



# Continuum of Community Systems & Structures, High School

## The Keel Line

### SY 2026-2027

**Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning**  
1700 South Holly Street  
Denver, CO 80222  
303-759-2076  
303-757-7442 (fax)

**Purpose:** The 'Keel Line' is designed to establish the foundational practices and policies that will serve to establish a strong series of expectations and student outcomes at RMSEL. We want our students to learn to be highly responsible with a well-developed sense of discipline and we believe the Keel Line directly supports this.

Please understand that we are working hard in order to provide the best experiences serving the students in the present, and preparing them for what's next. The practices and policies are derived from the most current pedagogical data and case studies including everything from internationally-acclaimed texts to the success stories from other professionals and schools willing to share effective practices.

## 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."*

*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. Community Interaction Norms

We will create and maintain an environment of mutual respect; however, it is important to note (even though it is self-evident) that teachers have a different role in the learning environment than students. Teachers will address students with respect, and students will understand that teachers are the authority in the classroom.

### Crew

Mission: "Crew fosters self-discovering people who will accept hardship, build trust, display compassion, and create mutual respect. Through initiative, students establish a bond between members and demonstrate a relentless pursuit of excellence."

Each crew will determine a 'vision' (how the mission becomes real) during the first few weeks of the school year. Crew operates best when all members show up with an open mind, ready to engage, and be an active participant.

Crew is considered a course, and grades are derived from two student responsibilities that require individual ownership of actions to contribute to the greater learning community.

1. Completion of the Daily Training Plan. Points are awarded each week for every complete Training Plan.
2. Full engagement and participation in Crew.

### **Teacher Expectations**

1. Establish and maintain a learning environment that focuses on both Academic Content and the Habits of Scholarship required for success.
2. Update student progress weekly in Infinite Campus.
  - o Specialists will update student progress biweekly in Infinite Campus due to the frequency of course.
3. Maintain a Google Classroom site as a supplement to class to aid upcoming assignments, events, and resources. HOWEVER, students are responsible for maintaining a training plan with due dates.
4. Provide a response to student/parent emails and voicemails within 48 hours.
5. Hold open daily conferences, by appointment, for families to attend M/W/Th/F from 3:00-3:25 pm.
6. Connect directly with student/parent regarding matters that require conversation and/or dialogue over the telephone in lieu of email.
7. Provide feedback and grades to completed work no later than the amount of time provided for students to complete the assignment. For example, if students have one week to complete a final reflection, they will receive a final grade no later than one week after the due date.

### **Student Expectations**

1. Meet and adhere to all standards set forth in the [Student Responsibility Contract](#).
2. Complete all assignments and final products.
3. Ask questions to support and drive student learning and deeper understanding.
4. Attend weekly Academic Support if necessary.
5. Communicate through professionally composed emails when appropriate, such as prior to weekly Office Hours or absences.
6. Never settle! Drive your own learning and experience.

### **Proactive Students**

Students will practice the skill of anticipation and planning using common sense. For example: if a student knows that they will be traveling with their family for the weekend, they will realize this early the week before and complete assignments that will be due Monday, before the weekend.

This would include asking teachers for potential assignments that will be due before they are assigned. In the event that a student misses a day of school, they will practice proactivity by emailing the teacher a photo or scan of the assignment that was due that day. If students miss a quiz or test due to an absence, they need to take that quiz or test within a week at Academic Support. Taking missed quizzes or tests within a week takes priority over extracurricular activities.

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

Please refer to the BOCES policy around attendance: [BOCES Attendance Policy](#)

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, 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).

The hallway is not a learning environment; it is filled with distractions, and not centered on the teaching taking place by the teacher. Hallways will be for passing to/from class, but not as an extension of the classroom.

### **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 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.

### **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 at the front entrance and can un-Yondr during off campus lunch and at the end of the school day at the front entrance. 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.

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.

