The Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning
Executive Director Communication

November 19, 2014

Dear RMSEL Students and Parent Community,

Over the course of the past week you may have read or viewed a media story regarding the 2014 – 2015 12th Grade Colorado Social Studies and Science Assessment administered to all 12th grade students across the state during the month of November. Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S. 22-7-409 (1.2)(d)(I)) requires every student enrolled in a public school to take any and all state assessments. If a student does not take an assessment, they receive a no score and unexcused absence. As this is Colorado state law, many may wonder where the burden for enforcement lies and with whom.

Around the state this week, many 12th grade students elected not to take the assessment in an act of civil disobedience. Some districts reported as few as 3% of 12th grade students taking the test. Each district and/or the state of Colorado do not have an enforcement officer or department. The penalty for not taking the assessment does not fall directly on the student or family, but rests on the shoulders of the district and school. Also according to the statute, any school that fails to have less than 95% of a grade level complete the assessment will have their accreditation rating fall one level. At RMSEL, this would impact our recent rating of Accreditation with Distinction.

We do not have an enforcement office or policy for Colorado’s assessment statute. Before the assessment, we met with our 12th grade students sharing the information above. We shared that there are no disciplinary measures or policy that would affect student grades, transcripts, or graduation for not completing the assessment. The community of students had the opportunity to discuss and determine a course of action as a class. Many statements regarding discontent were prevalent in the conversations amongst students, but also a clear message was articulated. The students clearly did not agree with having to take another test, but they unanimously agreed that they love and take pride in their school and would not want an outside force to place undue burden on a place they know as a second home.

This morning, we began the required 12th Grade Colorado Social Studies and Science Assessment, and 100% of 12th grade students were in attendance. I want to highlight our amazing students and appreciate their willingness to discuss and determine a course of action. While we will continue to see this unfold in legislative sessions and state board meetings, at RMSEL we will be hard at work digging deep into complex topics and learning, not worrying about looming burdens or possible sanctions.

I would encourage our parent community to attend the High School Academic and Internship Showcase this week on Thursday, November 20th, at 5:30 pm at RMSEL. Students will display and present final products from their most recent independent learning experiences, as well as high quality student work integrating their recent grade level trips and their first trimester learning expeditions. Also, this week students in 2nd/ 3rd / and 7th grade will be performing in their fall choir concert, culminating their first trimester of vocal music, at Merrell Middle School on Wednesday, November 19th, at 6:00 pm.

As a reminder, we do not have classes next Wednesday – Friday, November 26 – 27th, for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Sincerely,

Chad