July 30, 2013

Dear RMSEL Parents and Students,

Wow, I cannot believe that next Monday, August 5th, is Registration! It seems like we were just celebration passages and reading student portfolios. I have had the opportunity to make it outside this summer with my family and see my daughter learn and grow as she embarks on her second birthday. Along with her development, I was also able to compete in a few endurance mountain bike races. It has been a great summer and our team could not be more excited to return to school. This summer the office staff and administrative team have worked collaboratively to prepare for the start of school.

Currently, your family is utilizing one of the additional technological advances that we have put in place to improve efficiency and communication with the online registration system. The online registration system provides families the ability to register on-line and print official documents prior to registration at school on August 5, 2013. Registration will be open from 7 am – Noon and 1 – 6 pm. Upon the completion of registration we will also have available to RMSEL families a school directory for interacting with other community and crew members throughout the school year. We excited to launch and provide this opportunity to our families.

Along with the online registration system we will be utilizing a new school wide tool for communication. Elizabeth Spruill, Technology Teacher and Coordinator, has worked over the summer months to prepare for the launch of My Big Campus. My Big Campus will replace the outdated and inefficient School Fusion system currently in place. Each teacher will have a My Big Campus page that they will update weekly with important information for students and parents. This information will include Expedition Plans, Assignments, Portfolio Updates, Calendar, Field Work, and Crew Trips. We will be announcing how to utilize this amazing tool during the first month of school and at Back to School Night with your crew leader. You can take a virtual tour of the tool at www.mybigcampus.com.

On the first day of school, Monday August 12, 2013, we are also excited to launch our new school website! The new website is totally redesigned with new and improved features to provide more efficient and user-friendly access to information for parents, students, and new RMSEL families. We are holding the launch until after registration to prevent any confusion. We hope that these new tools provide us with additional opportunities to connect with parents and students in a consistent and frequent manner for the 2013 – 2014. We are always striving to grow and improve as a school.

This year we will be focusing on our school character education program and character values that are dynamically integrated into all aspects of an Expeditionary Learning School. Simply put, “Character Counts!” You may see this around the building and in various communications this year. As a goal we look to align our actions and values with our school vision.

Our Vision - “RMSEL scholars will demonstrate pride and ownership as they grow into responsible citizens, who strive for high academic achievement and character excellence. RMSEL staff will equip our students with tools for success in order to make a positive impact on our local and global community. Through our actions, our community will exemplify Expeditionary Learning.”
A particular focus will be on implementing RMSEL Family Groups for students K-12. This program will look similar to the former “crew buddy” program, however instead of connecting two levels student will be integrated K-12 in a family group. Students will be apart of the same RMSEL family group for their tenure at RMSEL, making a lasting impact and connection with peers of multi ages. The family group will focus on our character values, responsibility for learning, and service learning. Each family will meet on the first Wednesday of each month for one hour. Every staff member at RMSEL is apart of a family group. I am excited to be apart of a crew family next year. Family groups assignments were shared with students last spring at the RMSEL Olympics. We will remind new students of their family and assign new students to RMSEL a family group during August.

We have received our initial TCAP results and are very excited with the results. These results remain embargoeed until August 9, 2013. Once the Colorado Department of Education releases to the public, we will send a follow up communication to the parent community. Once again our school utilizes these assessments as an additional opportunity to demonstrate their abilities annually.

As you return to school this year and look forward to volunteering at RMSEL, you are required to be finger printed. This process provides background check information to the school to ensure each volunteer is cleared to work with children. All staff members and volunteers are required to be finger printed once during your tenure at RMSEL. Fingerprints and background clearance remain confidential to the RMSEL Administration. If you need a finger print card with our organizational code please stop by the office at any time.

