



# Continuum of Community Systems & Structures, Grades 7/8 SY 2026-2027

Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning

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## I. Mission and Vision

*As a K-12 community, the mission of the Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning (RMSEL) is to empower students and staff to be learners, thinkers, citizens, and explorers engaged in and inspired by the real world. "We are crew not passengers." This mission outlines the purpose and foundation of our school. To carry out this mission, we focus on our school vision, which places action to our values.*

*"RMSEL scholars will demonstrate pride and ownership as they grow into responsible citizens who strive for high academic achievement and character excellence. RMSEL staff will equip our students with tools for success in order to make a positive impact on our local and global community. Through our actions, our community will exemplify Expeditionary Learning."*

To ensure that RMSEL consistently works to pursue excellence in fulfilling 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. The continuum of community systems and structures serves as a guide for students to become leaders of their own learning.

As a community of educators, we believe all students need both accountability and support to be successful in building the confidence and capacity to achieve academically and demonstrate excellent character. The purpose of this document is to provide the framework for reaching the highest degree of success while understanding that both success and failure play vital roles in academic and character development.

## II. Academics and Character

**Habits of Scholarship: Homework, Classwork, and Supporting Pieces of Projects (30%)** - We believe that a student's habits of scholarship are essential for his/her success. Grades within the Habits of Scholarship category portray a student's ability to complete work on time, take notes, read directions, and follow classroom instruction to demonstrate understanding. Skill-building habits such as completing homework, participating in classwork activities, and taking notes for notebook checks are recorded as habits of scholarship assignments for each class. When bigger projects are assigned, teachers report supporting pieces or check-ins in this category.

**Habits of Character: Exhibiting Good Character (10%)**- RMSEL students are expected to demonstrate good character in the classroom and out on the field. When a student is in violation of our systems and structures or community created classroom norms, a student may receive a Habits of Character reflection form. Students must write a reflective letter according to the stipulations on the form, and have a parent or guardian email the teacher acknowledging that a conversation about the behavior took place at home. Failure for one or more of these stipulations will result in points being deducted from this category. Three Habits of Character forms received in any class in a single quarter will result in an office referral.

**Academic Content: Assessments and Projects (60%)** - Teachers in the RMSEL 7th & 8th grade assess students through projects, tests, quizzes, presentations and other performance-based measures. These measures show students' progress on learning targets which are directly tied to state standards. Student work is evaluated using the following scale:

## Grading Scale

E - Exemplary	100%
AE - Accomplished Exemplary	95% - 99%
A - Accomplished	90%-94%
DA - Developing Accomplished	85%-89%
D - Developing	80% - 84%
BD - Beginning Developing	75% - 79%
B - Beginning	70% - 74%
LE - Limited Evidence	60% - 69%
NE - No Evidence, Turned In	50% - 59%
M - Missing	0%

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the foundation of a learning environment. It means being honest about your work, giving proper credit to others, and taking responsibility for your learning. Acts such as cheating, plagiarism, copying homework, or using unauthorized assistance undermine the purpose of education and violate our core values. The first offense for academic dishonesty will result in parent contact and zero credit with the student being given the opportunity to re-do the assignment for up to 70% credit. Any further violations of academic integrity will result in zero credit, represented by a 'CH' in the gradebook and disciplinary action.

## Progress Reporting: Infinite Campus

Teachers update Infinite Campus weekly. Every standard must be at a Developing level or higher for students to be on track for mastery of standards. Please develop a plan to check IC weekly to best keep track of your student's grades.

## Academic Support

In the event that a student has a 'Limited Evidence' or 'No Evidence' for any classes (core or specials), they will be assigned to Academic Support. Sessions occur after school for one hour (Tuesday's 3:10-3:50 pm). During this time, students will receive support by completing assignments with their crew leaders. Families will be notified of the need to attend academic support at least one day in advance. Attendance is **MANDATORY** for student success. However, attendance at Academic Support is open to all students who are seeking additional opportunities for teacher assistance outside of the school day.

## 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 a grade within one week of the assignment. Student classwork, homework, and other daily assignments will be reported in Infinite Campus weekly. Student assessments, projects, essays, presentations, etc. will be reported in Infinite Campus under the Projects/Assessments category.

## Deadlines

It is imperative for student work to be completed 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. All assignments are expected to be completed as assigned. In the event that an assignment is submitted after the due date, 10 percentage points will be deducted for each day it is late (ex: one day late- 10 percentage points will be deducted, two days- 20 percentage points will be deducted, etc).

Students who have extended time accommodations due to a 504 or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) should work with the classroom teacher to establish an alternative deadline. Interventions and supports relating to work completion will vary depending on a student's individual needs.

