ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING
September 24, 2013
7:00 a.m.

In Attendance: Sue Chandler, Ulcca Joshi Hansen, JulieMarie Shepherd, and David Willman

Staff: Chad Burns, Marci Elder, Julie Stelzer, and Cris Veteto

Guests: Robin Sewell, Steve Steadman, and Susan Street

Ulcca called the board meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda
Ulcca asked for a motion to approve the agenda. David made a motion to approve, and Sue seconded. The agenda was unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes
Ulcca asked if there were any corrections needed to the minutes. Sue asked to change one word at the top of page 3, from “misperception” to “misunderstanding.” JulieMarie made a motion to approve the amended minutes, and Sue seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Executive Director Report
Chad welcomed everyone back to another amazing school year. He recognized Mike Kuhn, a high school teacher at RMSEL who is pursuing an administrative license, and is observing the board meeting. He said RMSEL is off to an incredible start. He contributes this successful start to the support and servant leadership of many members of RMSEL’s school staff. Over the summer, a committed group of staff members contributed to the implementation of a new website, online registration system, and student information system with the implementation of My Big Campus. All of these new advancements are designed to improve communication with RMSEL stakeholders.

As the school year begins, administration is working closely with EL and RMSEL’s new school designer, Dave Manzell. Dave has quickly become a member of the RMSEL community and is assisting staff in fulfilling the annual EL Work Plan goals at RMSEL. This year, one of RMSEL’s goals focuses specifically on the documentation of instruction and curriculum in classrooms. The term “curriculum map” has popped up numerous times over the last three years as part of RMSEL’s school Work Plan goals, however the product has not come to fruition. RMSEL is unique in that all standards are taught in a K-12 school and therefore there is not a focus on one specific school level. During the pre-planning meeting, administration consulted with EL and learned that no school within the network has achieved the goal of mapping their curriculum to Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and Common Core Standards (CCCS). Many schools in the network are at a beginning stage of this work. Not having a clear exemplar or example to help guide the work, a clear goal was decided upon: RMSEL will create the exemplar and organize the K-12 curriculum map in a manner that meets the needs of each staff member and positively impacts student achievement. Chad said that on Tuesday, September 10, 2013, as work began on this task, it was quickly realized that this was a monumental task. By the end of Tuesday, the team created a container to store their thinking. This container is the framework for the map. On Wednesday, using Excel, mapping 6th grade to CAS in Science / Social Studies, and CCSS in Math / ELA began. By the end of Wednesday, one grade level of information had been entered. Experimentation with the sort features of the Excel document took place, which is the true power of the container. Administration will be working closely with RMSEL’s Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to review this work and begin mapping the other grade levels.

This year RMSEL is also focusing on a Character Education program and the alignment of clear expectations of students to these values. This has been an area of focus during monthly staff meetings and ground school. At this point, a draft
has been created, which will be reviewed by the Organizational Leadership Team (OLT) before it is published to the community. The draft is included below:

**Responsibility:** I recognize and do my part to improve my community, which is bigger than myself.  
**Courage:** I have the courage to stand up for the right to learn, to have a voice, and to work hard, even through failure.  
**Integrity:** I will speak and act truthfully. I will consistently reflect on the cause and effect of my actions and how these actions impact our community. I own my mistakes and recognize the positive contributions of others.  
**Discipline:** I will demonstrate discipline by practicing habits and skills that encourage pride and ownership of our environment, our academic achievement, and our daily actions with others. I will embrace the skills necessary to persevere through challenges.  
**Compassion:** RMSEL community members strive to be aware of those in need, and respond with kind thoughtful action.

Chad said that over the past week, he has had the opportunity to connect with multiple groups of RMSEL parents through “Chat with Chad” and the District Accountability Committee (DAC) representatives. During each of these two meetings, clarifying questions were asked regarding RMSEL’s focus on Mathematics and student achievement. In a K-12 community, any change to a single school level or grade will impact the vertical alignment of curriculum. In making shifts to increase student achievement and close the disproportionate gap between literacy and mathematics achievement at RMSEL, a new lower school Common Core curriculum has been implemented, flexible differentiated groups in middle school have been created, and access to level IV Integrated Mathematics has been provided to high school students. Each of these shifts has an impact on the alignment K-12. To help explain, Chad will continue to inform the parent community each week with specifics to school level.

