ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING
February 24, 2015
7:00 a.m.

In Attendance: Mike Johnson, Eric Nelson, Kelly Perez, Rosann Ward, and David Willman

Staff: Marci Elder, Julie Stelzer, and Cris Veteto

David called the board meeting to order. He welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

Approval of Minutes
David asked if there were any corrections needed to the minutes, and there were none. Kelly made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, and Eric seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Executive Director Report
Chad is unable to be at the BOCES meeting due to a medical emergency. Marci read his report to the board, which is contained below in its entirety.

Last week the RMSEL staff embarked on our annual winter staff retreat. The staff traveled by snowshoe to the Broome Hut located in Grand County. Each year we conduct a fall and winter retreat for the course of two days, aligned to the adventure experiences we share with our students throughout the course of the school year. During the retreat, administrators and staff focused on building "crew structures" to align with our professional development and share best practice around building strong teams within our school community. The retreat is one of the many aspects that make RMSEL a unique learning community for students and staff.

To complete the week, our teachers hosted two days of conferences on February 19th and 20th connecting with students and families at the mid-point of the school year. Our conferences are student-led and differ based on the preferred communication structure of each school level. Our High School teaching staff piloted a group-led structure for the first time, providing parents the opportunity to connect with each teacher instead of just the individual crew leader. In our high school, students are assigned a crew for their four years. In the event they are in a crew with a humanities teacher, there are two years in which the crew leader does not teach part of the students in the crew. We are excited to collect feedback from high school families regarding this new delivery method for conference communication.

Professional Development Summary – February 2015
We had our second internal classroom learning lab on Thursday, February 5th. The learning target for the five-teacher team was: I can identify instructional moves and resulting student actions that help students meet the learning target. Their lens was looking at expedition writing aligned to Common Core State Standards. This team of teachers included two lower school teachers, a lower school teacher intern, and two middle school teachers. Julia LeGrand, 7th and 8th grade literacy teacher, was the host, leading a workshop lesson in which students made inferences from multiple texts to compare the different perspectives of the people in the Nuer and Dinka tribes. They then incorporated these inferences into point, evidence, explanation paragraphs. Teachers spent the afternoon collaborating on multiple topics, including annotating prompts, creating detailed writing rubrics, and developing methods for more authentic student self-assessment. As with our other classroom learning lab, feedback about this structure was extremely positive. Our next learning lab is scheduled for Wednesday, February 25th. This team includes math teachers from many levels, with the learning target: I can identify specific systems and structures that support mathematics instruction.
In embedded professional development, we have moved beyond analyzing our writing data to formulating action plans. At the Lower School level, next steps involve a focus on organization of writing, as well as grammar and conventions. In Middle School, teachers are collaborating on graphic organizers and paragraph structures that scaffold students’ understanding in writing. The High School teachers already use the common writing rubrics with fidelity. The next steps for these teachers include making sure students are getting diverse writing opportunities.

Finally, also related to professional development, teachers have been analyzing the PARCC practice tests in both English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics. Although the content of the tests is definitely one area of focus for our teachers, we have also asked them to evaluate the format of the tests through the eyes of a student. Even though many of our students are quite adept at navigating online environments, there are nuances to taking these assessments that we need to point out to our students. Teachers will be formally trained to be test administrators on Friday, February 27th. Students will be trained with the use of the practice tests and tutorials the week of March 2nd-6th.

At this point we are in the process of finalizing all annual staff evaluations, communicating teacher performance during a post evaluation conference. All post evaluation conferences will be complete by March 26th prior to spring break. All administrative decisions regarding extension of contracts for the 2015-2016 school year have been made at this point. We attempt to make these decisions in a timely manner that allows the employee to pursue other options during the annual spring hiring windows in the Denver metro area. We have posted for all open positions for the 2015-2016 school year and will begin the screening process during the month of March. We hope to have all new staff hired before May 1st. An integral part of our hiring process is shadowing teachers in their classrooms, allowing our hiring committee to observe best practices in actual teaching scenarios.

We completed the annual lottery on Monday, February 2nd. One of my many highlights during the school year is being able to make nearly seventy phone calls personally welcoming families to our school. The shouts of joy and excitement are reassurances for our relentless pursuit of excellence as defined in our school vision. During the month of February, new students participate in an in-classroom shadow experience prior to making their final decision for enrollment. New families and returning families make a non-refundable $150 deposit toward their 2015-2016 school year fees upon accepting their “spot.” We are currently projecting an enrollment in excess of 395 students, but will continue to build the budget for the 2015-2016 SY based on an enrollment of 390 students. We are currently enrolled at 392 for the current school year.

