Dear RMSEL Parent Community,

It is accurate to say “time flies when you are having fun!” This is the busiest and most exciting time of year in our school community. Every crew has completed their spring crew trip and students are actively engaged in completing their respective portfolios. High school students are nervously embarking upon graduation and decisions about what is next in their personal growth and journey to college. As a team, we appreciate the support of our parent volunteers at this time of year, helping with trips, chaperone meals, fieldwork, choir concerts, and portfolio reading. It truly is a time of year when our community embodies the value of crew as we come together and work toward the final days of school.

Over the past month, the Parent Action Crew for Kids (PACK) and the District Accountability Committee (DAC) voted to transition the two respective parent and school committees into one cohesive group for next year. PACK has primarily served in the capacity of fundraising and events, while DAC serves as an advisory committee for school leadership and the BOCES. By connecting these two entities, they intend to work closely as one group in support of our school community. This transition will not dissipate the quality of the two teams but enhance our work together for subsequent years while supporting institutionalized knowledge that is lost when each group’s leadership turns over annually.

To highlight how these groups will work in closer alignment, I will use an example on which both teams were working in service of one another this past year but not at the same time. PACK expressed that it has become very challenging to raise funds annually for school transportation. Parents expressed to representatives of PACK that they would like to diversify fundraising and explore another option to fund RMSEL bus replacement. PACK and/or DAC cannot make fee approvals as an independent group. The BOCES approves budgets, which include fees under the advisement of DAC. DAC published a survey in the fall regarding the interest and support of a school transportation fee for the 2017-2018 school year. The establishment of this fee was supported by 75.59% of respondents to the survey. The aggregate amount of fee by respondents was equal to $80 per student; the replacement cost of a bus on a two year cycle per student is equivalent to $75. Based on the data collected from the survey, DAC proposed a recommendation to the BOCES as the school advisory committee to implement a transportation fee for the 2017-2018 school year of $75 per student for RMSEL bus replacement. The BOCES approved this fee recommendation and restricted the revenue from the related fee to transportation cost.

Both groups, PACK and DAC, were working together with a common goal, to diversify fundraising while ensuring that transportation was accessible to continue our fieldwork and adventure program. By bringing these two groups together, the process of fundraising and advisory input can happen in collaboration instead of in separate committees.

To accommodate this transition, PACK and DAC voted to approve a new set of by-laws that will create a 7 member DAC board. Three new positions are being created and open for parent interest in filling these seats. The positions are outlined below:
**Community Building (DAC)**
- Coordinate with Volunteer Coordinator to define schedules and budgets
- Coordinate and communicate with crew parents
- Teacher appreciation
- Spirit week
- Build parent support for sports programs

**Academic Support (DAC)**
- Coordinate with Volunteer Coordinator to understand/define classroom volunteer needs
- Classroom support
- Connect parents with crew leaders that need support (may not be your kid’s crew)
- Teacher grants
- Book Fair

**Sponsorships and Development (DAC)**
- Coordinate with Volunteer Coordinator re: communication to parent and corporate communities
- Promote annual fund (immediate activity)
- Target corporate sponsorships and start to build a sponsorship base (long term activity)
- Connect parents with matching funds programs at their employers (immediate activity)
- Publicize Box Tops for Education (immediate activity)
- Publicize Grocery cards, Target, Amazon, etc. (immediate activity)
- Grants (long term)

If you are interested in serving as a volunteer for one of these three DAC positions, please contact me with a letter of interest. The DAC will review each letter of interest for each position at the June 13, 2017 meeting, and vote to approve any interested party in assuming the role. In addition to these three volunteer positions, we are going to hire a school employee position for next year to work with DAC and the overall community to increase community involvement and coordinate fundraising targets. This position will be a Community Events and Fundraising Coordinator; the posting for this will go out in early June once school is complete, to begin the screening process of candidates and hiring. We are excited to have this staff level position, as many of our partner schools have a member of their team dedicated to community events as well as fundraising and grant applications. A partner EL school raised $475,000 in a year by having a dedicated member of their team working in a targeted capacity to maximize school resources and community engagement.

Next week, we will have completed the hiring of new instructional staff for the 2017-2018 school year. I will dedicate my communication to introducing all transitions and new hires. It is an exciting time of year at RMSEL; we are a progressive community who works to strengthen all aspects of our school in service of student learning.

Sincerely,

Chad