Chad stated that during the 2011-2012 school year, RMSEL began piloting differentiated flexible groups in 6th grade. During that year, adequate growth was achieved for the first time in 7 years in 6th grade. Last year when the 6th grade was expanded into a two-crew stand-alone team serving 50 students, the differentiated flexible groups were expanded to serve two groups of students in Mathematics and Literacy Workshop. Once again during the 2012-2013 school year, adequate growth was achieved. This pilot project paved the way for implementation of differentiated flexible groups in grades 6-8 at RMSEL for 2013-2014. Students participate in mathematics instruction and curriculum based on mastery of standards and not by grade level or course title. The intention is to build mastery of understanding in concepts and skills as students prepare for post-secondary education.

To provide additional understanding into adequate growth and what this means as compared to an annual TCAP score, Chad said that “adequate growth” measures the growth of students compared individually from year to year. Adequate growth measures progress of students, not a single year state test score. Growth provides insight into the effectiveness of a learning expedition, instruction, curriculum, and/or organization. Since 2007, RMSEL has made adequate growth in 6th grade only during the 2012 and 2013 school years in Mathematics. In grades 7 and 8, RMSEL has not made adequate growth since 2007. With the implementation of the new system, administration’s hope is that the trend for upper middle school grades will be similar to the success found in 6th grade. To bookend middle school and specifically the pilot in 6th grade last year, 53% of 6th grade students made adequate growth, as compared to 29% in 5th grade and 28% in 7th grade. Chad feels strongly that the use of differentiated flexible groups provides all students with the opportunity to master mathematical content standards and grow as young mathematicians. He looks forward to a continuation of this positive trend in successive years.

Administrative staff has been working to improve communication with all stakeholders at RMSEL. A new section has been added to the RMSEL website that gets updated weekly and also included in the weekly newsletter to parents. The “News” section is located at the following web address: http://www.rmsel.org/News/index.html. In addition to this, approximately 30 parents attended this year’s first “Chat with Chad” on September 6, 2013. Sue asked how this information is received by parents. Chad said that an email blast is sent to parents with an embedded link in it. This is the same information that is sent electronically to the board members also.

Chad said he would like to take the opportunity to recognize the BOCES members who have transitioned off of the board in the past year or will transition off this year. He thanked Sue Chandler and JulieMarie Shepherd and presented them...
each with an engraved compass, similar to what is given to students who have been at RMSEL from kindergarten through graduation. He also recognized Claudine McDonald, although she is not present at the meeting, and said her compass will be delivered to her. There was a brief discussion regarding Sue and JulieMarie’s involvement in future board meetings and when their replacements may be determined. Each of them said the decision as to their replacements will be made in November. Sue encouraged the other board members to invite members of their boards to visit RMSEL, as it is a very unique environment that is deeply appreciated and deserves to be highly celebrated.

Ulcca asked if there were any questions or comments for Chad regarding his report. Sue asked if the attendance of 30 people at Chat with Chad is the highest turnout or if that is usual. Chad said that is fairly consistent, with a variety of parents from all school levels attending. About one fourth of the attendees at this particular meeting were parents who are new to RMSEL this year. That meeting took place during the flooding in the area, and there was some discussion about the flooding. Chat with Chad is held once a month during the school year, excluding December and May.

