ***Every SmartLab is custom designed and configured*** to meet a school systems specific educational goals and objectives. Each SmartLab design is the result of a highly-collaborative process where Creative Learning Systems design consultants work closely with teaching and administrative staff to develop and unique customized program for each school. Everything from the design and configuration of the furniture, to the selection of software, kits and accessories, to the customized scope and sequence of learning engagements are tailored the unique needs of each individual SmartLab. The equipment, kits, furniture and software applications dovetail with the curriculum, assessment systems, professional development and support to provide a complete, fully-integrated learning program.
- 3) ***Learning in a SmartLab is guided by a proprietary system of online curriculum*** called Learning Launchers™. Learning Launchers provide over 500 guided project-based learning engagements in more than 70 different technology topic areas. Learning Launchers may be accessed by students and teachers from school or home. A unique aspect of the Learning Launcher approach is the careful balance between guiding the learning process while fostering an inquiry-based, student-centered approach. Learning Launchers allow students to select an appropriate level of challenge and integrate topics of personal relevance into their technology projects. Students select Learning Launchers with appropriate levels of challenge and support.



Level 1 Learning Launchers are designed for foundational learning where more guidance and basic knowledge and skills development is required. Level 2 engagements provide transitional learning experiences with greater autonomy and less direct guidance.

Level 3 engagements are typically open-ended design challenges requiring advanced skills in the applied technology. In addition, Liftoff Challenges and Express Challenges guide learning engagements for younger or special education learners and Online Interactive Resource Guides provide links to engaging online content to support learning in a variety of academic content areas. All Learning Launchers include content to support connections between applied technologies and core academic subjects.

- 4) Complementing the Learning Launcher curriculum is the **SmartLab ePortfolio System™**, another proprietary curriculum resource available only with the SmartLab system. The ePortfolio system provides a framework of electronic templates for learners to document their learning and develop project presentations. This portfolio-based system enables accurate documentation of learning within a personalized learning framework. While documenting project work, students build critical communications skills (written, oral, and advanced and blended media) and gain vital insights into their unique learning pathways. The ePortfolio system develops critical thinking skills through an emphasis on learning and achievement rather than knowledge and skills alone. Moreover, the system results in a comprehensive portfolio of work learners can use to evaluate their progress over their term of study. The ePortfolio templates are easily modified to meet the unique learning objectives of each SmartLab program. ePortfolios may be stored and accessed locally on the school or SmartLab server, or on a cloud-based system to permit student and teacher access from any computer or mobile device.
- 5) **SmartLabs support authentic assessment of learning.** The ePortfolio system includes a rubric designed to accurately assess the learning process with a specific focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication and project management. The rubric may be easily modified to reflect the educational objectives of each SmartLab program. This rubric is used by the SmartLab Facilitator as an objective method for evaluating individualized project work and assigning a letter grade. The rubric is also used by learners in the SmartLab system for self-assessment. This provides a foundation for learners to understand 21<sup>st</sup> century skill expectations and to identify areas of improvement. In contrast, pre and post-test assessment systems are designed to measure basic knowledge only and cannot provide vital insight into higher-order thinking skills nor can they adapt to a personalized learning model.
- 6) **Adaptability and reconfigurability are core design concepts** in each custom SmartLab environment. The SmartLab system is designed to allow seamless integration of additional learning resources and/or updated technologies. In addition, each element in the furniture system is designed with heavy-duty casters and quick-connect fittings. This allows the furniture and equipment to be easily moved and reconfigured. The extraordinary flexibility of the SmartLab system results in a dynamic environment that adapts to the rapid pace of technological change as well as the evolving needs of the classroom community. No other technology education vendor has an equivalent system or dedication to adaptability.
- 7) **Comprehensive service and ongoing customer support** distinguish the SmartLab from other technology education and STEM program providers. SmartLabs installations are performed solely by Creative Learning Systems' highly-skilled technicians. This assures consistent quality of implementation and continuity of support. Professional development is provided on-site, by company certified trainers – each with extensive teaching experience in the SmartLab environment. Other programs typically offer only group training at designated off site locations. Creative Learning Systems also offers a Curriculum and Support program that provides unlimited technical and instructional support, professional development in the event of Facilitator turnover, all updates and additions to the SmartLab curriculum and an annual catalog credit for SmartLab parts and enhancements. No other technology education or STEM program provider has an equivalent customer support program.



Please let me know if you need further information, or if we can be of assistance in any other way. We look forward to working together to provide your students with truly unique 21<sup>st</sup> century learning opportunities.

Sincerely,

*Shelley Nault*

Shelley Nault  
Director of Account Administration  
Creative Learning Systems  
[snault@creativelearningsystems.com](mailto:snault@creativelearningsystems.com)