ISTE Seal Review Findings Report

SmartLab Spark

2025

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ABOUT

ABOUT ISTE

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is home to a community of global educators and solution providers who are passionate about using technology to revolutionize learning. Our vision is to create a bold community where education innovators are supported in reimagining and redesigning learning with a focus on using technology to create transformational and equitable experiences for learners. We're making this vision a reality by delivering practical guidance, evidence-based professional learning, virtual networks, thought-provoking events and the ISTE Standards.

ISTE SEAL

The ISTE Seal serves as a mark of high-quality product design for solutions that enable and guide high-quality learning. By choosing to demonstrate their commitment to supporting best practices for teaching and learning, these products show a purposeful and meaningful dedication to practical usability, digital pedagogical implementation, and the ISTE Standards. With a focus on user experience, product usability, and the most essential elements of instructional technology today, the ISTE Seal provides a set of criteria and simple indicators to guide educators, students, and technology directors toward the very best products on the market.

ISTE awards a seal only after an extensive analysis conducted by trained ISTE reviewers that ensures a product meets all critical elements under specific review criteria.

By earning an ISTE Seal, ISTE verifies that this product:

- Promotes critical technology skills.
- Supports the use of technology in appropriate ways.
- Incorporates digital pedagogy and the learning sciences.
- Addresses key elements of tech usability, user experience and user interface.
- Aligns to ISTE Standards in specific ways.

RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

WHAT IS *SmartLab Spark*?

SmartLab implements student-led, project-based learning environments that prioritize problem-solving and critical thinking skills, preparing students for future careers. The LearningHub platform provides structure and flexibility for facilitators, allowing educators to guide students through their projects. Each project starter in the SmartLab curriculum offers the necessary problem, background information, assessment tools, and collaboration features. Facilitators benefit from curriculum planning resources to align projects with educational goals. SmartLab's approach fosters active learning, empowering students to engage in hands-on tasks and document their progress. This commitment equips students with the skills needed to thrive in tomorrow's world.

HOW IS *SmartLab Spark* IMPLEMENTED?

SmartLab by Creative Learning Systems is implemented as a learning environment designed for students from kindergarten through 12th grade. These labs are facilitated by an educator or facilitator who guides the students through their learning experiences. SmartLab serves as supplementary resources to enhance core math and science curriculum, allowing students to delve deeper into these subjects. Additionally, they are utilized to implement Project-Based Learning (PBL) and STEM initiatives, providing students with hands-on, experiential learning opportunities. SmartLab also plays a role in supporting afterschool and community programs, extending the benefits of these innovative learning environments beyond regular classroom hours.

ISTE SEAL REVIEW

Product: SmartLab Spark
Product Type: Curriculum
Organization: Creative Learning Systems
Date of Award: June 2023, Updated August 2025

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

ISTE Seal reviews are conducted by a distinguished panel of experts in education, instruction and technology. These experts utilize the most up-to-date data provided by the organization to conduct thorough evaluations of each solution. The evaluations focus on assessing the solution's performance in addressing specific elements outlined in the technical and pedagogical usability framework and the ISTE Standards.

To complete their rigorous evaluations, the reviewers utilize a comprehensive rating system, categorizing each solution as either "meets expectations" or "does not meet expectations." This assessment covers both the required and optional "Look Fors" outlined in the application. To ensure the validity and reliability of their results, the reviewers regularly engage in calibrations. Final review findings are then analyzed and combined, providing an overall score for alignment with each indicator.

At ISTE, we take great pride in our unwavering commitment to delivering results that schools and districts can have full confidence in. To be deemed education-ready learning solutions, products must meet the high standards in learning sciences, user experience and interface, accessibility, and content quality.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

SmartLab Spark was reviewed against the technical, pedagogical usability framework and the ISTE Standards to determine whether **the solution is education-ready**. ISTE reviewers examined all evidence provided by the organization and interacted directly with the product.

REVIEW FINDINGS

ISTE STANDARDS: The ISTE Standards provide the competencies for learning, teaching, and leading in the digital age, providing a comprehensive roadmap for the effective use of technology in schools worldwide. Grounded in learning science research and based on practitioner experience, the ISTE Standards ensure that using technology for learning can create high-impact, sustainable, scalable, and equitable learning experiences for all learners.	
1.1.c Empowered Learner Use technology to seek feedback that informs and improves their practice and to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.	
1.1.d Empowered Learner Understand the fundamental concepts of technology operations, demonstrate the ability to choose, use and troubleshoot current technologies and are able to transfer their knowledge to explore emerging technologies.	
1.3.d Knowledge Constructor Build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.	
1.5.b Computational Thinker Collect data or identify relevant data sets, use digital tools to analyze them, and represent data in various ways to facilitate problem-solving and decision-making.	
FEEDBACK	**OUTCOME**
• Students collaborate on project documents through a shared portfolio "locker" space and document their learning progress through digital project collaboration tools. • Technology challenges engage learners through open-ended exploration using the explore, plan, do, reflect, and share process as scaffolding. • Real-world challenges provide opportunities for students to explore and create solutions using specific technologies and tools.	

