

## NWS Learning Commons and Maker Space Plans

Our vision at NWS is to design and create spaces that inspire innovation, mentorship, creativity, collaboration and entrepreneurship.

We started by turning our outdated computer lab into a state-of-the-art “**Maker Space.**” Maker Spaces are learning environments designed for students and community members to make things. We named ours the NWS SMARTE Space, because it provides time, space, opportunity, tools, and resources to integrate learning in the areas of science, math, the arts, reading, writing, technology, and engineering (SMARTE.) The space houses a variety of tools, materials, consumables, resources, and technology, as well as an adaptable space for ‘tinkering’ in large and small groups. It has become a hub of activity, used from before the school day begins until well after the dismissal bell has rung. The SMARTE Space has been used in a variety of ways including numerous curriculum-related and exploration projects, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade tech club, before and after school programs, and EXCL vacation and snow day projects. Check out our website for detailed descriptions, photographs, and videos of students working in the SMARTE Space: <https://sites.google.com/a/fpsct.org/smart-space/>

The next phase of our work is to transform our traditional library into a **Learning Commons.** In a recent article on the Edutopia website, the concept of a Learning Commons was defined as follows:

*Printed books still play a critical role in supporting learners, but digital technologies offer additional pathways to learning and content acquisition. Students and teachers no longer need a library simply for access. Instead, they require a place that encourages participatory learning and allows for co-construction of understanding from a variety of sources. In other words, instead of being an archive, libraries are becoming a **learning commons.***

Holland, B. (2015, January 14) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries: The Learning Commons. Edutopia. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/21st-century-libraries-learning-commons-beth-holland>

The Learning Commons will include a Digital Media Lab, mobile book stacks, and other flexible furniture designed for independent and collaborative work. This space would allow us to provide virtual learning opportunities that would instill a deep curiosity in our students about the world and how it works. The first phase will include a shift in current book stacks to make room for a new digital media lab. We plan to gradually purchase flexible furniture in the coming years.

The goal of this project is to provide innovative ways for students to connect with and learn alongside audiences in our school community, our district and the world through digital media. We believe that in order to prepare our learners for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we need to help them develop dispositions and skills to communicate and collaborate in a variety of settings with many different audiences, not just with their grade level classmates. By providing time, space, access to technology, and resources for elementary students to integrate learning across content areas, we are preparing them to take on the rigorous challenges set forth in the CT Core Standards. These kinds of learning opportunities will support the work they will encounter as they transition to our upper elementary, middle, and high school.

Below are the funds we have received through grants and PTO donations so far:

Date	Project	Source	Amount
2013	Library Set of iPads & Cart	NW PTO Grant	\$9,500
May, 2014	NWS SMARTE Space Project	Noah Wallace Fund Grant	\$10,000
May, 2015	SMARTE Space furniture and Smartboard	NW PTO Grant	\$11,800
May, 2015	Digital Media Lab Project	Noah Wallace Fund Grant	\$22,200
May, 2015	E-News Video Project	Farmington Public School Foundation Teacher Initiated Grant	\$2,500
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$56,000</b>