How do we intend to eliminate the achievement gap in our lifetime? From the ground up. Child by child. School by school. Community by community. Year after year after year. In the 2015-16 school year, 1,581 Rocketeers started the year behind and ended the year at or above grade level proficiency. Last year alone, we closed 1,581 learning gaps.

In the summer of 1966, the Coleman Report first introduced our nation to the “achievement gap.” This landmark, yet controversial report galvanized a golden age of education research that rigorously investigated the inequalities in our society that underpin an unjust system of public education.

50 years later, the gap between low-income and high-income kids still persists.

An unjust public education system doesn’t just stifle the potential of students whose only shortcoming is the zip code they were born into, it undermines the health of our democracy and strength of our economy.

To be sure, some students do beat the odds and break the cycle of poverty. Our culture rightly celebrates those stories and holds them up as inspiration for us all. But when you take a moment to think about why those stories move us, it’s because those students are the outliers. Most kids don’t make it out. So the next time you hear one of those inspiring “against all odds” stories, think about all the other kids not in that story. And think about what it says about our society that we are still celebrating those exceptional few.

Our Rocketeers are those exceptional students we celebrate and a reminder of the millions of students who are still falling behind. Our Rocketeers’ remarkable progress is powerful proof of what is possible in public education and a sober reminder of the challenges that remain.

By showing our Rocketeers that we believe in their potential from the moment they start school, they learn to believe in themselves and learn to overcome the low expectations our culture places on kids from disadvantaged communities. They learn that they are in control of their future.

Rocketship is about more than great schools. It is about building a movement of parents, teachers, community leaders, and concerned citizens who are united by a common purpose and fundamental belief that all children deserve the chance to realize their full potential.

We are just getting started at Rocketship. The movement we are building is powerful and it is already transforming the lives of thousands of kids who will go on to lift up their communities. Our first class of Rocketeers are applying to college this year. We are making great progress but we have a long way to go before we can truly scale to the size of the problem we are aiming to solve.

Together, we will eliminate the achievement gap in our lifetime.

Preston Smith, Co-Founder & CEO
All kids deserve access to an excellent education. Yet, three of four low-income students are behind grade level by fourth grade. Students who fall behind in elementary school struggle to catch up and may not ever reach their full potential and a better future. Rocketship is building an innovative school model that propels student achievement in underserved communities across the country.
A NATIONAL NETWORK

We’ve come a long way since we opened our first school in a church basement in San Jose. In the 2015-16 school year, we operated 13 schools across three regions and partnered with parents and community leaders in Washington DC to prepare our fourth region for liftoff.

BAY AREA
The land of opportunity, for some. In recent years, housing prices have skyrocketed, the region’s rich and poor have segregated, and middle-class jobs have all but disappeared. Immigrant communities are boxed into poor neighborhoods and underperforming schools. See how we are restoring equity in the land of opportunity.

READ MORE ON PAGE 28

MILWAUKEE
“A national disgrace.” That is how former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan summed up the state of public education in Milwaukee. The nation’s most segregated city is also home to the nation’s largest achievement gap. See how Rocketeers on Milwaukee’s southside are beating the odds.

READ MORE ON PAGE 30

WASHINGTON DC
Despite decades of reform and some progress, underserved communities in our nation’s capital still face grim prospects for a brighter future. In the poverty-stricken neighborhoods of Southeast DC, guns and violence are a daily fact of life. See how Rocketship is working with a community ready to rise up.

READ MORE ON PAGE 34

NASHTON
The Music City is booming, but not everyone is benefiting. So many children in Nashville public schools qualify for free lunch (72%) that the county decided to make school lunch free for all. Nashville’s achievement gap continues to grow and today just one of 10 students from low-income families attend a gap-closing school. See how we are changing the tune.

READ MORE ON PAGE 32

My dream is to become a doctor. But when it came time to apply to medical school I was worried that my dream might interfere with my daughter Chanel’s dream to attend Stanford. She was just finishing kindergarten at Rocketship Fuerza Community Prep in San Jose and already had her heart set on attending Stanford. Chanel didn’t want to leave Rocketship and neither did I. In a single year at Rocketship, Chanel went from far behind to performing well above her grade level. So when I applied to medical school, I focused on cities where I knew she could stay at Rocketship. When I got accepted to a school in Nashville I immediately applied to enroll Chanel at Rocketship United Academy. Chanel is now in second grade at United Academy and feels right at home. She’s getting the same personalized learning experience that helped her thrive at Fuerza. I’m getting the same opportunity to partner closely with her teachers as a valued member of Chanel’s education and our school community. And together, Chanel and I are on track to achieve our dreams.

CECILIA SANTOS
First year medical school student
Founding parent of Rocketship Fuerza Community Prep, San Jose
Proud parent at Rocketship United Academy, Nashville
As a school of choice, the clearest demonstration of our excellence is the number of Rocketeers who choose to come back each year. Every student we serve has a seat at their zoned district school waiting for them. But they choose to come back to Rocketship. We are humbled by this remarkable vote of confidence and work relentlessly to deliver on the promise our families see in our schools every single year.

