ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING

October 20, 2003
5:30 p.m.
Seminar Room

In Attendance: Rick Rufner, Bee Kirk, Elaine Berman and Tim White

Staff: Jon Mann, Leann Asgari, Melissa McComas and Julie Stelzer

Guests: Kevin Collins

Rick Rufner called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the September 22, 2003 meeting were unanimously approved pending a change from “guests” to “staff” for the RMSEL employees listed in attendance.

Open Forum
No one present for Open Forum.

Teacher Prep Program/Boettcher Fellows
Jon stated that the Boettcher scholars are looking to make the Boettcher Fellows Program come alive. They have identified $5,000,000 for coaching and other instructional help and are targeting high poverty schools. As of now, the only school district in the front range to apply is Adams County District #12. Beth Dorman has been selected as the Executive Director for the Boettcher Fellows Program. RMSEL will serve as the licensing agency for the program, and a fee for this service will be charged. The association with the Boettcher Fellows Program should get some good exposure for RMSEL as well as build a track record for future ventures.

Audit Report
Kevin Collins from Clifton Gunderson, L.L.C., addressed the board regarding the RMSEL audits for the years ending June 30, 2000, 2001 and 2002. Due to the anticipated change in board members, it is desirable for the current board members to approve the draft audits, thereby avoiding the need to educate new members of the board about past audit issues.

Clifton Gunderson was initially engaged to perform the audit for the year ending June 30, 2001. Prior to this engagement, RMSEL had received a letter from the Colorado State Auditor’s office regarding the 2000 audit performed by the school’s prior auditor, Grabau and Company. During the course of the 2001 audit, it came to Clifton Gunderson’s attention that RMSEL was not in compliance with federal reporting requirements for having an audit completed in accordance with governmental auditing standards. Specifically, a single audit was not performed for the year ended June 30, 2000, which meant that RMSEL was not in compliance with OMB Circular A-133. After a lengthy discussion with the board about the appropriate course of action, Kevin Collins proposed that Clifton Gunderson would issue a qualified opinion for the 2001 audit due to the non-compliance issue with the 2000 audit. Clifton Gunderson proceeded to perform the 2002 audit while simultaneously attempting to get a waiver from the Office of Management and Budget for the single audit requirement for 2000. The OMB responded that a waiver for the single audit requirement was not possible. Therefore, the board decided to engage Clifton Gunderson to perform the financial statement and single audits for 2000.

Kevin Collins presented draft audits for the years ending June 30, 2000, 2001 and 2002. All three draft audits received an unqualified opinion and a finding of no material weaknesses. As a side note, the 2000 audit has been performed twice, and this audit as well as the 2001 and 2002 audits will be released in final form shortly.
The 2003 audit is scheduled to begin in mid-November. The 2003 audit will again require a single audit due to the expenditure of more than $300,000 of federal funds.

Rick Rufner inquired about the 2002 audit because of the two prior years’ non-compliance issues. Kevin stated those instances are cleared at this level, but we might get a call from the Colorado State Auditor’s office. RMSEL should be able to explain that we now have different people in place both internally and from an auditing standpoint. The National Science Foundation performed an award site visit back in June 2003 and looked at the COMSTEP grant in particular with regard to internal procedures and policies. Typically, this type of visit from the NSF should occur at the beginning of the grant award in order to assist the grantee with procedures and answer any pertinent questions. According to the group of individuals from NSF that performed the award site visit, RMSEL’s chance of being audited by the OMB is quite high. Hopefully, this site visit will reduce that chance of audit.

Rick asked what action the board needs to take in order to approve the audit. Kevin stated that board should approve the draft audits and authorize final approval between the RMSEL staff and Clifton Gunderson to complete and file the three audits as deemed appropriate. Elaine Berman made a motion to approve the 2000, 2001 and 2002 draft audits. Tim White seconded motion, and the motion was unanimously approved.

New BOCES Members
Tim White will be the new BOCES representative from Douglas County. Littleton Public Schools may not get a new BOCES member by the next meeting. Rick will not be available for the November 17th meeting. New officers need to be elected at the next board meeting.

