Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning
Continuum of Community Systems and Structures, Grades 7-8
2019-2020

To ensure that RMSEL consistently works to pursue excellence as we fulfill our school mission and vision it is imperative that we follow a continuum of community systems and structures. Organizational systems and structures establish clear expectations for students, parents, and staff, to ensure that our community is able to learn, grow, and thrive. Our expeditionary learning design principles articulate this as: The Responsibility for Learning – “Learning is both a personal, individually specific process of discovery and a social activity. Each of us learns within and for ourselves as part of a group. Every aspect of school must encourage children, young people, and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.”

The purpose of the continuum of community systems and structures serves as a guide for students to accept and take responsibility for directing their own learning. Learning is a process which is guided by teachers and supported by ensuring students understand how to achieve and not simply respond to a series of four letters listed in tandem with a sentence.

Jacques Barzum articulates this well in the text Begin Here – The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning, stating, “In the name of progress and method, innovation and statistical research, educationalists have persuaded the world that teaching is a set of complex problems to be solved. It is no such thing. It is a series of difficulties. They recur endlessly and have to be met; there is no solution – which means there is no mystery…It will always be difficult to teach well, to learn accurately; to read, write, and count readily and competently; to acquire a sense of history and develop a taste for literature and the arts – in short, to instruct and start one’s education.”

Barzum is accurate in describing the process of learning to be difficult and not a mystery. While learning is a series of difficulties it is important to understand that true achievement of any learner is fulfilled only when the task is challenging, complex, and rigorous. This document is to provide the framework for reaching the highest degree of success, understanding that learning is challenging and difficult. As a community we understand and strive to meet this level of challenge.

Academics
Grading Scale

**Character Point Average** 10%: graded weekly in every content course totaling 10% of the final course grade.

**Habits of Scholarship (Homework/Daily Work)** 25%: points for homework will be assigned by each content area teacher totaling 25% of the final course grade.

**Academic Content (Assessments and Projects)** 65%: points for final products, projects, assessments, essays, etc., will total 65% of the final course grade and will be in one category in IC.
Projects and Assessments
Teachers in the RMSEL middle school assess students using standards-based grading. Assessment through projects, tests, quizzes, presentations and other performance-based measures shows students’ progress on learning targets which are directly tied to state standards. Student work is evaluated using the following scale:

- E = 100%
- AE = 98-99%
- A = 90-97%
- DA = 85-89%
- D = 80-84%
- BD = 75-79%
- B = 70-74%
- LE = 60-69%
- NE = below 60%

Standards-based grades reflect a student’s current level of progress towards a learning target. For that reason, we do not average grades. For instance, if a student scores Beginning on an assessment the first time and Accomplished on the target the second time, that student is Accomplished on the target, not Developing. A student’s current level of mastery of standards is what matters.

Habits of Scholarship: Homework, Classwork, and Supporting Pieces of Projects
We believe that a student’s habits of scholarship are essential for his/her success. However, we also separate a student’s habits of scholarship from student progress on learning targets that are tied to state standards. Things like homework, classwork, and notebook checks are recorded in the habits of scholarship standard for each class. When bigger projects are assigned, teachers report supporting pieces or check-ins in this category.

Character Values: Responsibility, Courage, Discipline, Integrity, and Compassion
As an Expeditionary Learning School, one of the things that differentiates us is our focus on character. Teachers assess students on character standards in each class and crew at the end of the grading period.

Progress Reporting: Infinite Campus and Portfolios
Teachers update Infinite Campus every week. Any time a student receives a B or NE on an assignment in the Portfolio Projects and Assessments category, teachers write a comment identifying next steps for that student to improve achievement. At the end of the grading period, the office generates student progress reports. Every course must be at a Developing level or higher for students to be on track for mastery of standards. Additionally, any Portfolio Project is required to be Accomplished or higher, or to have shown growth from Beginning to Developing in order for the student to be on track for passages.
Extracurricular Eligibility
Students must have a B or above in all courses to be eligible to participate in athletics and theater. Eligibility builds for every week throughout the season.

Academic Probation
In the event that a student has a missing or NE on an assignment or an NE/LE course grade, they will be assigned to Academic Probation (AP) the following week. They will stay after school for an hour on Tuesday and have time to complete homework and other assignments. Students will not be eligible for sports or other extracurriculars that week if they are on AP.

Grading Practice
Student work will be graded and returned to students in an equivalent period of time as required to complete. For example, if a student completes a writing assignment that requires a week to turn in to the teacher in final form, the student should expect to receive his/her grade within one week of the assignment.

Student classwork, homework, and other daily assignments will be reported in Infinite Campus weekly as completion grades. Student assessments, projects, essays, presentations, etc. will be reported in Infinite Campus as academic grades and tied to applicable grade level standards.

Deadlines
It is imperative for student work to be completely in the timeframe assigned by the teacher. Learning is an ongoing process and late or missing assignments impair students from achieving at the highest level.

At RMSEL, we do not have “late” deadlines for student work as all assignments are expected to be completed as assigned. Any work turned in past the deadline will be marked accordingly in Infinite Campus as “late” and the maximum grade available will be an “NE,” which is equivalent to 50%. Any work in excess of one week late will receive zero credit and not be eligible for inclusion in the student’s portfolio.

Students receiving accommodations through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or 504 will be granted extended time when necessary. Any extended time will be communicated by the Learning Specialist with the student and parents and final due date will be established accordingly.