### **Electronic Equipment**

All personal electronic equipment (even personal laptops and/or tablets) are not to be brought or used at any time during school. Students in High School will have access to a RMSEL laptop computer to use during the school day if warranted for educational purposes. Failure to comply with this rule will result in confiscation of the personal equipment.

### **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 quarter 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.

### **Portfolio**

All students in Expeditionary Learning schools complete portfolios that display their high-quality work and highlight their academic and character growth throughout the year. Students in 10th and 12th grades are in 'Passage Years,' which means they present their physical portfolios to an authentic audience in May in a presentation process that is tied to graduation from the grade level. Students in 9th and 11th grade will complete portfolios and will participate in a teacher-designed passage panel experience. The creation of student portfolios is supported throughout the year by academic content teachers who remind students to keep ALL completed/returned project work in their accordion folders and/or Google Drive folders as potential portfolio reflection pieces. Then, the written reflections and the organization of the portfolio itself, as well as practice for presentations (for 10th and 12th), are supported during the second semester of the Grade-Level Rotation course.

### **Infinite Campus (IC) and Google Classroom**

Teachers will update IC as assignments are assessed weekly. 'In progress' grades will be available for viewing at any time during the semester. Every week an automatic email will be sent to families in which students are earning an 'LE' or 'NE' in a class. The idea is that parents will be alerted that their student needs immediate support.

### **Academic Support**

In the event that a student has 'Limited Evidence' or 'No Evidence' for any class, they will be assigned to Academic Support. Sessions occur after school for one hour (Tuesdays 3:00-4:00pm). 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 students who are notified. However, attendance at Academic Support is open to all students who are seeking additional opportunities for teacher assistance outside of the school day.

## **III. High School Course Grading**

**Mastery of Knowledge and Skills (Formative): Homework, Classwork, and Supporting Pieces of Projects (30%)** - In order to build towards student mastery of state standards; smaller assignments such as completing homework, classwork activities, and taking notes for notebook checks are recorded in this category.

**Mastery of Knowledge and Skills (Summative): Projects, Tests (50%)** - Teachers measure students through challenging, complex, and authentic assessments. These assessments take time and show students' progress on learning targets which are directly tied to state standards.

**Habits of Scholarship (10%)** - We believe that a student's habits of scholarship are essential for their success. Grades within the Habits of Scholarship category portray a student's ability to engage with their learning environment and demonstrate the RMSEL core values of discipline and responsibility. All students will begin the year with 100% in this category. If a student is egregiously off task, disrespectful, and/or not prepared for class they will lose credit and be presented with an opportunity for growth and reflection with their teacher in order to regain that credit.

**Final Exam (10%)** - The final exam for each academic core class will be weighted as 10% of the final grade.

### RMSEL Homework Policy

#### Late Work

If a student misses the due date, late work will be accepted for 60% of credit earned, only up to a week late. 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.

#### 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 60% credit. Any further violations of academic integrity will result in zero credit, represented by a 'CH' in the gradebook and disciplinary action.

#### AI

The High School at RMSEL will not ban the use of AI software. The simplest reason is that it is an ineffective way to deal with innovation. However, the use of AI tools should be in line with our academic integrity policy.

Students CAN use generative AI tools in the following THREE cases:

- a. optional aids for exploration of potential topics of inquiry
- b. initial searches for sources of information
- c. confirming their understanding of a complex text, or checking their writing for grammar and tone.

**Students must read primary and secondary sources directly, perform their own analysis and synthesis of evidence, and make their own choices on how to communicate effectively both in their writing and presentations using their own voice. It remains the student's responsibility to engage deeply with credible, valid sources and integrate diverse perspectives when working on performance tasks.**

If AI is detected via an online checker or suspected by the professional judgement of the teacher, students will be called in to a one on one conversation. Teachers reserve the right to confirm whether or not the student's final submission is authentic student work.

