ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING

November 18, 2002
5:30 p.m.
Seminar Room

In Attendance: Barbara Volpe, Kenneth Buckius and Elaine Berman.

Guests: Jon Mann, Julie Stelzer and Leann Asgari.

Barbara Volpe called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the September 23, 2002 meeting were unanimously approved.

Open Forum
No one present for Open Forum.

Executive Director
With regard to School Accountability, Jon Mann stated that the state was becoming much stricter about the community report that is due December 1st as well as the year-end report that is due June 30th. He stated that he has had a difficult time getting information from the Colorado Department of Education on what the reports should contain. Jon was able to ascertain that the primary function of the December report is to inform our community about CSAP and other test results. Barb asked if this is the data that went on the state accountability report? Jon stated that the report was timed with the report card and that there weren’t strict guidelines for the report contents. The report that is due in June details students from enrollment to graduation, transfers in and out of RMSEL and the drop out rate. Jon is looking forward to getting parents’ reaction to the December report. Barb asked if we know what kind of scores we were expecting this year on the state accountability report. Jon stated that the scores from last year were very good, high in high school and average for the lower and middle schools. RMSEL scored 95% on the 3rd grade reading scores this year. Ken Buckius stated that because RMSEL is such a small school, it only takes a small number of bad scores to affect the total overall score. Leann Asgari stated that the school report cards are misleading because the data that is reported is covered over three levels. For example, most of the discipline problems are actually from high school, but are reported on lower and middle school report cards as well. After speaking with CDE, Leann feels that it would probably be in RMSEL’s best interest to file three separate report cards or at least two, for lower and upper school, in order to achieve a more accurate report.

Jon stated that we were proceeding with math and diversity as our school goals for this year. Both of these committees have been working hard, and RMSEL is working closely with ELOB on the math piece because they are trying to write what is equivalent to our literacy black board.

Jon stated that our Tenth Year Anniversary Program will be held on September the 11th and hoped that all the BOCES members would be here.

Fundraising is becoming a major focus this year, and a committee has been established to create a plan for how fundraising will be done in the future. We are working on a long-range plan on how to raise money for the more expensive expeditions as well as necessary capital expenditures such as mini buses, and this plan will outline specific criteria for fundraising.

Jon stated that we hope to have the Community Council approve the 2003-2004 school calendar by December. RMSEL is trying to create the calendar in conjunction with the Odyssey School, so efforts can be
combined with regard to staff development; thereby making it less expensive for both RMSEL and Odyssey. There is a combined staff development on January 6th with Ron Berger from ELOB as guest speaker.

The Costa Rica expedition has had its ups and downs. In January, the Middle School teachers, Leslie Raynor and Jon are going to be tracking the expedition. With parental concerns about international travel and the overall expense of the trip, Jon feels that the expectation of 100% participation from all middle school students is not possible. We hope to have 80% participation and an alternative expedition in place for the remaining students. Barb asked if the participating students were covered under RMSEL’s insurance? Julie Stelzer stated that they would obtain extra trip insurance like the High School does when they go to Mexico. Jon feels that it is a very safe place to travel and is very positive about the trip. Jon stated that fieldwork is not optional at RMSEL; however, we are making an exception this time because of the number of parental concerns.

Jon and Jill Corcoran are meeting with Ed Steinberg and Daphne Pereles to discuss the structure of Cherry Creek’s Special Education program. Jon stated that we would like to work closely with Cherry Creek to better articulate RMSEL’s special education program and come up with better strategies for meeting our students’ needs. He further stated that we do have the option of purchasing the next level of services from DPS; however, no decision has been made. We have a few long-term parents who continue to request additional services, and at the present time, we are not able to provide them.

RMSEL has been doing some major marketing this year. Leann stated that RMSEL has been invited to attend open houses at schools such as White Edison, Odyssey, and Denver Coop Preschool. Leann met with Cherry Creek counselors to explain about RMSEL. Jon has been to Montclair Academy, British Primary School and the Logan School, and Wednesday night is the Southeast Area School Fair at South High School. Leann is still trying to set up programs with Douglas County and Littleton Public Schools. To date, she has not been successful.

Director of Finance

Julie explained how to read the budget. She stated that to date we are on budget. Barb Volpe asked what the sponsoring districts are projecting in terms of budget reform for next year? Elaine said that the question should be what are the district expectations for this year? Elaine stated that the CDE sent out a memo stating there could be a 1-2% rescission on this year’s budget. It was unclear where this funding could or would be cut from. There should be a decision from the Governor soon. Barb wanted to know what the ramifications were for RMSEL if there was a possibility that PPOR funding would be down by 1-2%. Ken Buckius said that there still has been no decision made about a rescission. Elaine stated that it may or may not affect RMSEL because the cuts may come from textbook funding and the GT program. We are just going to have to wait and see.

Julie reminded the BOCES members that at a past meeting there had been discussion about creating a long-term budget. It was discussed that a retreat should be held to work out a five-year plan for RMSEL. Ken felt that this would be a good idea, and it was agreed upon that this should take place.

RMSEL has a number of large expenditures on the not too distant horizon such as the purchase of new minibuses, the HVAC system, health insurance for staff members and the completion of the master plan. Ken suggested that we could possibly “piggy back” on one of our sponsoring districts to get a better rate for the minibuses. Julie stated that at an earlier BOCES meeting, there had been discussion about “piggy backing” on DPS’ health insurance; however, because DPS is union, this was not possible. She asked whether it might possible to work with one of the other three sponsoring districts. Elaine suggested that we check with the League of Charter Schools. Ken stated that he thought that the charter schools have a waiver from the unions. Julie will check with Sherry Eastlund to see how the DPS charter schools handle their insurance needs.

Enrollment

Jon requested that there be an amendment to the enrollment policy changing the third bullet to the following:

Eighth grade students who are transferring or applying to RMSEL for
ninth grade from other expeditionary schools and are in good standing will be given special consideration on the waiting list after siblings.

Barb wanted to know if this change required a vote? All BOCES members were in agreement that a vote should occur. Elaine asked about the gender preference as a priority and whether this was legal? Elaine agreed to speak to the DPS attorney about the legality.

Elaine made a motion to accept the enrollment policy change as it read, and Ken seconded the motion. All were in favor.

New High School
Jon brought up the possibility of having the Aurora school district join the BOCES. He stated that Aurora doesn’t have any charter schools. Barb inquired if this would be a good time to look at opening a new high school that would stand-alone. RMSEL would then have to look at increasing the size of the lower and middle schools. Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound contacted Barb because they were interested in opening an EL high school in the Denver area, and Van Schoales with the Children’s Campaign is prepared to put up some money for it. Barb thought that the BOCES might be able to open a high school rather than making it a charter school. Jon stated that he had spoken to the RMSEL high school team, and there was interest that it might be a great opportunity. Barb stated that in order to qualify for the funding, Van would probably require a greater number of free and reduced lunch students. They are hoping to hire someone to research location and cost in time to have it opened by the fall of 2004. Barb asked it the BOCES should discuss the options involved with opening an ELOB high school. Elaine liked the idea of a planning group. Jon said that Greg Farrell, Scott Dolquist and Barbara Waxman from ELOB would be at RMSEL the first week in December. Barb and Jon agreed to set up a planning group to continue this discussion.

The board adjourned at 7:28 p.m.