Dear RMSEL Parent Community,

Have you ever gotten into the car after a day of school and asked your son/daughter, “what did you do at school today?” You have probably received a variety of responses, or maybe even the preverbal, “I dunno.” Instead of asking “what they did,” you may want to ask them, “what was your learning target today?”

Learning Targets are important to the focused and intentional work performed by teachers in service of focused instructional objectives. A learning target is more complex than a goal or class task, it is a statement of what students will accomplish during a class or a series of classes. The target most often begins with a prefix of “I can.” By leading the statement with “I can” it implies that it can be obtained. This statement of intention is then followed by the translation of a grade level content standard in the respective course of study to student-centered language. Grade level standards are oftentimes written in language for teachers and/or other educators and not necessarily student use on a daily basis in the classroom. To ensure that a target is of the highest quality, teachers use application terms such as evaluate, compare, contrast, analyze, etc. These verbs require students to dig deeper than simply accomplishing a task. Finally, targets that are contextualized make learning come alive. This is defined by specificity in the target that allows students to focus, problem solve, and engage in a narrow, instead of broad, case study. A target observed today stated: *I can read an informational text with the purpose of identifying evidence to support my claims of key players in the American Revolution “tipping process.”* Students are doing more with this target than simply naming key historical figures of the American Revolution; they are looking at the impact to the revolution. Learning targets are one of the many aspects of instructional design that push our students to achieve.

At this time, you should have received an invitation from your son/daughter’s crew leader and/or school level team to sign up for fall student-led conferences. Conferences will be held on Thursday, September 22nd from 11:40 am – 3:30 pm and Friday, September 23rd from 7:50 am – 3:30 pm. Teachers will determine set times that work best for families of the crew on the two respective conference days. During conferences, students are supported by each teacher in preparing high quality student work and examples from class that demonstrate their achievement. If you have not received an invitation to sign-up for a conference, please reach out to your child’s crew leader to schedule.

In addition to conferences, PACK, under the coordination of Kelly Contreras, will be hosting the two-day Scholastic Book Fair. The Book Fair is not a financial fundraiser for the school each year, but an opportunity for teachers to acquire additional books for their classroom libraries. Each time a book is purchased from the book fair, the school receives a portion of the sale in the form of scholastic credit. This credit can then be used to fill the “wish lists” of teachers for their libraries throughout the two-day sale. This is a great opportunity to support literacy initiatives in the classroom and outside of the classroom in your home.
I want to extend a huge thank you to parent volunteer and event coordinator, Karl Liedtke, for his organization of the 2016 RMSEL Run and Ride at Cherry Creek State Park on Sunday, September 18th. At this time, Karl is looking for an additional 15 course marshals to assist in keeping the course safe for students and participants as they intersect the bike bath and roadways. If you are able to assist for a period of time on the 18th please reach out and confirm with Karl (runandride.rmsel@gmail.com). Please respond as soon as possible so that Karl can plan accordingly. The Run and Ride is a great community event and fundraiser to kick off the school year annually.

Finally, we are continuing to find the most effective tools to communicate the abundance of information required for student participation and growth in an expeditionary learning school. As of Tuesday, September 6, 2016, RMSEL teachers will utilize Google Classroom as the exclusive tool for communicating with families. Teachers can post daily announcements, assignments, documents, links, etc. Each teacher's Google Classroom saves important information from class that can be retrieved by parents outside of the school day. We understand that the transition to this tool will take time and support. Each teacher has instructions for the activation and inclusion in their Google Classroom. Teachers will be reaching out to families that have not signed up, to provide support in ensuring you have up-to-date information and communication. I would encourage you to download the apple and/or android app for your phone/tablet interface; it is a great tool for keeping up-to-date with your son/daughter’s learning and events at school. If you need any support, please contact your son/daughter's teacher and/or RMSEL Technology Coordinator, Elizabeth Spruill.

Please note that for the 2016-2017 school year, we are no longer calling into classrooms from the main office. This practice last school year disrupted teachers and student learning substantially. In the event you need to pick up your son/daughter from school, please contact the teacher prior to the appointment. They will allow the child to come to the main office prior to the appointment or allow you to pick them up from the classroom. Students still must be signed out at the main office before leaving. We attempt to minimize disruptions to the learning environment as every minute counts, every day!

Sincerely,

Chad