The Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning  
Executive Director Communication  

RE: Student Immunization Records  

February 11, 2015  

Dear RMSEL Parent Community,  

A local educational news media source published multiple stories regarding the immunization of students in Colorado, and RMSEL was featured in one aspect of the report. In May of 2014, the governor signed into law House Bill 14-1288. This bill states in Section 2 in Colorado Revised Statute 25-4-903 Exemptions from Immunization – rules subsection (5) Each school shall make the immunization and exemption rates of their enrolled student population publicly available upon request.

At RMSEL, we use Infinite Campus a student information data processing system through the Denver Public School District. Our annual Per Pupil Revenue (PPR), with which we operate our school is collected through the Denver Public School District per our Intergovernmental Agreement with the five cooperating school districts. As such, we utilize the system to accurately account for student records.

The local news media source “Chalkbeat Colorado” requested the immunization and exemptions rates of the twenty largest school districts in Colorado per HB 14-1288, one of which is the Denver Public School District in which our school records were retained through Infinite Campus. Immunization and exemptions rates are currently not required reporting statistics by the Colorado Department of Education; however, compliance is required under HB 14-1288. The immunization and exemption rates are made available to the public, not the individual medical records of students.

In the story, RMSEL was reported as having a significantly high percentage of compliance. Compliance in the terms of reporting directly refers to each student enrolled having a complete file of information. For example, in one area we are 97.8% compliant, meaning we have almost a perfect rate of reporting. This is a favorable statistic on our behalf meaning our staff is entering information into the required system for a high rate of compliance.

What was astounding in the story was the disproportionate rate of Exemptions at RMSEL as reported in one area as high as 20.9%. In the state of Colorado, parents have the right to exempt their child from immunization under Colorado Revised Statue 24-4-903 Exemptions from Immunization – rules subsection (2) It is the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to have his or her child immunized unless the child is exempted pursuant to this section. A student shall be exempted from receiving the required immunizations in the following manner: (a) By submitting to the student’s school certification from a licensed physician or advanced practice nurse that the physical condition of the student is such that one or more specific immunizations would endanger his or her life or health or is medically contraindicated due to other medical conditions; or (b) By submitting to the student’s school a statement of exemption signed by one parent or guardian of the emancipated student or student eighteen years of age or older that the parent, guardian, or student is adherent to a religious belief whose teachings are opposed to immunizations or that the
parent or guardian or the emancipated student or student eighteen years of age or older has a personal belief that is opposed to immunization.

Upon an audit of records at RMSEL once the story was released, an error in data entry methodology was found within the Infinite Campus system, creating a disproportionate exemption rate as compared to our five cooperating school districts. In Infinite Campus when entering an exemption, a drop down menu is presented to the person entering the data. This menu has four alphabetical options (M) Medical, (P) Personal, (R) Religious, and (C) Compliant.

When entering medical immunization records into the system, accurate data was entered for each student, but then the Waiver box was erroneously clicked and the (C) Compliant code was selected. The problem is when pulling Immunization and Exemption Rates, the Waiver option of Compliant is only for families who have opted to complete an exemption waiver, not a code for actual compliance with immunizations.

What Does This Mean Now?

The data reflected in the news media is inaccurate: the inaccuracy is due to an erroneous method of data entry, not the media source reporting. We are in the process of updating and auditing all 392 medical records on file which will be complete by end of today, February, 11, 2015.

I have been in direct contact with the news media source regarding the error in reporting. After conversation with the reporting team, I shared how the error occurred, and that it will be corrected. The reporting team has agreed to pull the data in the same manner in which they received their initial data to ensure accountability in the reporting process. The staff at Chalkbeat were exceptional in their willingness to explain the content of the data, the collection process, and the willingness to take a second look and accurately report once an audit was conducted.

I will contact the RMSEL parent community through direct communication once our accurate statistics are available. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me directly. I intend to be accessible during student pick-up, via phone, and/or email.

I apologize for the mistake in reporting on behalf of our staff. I am encouraged that our records will reflect the accurate percentage of exemption rates at our school. The health and safety of our school community is imperative for providing an exceptional learning environment to students. Please take a look at your personal and child’s medical records, you may be due for an MMR booster and not be aware that you are eligible to receive this vaccine in the event you elect to be vaccinated.

Sincerely,

Chad