

TOGETHER WE RISE!

The Launch of Rocketship Public Schools



*This book is dedicated
to our first 15,000 Rocketeers and
all the parents, teachers, and leaders
who make our movement possible.*



Once upon a recent time (the year was 1999),
there was a priest both smart and kind.
His name was Father Mateo Sheedy.



He yearned to help young ones in need.
He had a tender heart indeed:
“I think I’ll found a scholarship
so that our kids will be equipped
with funds when they apply to college
where they will fill their heads with knowledge.”

Well, all the kids were sweet and bright
and worked to answer questions right,
but they didn’t have the proper tools
to get into the top-tier schools.

Was this the end and was that that?
Would all their plans and hopes fall flat?

*And would the families in this parish
Allow their college dreams to perish?*

I think you know this wasn't so!

A partner came to join these folks
and help them realize their hopes.
John Danner understood their vision—
a school that would fulfill their mission.

“Let’s make a school that innovates
and tries new things! Is brave! Creates!”

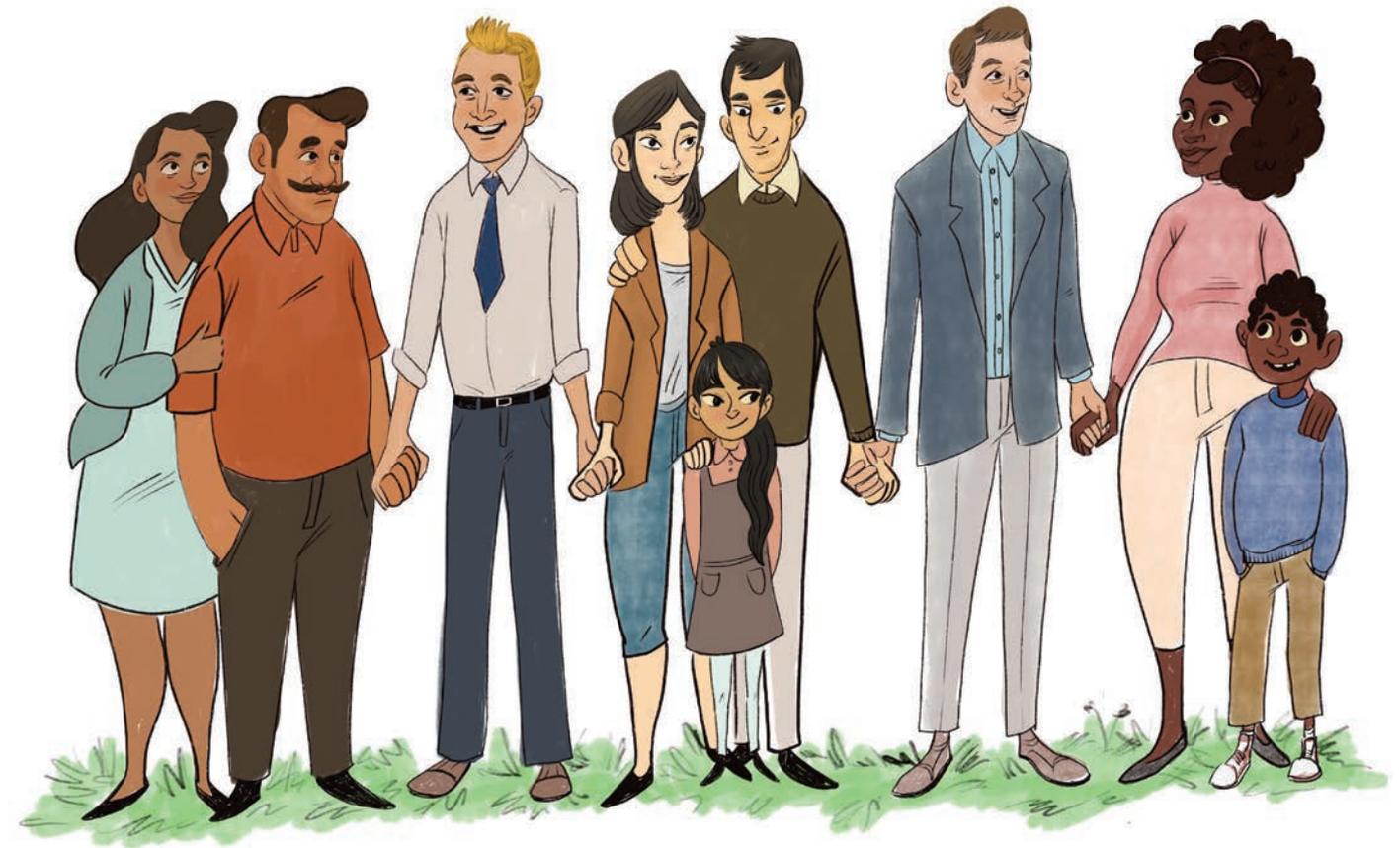
He next enlisted Preston Smith,
who signed right up to help, forthwith.

