



# Continuum of Community Systems & Structures: 4th/5th Grades SY 2026-2027

Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning

1700 South Holly Street

Denver, CO 80222

303-759-2076

303-757-7442 (fax)

## I. Mission and Vision

*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 the tools for success in order to make a positive impact on our local and global community. Through our actions, we 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

### Portfolio Projects and Assessments Standards-Based Grading

4/5 teachers at RMSEL 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:

<b>No Evidence (NE)</b>	The student shows no evidence of mastering the learning target. The student is either 1) not completing assigned work or 2) <u>performing significantly below the grade level expectation</u> . Further action is required of the student and/or family for the student to be on track for completion of the grade level portfolio.
<b>Beginning (B)</b>	The student is in the beginning stages of understanding the learning target, but is <u>performing below the grade level expectation</u> . Further action is required of the student and/or family for the student to be on track for completion of the grade level portfolio.
<b>Developing (D)</b>	The student has a developing understanding of the grade-level expectation for the standard.
<b>Accomplished (A)</b>	The student has mastered the grade-level expectation for the standard.
<b>Exemplary (E)</b>	The student has exceeded the grade-level expectation for the standard.

Standards-based grades reflect a student's current level of progress towards a standard. For that reason, we do not average grades. For instance, if a student scores Beginning on an assessment the first time and Accomplished within the same standard on a second assessment, that student will be marked as 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 students' 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.

**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. Students will self-assess themselves on our five character values using RMSEL's 4/5 Character Rubric every quarter. Character values are assessed using the following scale:

	Area of Concern	Making Progress	Consistently Demonstrates
<p><u>Compassion</u> I show empathy and kindness to myself, my crew, and my community.</p>	<p>I often miss chances to care for or understand others. I may be unkind to myself or others.</p>	<p>I make an active effort to be kind and empathetic. I sometimes notice others' needs and respond with care.</p>	<p>I regularly respond with empathy and kindness to myself and others. I help create a caring crew.</p>
<p><u>Courage</u> I take risks, ask for help, and try things outside of my comfort zone.</p>	<p>I rarely try new things, ask for help, or speak up.</p>	<p>I show courage when I feel safe or supported. I'm learning to step outside my comfort zone.</p>	<p>I take healthy risks, ask for help when I need it, and encourage others to be brave too.</p>
<p><u>Discipline</u> I show self-control in my choices, actions, and how I manage my time.</p>	<p>I often act impulsively or struggle to stay on track, which impacts my learning or others'.</p>	<p>I sometimes pause to think before I act and I stay on track with what matters.</p>	<p>I show strong self-control and help create a focused learning space for myself and others.</p>
<p><u>Integrity</u> I do the right thing, am honest, take ownership, and advocate for myself.</p>	<p>I avoid responsibility, hide mistakes, or struggle to be truthful.</p>	<p>I demonstrate honest actions and take ownership, especially when I feel safe to do so.</p>	<p>I do what's right even when no one's watching and help others stay accountable too.</p>
<p><u>Responsibility</u> I come prepared, meet deadlines, and help others be their best.</p>	<p>I often forget materials, turn things in late, or don't contribute.</p>	<p>I am often prepared and meet most deadlines. I support others when I remember to.</p>	<p>I'm consistently prepared, take initiative, and support others to do the same.</p>

**Progress Reporting: Infinite Campus and Portfolios**

Teachers update Infinite Campus at least every three weeks, students and families should create a habit of checking Infinite Campus regularly to build awareness for work completion and learning progress. Three-week updates include character rubric update, habits of scholarship (portfolio pieces turned in or missing), and class/crew assignments. At the end of the quarter, the office generates student progress reports. Progress is reported on Colorado State Standards, Habits of Scholarship and Character Values for each course. Every standard must be at a Developing level or higher for students to be on track for mastery of standards.

## **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 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 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. If a student turns in an assignment late, without prior conversation before the deadline, the following consequences apply: it will be downgraded by one letter grade if submitted more than 2 days late, downgraded by two letter grades if submitted more than one week late, and it will not be accepted if submitted two weeks past the due date. Students receiving accommodations through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or 504 will be granted extended time when necessary. Students who have extended time accommodations due to a 504 or IEP should work with the classroom teacher to establish an alternative deadline.