JulieMarie asked if RMSEL is using social media in an official capacity. Chad said that in conferring with Dan Maas from Littleton Public Schools, RMSEL has refrained from any extensive presence on FaceBook. RMSEL does have a FaceBook page, but it is not widely used as of yet. JulieMarie mentioned that Aurora Public Schools has been very successful in the use of social media. She mentioned Georgia Duron, Chief Communications Officer for APS, as a possible resource. Sue expressed that, from Littleton’s experience, unless there is a staff member designated as the point person for social media, it is very difficult to provide. David said that the Communications Team at Cherry Creek has also been recognized for their work with social media, and the CCSD board has adopted a social media policy. David asked Chad if he would like for the BOCES board to discuss a social media policy in the future. Chad said that would be welcomed. Ulcca asked if work is being done around the character education in regard to social media (i.e. cyber-bullying, etc.) Chad said that students are using discussion boards within MyBigCampus and have been self-monitoring the content of the discussions, with the ability to flag anything that isn’t specifically related to the instructional discussion and remove it. Ulcca asked specifically about bullying on FaceBook, and if that is an issue that has been addressed. Chad replied that he, Marci, and Kelsey Haddock do a review of the Student Code of Conduct with all students at the beginning of each school year, and they specifically discuss bullying, or any action that makes one feel unwanted or unwelcome, and the need to report that to a crew leader or staff member.

David commented that he has reviewed all of Chad’s communications thus far, and he commends Chad for how well he is communicating what is happening at RMSEL. As the newest board member, he has been able to absorb a lot of information from reading those communications, and see what is happening on a week by week basis.

Ulcca asked Chad to give an update about expeditions and crew trips. Chad responded that we have had a number of trips already going out. Right now, 50 6th graders are out at Yellowstone, but the trip may have to return because they are under a winter storm watch. Kindergarten is going out this week on their first crew trip to Cherry Creek State Park, and 1st grade is going to Golden Gate Canyon State Park. The flooding in Colorado did impact some of the trips. Chad recognized Amy McCann, Scott Martin, John Stene and Kate Crandall, who went out Monday on the middle school trip to Wyoming only to be hit with extreme hail and had to return to Denver. They left Tuesday to go to Cherry Creek, and that is when the flooding in Colorado hit. They opted to stay out, even though wet, but had to return on Wednesday because everything was saturated and they couldn’t continue the trip safely. Ulcca asked who makes the decision to end a trip early and return home. Chad said that if an Adventure Leader is on the trip, it is at their discretion. If not, Chad will make that decision in conjunction with a discussion with the crew leader. Sue thanked Chad for his commitment to the safety and appropriateness of these trips, and she appreciates his willingness to make hard decisions.

Robin Sewell interjected that her daughter has been here since kindergarten, is in 3rd grade now, and not once has she worried about her safety. They know that she is in good hands, is having a good learning experience, and safety precautions are being taken. The teachers are making good decisions, and as parents, they are extremely confident in allowing their child to participate in crew trips.

David asked how the RMSEL campus fared in the recent rains and flooding. Chad said that the building actually did better than expected. In the past, there has been some leaking with heavy rains that have caused some problems. The recent rains only caused a minor leak in the basement. In regard to the flooding, Chad said that RMSEL’s practice has been that if two of the partnering school districts cancel school, RMSEL would also cancel school. With the closures of
Cherry Creek and Aurora due to flooding, RMSEL did not cancel school, but encouraged parents to use their judgment on their ability to travel safely to school. General practice regarding delayed starts due to weather has been that if one district delays start, RMSEL will also delay start of school. This is due to all of our students having to travel to RMSEL by car rather than school bus.

**Open Forum**
Steve Steadman, grandparent of lower school student, commented about the character values at RMSEL, and how he observed those in practice at a recent picnic full of 7 year old RMSEL students. The students conducted themselves for two hours in a manner that is a tribute to RMSEL and what has been learned here. Susan Street, parent of a high school student, spoke about the lifelong community that is created and developed at RMSEL, and the character values that the students take into the world with them. She commented specifically about the age of Facebook, and how she sees the connection of community that far exceeds just the location of RMSEL, and she finds it remarkable. The aspect of community is one of the things she values most at RMSEL.

**Consent Agenda**
Item #1 – Personnel Matters – Sue moved to approve the consent agenda, and David seconded. The consent agenda was unanimously approved.

