

Coming Fall 2027

A Tuition-Free K-12 Public Charter in Garfield Re-2 Opening Grades 6-9 in Fall 2027

What is GCSI?

GCSI is a tuition-free public charter school. Not private. Funding is from PPR.

Authorized by the Re-2 Board which will vote to approve in January 2027

GCSI will open in Fall 2027 with grades 6-9; and high school and K-5 grows one grade at a time to K–12.

The Unique School Differentiator is Daily Engineering Lab Classes (starting in Sixth Grade)

Every student at GCSI, starting in the sixth grade will participate in dedicated Engineering classes as a regular part of the school day—not as an occasional enrichment activity, but as a core component of the curriculum. Through age-appropriate design challenges, students will learn the engineering design process: defining problems, brainstorming solutions, prototyping, testing, and refining. Early grades will emphasize hands-on exploration with simple materials, spatial reasoning, and collaborative problem-solving; as students advance, engineering experiences will integrate more deeply with science, mathematics, technology, and real-world applications. By making engineering a continuous thread from Sixth Grade through high school, GCSI ensures that all students—not only those who self-select into elective pathways—build the habits of mind, creativity, and technical confidence that prepare them for advanced STE³M + Business coursework, career exploration, and lifelong innovation. Professional and technical services (architecture, engineering, surveying) and specialized manufacturing of renewable-energy components are named high-wage targets by the Colorado River Valley Economic Development Partnership; GCSI's required engineering sequence from middle school is the K–12 preparation for those occupations.



Inaugural GCSI Campus and Afterschool, Friday, and Weekend STEM Innovation Center

The Rife Innovation Center at 949 Railroad Avenue could provide the initial home of the Garfield County School of Innovation ("GCSI") until a new campus is constructed.

The afterschool, Friday, and weekend Innovation Center would operate as a place where children of all age and from all schools will learn innovation, STEM, aviation, business, and entrepreneurship skills. It would house 3-D printers, CNC routers, laser engravers, drone labs, aviation simulators, robotics and engineering labs. Innovator-Mentors would work with students after school, on Fridays, and on weekends.

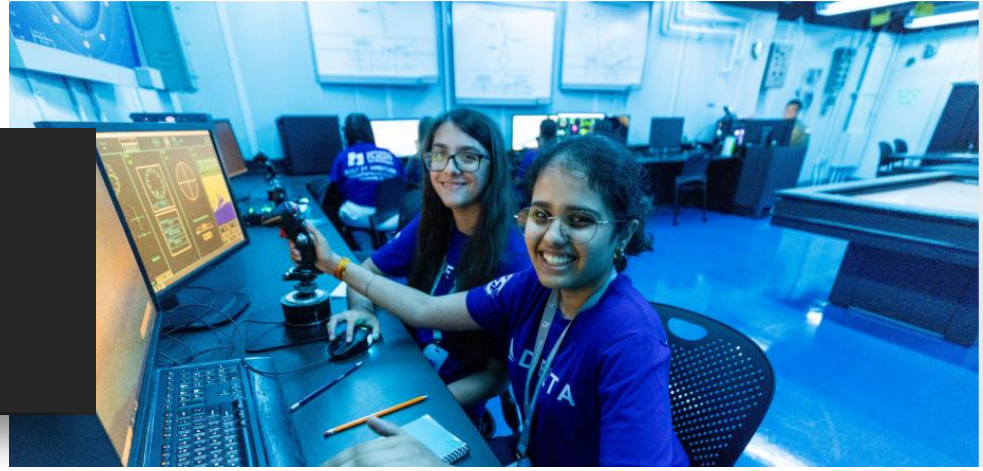
The Center would also be available to the Homeschool Community.

Garfield County



Education Innovation Center

The Education Innovation Center is a STEM-focused after-school program, with an aviation focus, designed to foster creativity, hands-on learning, innovation, and entrepreneurship for all students in grades K–12. While all hands-on projects are encouraged, the program places particular emphasis on robotics, drones, aviation, mechanics, engineering, alternative energy—including solar projects—along with related fields. The EIC is supported by individual and corporate donations, fundraising, and mentor-innovator volunteer efforts. It operates during after-school hours, on non-student school days, and on Saturdays.

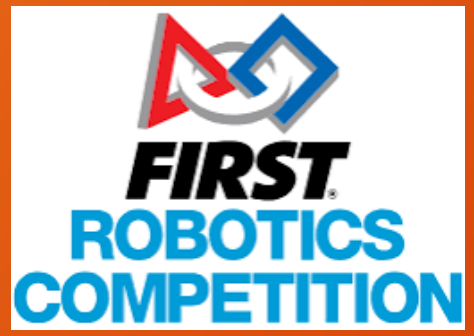






Afterschool STEM Innovation Center Clubs, Competitions, and Activities



















Jim Hybarger Rifle Farm Boy to Pilot Mentor Innovator

Aviation in Rifle, CO

1 message

Jim Hybarger <flynfishing@gmail.com> Thu, Oct 29, 2026 at 12:01 PM
To: Judy.brannberg@gmail.com

Dear Mrs Brannberg,
Per our discussion I would like to express my great admiration for the project you're anticipating in my home town of Rifle, CO.
I grew up in Rifle, started pursuing my dream of flying at age 14, learning from two former WASP pilots, Betty Clark and Pat Sullivan both were wonderful people and both are now in the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame and the Federal Aviation Hall of Fame.
I have held FAA Instructors ratings for single engine, multi engine, and instrument ratings.
I still hold ATP , and Airframe and Powerplant certifications. Having held Inspection Authorization certification for over 25 years.
I helped design and build the Rifle Jet Center with Andrew Doremus at its inception. I also managed same for numerous years.
I fought forest fires in PB4Y-2, and KC-97 aircraft.
More recently I have just retired from Airborne Resources in Denison , Texas after roughly 10 years of hands on piloting in Convair 340 and lead maintenance on Grob 520 and various other turbine and reciprocating engine aircraft.
We were very much responsible for the successful missions sponsored by Airbus, the Perlan Project and Blue Condor.
For which we were awarded the Collier Award, and SAE Award for sustainable aviation.
In the Perlan Project we set tow altitude records for altitude of 46,700 ft and the gliders went on up to set 3 records over 76,000 feet.
Also we worked extensively with the US military and Raytheon in their pursuits .
My point is that I am living proof that even a farm boy from Rifle, CO can make a difference and I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to help work with you to establish this greatly needed goal for our young entrepreneurs.
Thank you and good luck.

