Dear RMSEL Parent Community,

This week I want to share with you examples of high quality work from our classrooms. “In EL Schools, the curriculum reflects on student work in order to create a culture of excellence. High quality work is a reflection and result of the high expectations teachers have for all students.” EL Core Practice 7

One of the best parts of being an administrator at RMSEL is having the ability to see students in action in all aspects of our school and program, especially in the classroom. In kindergarten, students are starting their very first learning expedition of the school year focusing on the role of individuals in a community. At school they are interviewing administrators, office staff, educational assistants, adventure coordinators, and other teachers to understand the role each member of the school has in service of the community. Kindergarten students are now transitioning to the second case study in their expedition and looking outside of RMSEL to the men and women that serve in our local community. They are visiting local law enforcement officers and firefighters in the next two weeks as they continue to connect the important role members of our community have in service of serving and protecting our local neighborhoods. It is important for our students to demonstrate respect and appreciation to members of our community that serve in keeping us safe.

In our 2/3 classrooms, students are wrapping up their learning expedition studying rocks and minerals. The students have each been assigned a mineral in which they have created a description and illustration for the creation of a crew field guide. The students have investigated the scientific properties of their respective mineral as well as uses for the mineral. The final product is a demonstration of authentic documentation and collaboration. Students have created multiple drafts and gone through various feedback cycles to ensure that their page in the field guide is of the highest quality. I received a snapshot of the final product and was astounded, not by the minerals, but by the craftsmanship of each student in ensuring that their work was a demonstration of excellence.

At various points in our K-12 school, students and families consider the possibility of transferring to another school. Each month I host an Open House along with student ambassadors to share with prospective parents what RMSEL has to offer in our pursuit of academic achievement and character excellence. While it is important for respective families to interact with school leadership, it is valuable for them to hear the perspective of the student body as well. Fourth and fifth grade students study the process of persuasive writing tied to state standards each year in writer’s workshop. To make this process more authentic, Leah asked if students could write letters to prospective parents to share at Open House. Wow, what an amazing way to connect standards of literacy to authentic purpose! I cannot wait to share a student letter with families at our next Open House.

Seventh and eighth grade students are actively engaged in learning about the Water Cycle and use in the community. This week our students ventured to Denver Water to interact with experts in the field to deepen their understanding of water usage and cycle in a metropolitan
community such as Denver. While the wastewater treatment plant may not be the most glamorous site to conduct fieldwork, it provides students with an understanding of the complex cycle of water as it reaches the faucets of our home.

Finally, while not present in the classroom the past two weeks, our high school community is diligently working on building community during their grade level trips or working in service of their independent learning internship and senior learning expedition. The 9th graders are backpacking in small groups independently problem solving their daily routes and logistics for food and water. This act of independence stretches students beyond their typical comfort zone while ensuring they can safely accomplish their daily objectives. At times students may “storm;” the act of “storming” as referenced by Outward Bound is exactly as it implies. During a multi-week backpacking trip, there will come a time when the group is worn out, cold, wet, and beginning to be hungry; through this type of challenge trip participants take ownership and problem solve with one another. By solving each challenge without the direct support of the adult leader or guide, students demonstrate perseverance. Teachers and leaders use this demonstration of ownership in transference to the classroom when they return to school. Solving a complex math problem requires many of the same skills utilized by students in the field when they are storming.

I appreciate and value the opportunity to work in a school that lifts up learning and authentic experiences. Our instructional framework places value and need upon each student. Kurt Hahn summarized this best when he said; “There are many ways of trying to win the young. There is persuasion, there is compulsion and there is attraction. You can preach at them, this is the hook with no worm; you can say, “you must volunteer,” and that is of the devil; and you can tell them “you are needed,” that appeal hardly ever fails.”

Sincerely,

Chad