### **Homework**

As a group of educators we believe homework is a tool to build habits of scholarship that prepares 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. Students should expect up to one hour of daily homework. In addition to daily homework, students are encouraged to read a book of their choice for 30 minutes every night. 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.

### **Training Plan**

In order to best communicate this with families, daily homework will be communicated with students and families via Training Plan. Students are responsible for recording assignments and due dates in their Training Plans. Training Plans will be provided to students at the beginning of each year, free of cost. In the event that students lose/misplace their Training Plans, families will be responsible for replacing them with a charge of \$5. We encourage you to log into Infinite Campus with your student to monitor your child's work completion. Middle school is a crucial time for students to establish positive study habits as they begin thinking about high school and post secondary options.

### **Service Hours**

Middle School students at RMSEL are required to complete 10 hours of community service. We require students to complete at least half of their hours through a community organization.

Parents are asked to contribute 20 hours of service throughout each school year. They should log their hours [here](#). This can be done by attending crew trips, chaperoning fieldwork, serving as a crew parent, helping coordinate potlucks, or participating in crew trip de-rig. There are many opportunities available throughout the year. Please know that we cannot run this programming without you and appreciate your support.

### **Portfolios**

All students in Expeditionary Learning schools complete 'Portfolios' that display their high-quality work and highlight their academic and character growth throughout the year. Every Middle Schooler will complete a Portfolio that represents their learning. Students in 8th grade are in a 'Passage Year,' which means they present their Portfolios to a panel of community members at the end of the school year. Completion of a high-quality 8th grade portfolio is a requirement for participating in the 8th grade crew trip, 8th grade passage ceremony, and entry into RMSEL High School. Students must also be passing all Q4 classes in order to walk at their 8th grade passage ceremonies.

The creation of student portfolios is supported throughout the year by academic content teachers who remind students to keep ALL completed/returned project work as potential Presentation Portfolio reflection pieces. Then, the written reflections and the organization of the portfolio itself, as well as practice for presentations, is supported throughout the year. If the piece was not kept by the student then that piece cannot be used in the portfolio.

### III. Fitness and Adventure Programs

#### Fitness & Health

With the exception of Wednesday mornings, all Middle School students will have forty minutes of fitness training. Students should arrive at school wearing appropriate fitness attire and athletic shoes. Outdoor recess and fitness will continue if the temperature is above 20°F. Please help your child with appropriate clothing choices for the weather conditions. Fitness is a part of our Crew grade. Students are required to wear appropriate fitness wear and participate to the best of their ability. Inability to wear appropriate attire or participate will result in a deduction of points. In the event a student is unable to participate, please provide an email or doctor's note to the Crew leader.

#### Nutrition

As we continue to nurture a healthy and inclusive learning environment, we want to share some thoughts and reminders around food, snacks, and celebrations at school.

We *highly encourage* families to send snacks and treats that support student energy, focus, and well-being. In particular, we ask that snacks and celebration items be minimally processed and low in added sugars when possible. Research shows that ultra-processed foods and high-energy-density snacks (like candy, chips, and sugary drinks) can impact student behavior, focus, and long-term health.

At the same time, we *recognize that sometimes* convenience, access, and family resources play a role in what's packed. We never want to shame any student for what they bring to school. Socio-economic factors can impact food choices, and we strive to hold compassion and understanding at the center of all conversations.

To help maintain a healthy classroom culture:

- **Soda and energy drinks are not allowed. If these drinks are seen in school, they will be disposed of.**
- Candy should not be used for regular snacks or classroom celebrations.
- For **Crew parties or birthdays**, we welcome simple, wholesome options—fruits, veggies, popcorn, etc.—that all students can enjoy.
- If you're planning to send in a special treat, feel free to check in with us ahead of time to ensure it fits within our classroom needs and dietary considerations.

Thank you for partnering with us in building a community that supports both health and kindness. We appreciate your flexibility and support as we continue to grow together.

#### 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. Students need to come dressed appropriately for fieldwork opportunities, they need to be dressed to represent RMSEL in a positive manner (no sweatpants, or PJ's). If students are unprepared 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 will 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. Out of school suspension and/or three or more behavioral referrals in a semester may result in the removal of students from their Crew Trip and required parent supervision on fieldwork. 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. It is expected that parents/guardians are available to receive phone calls in the event of a medical emergency with their student. Parents/guardians are financially responsible for all medical expenses that may occur in the field.

In order to attend a landmark trip, the additional fees related to that trip must be paid in full.

