ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING
October 17, 2005
5:30 p.m.

In Attendance: John Dunn, Bee Kirk, Madeline Paroske (APS), Suzanne Plaut and Tim White

Staff: Leann Asgari, Melissa McComas, Jim McDermott and Julie Stelzer

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the September 21, 2005 meeting were unanimously approved.

Open Forum
Leann Asgari has been notified that Betty Ann Tichenor, the plaintiff in the potential defamation lawsuit against RMSEL, has been hospitalized with cancer.

John Dunn noted that the minutes mentioned that a Community Council member would be attending the BOCES meetings. Mike Aitken is the Chair of the Community Council, and he will be attending BOCES meetings in the future. Unfortunately, we neglected to notify him of the schedule change for this meeting. Bee Kirk encouraged all BOCES members to attend a Community Council meeting at some point in the school year.

Tim White indicated that Douglas County Schools have now endorsed Referendums C & D. Littleton and Cherry Creek school districts continue to get the word out that they are in support of C & D.

Executive Director Report
Colorado Business Bank has made a $5,000 donation to RMSEL to be applied toward financial aid. Our financial aid budget is designed to assist families that qualify for free and reduced lunch with fieldwork fees and kindergarten tuition. Currently, the financial aid allocated for a year is $18,000 for fieldwork fees and $14,000 for kindergarten tuition for a total of $32,000. John suggested that we draft a thank you letter from the board to Colorado Business Bank expressing deep gratitude for their confidence in RMSEL. Tim asked how we intended to handle the public relations for this donation. Bee suggested that we contact the Public Relations Officers in our partnership districts to see if the districts wanted to mention the donation in their newsletter. Tim also suggested we contact the bank’s PR department and ask if we could assist with their publicity. One of our parents has been soliciting for our Capital Campaign and has a contact at the bank.

Many of our students and crews have raised money for Hurricane Katrina victims. The lower school had a day long Read-A-Thon and received pledges totaling over $5,500. The middle school had two crews that had their crew trips postponed, so they took advantage of that time and scheduled a day of car washes, bake sales and drumming that raised a little over $1,000 for the hurricane relief effort. In total, the RMSEL community donated close to $6,800 to the American Red Cross. Bee stated this is another item of note that should also be directed to the district’s PR offices. Leann will follow up with the districts to get their PR contacts.

The installation of the new boiler is now complete, and the unit functions well. DPS pushed to have heat in the building before the snow storm and had workers in here 24 hours a day to complete the work. While the system is still being worked on, we were nice and warm for the first snow storm of the season.

The Community Council has created a subcommittee to review the fieldwork fees charged to RMSEL students. This Fieldwork Fee Oversight Committee will bring a recommendation to the BOCES next month for changes to fieldwork fees for the 2006-2007 school year. The committee will first make a recommendation to the Leadership Team and then present the proposal to the BOCES. Currently, the fieldwork fees charged are $150 for kindergarten, $300 for 1st through 5th grades, $400 for middle school and $500 for high school. The
fieldwork fees and fundraising are specifically to cover the cost of expeditions. Suzanne Plaut asked if we are concerned about having sufficient funds to pay for our fieldwork this year. Jim explained that we are paying about 50.5% more for fuel and getting about 26% less per mile because of the new buses.

Regarding the increased cost of natural gas, Bee asked if we are working with any of the districts for a negotiated rate on natural gas since some of the districts have a negotiated rate. Jim stated that he will pursue this through Cherry Creek to see if it is an option for RMSEL.

With regard to the accreditation process, the Colorado Department of Education does not want to accredit our school because they only accredit districts. Jim is continuing to pursue having CDE accredit RMSEL. Leann mentioned that RMSEL reports to CDE as a district. Tim asked if Jim was dealing with just one person at CDE. Jim stated that it is just one person but that they have indicated that they have confirmed the decision with the Assistant Commissioner. Bee asked Jim to let the districts know if they should get involved. Madeline Paroske asked if there was a formal appeals process. Bee asked if there was a cost to the school. We used to get charged $600 from North Central for accreditation. Since we really want our own accreditation, we should push until we reach a dead end with CDE. Madeline stated that there have been many changes at CDE, and this may just be a sign of some growing pains. Jim will continue to pursue this.

