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Dear RMSEL Parent Community,

Over the course of this school year, we have celebrated our mission, vision, traditions, and rituals that have allowed us to positively impact our community through the work of our students over the past 25 years. This year has also been about charting a sustainable course forward to ensure the success of our school as we plan for the next 25 years. This process has included the application and planning for school wide renovations, as well as systems to support teaching and learning for the future. President John F. Kennedy captured this well when he said, “Change is the law of the life. And those who only look to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.”

Change is an essential element to organizational development, growth, and sustainability, while at the same time being extremely challenging to implement. I share this as we are in the process of implementing a Banded Salary Matrix (click here) approved by the BOCES on February 26, 2019, to support teacher retention and performance through an increase in base salary and the ability to earn performance incentives. Our Banded Salary Matrix is different from systems implemented within our partner districts in that it was budgeted for and approved by the BOCES to be funded at 100%; however, this does not mean that every staff member will be awarded the maximum incentive without corresponding evaluations and documentation of highly effective teaching and learning in their respective classroom. The Banded Salary Matrix includes the following:

- The establishment of 4 base salaries that cover a range of four years of experience in each band. Bands are established by teaching credentials as tied to degree experience (BA & MA).
- Averaging the 4 years on the current salary schedule and adding 1.5% to the average for cost of living established the 4 base salaries.
- No employee will receive a salary reduction based on the implementation of the new salary schedule.
- Performance incentives are established for each band beginning at $3,000 and increasing by $1,000 over each band, with a maximum performance incentive of up to $6,000.
- Our current 18.19 SY salary schedule includes a classic “step & lane” model with 2.5% increases between every step.
- The banded salary matrix includes a minimum salary increase of 4.27% for an employee who receives a maximum incentive.
- The banded salary matrix includes a maximum salary increase of 17.19% for an employee who receives a maximum incentive.
The average salary increase based on current staff for next year, in the event the employee receives a maximum incentive across all teaching staff, is calculated at 13.64%. All incentives are tied to an objective evaluation of performance with an overall effectiveness score calculated for each employee. The effectiveness scale is 1 (Basic) to 4 (Highly Effective). A score of 2.5-2.9 = 1/3 incentive / 3.0-3.4 = 2/3 incentive / 3.5-4.0 maximum incentive. This model is to increase the base salaries of staff and reward staff members with supplemental compensation based on performance.

To implement the Banded Salary Matrix on a fixed Per Pupil Revenue (PPR) source that is determined by the Colorado Department of Education each school year, we had to make program cuts to 1.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions and implement a new school wide schedule. Next year, we will eliminate K-12 Spanish and (.5) Learning Specialist.

K-12 Spanish will be eliminated and a new program will be established with a partner school district to provide blended learning (online/onsite) opportunities for High School Students to obtain language requirements for graduation and Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR). Students will have the opportunity to enroll in multiple languages and take coursework beyond level two, which is what is offered in our current model.

A (1.0 FTE) Learning Specialist will be reduced to a (.5 FTE) Learning Specialist. Learning Specialists will no longer follow a school level however, they will implement Special Education Service time to groups of students based on their specific IEP service time. Students will not be grouped across school levels. This change will provide students who receive special education services the ability to attend specials and electives three days per week instead of the current pull out services, which removes them from class five days per week.

School Schedule 2019 - 2020

Based on the required reduction of force, we are implementing a new schedule for next year (click here). The schedule impact is outlined below:

- Establishment of four school levels K-3 (Primary); 4th-6th (Intermediate); 7th & 8th (Middle School); and 9th – 12th (High School)
- Students will have one 75 minute Special or Elective period per day. The Specialist Team is determining if this will continue to be one special/elective for 9 weeks or a continued wheel of specials. Once a final determination is reached we will inform students and parents.
- Specials or Electives will be offered in the following disciplines, Music, Technology, Physical Education, and Art.
- Foreign Language will be provided through a blended learning environment for High School Students.
- Fitness is a retained program K -12.
- Lunch and Recess remain at 40 minutes K-8 and is increased to 39 minutes for High School.
- The school day will be 7:40 am – 3:10 pm (High School) and 7:50 am – 3:10 pm (K-8).
- Crew trips and grade level experiences are uninterrupted.
The establishment of an intermediate level is for the purposes of travel within the school schedule. 4th/5th will continue to be a multi-age loop across two years and 6th grade will continue as stand-alone.

Teacher planning time is retained or slightly increased based on a consistent schedule.

Professional Development – Case Study Design & Implementation

Finally, we have determined that increasing the quality of our Expeditionary Learning Instructional Framework through “Learning Expeditions” is imperative to our continued growth and success. While this is not a change, it is an intentional focus on teachers creating and implementing Case Studies of the highest quality. Each Learning Expedition consists of two to four case studies based on the expedition content. A Case Study should include the following:

1. The selection of a current topic that can be aligned to multiple Colorado Academic Standards across multiple disciplines.
2. The establishment of Long Term and Short Term Learning Targets that guide instruction.
3. The establishment of inquiry based Guiding Questions that engage students in the process of learning while providing ownership to the learning process.
4. Task Descriptions that outline the content of instruction.
5. Selection of current research articles that are scaffolded for student levels.
6. The creation of Rubrics and Scoring Tools that provide direct feedback for students to understand achievement on each product.
7. Determining the establishment of authentic audiences and displays of student learning beyond the classroom.
8. The integration of specialists to enhance the final product, such as a musical score or art installation.
9. The selection and implementation of multiple fieldwork opportunities for each case study.
10. The celebration of student work at the conclusion of each case study.

Every professional development session on full day and Wednesday morning sessions will be devoted to increasing expeditionary experiences for all students. Parents and students should expect and receive an increased focus and commitment of quality to the expeditionary aspect of our model. Case Study design and implementation will be utilized in the evaluation process to document the most effective learning practices for maximum incentive. Our focus is on ensuring that students are engaging in authentic learning experiences, mastering standards, and engaging in fieldwork opportunities that enhance and solidify the expedition.

I understand that processing these three elements of systematic change and improvement will not go without clarifying questions. I can set up personal meetings and calls and I am extending an additional “Chat with Chad” opportunity for Tuesday, March 26, 2019, when we return from Spring Break at 8:00 am. I appreciate the community in reading my lengthy and transparent communications, my intent is to always be open with our planning and implementation.

RMSEL Olympics

This Friday we are scheduled to have RMSEL Olympics all day! We met this morning in color teams and established our team names, cheer, song, and banner. We are fully intending to host Olympics and hope that Mother Nature is wrong on the impending snowstorm. In the event of
a storm we will inform parents and students. If Olympics are canceled we will reschedule for Thursday, May 2, 2019, which is the next opportunity when all students are on campus, and not engaged in CMAS testing.

I wish everyone a restful and rejuvenating spring break and look forward to the start of Spring Crew Trip Season and Portfolio Presentations!

Sincerely,

Chad