For Smith had run a school before:

“I’d love a go! I know the score!”

Together, everyone agreed
on just the kind of school they’d need.

“Let’s make a school that’s great! Stupendous!
We won’t give up; we mustn’t end this!”



*But was this valiant crew enough,
when things were hard and life grew tough?*



That very first school found its place
in a local church with extra space.
It had no A.C. — a heat wave hit.
We worried that our folks would quit!

But did the Rocketeers complain?
Well, not a bit! Let me explain:
“It’s hot,” they said, “but though we suffer,
we won’t quit. We’ll just get tougher.”
And just as we had hoped they’d do,
this strong community pulled through—
exactly as we hoped they would!

That year was hard. And hot. And GOOD!

*It paved the way for so much more!
A **lot** of goodness was in store....*



Let's build a building for our school,"
said one and all, "and make it full
of light, with room to learn and play."
And so they did! Hooray, hooray!

They named it after Mateo Sheedy.
That's only right, they all agreed.
He had a dream, and folks came through
and made it real—a dream come true!

(Now parents at each new school choose
the name their school will always use.)

And still the the best was yet to come:
for students found theirs were among
the highest scores across the state!
They'd done so well! They were first-rate!



Here's something that you likely know:
that good ideas—like children—grow!
Soon other parents could not wait
to have *their* kids participate.

“We want our children to succeed.
Please build more schools! There's such great need!”



And Rocketship agreed, “It’s true,”
so in five years, six new schools grew.
Well, if you think that our foundations
are more than brick and wood creations—
you would be right! (You’re very smart!)

They’re based in joy and love and heart.



Our days begin with dance and song,
and sometimes parents join along.
Each morning we recite our creed—
ideas that help us to succeed.



We call it “Launch,” and it’s a way
to help bring fun to every day.
’Cause kids must read and study math
but also need to play and laugh!



Here are some things you ought to know about the schools that we love so.

We like to dress so we look neat, from head to toes, from nose to feet. Our uniforms make us look best. We call it “dressing for success”.

The kids and principal shake hands. We know our teacher understands just who we are—not just our name—but family, friends, our favorite game.

And every fall our teachers visit each kid’s home (they wouldn’t miss it!), making ties that reach beyond the usual family-teacher bond.

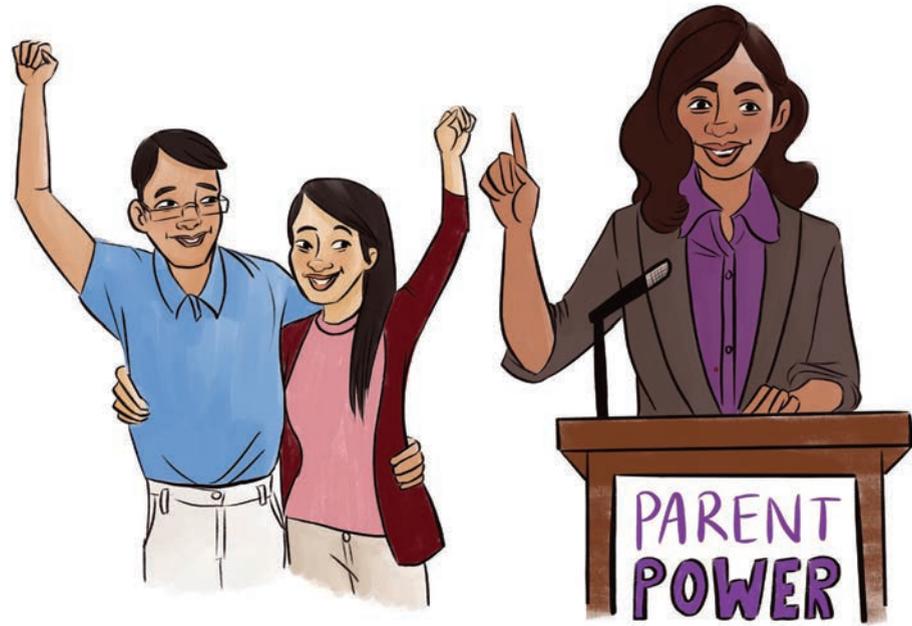
We go to school to grow our brain and work toward goals we will attain. We're loud and proud and use our voices, as we strive to make good choices.

Core values guide us every day at Rocketship. It's why we say **RESPECT** and **EMPATHY** are key, as is **RESPONSIBILITY**.

We work hard so we can excel: we know **PERSISTENCE** counts as well.

Apart from just these founding four, each of our schools selects one more.





Returning to that founding dream, there was much more to do it seemed. So many schools were low-performing that what came next was quite heartwarming!...

