ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING

June 2, 2003
5:30 p.m.
Seminar Room

In Attendance: Rick Rufner, Ken Buckius and Bee Kirk.

Guests: Jon Mann, Julie Stelzer, Leann Asgari and Melissa McComas.

Rick Rufner called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the February 24, 2003 meeting were unanimously approved.

Open Forum
No one present for Open Forum.

Executive Director
Jon Mann mentioned that he is pursuing the Principals Program offered through the University of Denver. He asked if the districts would be able to fund the tuition for the program. Rick Rufner stated that this probably needs board approval, and Littleton board’s next meeting is on June 12, 2003, with decisions for items presented at that meeting made June 25, 2003. Jon will know June 3rd whether he has been accepted to the program. Bee Kirk asked Jon to e-mail all of the RMSEL board members regarding his acceptance, and then the different districts can look into that approval process. Jon mentioned that this specific program interested him because the coursework overlaps with his current goals of working on a new salary schedule and professional development opportunities for staff. Elaine Berman wrote the nomination letter for Jon, so she is already familiar with the fact that he is pursuing this.

CSAP
Jon stated that as predicted at the beginning of the year, the 3rd grade went from 95% proficiency or above to 50% proficiency on the CSAP test. He anticipates that results next year it will go up again. The population for this score was 24 students. A Literacy/Reading Specialist has been included in the 2003-2004 budget in order to target students in need.

Safety Committee
A group of parents has been organized to address anti-bullying, and they are working to identify problems we have in this area. RMSEL does have an annual site assessment done, and we are looking at developing a crisis plan. Guy Grace, Security Director, Littleton Public Schools, came to show us the system they have in place for a crisis situation at the school. This system has a video component that shows inside and outside the school. Guy will come back in July to help us get this system in place. If all goes well, we will be the first in Denver to have this system. Jon stated that we have had parents share that they feel there is too much bullying in the lower school. Most of these issues were never brought to staff. As a follow up, we did a Lower School session on bullying. Crew leaders want to continue to touch base daily with students about bullying. The High School is also implementing a peer mediation process. Our source of expertise is the Safe Schools for Violence Prevention in Boulder. The curriculum being considered is in use in other schools.

DPS Drainage
DPS is currently working on the drainage project and should continue to work on this throughout the summer.
Staffing
Josh Feiger has been hired to fill the Humanities position in the Middle School. Josh is the intern in that classroom this year.

The Fitness position has been filled with a very qualified candidate, J.H. Sava, from the British Primary School.

With regard to the Special Education Aide, Jon is looking to clarify this position description because his vision for this position did not align with the current aide's. This position is currently vacant, and we have posted the job.

As previously noted, the 2003-2004 budget includes a Literacy/Reading Specialist position. This individual will assist teachers with their students in need of reading instruction. This position has been posted as well.

Kathy Tabb, High School Humanities teacher, has accepted a position with the Island School in the Bahamas. We are posting this position as a 50% humanities and 50% counseling position. The job has been offered to Karin Stayton, and we are waiting for her acceptance.

Grant Research
The final drafts of our common grants have been received from JVA Consulting. The grant application process will begin in July.

Passage Presentations
Student presentations to passage panels are scheduled for 6/6/03.

Enrollment
Leann stated that after discussion with Jon and the Kindergarten teachers, the school has decided to increase the Kindergarten class from 20-24 students. The purpose of this increase is to make it possible for the school to pay for a part-time aide instead of having parents fundraise for this position. In the past, the school determined that with 20 students in the classroom, there would not be an aide. Historically, however, Kindergarten parents have always fundraised for an aide. Jon mentioned that at the first meeting we had with new Kindergarten parents, they were told that in order to have an aide in the classroom, the parents would have to fundraise for one. Jon felt like that was inappropriate and is opting to increase enrollment by 4 students to pay for the aide. Bee voiced concern that increasing to 24 kids may not provide enough support. Jon said that one of the Kindergarten teachers actually requested the increase because when Kindergarten moves to 1st grade, they won't need to take on an additional 4 students at that point. It will be less disruptive to the class if they do not need to bring on 4 new students.

Leann stated that we have applications for Kindergarten but most are from Denver. The applications from Littleton, Cherry Creek and Douglas County have doubled this year. Overall, we are short applications for 4th grade and 6th grade. In our 4th grade crews, we had 3 students who left in March to move out of state and 2 3rd graders that are not moving up to 4th grade. We have 4 openings for 4th grade and no applications. The 6th grade has openings as well. There is usually some movement out of the school after 5th grade plus we increase by 10 students going into 6th grade. Again, we have applications but they are from Denver, and we are full in Denver. Right now, we have 135 students enrolled, and we have slots for 146, which makes us 11 students short. Middle School has 91 students with 97 slots available. High School needs 92, and we have 89. We may need to approach DPS again for a few more slots. All of the spots should be filled by the beginning of the year.