Students must be passing all classes (core classes and specials) during 1st Semester, and passing all classes in Q3 in order to attend Crew Trips. Additionally, students who receive three or more disciplinary referrals in a semester, and/or students who continuously cause behavioral disruptions may lose privileges for fieldwork and crew trips, along with dismissal due to phone policy. Students who are unable to participate in fitness or adventure activities due to medical reasons should provide documentation from a medical provider.

#### **IV. Accountability and Behavior**

##### **Attendance and Tardies**

Student attendance is taken to begin the school day in all middle school classrooms. School hours are from 7:45 AM – 3:05 PM (M/T/TH/F) and 8:45 am – 3:05 pm (W). To support parents in arriving to school in a timely manner, students are permitted to enter the building at 7:30 AM. Teachers will provide supervision in their crew classrooms.

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.

Excused absences The following shall be considered excused absences:

- A student who is temporarily ill or injured, or whose absence is approved by the administrator of the school of attendance on a prearranged basis. Prearranged absences shall be approved for appointments or circumstances of a serious nature only, which cannot be taken care of outside of school hours.
- A student who is absent for an extended period due to physical, mental or emotional disability.
- A student who is pursuing a work-study program or fieldwork under the supervision of the school.
- A student who is attending any school-sponsored activity or activities of an educational nature with advance approval by the administration.
- A student who is absent in observance of an established religious holiday.
- A student who is suspended shall be considered excused.
- A student whose absence is approved by the executive director at the request of the parent or guardian.

The district may require suitable proof regarding the above exceptions, including written statements from medical sources.

Unexcused absences: An unexcused absence is defined as an absence that is not covered by one of the foregoing exceptions.

Unexcused absences may be deemed unacceptable by RMSEL regardless of prior notice or knowledge of the parents. Absences not properly reported by parents are unexcused.

Continued absences and/or repeated tardiness may be considered cause for disciplinary action. In accordance with law, the school may impose academic penalties which relate directly to classes missed while unexcused. The administration shall develop procedures to implement appropriate penalties. Students and parents/guardians may petition the BOCES for exceptions to this policy or the administrative procedures provided that no exception shall be sustained if the student fails to abide by all requirements imposed by the BOCES as conditions for granting any such exception.

Make-up work may be allowed for excused absences only. Make-up work shall be provided for any class in which a student has an excused absence unless otherwise determined by the administrative or executive director. It is the responsibility of the student to pick up any make-up assignments permitted on the day he or she returns to class. Students are required to complete any make – up assignments within two school days per excused absence, not to exceed one week from the original assignment date, unless otherwise arranged with a crew leader.

Truant: If a student leaves school or a class without permission of the teacher or administrator in charge, the student shall be considered truant. The parents/guardian of the student shall be notified at the first offense regarding truancy. On the second offense, the student may be suspended from school for up to three days. Additional trancies shall be grounds for suspension and/or withdrawal from RMSEL and a return to the student's district of residence. No credit shall be permitted for any student for any class or portion of a class during which time the student was truant.

Procedures for Monitoring and Compliance of Compulsory Attendance: The following procedures will be utilized to monitor the excused and unexcused attendance.

1. 3 absences per semester – Initial contact: concern about missed class time.
2. 5 absences per semester – Letter: missing instructional time.
3. 7 absences per school year – Parent Meeting with Administration and School Support Staff.
4. 10 absences per school year – Attendance Contract and Plan - Any absence in excess of 10 after an Attendance Contract and Plan is established without prior approval by the Executive Director will result in a referral to the school social worker that will file with the court system.
5. 15 or more absences per school year – Referral to RMSEL Attendance Review Board - Request for referral to school district of residence.

### **Attendance in the Learning Environment**

Students are required to be present in each class period when attending school. When attending class, it is required of students to be prompt and ready to engage in the learning environment. Every minute of every class period is important and relevant to learning; therefore, students may not exit the classroom during the first 15 and last 15 minutes of each period. This time is essential to ensure students engage in each class period and do not miss essential information that may require completion outside of class.

Students are respected as scholars in the learning environment; in the event they need to leave class for the restroom, copier, printer, etc., they are to do so in a professional manner. When students depart the learning environment they may exit one at a time, **not in groups**. They are required to sign-out / sign-in when departing the room (we are required to account for all students in the event of an emergency).

### **Tardy Policy**

Students are expected to be in the class, ready to learn when class starts. If a student receives 10 tardies (collectively between any class) they will serve an after school detention from 3:00- 4:30 PM. If a student receives 15 tardies in a given semester they will lose attendance on the Spring Crew Trip. Students will be able to “buy back” their Crew Trip by allocating 5 hours of volunteer time at the *Food Bank of the Rockies* with signed verification submitted to grade level administrator. After the 15th tardy, if a student has repeat infractions, each infraction will equal an additional 5 hours of volunteer time.