Soon parents came to realize to make a change means: ORGANIZE!
In San Jose, excitement gripped the movement spurred by Rocketship.



The parent leaders held a forum. A huge crowd showed—you couldn't ignore 'em. Twelve hundred strong, one question burned: how can we help *all* children learn?

From there a grand alliance thrived. and from their work, more schools arrived! 'Cause kids deserve a school that's good, in every grade and neighborhood.

Our reputation quickly grew.
It seemed that every city knew
that Rocketship helps kids succeed.
They said, “You’re just the schools we need.”

Milwaukee had achievement gaps—
The largest in the states, perhaps.
It was unfair; it was unjust!
All families need a school to trust.

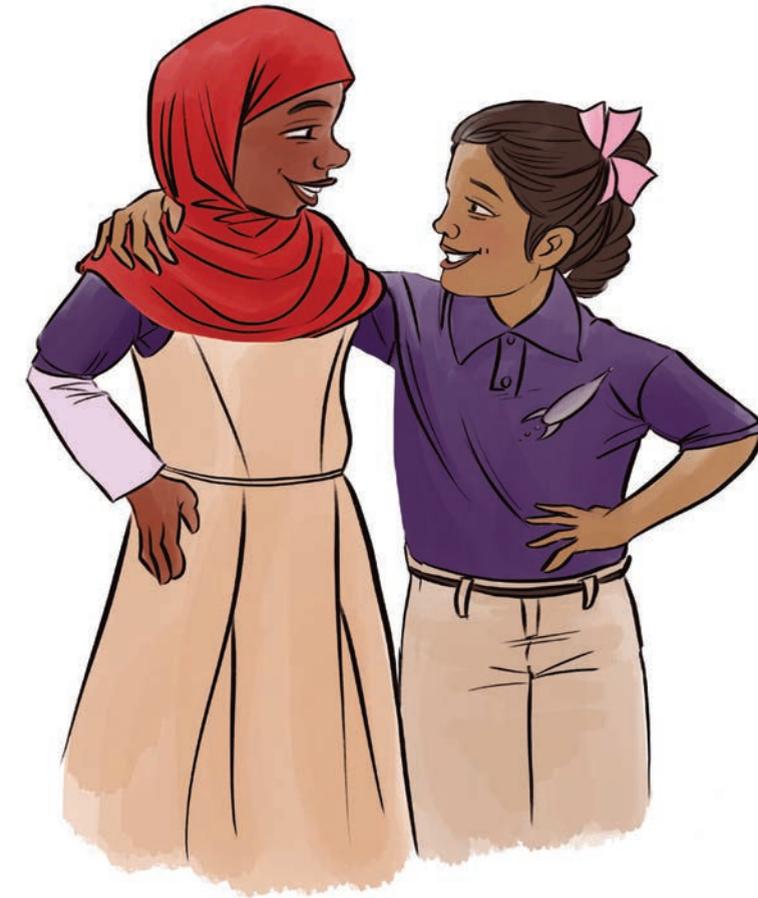
We worked together to create
a brand new school to elevate
our Rocketeers and close the gaps
that held them back. Now think of that!



Nashville, Tennessee came next,
and that first year, when scores were checked,
our students' growth was off the charts!
Folks asked for one more school to start.

Well, many children filled its halls
to learn together, one and all!

And it was good, and it was grand—
with kids from over 15 lands!



The kids were joyful, warm and fun.
'Cause that's the way our schools are run;
they're welcoming to everyone!

We built more schools from coast to coast.
Indulge us, kindly, while we boast:

Our first school opened in D.C.,
its largest launch in history.
And after that first year was done,
our brand new school achieved Tier One!

From California to D.C.,
we've built a true community
of Rocketeers who will pursue
their highest dreams; it's what we do!
We know that it is quite essential
that students reach their full potential.





We never think we know it all—
and now and then, we try and fall.
'Cause everybody makes mistakes.
It's how we learn! It's what it takes!

We love to learn and learn forever.
Should we stop? No, no, not ever!

Our kids have power—know they're strong,
and know that this will be lifelong.

We know our strength and know our value:
our teachers, parents, kids will wow you!

And best of all, our kids will thrive
at college after they arrive.
Soon they'll be docs and scientists,
and artists, teachers, journalists,
or maybe rocket engineers
(because, you know, they're Rocketeers),
and mothers, fathers, activists.
The choices are too long to list!

Those early parents can be proud
to see their dream be lived out loud,
to know their dreams have helped inspire
our Rocketeers rise ever higher!

But wait! There will be more to come!
More kids to teach, more schools to run!
More parents, more community,
diversity and unity.



More goals to reach, and yet more winning:
'cause, guess what, folks?
We're just **beginning!**

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Together, we are all Rocketeers.

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