On CSAP goals, Jim has been working with the staff to provide them with a manageable breakdown of the scores. He stated that he does not want to overwhelm them with this data since this is a shift to focusing on the assessment piece. But at the same time, he wants to make sure that we are analyzing the data to see what we can learn from it. Jim provided a breakdown of data that set goals by grade level for analyzing the scores from basically the same set of students from the previous grade level. The data presented to the teachers shows a breakdown in bands that reflect the students are not that far off from reaching the next step. When you look at the data in this way, it is apparent that these goals are obtainable. The staff is open to looking at this data, but they don’t want to teach to the CSAP test. Instead, Jim stated that the goal would be to teach to the standards. Bee asked how our curriculum was developed. Jim explained that expeditions are based on standards. The math curriculum also uses investigations, number data and space at the elementary level and the Connected Math Program at the middle school level. We will continue to modify expeditions as we find areas that need improvement. John stated that he was thrilled to see Jim and the staff focusing on CSAP results. Suzanne stated that she appreciated that Jim was presenting the data in a manner that the staff finds open to feedback. Suzanne also wondered how we are utilizing the instructional coaches to help with this feedback. Jim meets with Sam Bennett and Leanna Harris, RMSEL’s instructional coaches, weekly to discuss coaching and curriculum issues.

Our technical support group continues to work at getting the MAPS testing available through our Linux system. We hope to be able to pilot that program in the next couple of weeks. Concern still exists that this may have an impact on our budget. Initially, the start up costs are being avoided by working with Mariah Dickson of the Colorado Small Schools Initiative and the PEBC. We may also need an additional Windows server to make this work. Leann suggested that we might be able to use a computer lab at one of the other schools. Madeline pointed out that this testing is very time intensive for the younger students that need one-on-one computer assistance, and we may not be able to use the computer version of the test for that group.

We are currently piloting a writing assessment in the 4th and 5th grades. One of our parents is funding half of the cost of this program which costs $7.50 per student. We will be able to take a written prompt and send it in with a rubric that two people will score. The group we send this to is called ERB, and we will get a constructed response with a scored rubric. Our scores will primarily be compared to private schools, so we will take that into consideration. We would like to see if there is any correlation between this and the extended part of the CSAP.

Enrollment
Leann stated that we were right on target for our October count at 335 students. She has completed the first submittal to the CDE for October count and CSAP labels. She is preparing a marketing campaign to send information out to all counselors and principals to invite them to our Exhibition Night. This is the first year that
we have not run short on applications. 5280 Magazine wrote an article about us that had a positive impact on interest in RMSEL. Jim continues to attend recruitment nights at various schools. We are at full enrollment in Aurora and 4 students over in Douglas County. Cherry Creek numbers are down slightly, but we are not concerned because it is not due to lack of applications. The applications received did not fit our open positions.

**Budget**

Julie Stelzer stated that we are on target for the budget. The donation from Colorado Business Bank has helped to take care of some shortfalls. We had a salary issue for about $3,060 and another $2,000 for substitute teachers for crew leaders that were doing testing that we had not included in the 2005-2006 budget. We are hoping to free up some funds for our Professional Development budget as well. John asked Julie to explain the school’s fundraising efforts. Julie stated that one effort is our Capital Campaign which is a three year program designed to raise money for capital expenditures. The goal is to raise $320,000 with the first $156,000 being used to pay off the buses. After the minibuses are paid for, fundraising monies will go toward completion of the playing field, air conditioning and the performance platform. The other component of school fundraising is considered general fundraising that raises money specifically for expeditions and special programs. This year our goal is to raise approximately $40,000 to support those programs. John asked if we were to get another $5,000 donation where would we use that money. Julie thought it would be used to supplement financial aid, so they we could reallocate money to other areas of the budget.

Bee asked if we have applied for any grants through the partnership school district foundations. He stated that Cherry Creek takes applications for grants for schools and that our school should be able to apply for those grants. All of the districts have similar programs, and we should request those grants from each district. Madeline suggested we request money for our daily expenditures that might cover three to five years.

Julie stated that the audit is scheduled to begin the 2nd week of November.

**Miscellaneous**

Jim stated that since he has been with RMSEL, the sponsoring school districts have been very supportive. Bee encouraged all BOCES members to be more visible. Not only can BOCES members attend Community Council meetings, but they can also attend Exhibition Night on February 15th, the high school graduation ceremony on May 31st and staff meetings that are held every Tuesday at 3:30 p.m.

Leann requested pictures from all BOCES members, so she could add them to the bulletin board for the BOCES.

Madeline stated that Willie Jones is up for re-election in Aurora and is currently involved in running for his seat. Aurora has 4 open seats on the board with 12 candidates running and only 2 incumbents.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 16th at 5:30 p.m.

The board adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

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Bee Kirk, President

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John Dunn, Vice President