#### High School Class Grading System

Class	System
Science	Letter Grade
English Language Arts	Letter Grade
Math	Letter Grade
Social Studies	Letter Grade
Electives	Letter Grade
Crew	Pass/Fail
Fitness	Pass/Fail
HS Trip	Pass/Fail
Mini-Challenge/Internship/SLE	Letter Grade

## High School Grade Scale

Percent	Grade	GPA Weight
0 – 59%	No Evidence – NE	0
60 – 69%	Limited Evidence – LE	1.0
70 – 74%	Beginning – B	2.0
75 – 79%	Beginning / Developing – BD	2.5
80 – 84%	Developing - D	3.0
85 – 89%	Developing / Accomplished - DA	3.5
90 – 94%	Accomplished - A	4.0
95 – 99%	Accomplished / Exemplary - AE	4.25
100%	Exemplary - E	4.5

## IV. Grade Level Rotation

### Mini-Challenge (9th), Internship (10th & 11th), and the Senior Learning Experience (12th)

Students have the opportunity to participate in an earned-internship experience during the school year as part of a class that meets once a week throughout both semesters. The design of the course is similar from 9th-12th grade, but the specifics of each grade level's expectations and coursework vary in an age-appropriate manner (with more responsibility and higher expectations placed on Seniors than on Freshman experiencing this opportunity for the first time; this is also the reason that the courses are titled differently). Course expectations and overviews for each grade level are handed out and reviewed in the first two weeks of class meetings.

### Draft Process for Excellence

Completing multiple drafts of long-term learning assignments is required for students to build upon their ideas and revise any errors prior to receiving a final grade. The draft process may consist of the following:

- Draft #1 – Completed and points awarded for completion – Peer Revision Cycle Conducted
- Draft #2 – THIS IS A 'FINAL' DRAFT quality; the best work that the student is capable of. Completed and assessed for accuracy to the assignment task description and/or rubric by the Teacher – Final Grade with Feedback
- Draft #3 – Completed and graded for inclusion in the student portfolio – Final Grade for Portfolio

### Fitness

Fitness is considered an essential component of learning at RMSEL and is a graduation requirement. Students will be provided a syllabus at the beginning of each semester that will lay out all requirements for course credit.

### 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.

### **Automobiles**

Students who are legally authorized to operate an automobile may drive themselves to school and park in the school parking lot. Cars can be accessed before and after school, or during off-campus lunch periods. Students should take ownership of personal items throughout the school day; cars are not to be used for the storage of personal items.

### **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 a positive and respectful learning environment 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 attribute 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 disrupt the teaching-learning process

## Exceptions

Appropriate attire is required for participation in Fieldwork and/or Adventure Based Travel. Students are provided a "gear list" prior to departure of all Adventure Based Travel. In the event a student does not own an item on the "gear list," he/she is required to communicate with the Adventure Coordinator and/or Adventure Coordinator Designee to rent at no charge the item from the Adventure Department. This accommodation must be completed prior to the day of departure. Any student unprepared for travel departure after equipment check is complete may be unable to participate in Fieldwork and/or Adventure Based Travel for the safety and welfare of each student.

Appropriate athletic clothing may be worn in physical education classes or clothing normally worn when participating in school-sponsored extracurricular or sports activities

The executive director, in conjunction with the school accountability committee, may develop and adopt school-specific dress codes that are consistent with this policy.

Students should dress to show respect to themselves, their fellow peers, other students, and the learning environment in general. People who dress the part perform better: "The clothes we wear have power not only over others, but also over ourselves," Northwestern University scholars Hajo Adam and Adam Galinsky write in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. They concluded this after conducting a study that showed putting on a lab coat increased people's abilities to perform on a test. At RMSEL we don't have uniforms because we want students to express themselves, but we expect students to show up looking "together."

The content itemized above makes up the structure and foundation of our 'Keel Line.' The Keel Line is the 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 provide a different learning environment. The work that we do with students will serve as a catalyst for great success as they transition to the workforce and/or post-secondary education options. We look forward to another amazing school year at RMSEL!

Sincerely,  
The High School Team