Finance Update
Julie Stelzer provided a summary of the Budget vs. Actual report with variance explanations. Line items with potential variances were identified on this summary. At this point in the budget year, the budget is showing a $5,800 shortfall.

Elaine asked why the October count was short. Leann Asgari explained that we had a student disenroll the day before the count, and we were unable to fill that position with such short notice.

There was an error on the 2003-2004 budget. The final payment of $15,300 for the data infrastructure was inadvertently left out of the budget. When the renovations to the building were done back in 2000, RMSEL agreed to pay DPS $85,000 for the data infrastructure. Per the agreement, $40,000 was paid in 2000, and the remaining $45,000 balance was amortized over the next three years. This variance will be covered from the current year’s technology services and administrative contingency budgets.

The contingency and reserve amounts are reflected on the Balance Sheet as discussed at the May board meeting. It was reiterated that board approval is required to move any of those funds from the contingency or reserve accounts.

Julie mentioned that we do not budget for fundraising efforts; however, any actual funds raised are reflected on the financial statements. Julie will provide Tim with a copy of a memo created previously that explains the timing of our expenditures. At the beginning of the year, all teachers are given their fieldwork fee and supply money for the year. Monthly expenses such as salary and operating expenses are budgeted every month.

Rick asked about how individual teachers are monitored to assure they stay within budget. Julie explained that the Upper and Lower School Directors monitor each of their team’s budgets on a monthly basis. In addition, the Executive and Finance Directors oversee all budgets. Every individual with budget responsibility is provided a Budget vs. Actual report on the first of each month. Rick expressed concern that teachers would overspend their budgets. Julie stated it was more of a concern that they would not expend their budgets.

Rick inquired about the administrative contingency account. Julie explained that this is part of budget for this year and is part of discretionary funds. When the budget was created, the assumption was made that RMSEL
will receive a rescission with the January 2004 PPOR funding. If we actually receive funding at the current level and no rescission, RMSEL will be in better shape from a budgetary standpoint.

Health Insurance Update
The Signature Freedom plan that Beth Dorman brought to the last meeting was researched as part of the ongoing health insurance discussion. Basically, the participant is given a bank of funds and once those funds are depleted, the participant will pay out of pocket for doctor visits, testing and other health care needs. The cap for out of pocket expenditures is $4,500 per year. This plan does not suit our needs.

Elaine asked about where the staff stood on the issue of health care. Beth Dorman has been the most proactive person. She has been very vocal about not moving to Kaiser. The RMSEL staff clearly has a preference for remaining with PacifiCare rather than moving to Kaiser. The options available to a small group have been researched and were reported to the board in June 2003. To piggyback on one of the districts would severely limit that district’s choice of insurance carriers.

Elaine asked about the compensation package that is offered to teachers. The trend is to offer total compensation instead of separating insurance benefits and salary. RMSEL is still using the salary schedule from 1999. The existing salary schedule is adjusted based on the PPOR funding increase. This year, due to the uncertainty with the funding, the salary schedule included a 0% increase. Jon stated that he is planning to create a team to review the salary schedule and make revision suggestions. He hopes to have a salary plan that would include different levels of compensation according to the teacher’s professional development and accomplishments. The intention is to create a salary plan with provisional, professional and master teacher salary levels. Currently, there is no mechanism in place to compensate teachers for any continuing education that they may pursue. The existing salary schedule caps out at ten (10) years, and after ten years of service only a cost of living increase is provided. The original intent was to have teachers stay at RMSEL for about seven (7) years; however, we are now leaning toward trying to keep our teachers with experience.

Tim asked if we could align our insurance plans with the fiscal year. Julie stated that is one of the goals with making a change in carriers because it would remove the uncertainty of the rate change for the final four (4) budget months. Julie further stated that we would continue with PacifiCare for the March through June 2004 period and make the change effective July 1, 2004 which coincides with RMSEL’s fiscal year.

Leann asked if we should review the entire compensation package before making a decision on the health care component. Julie said there have not been any discussions on the revised salary package. Jon stated that he is not sure how to build the framework for a total compensation package. In our sponsoring districts, the teacher’s union decides whether they will take an increase to the total compensation package as health insurance or salary. Julie pointed out that we have release teachers from several school districts and are bound by the terms of the Intergovernmental Agreement to reimburse those districts for health benefits. If the teachers were to decide about the compensation breakdown, we could potentially start pitting teachers against one another because we are such a small staff.