When building the budget for 2015-2016, we will highlight a change in service delivery and associated cost from the Denver Public School District as our Administrative Unit for Special Education. This process may be advantageous regarding access to special education services and associated cost. RMSEL currently provides Special Education Services to 59 total students, which is 15% of our total school population. Any school that purchases services from DPS as the Administrative Unit with a Special Education population in excess of 13% will have access to additional funding to support the needs of students. We will update the BOCES regarding this process upon further review. We received this information for the first time on February 17th.

Outside of the business aspects of school operations, I am excited to share news from our classrooms. In high school, our 9th/10th grade students recently completed their two-week independent study titled “Mini Challenge.” The Mini Challenge is the first step in each student’s four-year independent study experience. The showcase of student learning will take place on Thursday, February 26th at 5:30 pm. Along with the student showcase, our 4th/5th and 8th grade crews recently completed their Winter Vocal Music Concert. This was a great night for students and our extended parent community; music plays an integral role in the elective experience of our student body.

This is a time of transition for students as they begin planning for high school. We are hosting our High School Registration Night for current and new RMSEL families on Wednesday, February 25th at 5:00 pm. Over the course of four years, our administrative team has developed a comprehensive process for communicating with high school students’ families. Along with registration night, families receive a comprehensive document outlining each aspect of our high school experience. This process, and the accompanying documents, is revised each year to assist students in a pathway for success focused on post-secondary readiness.
We are continuing to prepare for the upcoming PARCC and CMAS state assessments. On Friday, February 27th, teachers are training to administer the assessment to their students. This training will allow teachers to see sample modules in which the students will complete their assessments. We continue to watch and document this process with the continued release of information from the Colorado State Board of Education. We will provide an assessment update to the BOCES during our April BOCES meeting.

Finally, Saturday, March 7th is the annual RMSEL Auction at “The Island” located in Aurora. This is our primary school fundraiser each school year. Our PACK parents contribute countless hours to making this night a success. Each year PACK raises over $50,000 at the Auction. Since 2011, all proceeds from fundraising go directly to instructional support resources. We are grateful and appreciative to work with such an amazing group of parents that support additional resources for student learning.

Rosann asked Marci if any impact is being observed yet in the staff evaluations as a result of the internal learning labs. Marci said that she is not a staff evaluator, but as a coach, she is seeing implementation as a direct result of the learning labs. She said that there are some exciting changes in professional development in the next year, and she believes it will have more of an ongoing impact. David asked Julie about the additional funding regarding Special Education students. Julie said that currently, $491 is deducted from PPR per FTE for Special Education services provided to RMSEL. DPS is changing the structure and the numbers are still being developed, but it may potentially save RMSEL some money. Kelly asked if this is new, and Julie said it is for the 2015-2016 school year. Rosann asked for clarification as to whether this is specific only to DPS or a statewide decision; Julie said it is specific to DPS. RMSEL currently pays for a school psychologist 4 days per week and a school nurse 1 day per week. Rosann asked for additional information regarding the location and time of the RMSEL auction. Kelly noted how wonderful it is that the PACK auction raises approximately $50,000 per year.

Open Forum
Marci mentioned that RMSEL had two students who qualified for the state Spelling Bee; Faith Baca, a 6th grader who previously also qualified as a 4th grader at RMSEL, and Samantha Sumner, an 8th grader. David asked how things are going with Chad being out of the office due to the birth of his child, or if any extra support is needed. Julie and Marci responded that things are going smoothly at this point.

Consent Agenda
Item #1 – Personnel Matters
Eric made a motion to approve the consent agenda, and Mike seconded. The consent agenda was unanimously approved.

Action Items
There were no action items on the agenda.

Report Items
Budget Update – Julie reviewed the items that were included in her Management Summary, which was sent to the board electronically. The Management Summary is included below for the minutes.

Finance Update
A brokerage account was opened at Wells Fargo in December 2014 for the purpose of accepting stock donations. We received a donation of 500 shares of Noodles & Company Class A common stock, and the fair market value as of the donation date is reflected on the balance sheet. This account, less minimum balance requirements, will be liquidated later this spring.

In January, $750,000 was moved from the CSAFE Investment account to the U.S. Bank operating account to work toward maintenance of a compensatory balance of $1,500,000 in the USB account. As noted in the December 2, 2014 Management Summary, it is the practice at RMSEL to invest school funds in a manner that provides the highest return consistent with the preservation of capital. Both CSAFE and USB are covered under the Public Deposit Protection Act (PDPA) which requires banks in Colorado that are eligible depositories of public funds to pledge
collateral having a market value in excess of 102% of their aggregate uninsured deposits to secure uninsured public funds on deposit with the bank, (CRS §11-10.5-102). The PDPA provides protection of public deposits beyond FDIC insurance. In order to mitigate the service fees at USB, RMSEL must maintain a compensatory balance in the USB operating account of $1,500,000, $250,000 of which is insured by the FDIC and $1,250,000 is covered under the PDPA.

