The Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning
Executive Director Communication

August 20, 2014

Dear RMSEL Students and Parent Community,

I have the privilege and honor to share some exciting news with you today. Each year, schools and districts in the state of Colorado receive a School Performance Framework (SPF). The SPF is a document that serves as a “progress report” for schools as compared to their own longitudinal performance as well as to other Colorado schools. The SPF determines each school and district’s annual Accreditation Rating which is a composite score derived from four categories: 1) Academic Achievement (15 points), 2) Academic Growth (35 points), 3) Academic Growth Gaps (15 points), and 4) Post Secondary Workforce Readiness (35 points). This score is then compared to Accreditation ranges to determine a school’s level.

In 2011, our school scored a total of 69%, receiving a score of Accredited; however, we were 4% from falling into an Accreditation with Improvement rating. This rating would have required our school to work with the Colorado Department of Education to make priority improvements. In the fall of 2011, we implemented our strategic plan for improvement (http://www.rmsel.org/Strategic-Plan/index.html). This plan outlined changes and improvements to fulfill our school mission and best serve our students and community. Over the course of the past two years, our school made incremental improvement on our SPF, meeting 78.4% and 77.1% of targets. To obtain the highest level of Accreditation, a school must meet 80% of targets to receive a rating of Accreditation with Distinction. In 2013, 16 of Colorado’s 179 school districts obtained a rating of Accreditation with Distinction. Less than ten percent of Colorado school districts obtain this rating annually.

I am honored to share with our students and parent community that the Expeditionary BOCES – Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning met 88.8% of SPF targets, achieving an Accreditation with Distinction Rating for 2014! Not only did we meet the target of 80%, but we exceeded in many domains across the board. This is truly an amazing feat that could not be achieved without an amazing group of dedicated professional staff members, teachers, students, and a supportive parent community.

Expeditionary Learning engages students in complex critical thinking to problem solve local and global issues impacting their community. An EL student is not a test taker by nature, but a thinker. The way in which we learn at RMSEL allows students to grapple with challenging concepts; this prepares students with the skills to be successful in the field, as well as on a standardized measure of achievement. The student performance and growth measured by the SPF is a testament to our ability to prepare students to succeed on standardized measures of achievement, as well as the dynamic workforce that lies ahead.

For those families wanting to learn a bit more regarding frameworks, the Colorado Department of Education (http://www.cde.state.co.us/) is a great resource. To assist with the interpretation of the SPF, I have attempted to break down each domain of the framework.

Academic Achievement – Measures single year academic achievement (percent of students proficient /advanced) as compared to the state average annually. Academic achievement is not an
internal measure of student growth but a comparison to peer groups across the state. This year we met 80.6% of targets, scoring 12.1 of 15 total points possible.

**Academic Growth** – Multiple year evaluation of how students perform at a school in which they are enrolled for a minimum of two consecutive years. A student must take the assessment twice at a school to factor into the growth rating. This measures if students are making annual academic growth or improvements toward proficiency. This year we met 83.3% of targets, scoring 29.2 of 35 points.

**Adequate Growth** – A sub category of Academic Growth that tells us whether the observed level of growth was sufficient for those students to be, on average, on track to reach or maintain proficiency in that content area. For the first time, we made adequate growth in all areas of Reading and Writing, and 2 of 3 school levels for Mathematics.

**Academic Growth Gaps** – Students identified as unsatisfactory or partially proficient that are making gains toward proficiency. Sub categories of growth gaps are identified on the SPF. This year we met 83.3% of targets, scoring 12.5 of 15 points.

**Post Secondary and Workforce Readiness** – The measure of high school performance as determined by academic achievement, ACT, graduation rate, and dropout rate. We recorded our highest composite ACT score in since 2011 with a score of 23.1, 3.1 points over the state average of 20! This year we met 100% of targets, scoring 35 of 35 points.

This brief analysis is intended to assist families in understanding how School Performance Frameworks determine annual accreditation ratings for schools. This past year, not only did our students demonstrate high academic achievement, but high levels of growth. Growth is the most important indicator for success and a measure that is most informative to where students will be as they prepare for college. Based on our SPF, we are one of the highest performing school districts in the state of Colorado and one of the top performing Expeditionary Learning Schools. I cannot thank our staff enough for the countless hours they dedicate to ensure your son/daughter becomes a lifelong learner and responsible citizen.

Sincerely,

Chad