ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING
September 15, 2010
9:30 a.m.

In Attendance: Sue Chandler, Jennifer Churchfield, Elaine McCain, Amy Prince and Mary Seawell

Staff: Leann Asgari, Kerry Lord, Julie Stelzer and Susan Tamulonis

Guests: Kindra Whitmyre

Jennifer Churchfield called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. The board welcomed Kindra Whitmyre, Douglas County School District’s Service Link for RMSEL.

BOCES Compliance
Sue Chandler has been reviewing the school law for BOCES. She found that a BOCES is charged to follow the same duties as school districts under Colorado state law. The RMSEL BOCES has been in compliance with those duties, but she suggested that board members’ discussion with their respective districts might offer guidance, continuity and clear directives. The board felt that they should include a Consent Agenda on the meeting agenda, although this is not required by the state. Standard practices, such as posting of BOCES agenda and minutes on the school’s website, board review of the calendar, personnel hires and resignations, school policies among many other aspects of school management and compliance, have been presented for board review and/or approval. Kindra Whitmyre noted that there is an on-line governance board training module available that board representatives might want to consider utilizing. Kerry Lord offered that she will be attending a CDE board training on September 24th.

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the June 9, 2010 meeting were unanimously approved.

Items for Review/Discussion/Approval
The Policy JLCDA, Students with Food Allergies, was slated for approval. There seems to have been a typographical error for the reference to the policy on Littleton Public Schools’ website. There, the policy is called “JICDA”. The correct title is “JLCDA”. Littleton will simply correct that error. Kerry noted that the policy JLCD, Administration of Medication to Students, is being readied for the next meeting. Policy JLCDA references this. Special considerations will be noted for RMSEL’s policy because of all-day and overnight fieldwork. The Academic Secretary, Meg Blair, and Kerry are working to ready JLCD for the next meeting. A motion to approve Policy JLCDA, Students with Food Allergies passed unanimously. The Resolution in Opposition to Amendments 60, 61 and Proposition 101 was next. Jennifer clarified that the BOCES’ position state-wide is in opposition to both amendments and the proposition. RMSEL staff and parents are in no way obligated to agree or disagree with the BOCES’ position. A motion to pass the BOCES Resolution in Opposition to Amendments 60, 61 and Proposition 101 passed unanimously. RMSEL may print the BOCES resolution in the school newsletter and post on the website. Such announcements are not in violation of Colorado’s Fair Campaign Practices Act under Colorado Revised Statute 1-45-117.

Open Forum
Kindra asked for clarification of her role as the Service Link for Douglas Country School District and information about board representation from her district for BOCES. Service Links can attend any of the BOCES meetings. In October, the focus of the BOCES meeting is on the service links, in order that they may meet one another, become familiar with RMSEL and have a time for questions and discussion. BOCES expressed their thanks to Kindra for her attendance and noted that her attendance is critical, particularly when the DCSD board representative cannot attend. The board is aware that Annette Fante, the prior DCSD Service Link, has retired and Doug Benevento cannot make the meetings and will no longer serve as his school district’s representation. Jennifer has received no response from Doug or John Carson, president of the DCSD Board about their district’s intentions for rectifying this situation. Doug and John have the immediate responsibility to find a
replacement. Nona Eichenberger, Secretary to that district’s board of education is aware of the situation. Although conference calls have been done in the past, the BOCES members stress that a physical presence is critical to guarantee clear understanding of process and issues. No board representative from DCSD has been in attendance since December 2009. Jennifer noted that the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) explicitly states that all participating districts attend the meetings. She pointed out that the IGA is up for renewal in 2011. Jennifer will provide a copy of that and the RMSEL constitution to Kindra and Nona. Amy Prince offered that Aurora Public Schools is re-organizing some charter schools in the district and as a result, the district will have a list of services that RMSEL could purchase. Amy noted that it will be ready in the spring of 2012.

Leann Asgari anticipates reviewing the list. Leann noted that vision and hearing testing is less expensive when contracted privately rather than from DPS.

**Executive Director Report**

Kerry offered a ‘data walk’ and demonstration of the Promethean board. The meeting moved to the Technology Room, where one of the three Promethean boards is installed. The other boards have been installed in a 4th/5th grade room and in a middle school math/science classroom. Elizabeth Spruill, Technology and Media Coordinator at RMSEL demonstrated the basics of this interactive teaching/learning board. By offering this demonstration, the school is fulfilling their part of the grant from the Morgridge Family Foundation. The board can display the school’s website data and organization. Kerry displayed and discussed the highlights of the recent accountability information, accreditation (with distinction) and post-secondary readiness, all with strong, positive results. Math is a subject for improvement, as RMSEL has not achieved the scores necessary to lift it out of the red zone. On the contrary, the ACT scores are strong. This difference may lie in student motivation on CSAPs versus ACT, the latter bearing more significance for students. Kerry is working with Jhon Penn at CDE on this phenomenon, which is not uncommon in high schools. The staff is working to approach math problem-solving in a variety of ways (the constructivist approach). The school met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in all 32 targets. School Performance Figures (SPF) tracks growth of students’ learning, and there is achievement data in math. CSAP scores do not report out scores with less than 24 students, and this is why N/A is noted for many categories.