## **Homework**

Homework in the intermediate team is designed to reinforce and extend the learning happening in the classroom. In math, assignments provide extra practice with concepts and skills students are actively learning, helping build confidence and fluency. In literacy, humanities, and science, homework is often used to finish work that students have already had sufficient time to begin in class, or to engage in self and peer editing using skills they've already learned.

Our goal is for students to come to class prepared, ready to engage in meaningful discussions, especially around reading, and ready to continue progressing through our curriculum and standards.

We recognize that every child is different, especially when it comes to focus and energy after a full school day. Because of this, it can be difficult to assign a fixed amount of time for homework. Instead, students may typically have one to two assignments per night, which can range from about 20 minutes to up to an hour, depending on the task and the individual student.

One intentional shift we've made is moving the traditional "30 minutes of nightly reading" into the school day. This ensures all students have access to supported reading time, and allows homework to focus more on meaningful practice or completion of in-progress work.

At this grade level, we also place a strong emphasis on building independence. Students are encouraged to manage their time, organize their responsibilities, and advocate for their learning. They track assignments in their planners and are supported in balancing schoolwork with extracurricular activities.

Finally, we want to be clear: homework is meant to support learning, not create stress. If an assignment feels too challenging or overwhelming, we encourage students (and families) to reach out.

Our goal is to support students in developing both strong academic skills and lifelong habits of responsibility, communication, and self-management.

## **Character Letters and Service Project**

Both 4th and 5th graders are expected to ask members in their community to write a letter that speaks to how the student demonstrates the RMSEL character values, compassion, courage, discipline, and responsibility. Character letters become a part of the 5th graders passage portfolio and students are required to have a letter from each academic year, a total of two. In addition to character letters, Service Projects are another important piece in portfolios. Each academic year, students are required to complete 10 hours of a service project outside of school to document and reflect on their impact in their community. Each service project from both 4th and 5th grade will also become a part of the 5th graders passage portfolio.

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 5th grader will complete a Portfolio that represents their learning. Students in 5th 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 the 5th grade portfolio is a requirement for participating in the 5th grade passage ceremony and at the end of the school year. Portfolio development lays a critical foundation for passage readiness and the transition into middle school.

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 Working Portfolios 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 a student has not completed their portfolio requirements, they will not be allowed on the spring crew trip.**

## **III. Fitness and Adventure Programs**

### **Fitness**

With the exception of Wednesday mornings, all 5th grade students will start the school day with thirty minutes of fitness training. Students should arrive at school wearing appropriate fitness attire and athletic shoes. After the first day of classes, crews will be assigned locations where they should meet crew leaders each morning. Students who do not arrive at their designated locations by 7:45 will be marked tardy for the day. 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.

### **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 to attend fieldwork and/or have disruptive behavior that has been communicated to families prior to the 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 **independently** 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 Code of Conduct. 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.

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. 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**

Consequences in the learning environment are not punitive; they are a tool for correction and redirection. The team will use the following tiered structure as a guide to respond in the classroom prior to requesting intervention by the Dean of Students.

## **Attendance and Tardies**

Student attendance is taken to begin the school day. School hours are from 7:45 AM – 3:00 PM (M/T/TH/F) and 8:45 am – 3:00 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. We understand that this contract is an agreement of prompt and faithful attendance when working with elementary parents, as students are unable to transport themselves to school at this time. A violation of an attendance contract may result in removal from fieldwork and/or crew trips.

## **Technology**

While at school, phones must be powered off and YONDR'd or not brought to school at all. Students in 4th and 5th grade will be assigned a laptop computer to use during the school day. 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. Students who misuse technology will face the following consequences: on the first offense, their laptop usage will be revoked for one day; on the second offense, it will be revoked for one week; and on the third offense, it will be revoked for a whole month.

## **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 Dean of Students. It is the expectation that teachers and families will act as partners to support appropriate conduct at school.

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.

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

The teaching team will provide weekly updates on crew and academic announcements to students in their take-home folders and families via email. Please be sure your current email address is included in your child's registration packet.

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) through ParentSquare and email to communicate updates about announcements and assignments. 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 two business days.

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 in grades 4 and 5 as well as future endeavors. We look forward to another amazing school year at RMSEL!

Sincerely,

Fourth and Fifth Grade Crew Leaders