Sent from my iPhone

Jim Hybarger

Rifle Farm Boy to Pilot Mentor Innovator

“I am living proof that even a farm boy from Rifle CO can make a difference and I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you to establish this greatly needed goal for our young entrepreneurs. Thank you and good luck.”





Colorado Northwestern Community College











Aviation Pathway Partnerships

EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY

Colorado Northwestern Community College

Colorado Northwestern Community College-Aviation Technology

To the Review Committee and Authorizing Board,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the establishment of the Garfield County School of Innovation (GCSI). Integrating aeronautical science into GCSI's core curriculum is a forward-thinking initiative that directly addresses the workforce demands of Western Colorado and the nation.

Having previously served as the Director of Aeronautics for a specialized secondary aviation charter school, I know firsthand what it takes to embed aerospace education into a public school framework. From establishing a robust safety culture to structuring coursework toward FAA ground certifications, technical rigor is paramount. To support GCSI's success, I gladly offer my personal mentorship, curriculum guidance, and technical advisory support to school leadership.

Furthermore, as the Director of Aviation Technology at Colorado Northwestern Community College (CNCC), I offer our strongest institutional recommendation. At CNCC, we train career-ready aviators through comprehensive FAA Part 141 flight training and applied degree pathways. Situated right here on the Western Slope, CNCC is ideally positioned to provide a seamless postsecondary pipeline for GCSI graduates, bridging secondary education directly to collegiate flight training and aerospace careers.

GCSI has the vision to inspire and equip Colorado's next generation of aviators and technical leaders. I urge your full approval of their charter application and look forward to collaborating with their founding team.

Sincerely,

Nathan Hardin, M.Ed.

Aviation Technology Program Director
Colorado Northwestern Community College
Commercial Pilot | CFI / CFII | Remote Pilot
nathan.hardin@cncc.edu | (970) 675-3291

Business and Entrepreneurship

From the first grade, students will be introduced to the principles of business and entrepreneurship. Through age-appropriate projects, Junior Achievement-style curriculum and experiences, and later through more advanced incubators and real-world partnerships, students will learn how ideas become products, how value is created, and how to solve problems that make a difference in the marketplace. The goal is to graduate young people who not only understand science and technology, but who also know how to turn knowledge into useful, sustainable, and innovative business enterprises.



Location - Year 3

The Development Team is working to locate a building or land (or possible donation of land), to build a new school facility or for an existing building to repurpose as a permanent GCSI campus near the Rifle Garfield County Airport (RIL). The search is for acreage or an existing building close enough to the airport that the Aviation Tech Lab (ground school and simulators) can use the field as a teaching context — visits, flight instructors, and, later, flight with an FAA-certificated provider. Our goal is that every student will graduate with not only their flight ground school, but also their pilot's license.



Rifle Airport Location

GCSI is seeking the right parcel of land in Garfield County Re-2 to construct a purpose-built Innovation Campus from the ground up. Every square foot will be designed with our STE³M + Business curriculum, CTE Research Labs, Planetarium, Science of a Sphere, and student experience in mind. This vision represents our vision for a modern, welcoming, and fully functional learning environment that serves students in grades K–12.



In-Kind Donations and Grants

At our former school we received hundreds of thousands of dollars of in-kind, generous donations for the school from business and industry, private, grants, and parents including:

- Polished Concrete Floors for the School
- Beautiful New Chairs for all Teachers and Staff
- Lockheed Martin – Furniture and Technology
- Book Shelves
- Electricians, Roofers, and other skilled labor donated their services
- Encana Oil and Gas – now Ovintiv
- Morgridge Family Foundation – Donated the Engineering Lab (3D Printer, Lazer Engraver, CNC Router



Mentor-Innovator Volunteers

GCSI welcomes parent involvement, including community mentors at our school and Rifle STEM Innovation Center.

Research shows that students do better in school when their parents volunteer and remain active in their child's education.



Important Milestones

September 30, 2026
Garfield County School of Innovation Charter School Application filed with the Garfield County Re-2 School District

November 9, 2026
BOCC meeting

November or December 2026
GCSI will present our application at the Garfield County Re-2 Board of Education Community Meeting required by C.R.S. § 22-30.5-107(2).

January 28, 2027
GCSI Application will be reviewed, with a decision from the District's Board of Education by January 28, 2027.

February 1, 2027
Lottery for the GCSI Enrollment

Fall 2027
Garfield County School of Innovation will open grades 6–9.

Garfield County

The Familiarity Trap

Students overwhelmingly limit their career ambitions to jobs they already know from family, community, or media.

Early Lock-In

Children begin forming rigid ideas about "jobs for them" as early as age 7, with little change through age 17 (OECD / Andreas Schleicher).

Why It Matters

"You can't be what you can't see." (Marian Wright Edelman)

Early role models and real-world exposure expand what students believe is possible.



The Exposure Gap

Without direct contact with professionals, alumni, or workplaces, career options shrink dramatically — often along lines of background, gender, and geography.