### **Technology and Cell Phones**

At RMSEL, we believe that maintaining a phone-free environment, whether in the classroom or in the field, is essential to accomplishing our mission. Students will Yondr their phone in their crew rooms each morning and can un-Yondr at the end of the school day. If a student's phone is out, it will be kept with the school level administrator for the remainder of the day and parents/guardians will be notified by the staff member who confiscated the phone or electronic device. Students will get three chances if caught with a device out, upon the third chance students will lose attendance on Crew Trip. Students will be able to “buy back” their

Crew Trip by allocating 5 hours of volunteer time at *Food Bank of the Rockies* with signed verification submitted to the grade level administrator. After the third chance if a student has repeated infractions, each infraction will equal an additional 5 hours of volunteer time.

All personal electronic equipment such as headphones, personal computers, and tablets are not to be brought or used at any time during school. Failure to comply with this rule will result in confiscation of the personal equipment.

Middle School students will have access to a RMSEL laptop computer to use during the school day if warranted for educational purposes. The student will be responsible for the care and use of school devices just as they are responsible for other learning materials, such as textbooks, 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](#). Students who cause damage to or fail to comply with technology use policies will be subject to action under the Student Code of Conduct and/or be held responsible for the cost of device repair/replacement.

### **Student Behavior**

Consequences in the learning environment are not punitive; rather, they are a tool for developmentally appropriate learning and redirection. Crew leaders will use a tiered structure as a guide to respond in the classroom in partnership with families prior to requesting intervention by the Director of Secondary Education. It is the expectation that teachers and families will act as partners to support appropriate conduct at school. In the event of disruptive behavior in a classroom during the school day, the crew leader will have the student stay with them until 3:30 the day of to serve detention, students will call parents if they need to attend.

Repeated patterns of misbehavior may necessitate a meeting between the family and teacher as well as a behavior tracker/contract to be implemented at the discretion of school staff. A RMSEL staff member will communicate directly with parents when any consequence is issued for Level 2 or Level 3 behaviors (uncivil, unsafe, policy violations). School staff will be guided by RMSEL BOCES policy in their response and interventions to student misbehavior.

### **Backpacks**

Students are provided with lockers to use on a daily basis while at school. To ensure a safe and distraction-free learning environment students are required to keep their backpacks in their lockers for the duration of the school day. Please work with your student on an organization system so they can use their time wisely between class periods to be prepared.

### **Dress Code**

The full dress code policy is on our website, under Governance > BOCES > BOCES Policies > JICA - Student Dress Code. The purpose of the dress code is to establish an environment that allows for a collegiate atmosphere, one where learning is at the forefront of our experience.

The following items are deemed disruptive to the classroom environment or to the maintenance of a safe and orderly school and are not acceptable in school buildings, on school grounds, or at school activities:

1. Articles of clothing or sunglasses that cover your face.
2. Clothing that bares or exposes traditionally private parts of the body, including, but not limited to, the stomach, buttocks, back, and breasts (e.g., midriffs, halter tops, backless clothing, tube tops, garments made of fishnet, mesh or similar material, muscle tops, etc.).
3. Any clothing, paraphernalia, grooming, jewelry, hair coloring, accessories, or body adornments that are or contain any advertisement, symbols, words, slogans, patches, or pictures that:
  - Refer to drugs, tobacco, alcohol, or weapons
  - Are of a sexual nature

- By virtue of color, arrangement, trademark, or other attributes denote membership in gangs which advocate drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior
- Are obscene, profane, vulgar, lewd, or legally libelous
- Threaten the safety or welfare of any person
- Promote any activity prohibited by the student code of conduct
- Otherwise disrupts the teaching-learning process

## **V. School-Home Communication**

The teaching team will provide weekly updates on crew and academic announcements to students and families via the students training plan.

Positive communication between parent/guardian(s) and teachers is encouraged to support the development of students' holistic learning. Teachers will communicate frequently with parent/guardian(s). Teachers will communicate behavior concerns, information regarding a student's individualized learning plan, and other conversations where sensitive information may be discussed over the phone or in person. In the event that you need to reach a teacher by phone, your call will be forwarded to their voicemail box. Teachers will respond to emails and voicemails within 48 hours.

To encourage face-to-face interactions, teachers will have conference hours M/W/Th/F from 3:00-3:25 by appointment only.

The content itemized above makes up the structure and foundation in which work of high quality can and will be produced by students. RMSEL provides an opportunity to exceed the expectations of a traditional learning environment, not simply provide an alternative learning environment. The work that we do with students will serve as a catalyst for great success as they transition to high school, post-secondary education options and the workforce. We look forward to another amazing school year at RMSEL!

Sincerely,  
Middle School Crew Leaders