**Report Items**
2013-2014 Budget Update – Julie said the board members all received the financial statements. With two months of the school year having taken place, there have been numerous trips that have gone out, producing a lot of activity in the month of September. Julie mentioned the merchant fees, and said that because RMSEL utilized an online registration system this year, there was an increase in processing fees for those electronic payments made by parents. Julie said that she is preparing for the audit, and the fieldwork portion is expected to take place October 7th – 9th. The new audit firm was tasked with having an audit ready to present to the board in the November meeting. Ulcca asked if the computers that the board previously approved are coming from the technology budget or reserves. Julie said it is from reserves. To clarify the budget cycle, Julie said that in May the board is presented with the budget for the coming fiscal year. That budget stays in effect until January, at which time, statute provides the opportunity to present a revised budget. The funds used from reserves for the computers necessary for TCAP will be on the January revised budget. There is the opportunity in May to present the board with a supplemental budget. Sue commented that new regulations required the passing of the resolution for the use of reserve funds. Any time reserves are used now, it has to be done with a formal resolution and approval by the board. Sue asked if the merchant fees are going to continue to increase. Julie said that the process used to collect fees from parents was changed. RMSEL implemented an online registration which required that parents pay 50% of the fieldwork fees, and the deadline for completing payment in full has been changed to November 30th. In the past, some parents were experiencing a snowball effect on their finances and were having difficulty getting fees paid in a timely manner. This new system will greatly alleviate that by having parents pay half up front. Ulcca asked if there is the ability to override that requirement, and Julie said yes. There are a number of parents who have signed a payment plan agreement and are making payments. Chad commented that enrollment is on target for the PPOR amount, and anticipates being very close to the goal of 390 students. David asked about the audit and who the audit firm is. Julie stated RMSEL is using Clifton Larson Allen (formerly known as Clifton Gunderson), and Ulcca noted that there had previously been discussion regarding the best audit firm to use, with the board agreeing upon the current firm. DPS, CCSD, and now LPS all use this same firm.

**Action Items**
There were no action items for this meeting.

**Discussion Items**
BOCES Position on Amendment 66 – Ulcca said that she and Chad have had some conversation regarding this amendment, and asked Chad to address that now. Chad said that discussion was raised during the District Accountability Committee (DAC) meeting as to whether the school can/will take a position regarding amendments that are going before the public for a vote in November. The board has the option of taking a favorable, oppositional, or no stance position; the school or the DAC cannot take a position. At this time, there is not a unanimous stance across the five partnering
districts’ boards. Therefore, Chad’s recommendation is that RMSEL take a “no stance” position regarding this amendment, and communicate with parents the timeline and resources available to help them make decisions regarding their vote. JulieMarie spoke that APS has passed a resolution in support of the amendment, but realizes that not everyone has that same mind. She said that the CASB board issued a statement regarding the amendment and she suggested the board look at the wording of that statement to see if something similar would be appropriate for the BOCES board. She suggested that the board at least have a discussion regarding the resolution, even if the result is still not a specific stance. JulieMarie then read the resolution to the board members, the content of which is cited here:

“Whereas, Colorado voters in November will be asked to approve new taxes to support public education, and
Whereas, these new tax revenues would provide significant resources needed by Colorado school districts to implement existing and proposed education reforms, and
Whereas, CASB resolutions direct CASB to support additional funding for education, Constitutional tax reform and solutions to the state’s underlying fiscal problems, and
Whereas, the proposed tax increase would result in progress toward Constitutional reform and a solution to Colorado’s fiscal problems, and
Whereas, CASB recognizes that the CASB membership has diverse opinions and different levels of understanding about this proposed tax proposal,
Now, therefore, be it resolved by the CASB board of directors that CASB support the ballot proposal, and further that CASB staff shall take steps to assist members to understand the ballot proposal and to hear and to express the different views on all aspects and possible consequences of the ballot proposal, and further that CASB staff shall develop tools for the CASB members to use in support of this effort in local school district communities.”