Kerry’s report on fundraising discussed increasing family events and rethinking the ‘how’ of these efforts. The Expeditionary Learning Schools’ organization has revamped its look and focuses on data-driven information. Kerry continued with updates on the RMSEL “At a Glance” that includes steps on how to problem solve an issue, decision agreements falling to Leadership Team to provide input and decide on review of historical documents. One document currently in process is the “Over-Enrollment Policy” which is being used as a test document. The “Staff Bulletin” continues to go out electronically on alternate Fridays. An open forum at school level staff meetings allows issues to be addressed that have no other place for discussion. These issues are then presented to Leadership Team. Weekly “Field Notes” continue to go out electronically to the parent and staff community. The “RMSEL Newsletter” will begin in November and be available on the website. Parent Action Crew (PAC) will have quarterly meetings, and Kerry will attend these as well as Community Council meetings. The Fieldwork Oversight Committee of Community Council will be reviewing the fieldwork fee schedule in the near future. Members of BOCES are always welcome to attend the Community Council and PAC meetings.

Kerry announced that she is applying for a professional development grant that is staged in three phases, and that one or all three could be awarded. In her Work Plan update, 6th through 12th grade math is a target, one reason being that science is stronger in the existing staff. In the lower school, math has been targeted first, then literacy. The expedition documentation boards in the hallways exhibit embedded standards. She met with Jon Mann, the Expeditionary Learning Mountain Regional Director. Kerry believes that RMSEL, as one of the EL legacy schools, should continue to enjoy MOU benefits as well as her proposal for shared learning opportunities, specifically three gifted leadership spots.

She assured the board that since August, much has been accomplished and much has been attended to.

Sue then distributed the school’s bylaws and constitution and the BOCES Act of 1965 from the state’s School Law. Elaine McCain will scan these as PDF documents and distribute them to the district board members.
Enrollment
Leann reported that due to vandalism sometime during the summer, repairs to a drain pipe from a bathroom will need immediate attention. After several unsuccessful attempts to clear the pipe conventionally, a scope revealed a rock the size of which cannot be flushed through to the main sewer line. The location is outside of the building which would assign responsibility to DPS for repairs. However, Julie Stelzer reported that RMSEL’s insurance will cover the costs, the estimate of which is from $7,000 to $9,000, if DPS does not accept responsibility. The roof vent pipe seems to be the rock’s entry point. For commercial buildings, capped vent pipes are part of Denver’s roof code, and Leann has asked Andy Raicevich in the Department of Facility Management at DPS, to assist with this, as under the lease, the condition and repair of the roof are DPS’ responsibility.

Leann once again noted that RMSEL is not a charter school, but its own district. Parker Baxter, the head of DPS’ Office of School Reform and Innovation, does not seem to accept this information. Coding of transfer and exiting students to and out of RMSEL does make a difference to CDE. Mary Seawell thought that the recognition that RMSEL is its own district was settled. Leann offered that the only connection is that DPS is the LEA for Special Education. Leann noted that DPS is a vehicle by which RMSEL receives funding from the state. The continued lack of understanding takes much time and effort on her part. She asked Mary to work on clarifying this issue with Parker Baxter. Leann also noted that Parker did not participate in the conference call about this issue. Finally, Leann underscored that a clear understanding must be had all-round because board members will begin reviewing the IGA for renewal in 2011.

With regard to enrollment, Leann still has one or two spots open. One, in first grade, concerns a student from DCSD. The student and his mother shadowed the other day. In a letter that families receive to schedule a shadow day, it clearly states that shadowing does not guarantee enrollment at the school but is a way for all parties to explore whether RMSEL is the best fit for a student. During his shadow day, the student refused to participate in any of the activities, did not interact with his peers, left the technology class and would not return until his mother intervened. Many of his actions suggested that the school’s model and activities would not be a good fit for the child. The various reasons were explained to the parents. However, the parents have not accepted the school’s decision and have sought legal advice. One of the issues is the current modified program he is in, even though he is a general education student. By the parent’s own admission, he does poorly with transitions and is easily over-stimulated. Both Leann and Kerry have concerns about his placement at RMSEL, and noted that in its IGA, RMSEL does not have to change the environment or offer new programs for students, among other legal aspects. Additionally, they are concerned that the parents are now willing if not insisting to place their child in a completely different and even opposite learning environment than what he is currently in (a half-day class). Kindra and Elaine noted that legally, a strong platform is needed. Policy overrides opinion. Because the student’s records are not yet available the board could take no further action. In the next week, the staff will have more information and will then contact board members.

Finally, Leann noted that she has enrolled 90 new students this year, the record, even though 10 of these were due to the increased enrollment numbers the board approved. Openings continue to be typically at 6th and 9th grades. Some factors for transfers from RMSEL include attendance at a larger school with more programs, and with the dismal economy, transportation. However, the school has filled its openings save for the above situation, and the first come list continues to lengthen, even at this time of the year.

Budget
The current year’s budget is on track. In October, Julie Stelzer will have the complete details for the board’s review such as Professional Development. She explained that even though there is no budget for it this year, there are charges to apply, hence the retention of this line time. Julie referred board members to the Management Summary for details. Julie requested assistance from the districts with regard to compliance with the Financial Transparency Act. Additionally, she also asked Mary for the formula on allocation of funds from DPS. Sue was concerned about the special education budget and the financial transparency of how DPS funds that. Kerry thought a menu of services from all the districts would be useful, in order to compare and understand costs. The PPR of $7,724.03 for 2010-2011 includes the rescission amount of 6.31%, reducing by
$487.39 to the current PPR of $7,236.64. Rather than return funds, the recession will be reflected in the January 2011 funding check from DPS.

Jennifer adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

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Jennifer Churchfield, President

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Sue Chandler, Secretary/Treasurer