

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Miller Davis Helps Bring Comstock's New STEM Academy to Life

Purpose-built facility creates a new home for Kalamazoo County's leading STEM program.

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — September 14 — Comstock Public Schools students are beginning a new chapter in STEM education this fall with the opening of the district's new Comstock STEM Academy, a purpose-built facility designed from the ground up to support hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Miller Davis served as Construction Manager for the project, working alongside Comstock Public Schools and GMB Architecture + Engineering to transform the district's vision for the Academy into a modern learning environment built specifically around its STEM-focused curriculum.

The new school provides a permanent home designed for a program that has already established a strong record of academic achievement. Comstock STEM Academy was recognized by U.S. News & World Report among its 2025 Best Elementary Schools and Best Middle Schools and ranked as the highest-performing school in Kalamazoo County.

"The new building will be a true game changer," said Dr. Jeffrey Thoenes, Superintendent of Comstock Public Schools. "Our previous facility was a converted neighborhood elementary school built in 1949. The new school is specifically designed for STEM education, and students and staff will have ample resources to engage in lessons focused on science, technology, engineering, and math."

Designed around the way STEM students learn, the new Academy incorporates spaces that encourage experimentation, collaboration and project-based learning. Among the building's specialized features are science and robotics labs with extensive workstation layouts, integrated sinks and retractable electrical cord reels that allow students and teachers to adapt the spaces to a variety of activities.

"We also added a nature play area to the playground featuring oak stumps and a large tree trunk anchored horizontally to the ground, and the students love it," said Dr. Chris Chopp, Principal of Comstock STEM Academy. "Each year, our first graders design their ideal playground as part of their curriculum, and a nature play area like this was included in their designs. It's exciting for them to see an idea they envisioned become part of their new school."

For Miller Davis Senior Project Manager Sherri Borick, the specialized learning spaces were among the most rewarding parts of the project to construct.

"The science and robotics labs were especially exciting because you can immediately see how the details of the building connect to the way students will learn," Borick said. "There was a tremendous amount of coordination behind those spaces, from the workstations and sinks to the overhead electrical systems."

The project also reflected a shared commitment to construction safety. During construction, Miller Davis participated in the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) Alliance Program and, for a period, was the only active MIOSHA Alliance construction site in Southwest Michigan. It was later joined by another Miller Davis-managed project in the region.

That commitment required participation across the project team and trade partners, reinforcing a safety culture that extended beyond compliance and into day-to-day operations on the jobsite.

“Building a school like this is really about the people who will walk through its doors long after our work is finished,” said Dan Coffman, President of Miller Davis. “We’re proud of the building, but we’re equally proud of how it was built — through strong collaboration, careful planning and a commitment to sending everyone home safely each day. Comstock had a clear vision for the future of STEM education in this community, and it has been a privilege for our team to help bring that vision to life.”

Throughout construction, Miller Davis worked closely with GMB Architecture + Engineering to resolve field questions and coordinate areas where multiple elevations, materials and finish transitions came together. Weekly site observations and ongoing communication between the design and construction teams allowed questions to be addressed quickly and helped maintain progress in the field.

For Borick, who is also the mother of four children and has worked in both elementary and middle school environments, the finished building carries personal significance.

“Educational spaces have such an important role in shaping a student’s experience,” Borick said.

“Knowing this building will serve hundreds of students and give them an exceptional place to learn, collaborate and grow makes this project especially meaningful. It was a true team effort, and we’re proud to have played a part.”

With the new Academy complete, Comstock students now have a facility created specifically to support the program’s focus on rigorous, relevant and collaborative STEM education — and to provide room for that program to continue evolving for years to come.

As Dr. Thoenes is known to say, “It’s a great day to be a Colt!”

About Miller Davis

Headquartered in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Miller Davis provides construction management, general contracting and design-build services throughout the state. For more than a century, the company has partnered with schools, municipalities, businesses and community organizations to build spaces to strengthen communities and shape skylines.

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