January 29, 2013

Dear RMSEL Parent Community,

We are back to full speed and rejuvenated from a week of professional learning and conferences with families. Last week is a unique week in our school calendar that condenses various important aspects of the school year into a single week period of time creating more weeks throughout the school year with five instructional days. We began the week after the holiday with community service and professional learning. One of the ten Expeditionary Learning Design Principles is: Service and Compassion. “We are crew, not passengers. Students and teachers are strengthened by the acts of consequential service to others, and one of an Expeditionary Learning school’s primary functions is to prepare students with attitudes and skills to learn and be of service.”

On Tuesday, January 21, 2014, our entire school staff participated in service at the Food Bank of the Rockies. During this time we completed a variety of volunteer services for the organization. This experience provided time to laugh and enjoy the unstructured company of our fellow professionals while contributing to assisting an important organization in the Denver Metro Community. Students at RMSEL are required to document service annual in their portfolio and reflect on their experiences. As an Expeditionary Learning community and staff it is crucial to our success in fulfilling our mission and vision to be active learners and participants in service as we lead by example. At completion of our service we took the opportunity to introduce staff to new initiatives to use in their classroom and during fieldwork with students. On Wednesday, January 23, 2014, we engaged in professional learning together at RMSEL tied to our EL Work Plan Goals. Our focus for the day was tied to our goal that states: Students will have access to a complete and diverse curriculum that makes learning come alive. Teachers will complete documentation of learning experiences and align them to Common Core State Standards. ILT will create a vertical sequence that articulates the way students will apply their learning (content, concepts, and skills) in increasingly more sophisticated and rigorous contexts, as they get older. During this work session each teacher provided a copy of his or her most recent Expedition Plan accompanied by an Expedition Plan Rubric. Teachers worked in teams of three providing feedback to their colleagues regarding their plan for instruction. Teachers utilized the Expedition Plan Rubric to guide their conversations and feedback. As a school we utilize an internal collective uniform planning template. This allows teachers to engage in common curricular conversations focused on diversified instruction and improvement. The quality of plans provided by our staff has increased significantly during the last two years and we are in the process of completing the only K-12 integrated curriculum map for EL Schools tied to CCSS and CAS. This work would not be possible without the dedication of our staff.

Sincerely,

Chad

Chad Burns
Executive Director