This year we will be focusing on the alignment of our mathematics instruction and resources to the Common Core Academic Standards (CCS). In the lower school we will be adopting a new integrated curriculum used in many EL schools around the nation, titled Envision. Envision is aligned to the CCS, and provides teachers with instructional materials and resources to meet the needs of our students. Along with Envision, we will continue to use an Integrated Mathematics Program in secondary classrooms. This program has been updated and also aligned to the CCS. Along with new curricular materials we will also be providing students with additional benchmark assessments generated by the teachers and administered throughout the school year. The parent community will receive continuous communication throughout the year regarding the curriculum and performance of students. Mathematics achievement will be at the forefront of our instruction and goals for the upcoming school year to ensure our students master the concepts and skills required for post secondary success.

We are excited to once again welcome new staff members and crew leaders to our school. Throughout the spring last year we highlight each crew leader as they were hired. In light of the New Year upon us I would like to once again briefly review our new staff.

Kate Wolff – K/1 Crew Leader – Kate was a teacher intern at RMSEL last year working with Alisha and Katie in 4/5. Kate also has international teaching experience and was a dedicated member of the 4/5 crews leading the 4th graders on their spring crew trip while the 5th graders were on the sailing trip.

Kate Crandall – 7/8 Mathematics – Kate has a diverse teaching background starting with her experience with Teach for America. For the past year Kate has worked with the Denver Public
Schools as data and business analyst. Kate is returning the classroom this year and could not be more excited to work with the middle school students and team at RMSEL. Kate also played division 1 women’s field hockey while attending Yale University for her undergraduate studies.

John Stene – 7/8 Humanities – John was also a teacher intern from the University of Denver working in MB’s humanities classroom last year. John is also a Wilderness First Responder and has experience coaching collegiate basketball. John will be coaching middle school sports at RMSEL next year and continuing to build the middle school athletic program providing additional after school activities to our students.

Erik Fuller – 9 – 12 Mathematics – Erik has over 14 years of classroom teaching experience and was a founding member of the Littleton Public Schools teaching cadre to utilize the Integrated Mathematics Program (IMP). Erik has taught multiple levels of high school mathematics including course recovery for students who need additional support with math. Erik is currently closing out his summer with a family adventure in Montana prior to the start of school. Erik is excited to being a RMSEL and experiences his first crew trip the second week of school.

Michael Newman – Reading / Writing Interventionist & Learning Specialist - Michael Neumann will also continue at RMSEL next year as the new 4-12 Literacy Interventionist and Learning Specialist. Mike started working in Peter’s Crew this year as an EA and completed the school year as an intern with Metro State University working alongside Kelsey and Amy. Mike also coached our new middle school girls’ basketball team this year.

Scott Nobles – K -12 Art Teacher – Scott also has extensive teaching experience ranging from elementary education to collegiate art courses. Scott and his family relocated to Denver from Los Angeles. During Scott’s interview he demonstrated a clear understanding of the connectively of art as an additional medium for learning to multiple disciplines. Scott recently worked with his middle school humanities team to create Middle Eastern tile project connecting humanities, mathematical patterns, and art.

The dedicated member of the Parent Action Crew for Kids (PACK), have also been preparing for the new school year as well. PACK will be hosting the annual Back to School BBQ in conjunction with High School Back to School Night. The Back to School BBQ is for all RMSEL parents and students K-12. The BBQ is schedule for Thursday, August 15, 2013, 6:30 – 8:00 pm. Additional information regarding the BBQ will be sent next week from PACK. Please save the date and we look forward to seeing you then.

Last year the dedicated group of PACK parents organized multiple successful fundraisers to support RMSEL. I was welcome with a new Bus today to begin the school year. When you pull in Bus 7 is new to the fleet and we look to add an additional bus next year to support having 4 crews out on fieldwork any day of the week at RMSEL. In addition to the new bus in the parking lot, adjacent to the building at 6 RMSEL Auction Winner Parking Spaces, these spaces were purchased last year at the auction for one-month intervals. PACK and I, request that our community respect the parents who have purchased these spaces as we look to continue this fundraiser for future years.

Once again we look forward to seeing everyone at registration on Monday. Please be sure to register via the online portal prior to Monday. In the event you have not completed the online
system you will be required to complete the online portal at RMSEL prior to going through the registration process.

Sincerely,

Chad