Dear RMSEL Parent Community,

In a few short days, the month of August will begin and we will be back to the classroom and onto new adventures in two short weeks. The excitement of a new school year is infectious as we begin to plan for the work ahead of us in service of supporting the development and growth of your amazing children. As a high performing Expeditionary Learning School, it is incumbent upon our staff to strive to offer an educational opportunity to students that exceeds the expectations of other choice and neighborhood school options. In support of our school mission and vision, our team provides opportunities prior to the start of each year to enrich themselves in professional learning opportunities tied to our Expeditionary Learning Work Plan. In years past, we have shared portions of our professional learning goals through the year with our community as points of pride in the work which we are engaged in as a staff. This year the direct correlation to daily instruction and our work plan aligns with our focus on ensuring that every minute of every class period, every day, counts!

While at times during the course of a school year it may feel long, it is actually very short in our time to impact our students. We have 169.5 days to make an impact on the achievement of our students. In this limited time, our team has to ensure that every minute counts! This mindset and focus is not to alarm our parents that time has not been a focal point of every school year, but to ensure that a level of quality, purpose, and engagement is present every day in every lesson. Our EL Work Plan Goal and Rationale for the 2016-2017 school year states, “All students will reach the identified learning targets as a result of teachers’ high quality lesson design. In service of increasing student achievement, teachers must provide students with daily access to high quality lessons. To provide high quality instruction, teachers must first be able to identify and implement the essential elements of high quality lessons. The RMSEL staff will examine high quality lesson design through the lens of the foundational components of learning targets and the workshop delivery model.”

I share this focused goal for Professional Development to further articulate our learning as a staff in service of student learning and achievement. Our teachers have an expectation to provide a learning environment and opportunities that exceed that of other school options. To focus on the work we do at RMSEL, we are also limited based on the simple fact that any institution can’t do everything. We are focused on the design and implementation of high quality lessons as students engage in learning expeditions and the opportunity to conquer challenges presented through adventure experiences. As a team, we will align our work throughout the year to ensure that each lesson is connected to our pursuit of excellence for your son/daughter. As I shared last year, when we elected to provide weekly Professional Development from 7:00-8:30 a.m. to support our staff, time is a finite resource that unfortunately cannot be replicated or purchased. Time is truly our most valuable and limited resource in making a difference for students; therefore, I connect back to our dedication that every minute of every class period, every day, counts!

Our staff will participate in Ground School during the week of August 7th-12th, during which we will facilitate a wilderness trip for staff similar to the experiences we conduct with students and
then dig into an in-depth two day fieldwork experience in Denver that will model effective lesson design and implementation. This fieldwork experience will be an exceptional opportunity for our veteran staff to model the EL instructional framework as we transition new staff to our team for this year. I appreciate the commitment of our staff for going above and beyond as we prepare to begin another school year.

As this time, I would like to introduce two new RMSEL staff members that were hired over the course of the summer. Leah Wesselman will be joining our staff as the new 4/5 crew leader. Leah was most recently a 5th grade teacher at Powell Elementary School in San Antonio, TX. Prior to her classroom experience, Leah was a Program Assistant and Counselor at the Sonlight Camp in Pagosa Springs, CO. Leah has a Master of Arts in Teaching and Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from Trinity University. In the interview process Leah stated, “Knowledge is socially constructed, so I develop and initiate opportunities for students to learn and grow cooperatively. Through thoughtful planning, intentional instruction, and considerate reflection, I have created a classroom community that encourages students to take risks and grow cooperatively. My classroom is a safe environment where all learners are valued and entitled to a quality education.”

Lauren Cain will be joining our staff as the new 6th grade crew leader. Lauren most recently served as the Adjunct Adventure Coordinator at the Odyssey School of Denver. Lauren comes from a diverse teaching background that includes direct classroom instruction at the Skyview School, Prescott, AZ to leading wilderness course work for Outward Bound based in Leadville, CO. Leah has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and Masters of Arts in Sustainable Communities from Northern Arizona University. Leah’s skill set will be an asset to the 6th grade team as we transition 25 new students to RMSEL and continue to build the leadership capacity of our scholars who have been here since kindergarten.

As you prepare for next week at registration on Wednesday, August 3rd from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 to 6:00 pm, please ensure that your family has completed the online portion of student registration. The online registration system requires you to complete hard copy documents to be turned in at registration based on the grade level of your son/daughter. These forms are required to be completed prior to registration to ensure that August 3rd is efficient for all families. The online portion of registration is currently operational even though the credit card processing service is not active at this time. We apologize for this ongoing inconvenience to families; our long time processing vendor was no longer supported by the registration software development team. During the testing of the system it worked without error, but once the system was available to take and process actual credit cards, the system unveiled the inability to process credit cards. We are continuing to work with the company to correct the error and sincerely apologize for any inconvenience to families. At this time, you are able to complete online registration by contacting the main office with a credit card number or providing a check or cash for payment. We appreciate the patience and understanding of the parent community.

Last evening, you may have received three documents from the RMSEL Parent Action Crew for Kids (PACK). PACK is a parent fundraising entity that supports additional classroom resources each year through a variety of events and fundraisers. One of our annual fundraisers is the opportunity to give to the Annual Fund; this is the simplest and most efficient way to contribute to the fundraising efforts of PACK. The Annual Fund for the 2016-2017 school year is to focus on transportation needs of our school, allowing our other fundraisers to focus on additional classroom resources. While the intent and content of the information you received from PACK was accurate,
the forms contained errors that are not a reflection of the quality expected at our school. The first word of the document reads “Explorers.” In addition to the spelling errors present, you may also be wondering, “What is Pizza Friday?” and how much does a new bus cost, as one page states “$60,000” and the next page reads “$54,000.” While these errors are certainly not intentional on behalf of PACK, I would like to apologize, on behalf of the school and the PACK Board, for parents receiving this quality of communication filled with errors. “Pizza Friday” was a program in previous school years that was a cooperative effort between a local vendor and PACK to provide a lunch alternative on each Friday. Last year, we were fortunate to begin a daily hot lunch program for students and the need for this additional resource was eliminated. A new RMSEL bus will cost approximately $60,000; $54,000 was the approximate cost of a replacement vehicle to the fleet in 2013, but with additional features and rising costs, the replacement cost has increased over the past three years.

Finally, as you wrap up the final weeks of summer, please mark your calendars for the following dates and events that are rapidly approaching.

August 11, 2016 - PACK Back to School Ice Cream Social – 5:30 pm on the RMSEL Auxiliary Field
August 15, 2016 – First Day of School (1st – 12th grade) – 7:50 am – 3:20 pm
August 17, 2016 – First Day of School Kindergarten – 8:50 am* - 3:20 pm
* School Hours (M/T/TH/F) 7:50 am – 3:20 pm / (W) 8:50 am – 3:20 pm
August 18, 2016 – Back to School Night – Middle School (6th-8th) – 5:00 pm
August 25, 2016 – Back to School Night – Lower School (K-5th) / High School (9th-12th) – 5:00 pm

You can also print an annual calendar with an itemized monthly calendar from the RMSEL website at: [http://www.rmsel.org/Who-We-Are/Calendars/index.html](http://www.rmsel.org/Who-We-Are/Calendars/index.html)

We look forward to seeing you at student registration next week and for the first days of school beginning August 15th!

Sincerely,

Chad