• Students collect and analyze data through project structures and create Claims-Evidence-Reasoning charts to complete challenges.	

Dimension 1: User Interface and Agency **Definition: The design of the product interface and user experience helps teachers quickly and reliably achieve instructional goals. This dimension includes features related to interface design, learnability, navigation, maximizing time on task, control over actions, and general usability.**	
FEEDBACK	**OUTCOME**
• The platform's intuitive interface and clean document library design enable easy navigation without requiring significant time or effort to use basic features. • A persistent left-hand menu with clear titles allows quick access and switching between modules that describe key platform areas. • Prominently placed document categories and search functionality at the top of the page facilitate easy content access and organization. • Strong discoverability features, including well-organized library layout and clearly visible search bar, help users locate and access materials efficiently. • The product protects student data through a privacy policy that outlines data storage and usage practices with references to GDPR, CCPA, and SOC2 compliance standards.	

Dimension 2: Learning Design

Definition: The product has features that exhibit and promote design and customization of learning episodes in ways that align with research-based best practices, including those rooted in the learning sciences.

FEEDBACK	OUTCOME
• Prompts and discussion boards enable goal setting, progress monitoring, and reflection opportunities for students. • The product presents content in developmentally appropriate chunks with K-2 activity cards featuring minimal text and strong visual supports, and 3-12 project starters that break tasks into manageable guided steps. • Modular design allows educators to customize and differentiate instruction through flexible mixing and matching based on instructional goals. • Customizable content order addresses individual learning goals, needs, and sequences. • Multiple easy-to-navigate content formats support ease-of-use and student choice.	

Dimension 3: Digital Pedagogy

Definition: The product is designed to support the development of digital age learning skills, capacities and knowledge. This dimension focuses on how technology can help students and teachers experience the best possible learning experiences, including the social and learning affordances that digital educational products uniquely offer.

FEEDBACK	OUTCOME

• Open-ended challenges grounded in real-world ideas, problems, and issues include career connections woven throughout to engage students. • A structured problem-solving process (Explore, Plan, Do, Reflect, Share) supports both problem definition and deconstruction. • Reflection prompts encourage students to evaluate their designs and iterate as needed. • Multiple collaboration opportunities are built into the platform and projects.	
DIMENSION 4: INCLUSIVITY **Definition: The product helps teachers provide learning experiences that are relevant to students of many cultures, backgrounds, and abilities, and support learner motivation and agency in the learning process. The product meets current guidelines around accessibility, and supports a positive classroom culture.**	
FEEDBACK	**OUTCOME**
• Job and career examples throughout the platform showcase diversity by featuring people from various backgrounds and situations. • Closed captioning and playback speed control are easily accessible in all support videos to meet varied learning needs. • High-contrast design for key interface elements, such as white text on dark backgrounds, supports visual accessibility.	

Dimension 5: Assessment and Data **Definition: The product uses formative assessments – learning experiences that help make visible what students know and don't yet know – to generate data that inform teachers about student knowledge and skill gaps, and provide students assessment feedback that is specific, actionable, and constructive. As such, it guides teachers' instructional decisions and students' learning journeys.**	
FEEDBACK	**OUTCOME**
• A comprehensive and holistic assessment process includes multiple formats for students to submit artifacts, add comments, and make modifications based on educator feedback. • Actionable, timely feedback is delivered across various stages of the learning process through resources and templates that enable quick teacher response in flexible formats. • Robust analytics provide teachers with performance results, grades, submissions, discussion entries, progress, and platform interaction data.	

CONCLUSION

SmartLab Spark delivers a comprehensive STEM learning environment that empowers students through guided project-based learning experiences and challenges. The platform excels in providing educators with an intuitive interface that requires minimal time investment to access basic features, while offering advanced customization options for instruction and assessment.

Students benefit from a structured yet flexible learning experience where they actively collaborate through shared portfolio spaces, solve technology challenges using open-ended exploration, and engage with real-world problems using specific technologies and tools. The platform's modular design enables educators to customize content presentation in developmentally appropriate chunks, from K-2 activity cards with strong visual supports to comprehensive 3-12 project starters that guide students through manageable steps.

The digital pedagogy framework centers on an authentic inquiry process where students explore, plan, do, reflect, and share their learning. Students construct knowledge through real-world challenges that integrate career connections and require them to collect and analyze data using Claims-Evidence-Reasoning approaches. The platform promotes inclusivity through diverse career examples, multiple accessibility features including closed captioning and high-contrast design, and various tools that support different learning preferences and submission formats.

Assessment integration throughout the learning process provides teachers with comprehensive data including performance results, grades, submissions, and platform interactions. Students receive timely, actionable feedback across all stages of their learning journey through flexible response formats that enable quick teacher turnaround and meaningful student reflection.

SmartLab Spark successfully creates a continuous learning and improvement cycle that prioritizes student agency, collaborative problem-solving, and authentic STEM application. The platform facilitates streamlined learning experiences for both educators and students while generating insights that drive active, student-centered learning within diverse classroom environments and beyond.