Leann would like to have the Service Links come to the first BOCES meeting next year. This way, the Service Links are more familiar with our school and that may prompt them to refer more students. Rick mentioned how difficult it is to refer students out of our district. He stated that Littleton is down on enrollment, so there is a huge push to keep their students. Leann mentioned that we should still be considered as part of their district as a Choice School. Jon would like to look into our process to determine if the existing enrollment caps are the best way to go. Should we consider bringing other school districts into our BOCES? Jon has started
discussion on this already. Rick suggested we pursue this in September so that we have resolution early in the year. Leann said we currently are offering positions to Aurora and having them open enroll in one of our sponsoring districts. We would prefer to be able to offer the openings to students within our BOCES. Bee said if we are trying to solicit students with an understanding of our school, we should go to assistant principals in the middle school and principals in the lower school since there are no counselors. He suggested that in Cherry Creek, we should get on the agenda of one of the middle school principal meetings and then every couple of years go back to the counselors for the high schools. The Service Links should be able to provide Leann with those dates. Leann stated that another reason for the Service Links to attend a meeting is for a better understanding of RMSEL overall. Currently, we are not able to get most of the Service Links to post our open positions and maybe a better awareness of our school would help.

**Director of Finance**

Julie referred to her handouts and stated that the current budget should be on target for the end of the year. Bee asked why there was no fundraising or grants in the budget. Julie said that the previous Cherry Creek BOCES representative had requested that fundraising not be included in the budget, and grants are not included because we have not received any grants. Bee questioned how much fundraising we do in a year. Julie said we raised about $44,000 in the 2002-2003 school year, and our goal for next year is to raise $30,000. The big trips that Middle School and the 4th and 5th grade crews had planned for 2002-2003 are not part of the curriculum for 2003-2004. Bee asked if our parents understand that in order to do the more extensive trips, we have to do fundraising. Julie confirmed that parents are very aware of the need for additional funding through fundraising in order to have the bigger trips.

Rick asked about the budget variance for gifted and talented funding. Julie explained that DPS provided us with incorrect numbers for gifted and talented, and the funding was substantially less than originally budgeted. The budget shows a variance (loss) of $25,587.22 for G/T funding, and there is no G/T funding included in the 2003-2004 budget. Rick confirmed with Julie that net income was indeed a projected outcome. Ken questioned the variance for payroll and benefits. Julie stated that the majority of the variance is due to a timing difference with DPS. RMSEL is billed once a year, usually in June, from DPS for the payroll and benefits for release teachers. The billing from Cherry Creek is usually a couple of months behind. Julie explained that we would be billed for those payroll and benefits expenses.

**Health Insurance**

Julie stated that at the last meeting, the BOCES requested that we identify four different health insurance options in order to address the rising cost of health insurance premiums (refer to health insurance analysis.) RMSEL’s current health insurance provider is PacifiCare. When the RMSEL staff was asked to indicate their preference for health insurance from among three choices, only two staff members opted for Kaiser with the rest voting for PacifiCare or Rocky Mountain HMO. Purchasing health insurance coverage through Kaiser represents a substantial savings over PacifiCare. At the present time, RMSEL covers the premium for the employee. The third option that was researched was PERACare. While obtaining health insurance coverage through the PERACare system offers a larger selection for employees purchasing family coverage, the premiums are substantially more due to the age of the population of the entire pool. The fourth option researched was to “piggy back” on one of the Districts. Julie worked with Joyce Testerman of Littleton Public Schools who spoke with their attorneys. In her research, she found that Littleton would have to write a Multiple Employer Welfare agreement. There are many insurance companies that will not accept this type of agreement and that would limit Littleton’s options for insurance the next time they shop for benefits. In all, the two best options are PacifiCare and Kaiser. Julie has built the budget based staying with PacifiCare. PacifiCare and Kaiser will only offer these rates if the entire group participates. Julie mentioned that we are trying to implement this by July 1st in order to align with the fiscal year as suggested by the BOCES. Concerns were voiced that making the change July 1st would not give people enough time to research other options if they did not want to go with Kaiser. The current plan expires at the end of February. Julie was under the impression from the last BOCES meeting that the decision for health insurance coverage was a BOCES decision and not a staff decision. Rick voiced concern that we have no reserve to deal with a sudden increase in premium rates. Julie says we have a reserve of approximately $300,000, but won’t the exact amount until we are finished with the 1999-2000 audit. Jon suggested that we could look at Kaiser but also put a cap in
place in case there was a significant increase. It was left that we would present this is to staff for input and see if we could get a 6 month agreement from January through June, and align the new plan with our fiscal year.

Julie mentioned that the health insurance should also be considered with overall compensation. The staff has been getting fairly large increases with as much as a 9% increase per year. The step increase as well as the cost of living increase was discussed. Jon also mentioned that we had four staff members pursuing National Board Certification and nothing in place to provide an increase.

**Budget**
Rick was concerned that we have contracts in place before the budget has been approved. We discussed the contracts we have in place. Ken and Rick suggested that we have a 10% general reserve reflected on the balance sheet. It was further suggested that 5% contingency also be established.

Jon mentioned another change in the budget that concerns professional development. In 2002-2003, allotment was $1,000 per individual. In 2003-2004, that amount changed from $800 to $500 per individual. RMSEL would then use those monetary differences for professional development in other areas.

Ken Buckius made a motion to approve the budget with the updated reserve and contingency amounts to the balance sheet. The motion was unanimously approved.

**2003-2004 Calendar**
Rick stated that his term is finished in September. Ken’s term is also finished in September. They will both try to get someone involved at the first meeting of the year. Elaine’s term is most likely up next year as well. We will need to schedule elections for the beginning of the year. Any crucial items need to be addressed in the September meeting while we still have historical presence.

Leann asked that June 7, 2004 be reserved on the BOCES’ calendar so that we can have BOCES representation at our graduation.

The board adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

The next BOCES meeting will be September 22, 2003.