Ulcca clarified that JulieMarie’s suggestion is that the board present a resolution of some sort that supports the underlying values of the amendment, but declines to take a position on the amendment. Sue commented that Littleton’s position is to not take a stand as a district on any political issues so as to not polarize any stakeholders. Her suggestion is that the BOCES board does not take a public stance, but instead speak about the importance of the issue and direct parents to information that will help them make a decision. David echoed Sue’s comments, and said that while his district supports the underlying concepts and principles of the amendment, Cherry Creek also does not take a public stance regarding such. He does see value in the BOCES developing a statement regarding the principles and values found in the amendment. Ulcca said she will draft a statement and distribute it to the board members for review. JulieMarie said she would like to see that language before the October board meeting. The RMSEL board will then vote on RMSEL’s statement before the public votes in November. Sue made a motion that the board draft a statement regarding the importance of Amendment 66, Ulcca seconded. There followed a discussion as to whether a motion is necessary, and it was agreed it was not necessary. Since the motion had already been made and seconded, a vote was taken. The motion failed. For the record, the intent is to draft such a statement prior to the next board meeting. An electronic vote will be taken prior to the next BOCES meeting and the resolution will be posted to the RMSEL community.

As an additional item of discussion, Chad mentioned that some of the assessments are coming in electronically for Social Studies and Science. He asked Marci to conduct field testing of these. Marci said that she used 25 computers that RMSEL already has to conduct the field testing for the 50 students, which required a lot of front-end work to get them workable to take the test. Using the computers already available worked, but it was a process that limped along. The requested 60 computers that the board has previously approved will be a wonderful solution for the testing process. With those new computers, the ability to test 50 students in the community room will work. Marci said RMSEL also has been selected to conduct the PARCC assessment field testing in the spring. She said that the students were very engaged in the field test, and the room was so silent you could hear a pin drop. Afterwards, students commented that it was “cool” and “fun.” For students to refer to a test as fun was rather exciting. David asked if students had to do all the work on the computer. Marci said yes, and that the testing suggests the students use the computer’s tools, such as the magnifier or calculator, as needed during the test. They are not allowed to have any paper to work on. The tools try to simulate some of the test taking strategies that can be used on a paper test. She saw students using the tools, some more effectively than others. After the test, students were allowed to provide feedback, and RMSEL students love to give feedback. Ulcca asked how this is impacting RMSEL’s decisions regarding students’ computer time. Marci responded that it has opened
conversations that include critical thinking regarding students having to take online testing beginning at the third grade level. The sixth grade students were allowed to “tinker” with some of the features ahead of time so that the novelty would be less enticing during the actual testing time. Ulcca noted that there could be parents who have a tighter limit on the amount of computer time their children are allowed. Chad noted that Elizabeth Spruill, Marci Elder, and Maxwell Spangler, a volunteer technology support person who assists RMSEL, were willing to put a lot of time and energy into this effort, and they were proactive in finding ways to make it successful, and expressed his appreciation for their willingness to problem solve and persevere in finding solutions. Ulcca also expressed her gratitude for RMSEL’s staff.

**Items for Future Agenda**
Sue mentioned the example of the Electronic Participation of Board Members in Meetings policy that the board received. She asked, as regarding the BOCES, what is acceptable practice for future purposes? The specific policy she is referencing is Policy BEAA. Ulcca said it would be helpful to discuss the requirements of the board members in regard to attendance and participating in board meetings. She and Chad have had discussion about the responsibilities of a BOCES board member, and melding these two things into one discussion and understanding. She asked the board members to send the minutes of those discussions of each of the respective boards’ meetings to her and Chad. Chad acknowledged Dale McCall of the Colorado BOCES Association, who has a partnership agreement with CASB in developing BOCES specific policies. As those are drafted, Dale will forward those for review. Sue mentioned that sometimes there are quorum issues, and there needs to be consideration given in the discussion of a potential policy for this BOCES.

Sue asked about Service Links attending the October board meeting, and Chad said that it has been practice to invite them to attend the October meeting. Sue asked if there is anything that should be conveyed to the Service Links at that meeting. Julie said that a small “tutorial” would be helpful to the Service Links. Sue asked that the agenda include that for the October meeting.

**Adjournment**
Ulcca asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. JulieMarie moved to adjourn, and Dave seconded. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.

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Ulcca Joshi Hansen, President

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Anne Rowe, Secretary/Treasurer