Homework
As a group of educators we believe homework is a tool to build habits of scholarship that will prepare students to be successful lifelong learners. Homework is a place for students to practice and become experts in skills that are taught at school and allows families to stay connected to the content with their child.

Middle school students should expect up to one hour of daily homework. In addition to daily homework students are required to read a book of their choice for 30 minutes every night. If your son/daughter responds, as sometimes middle school students do, with “I don’t have anything to do,” or “I’m all caught up,” we encourage you to log into Infinite Campus with your son/daughter to monitor his/her work completion. Constructing habits of scholarship is an active process guided by teachers and parents as adults, middle school is a crucial time for students to establish positive study habits as they begin thinking about high school and post secondary options.
At times throughout each grading period, students may be required to exceed the one hour guideline when working to complete a final project, essay, presentation, debate, etc.

**Fitness Program**

With the exception of Wednesday mornings, all middle school students will start the school day with forty minutes of fitness training. Students should arrive at school wearing appropriate fitness attire and athletic shoes, including on the first day of school. After the first day of classes, crews will be assigned outdoor locations where they should meet crew leaders each morning. Students who do not arrive at their designated locations by 7:50 will be marked tardy for the day. After fitness, students will be given a short period of time to change their clothing, if they choose to do so. Academic blocks will begin at approximately 8:45.

Students will be assessed each grading period in the following areas:

- Participation
- Dressing out
- Passing benchmark standards on a variety of fitness tests

**Adventure Program**

**Fieldwork**

Fieldwork is directly tied to the learning targets connected to each unit of study or learning expedition in the classroom. Students are expected to be prepared as learners to participate in fieldwork prior to departure. For example, students may be asked to come prepared with a series of questions to share with an expert upon arrival based on a reading or workshop in class the day before. If students are unprepared academically to attend fieldwork the teacher may request that the student remain on campus and forgo the fieldwork experience.

**Crew Trips**

Crew trips are a unique opportunity to extend learning experiences and build character outside of a typical school day. All students are required to attend crew trips unless a medical exemption is present. A student may be removed from a crew trip or prohibited from attending in the event they are in violation of the [Student Responsibility Contract](#) signed by families to begin the school year. Student safety on crew trips is our team’s number one priority and behavioral misconduct in the classroom and/or while on the trip is not acceptable.

**Accountability and Behavior**

**Attendance and Tardy**

Student attendance is taken to begin the school day in all middle school classrooms. School hours are from 7:50 am – 3:10 pm (M/T/TH/F) and 8:50 am – 3:10 pm (W). To support parents in arriving to school in a timely manner the Administrative Team provides supervision in the community room starting at 7:30 am (M/T/TH/F) and 8:30 am (W). In the event that truant attendance habits are established by a family during the course of the school year as defined in School Policy (JH – Student Attendance) the family will be placed on a contract for attendance.
Technology
Students in grades 7-12 may bring cellphones to school. During school hours, phones must be powered off, placed in a locked Yonder Bag (supplied by crew leaders), and stored in lockers. Yonder bags will be unlocked by crew leaders at the end of the school day.

Students in grades 7-8 will be assigned a laptop computer to use during the school day. All families must sign a Technology Policy before devices will be issued to students. The student will be responsible for this device just as they are responsible for other learning materials, such as a textbook, checked out to them from the school. Acceptable use of school devices will be determined by the BOCES- Student Policy (JS) Student Use of the Internet and Electronic Communication.

Consequences
Consequences in the learning environment are not punitive, however, a tool for correction and redirection. The team will use the following tiered structure to respond in the classroom prior to requesting intervention by the Director of Elementary/Intermediate School.

Tiers of Behavior Concerns:
- **Level 1-** Handled in the classroom
  - Lack of work completion
  - First warning of behaviors
  - Smaller behaviors that happen throughout the day, but don’t require an office visit
  - Three Level 1 behaviors in one week will escalate to Level 2; detention will be assigned.

- **Level 2-** Recess/After School Teacher Detention/Fieldwork consequence, parent communication/conference, individualized behavior plan/tracker
  - Repeat behaviors, or behaviors that could lead to escalation quickly
  - Rough-housing
  - Repeated conversations about behaviors without any consistent change
  - Disengagement in the learning environment
  - Incomplete and/or late assignment completion
  - Disruption to the learning environment that impacts one self and/or other students
  - Repeated Level 3 behaviors will escalate to Level 3

- **Level 3 -** Send to office with a classroom behavior form that communicates why
  - Unsafe and/or Uncivil
  - Difficulty with regulating physical behaviors - unsafe behaviors, reacting physically in anger, punching others
  - Difficulty with emotional regulation

Teachers will communicate directly with parents when any consequence is issued at the classroom level. Teachers will seek assistance from parents as partners to support appropriate positive culture and conduct at school.
Communication
Teachers will communicate with students and parents bi-weekly through the use of the email crew updates/announcements. All communication regarding assignments will be reported in Infinite Campus.

Teachers will respond to any request from a parent within two business days of receipt. Teachers will respond to families with email when a request is received electronically and with a phone call when any message is left via voicemail. We strongly encourage conversation to take place over the phone or in person instead of through email, as it is absent of tone. Every teacher has a voicemail extension that is posted on the RMSEL website for parent reference.

Teacher Team Leader Support
Each school level at RMSEL has a designated team leader. The team leader is the teacher at the school level serving in a leadership capacity to support students and families. The team leader is available to answer questions of any family at the school level. The team leader works collaboratively with his/her colleagues at the respective school level to respond and support students.