Revenue
PPR funding is paid from DPS according to the following schedule: 25% is funded in July, 25% in October and the remaining 50% is paid in January less any adjustments or rescissions from CDE. PPR was budgeted in June at $7,398.97/FTE X 379.5 FTE, and $7,399.46/FTE X 376.5 FTE (10/1/13 count) is the per pupil amount that was received. The first 25% of PPR funding or $696,396.99 was received in July, and the second 25% or $696,551.36 was received in October. The PPR in the January payment was reduced by $44.37/FTE or .5996%, due to a change in the estimated at-risk population in DPS. This adjustment, along with the 2 additional students from October count, is included in the revised budget.

Kindergarten financial aid (#42500) is over-budget by $50 due to full financial aid awards for 3 students. This shortfall will be resolved later in the spring due to a student withdrawal. There remains $13,174.50 in fieldwork financial aid (#67800). Under RMSEL’s fieldwork fee structure, families with three (3) or more children at RMSEL have the option to take a 10% discount on their fieldwork fees. To date, six (6) families have opted to take advantage of this discount.

Per the Budget Appropriation resolution approved by the board in January 2015, $16,000 of beginning fund balance is reflected on the budget (#43503). This is in alignment with the provisions of GASB 54 and the categorization of fund balance assigned for budget carryover.

Per HB 12-1345, $213,850.04 was received in August to assist the BOCES with meeting state educational priorities determined by CDE. These funds are used to employ key personnel to implement a Response to Intervention (RtI) process for monitoring student achievement with 20% of our school population in grades K-12.

In September, we received $5,297.54 per the READ Act to support reading intervention for students in grades K-3 as identified from state assessment scores.

The amounts reflected in the Fieldwork Carryover-Landmark Trips line item include fieldwork fees carried over from 2013-2014 as well as 10% landmark trip allocation from the 2014-2015 fieldwork fees. These amounts are allocated toward funding the landmark 5th grade Sailing trip, 6th grade Yellowstone trip, 8th Civil Rights trip, and the 11th grade trip to Costa Rica.

The revenue derived from kindergarten tuition (state currently funds only .58 FTE for kindergarten) is on target, with 5 months (February-June 2015) remaining to be invoiced.

Classroom revenue (#46400, #46500, #46550 and #46600) represents the student contribution toward the 5th grade Sailing ($3,600), 6th grade Yellowstone ($5,000) and 8th grade Civil Rights ($7,650), and the 11th grade Costa Rica ($17,469.19) landmark trips.

In September, the Parent Action Crew for Kids (PACK) began facilitating a Pizza Friday for our students. The popularity of this lunch program explains the variance for PACK Community Events (#45630). Additionally, PACK was instrumental in successfully collecting funds during registration for PACK Staff Appreciation (#45660) and exceeded their anticipated revenue budget by $1,220. PACK also facilitates the sales of RMSEL spirit wear.

Miscellaneous income is greater than anticipated due to write-off of fieldwork fee deposits for students that decided not to attend RMSEL. These funds will be used to offset other budget shortfalls.
Interest Income #80000 is $534 less than budgeted due to the continued low interest rates on the CSAFE investment. This shortfall in earnings will be reduced from the realignment of funds invested in USB and unspent budget line items.

**Expenses**

Line items with notable variances or exceptions are explained below.

- Water & Sewer #63120 – this expense account will be offset against billing to the Denver Urban Gardens for garden water usage.
- Minibuses-Other #64500 – this expense account is showing a credit balance of $3,500 from the sale of the 1997 gear van. These funds will be used to purchase and install a permanent roof/bike rack on the new gear van and/or offset current budget overages.
- Vocal/Instrumental Music #66210 – this expense account is offset against funds in account #46210 which were donated for the purchase of guitars for the 8th grade music program.
- MS Math/Science Supplies #66501 – this account is over-budget and offset against a parent donation of $900 in account #46501 toward the classroom math/science project to install planter boxes and benches at the main entrance to the school.
- HS Math/Science Supplies #66602 – this account is over-budget and offset against a PACK donation for a telescope to be used on fieldwork by K-12 crews.
- Elementary Fieldwork #67402 & #67403 – these expense accounts are offset against funds in the Fieldwork Carryover-Landmark Trips for the 2014-2015 Sailing trip.
- HS Fieldwork #67601, #67602, #67603 & #67605 – these expense accounts are offset against funds in the Fieldwork Carryover-Landmark Trips for the 2014-2015 Costa Rica trip.

Julie added a comment that the board does not meet in March, but in April, will begin seeing the supplemental budget for this year, as well as the 2015-2016 budget.

**Discussion Items**

Classroom Visits – April 28, 2015 at 8:30 a.m.
Calendar Events – David mentioned the auction at The Island, and asked the board members to consider that event.

**Items for Future Agenda**

Long-Range Planning Committee

**Adjournment**

David asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Eric made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Rosann seconded. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.

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David Willman, President

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Rosann Ward, Secretary/Treasurer