Rick asked if the Intergovernmental Agreement requires us to pay health insurance. The Intergovernmental Agreement states that release teachers are required to use the insurance from their respective districts.

Elaine asked why we are making a decision now about insurance that would take effect July 1, 2004. Julie stated she would like a decision now, so that the staff can plan accordingly. Julie stated that an increased premium is not included in the budget. The anticipated premium increase is minimal, so there will be a relatively minor impact to the final four months’ of the budget.

Rick and Elaine both stated they would like to see the verification of terms with the insurance company once those have been established.

Elaine made a motion that effective July 1, 2004, RMSEL changes health insurance carriers to Kaiser pending locking in rates for one full year. Tim seconded the motion, and all approved.


**Intergovernmental Agreement**

Rick stated that Jon has been working with Level 10 and Douglas County to get assistance with the language regarding Special Education services in the Intergovernmental Agreement. Currently, it states that we provide Special Education services for students with mild and moderate disabilities. The Special Education people in each of the districts as well as the Service Links have suggested we amend the IGA to change enrollment and application procedures for Special Education. It has been recommended that we specifically include a description of the services provided. Parts of the IGA have been rewritten based upon the recommendation from Littleton. In addition, the application and enrollment procedures need to be updated to accurately reflect the enrollment process at RMSEL.

John Stanick and John Doherty provided feedback and are concerned with the predetermination of services. They stated that we are already in violation of the law by placing a restriction on inclusion even though we are unable to provide the full spectrum of services that the districts provide.

Jon stated that he hopes to have final language by the November BOCES meeting. He would prefer to have an attorney draft the agreement. Bee Kirk questioned if each of the district’s attorneys need to sign off on the revised Intergovernmental Agreement. They do not have to sign off on the agreement, but a representative should share the IGA with each district’s attorneys.

Jon stated that the enrollment numbers will change in the revised IGA to 348 FTE as discussed and approved in our previous meeting.

**Aurora Meeting**

There will be a presentation to the Aurora board in January 2004 regarding the inclusion of Aurora Public Schools as a sponsoring district. Barbara Volpe and Jon Mann will do the presentation.

**Accreditation**

Jon stated that we have started our five (5) year re-accreditation process with North Central Association.

**Literacy**

The literacy testing has been completed in the lower school. The new literacy specialist, Linda Greene, started this week.

**Bullying Survey**

The bullying surveys will be sent out October 21, 2003. The results of these surveys will be compiled and presented to the board when completed.

**Capital Campaign**

Jon stated that we are moving forward with the Capital Campaign, and it is targeted for completion by the end of 2004. Our goal is to raise $300,000 with $100,000 going toward the completion of the master plan, $150,000 for new minibuses since our fifteen (15) passenger vans need to be replaced by the end of 2004. The Odyssey School is encountering problems with their new minibuses going into the back country because of low ground clearance. The remaining $50,000 will be used for building improvements such as air conditioning for classrooms and completion of the stage.

**CSAP Results**

Clearly, the math results are outstanding. High School math is doing weekly assessment journals to help identify the types of questions they can expect on the CSAP test. We are working on developing math benchmarks at each of the passage levels and at each grade level. Two members of our staff are going to California for the Math Institute. We are hopeful that the Connected Math program will help us see an increase in the CSAP results since we have been doing Connected Math for the past three (3) years.
Jon sent in a request to the CDE for a determination of the target for adequate yearly progress. This is the target for student that need to be at partially proficient or above. The CDE will provide us with a target and then we will need to make a decision on how to proceed based on the target.

Enrollment
Leann stated that we are one (1) under for our total enrollment. Bee asked about the breakdown among districts. Cherry Creek is at 79 FTE, which is 2 FTE under. Littleton is 2 FTE over. Douglas County is at 45 FTE, and they are supposed to be at 67 FTE. Denver is 30 FTE over.

The board adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

The next BOCES meeting will be November 17, 2003.