Dear RMSEL Parent Community,

I had the opportunity to meet with our parent community last Friday morning at 8 am during “Chat with Chad” regarding the theme of “RMSEL Adventure.” Our Adventure Program is a pivotal part of our school program and community at RMSEL. We take students on amazing journeys around Colorado and beyond throughout the surrounding Rocky Mountain region. As I enter my fifth year as the Executive Director, I continue to support our mission and vision pushing our students to stretch their comfort zone and engage in what we sometimes refer to as “Big Adventure.” These adventures take our students beyond the Front Range onto the Colorado River in Utah, Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, and Canyon de Chelly in Arizona. As we continue to engage in “big adventure,” as a team of Administrators, Adventure Staff, Crew Leaders, and parents, we are required to evaluate our program, collect feedback from families, and chart a course of action for continuous improvement. To offer this amazing program, it is essential that we are reflective practitioners who analyze each season in the pursuit of action-based improvement.

I want to capture a few items from our parent forum that we are improving this school year in the following areas of our Adventure Program. Communication is paramount to success on any team and crucial for the success of a program that goes beyond the expectations of a traditional learning environment. Our new standard for Adventure Communication for the spring of 2016 is Trip Packets distributed to students and families one month prior to departure. This will include a welcome letter, gear list, and trip itinerary. We will not post this information to any website or open source outlet to ensure that this information remains confidential to students and families. By communicating one month prior, families can begin going through gear, purchasing new items as needed, communicating with teachers, etc. This window of time will increase the ability for families to work collaboratively with our Crew Leaders and Adventure Staff.

We have also restructured our food for crew trips. During Fall Break, Nick and I built a food locker on campus. This will warehouse packed dry food items for each season of crew trips, so crews will essentially shop on campus. In lieu of requesting produce purchases, we piloted the use of online ordering and food delivery through King Soopers on the morning of trip departure this past week with the high school. In the food locker we have also added a refrigerator, chest freezer, tub washbasin, and dishwasher. This way we have the ability to store items and clean camp kitchens on site instead of having to send them home with a parent to wash. We hope this streamlines our efficiency with this aspect of our program.

Finally, as we continue to engage in “big adventure,” we will adjust the annual crew trip calendars to ensure that long distance trips back up to a shorter Front Range trip to allow Adventure Staff to regroup, communicate, and prepare for departure for each trip. This past season Yellowstone and 4/5 Rafting in Utah were back-to-back on the calendar. This simply does not work with the amount of equipment required for each trip and the geographical distance between locations. Our Adventure Staff returned late, repacked, and departed with less than 24 hours between trips. The 2016-2017 crew trip calendar will be released prior to winter break this year. We are in the final phases of confirming trips, locations, and support staff. Our team is focused on
communication, efficiency, and planning that ultimately will foster safe crew trips that continue to provide “big adventure” experiences to our students.

Shifting gears a bit from Adventure to appreciation and gratitude. This week is extremely important in that it is one of many annual opportunities and reminders to thank the men and women who are actively serving or are a veteran of one of our service branches in the United States. We have been once again invited by the Saluting America organization here in Colorado to complete a “Tribute Card” to a family member or to an anonymous member of the armed services. This year Veteran’s Day falls on Wednesday, November 11, 2015, which corresponds to extended crew time. Students and staff will have the opportunity this Wednesday with their Crew to complete a personalized message of gratitude. “Tribute Cards” may be personally addressed to a family member who served or is actively serving and each student may keep the card and present it in person. If students do not have a personal connection, they may complete a “Tribute Card” to an active duty service member or veteran. These cards will be collected on campus, bundled, and Saluting America will send the cards around the country and globe to members of the armed services or share with veterans at various events over the course of the year.

President Abraham Lincoln in his First Political Address stated “Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least, a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves.” Our public education system in the United States of America is not a right, but a freedom protected by our members of the armed services. We experience the value of this freedom every day at our school and it is “the most important subject we can be engaged in.” I ask that on Veteran’s Day we take the opportunity to offer our thanks to those in our community and nation who protect the freedoms of our constitution that allow us to engage with students on campus and around the nation.

Sincerely,

Chad