We don’t kick kids out of school. That has been our stance since we opened our first school ten years ago. And while we have grown from a single school serving a couple hundred kids in a church basement to a national network serving nearly 7,000 Rocketeers, we have still never expelled a student at any school in any year.

We make every effort to keep all kids in class every day. Removing a student from class, even in elementary school, is strongly correlated with negative academic, behavioral, and social outcomes. School suspension is a last resort strategy that we only use when a disruptive student endangers the safety of other students, teachers, or school staff.

Rocketship schools focus on modeling and reinforcing positive behaviors rather than punishing children for negative behaviors. Many of our students confront very challenging experiences at home and in their community. As educators, it is our responsibility to help students learn how to understand and manage their emotions. We integrate social and emotional learning opportunities and positive behavior interventions and supports throughout our Rocketeers’ school day. And while it may be hard to measure those skills, not everything that matters can be measured. We know these skills matter tremendously to the success and well-being of our students.
We believe all children deserve access to an excellent education - no matter what zip code they were born into. Yet three in four students from low-income families are behind grade level by fourth grade. These are the families Rocketship is committed to serving. That is why we pay close attention to the performance of our schools in comparison to local districts. To ensure we are on the path to delivering an excellent education we must first measure our performance against the schools our Rocketeers would otherwise attend.

**PERCENT OF ROCKETSHP CLASSES OUTPERFORMING SIMILAR STUDENTS IN LOCAL DISTRICTS IN 2015-16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>English Language Arts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of publicly reported 2016 state assessment results for socioeconomically disadvantaged students in the regions and local districts Rocketship currently serves. Data from Rocketship includes 41 third grade classes, 34 fourth grade classes, and 20 fifth grade classes.

I’m a first generation college graduate so I know how important education is and how hard it can be to get into college. But I didn’t realize that my daughter, Jocelyn, was falling behind and not on the path to college. Her teachers were happy that she behaved well so they never brought up her lack of academic progress. A native Spanish speaker, Jocelyn completed her first three years of school speaking no more than 20 words of English. Jocelyn was severely shy and lacked confidence. She wouldn’t even order food in English. When I heard about Rocketship I decided my daughter needed a change. Jocelyn joined Rocketship Southside Community Prep as a second grade English Learner. Now in fifth grade, Jocelyn is a social butterfly who is outspoken, confident, and speaks fluent English. The personal support of her teachers, learning specialists and school leaders has helped Jocelyn thrive academically and socially. Putting Jocelyn into Rocketship is one of the best decisions that my family and I have ever made.

**ELSY VILLAFUENTES**

Founding parent, Rocketship Southside Community Prep
The majority of our students start at Rocketship well behind grade level. We are committed to getting every Rocketeer on the college and career-ready path by the time they move on to middle school. After four years of growing over a grade level every single school year, a strong majority of our Rocketeers are now at or above grade level.

The chart on this page shows achievement results for over 1,300 Rocketeers who began with us in Fall 2012 and were still with us in Spring 2016. This means they were in kindergarten through second grade at one of our seven schools in San Jose in 2012 and completed the most recent school year in third through fifth grade. As you can see, in Fall 2012, just 34% of Rocketeers were at or above grade level in math. By Spring 2016, 62% were on track. In reading, only 25% of our students started 2012 on grade level. By Spring 2016, more than double (56%) were on the college-bound path. Although we still have far more to accomplish to get every Rocketeer on the path to a better life, we are inspired by the extraordinary progress of our teachers, families, and students.

Every year a student spends in an underperforming school is another year they fall further behind their college-bound peers. Eventually those gaps become insurmountable. That is why Rocketship opens all grade levels in year one and continues to backfill every grade level, every school year. Of course, we do not expect to close academic gaps that accumulated over several years of prior schooling in a single school year at Rocketship. But we do expect major gains in academic growth that abruptly shift the trajectories of our students.

In the 2015-16 school year, our first year Rocketeers achieved remarkable gap-closing results in every region we served. By growing well over a grade level in a single school year, they are gaining solid ground on their college-bound peers.

Average growth is measured by NWEA MAP, a nationally-normed, Common Core-aligned assessment we use to track student growth within a school year and absolute performance across years. Our students take the MAP assessment in the fall, winter and spring.

Source: NWEA MAP Quartiles, Fall 2012 & Spring 2016.
SRI STUDY FINDS ROCKETSHIP GRADUATES ARE A YEAR AHEAD OF THEIR PEERS

When we launched Rocketship ten years ago, we decided to focus exclusively on elementary school. We believed that if we helped our Rocketeers build a solid foundation in those early years, they would thrive in middle school, high school, and beyond.

But there’s no doubt that middle school is one of the most challenging transitions in a student’s academic journey. So we decided it was time to examine how our Rocketeer alumni perform in middle school. We engaged SRI International, an independent nonprofit research center, to conduct a three-year study on the performance of our Rocketeer alumni in middle school. The study followed nearly 2,000 students in seven San Jose middle schools with high concentrations of Rocketship graduates. SRI rigorously investigated academic performance, social and emotional skills, and student confidence navigating the middle school transition.

The results provide powerful validation that our incredibly dedicated teachers, deeply engaged parents, and purposeful approach to technology are delivering significant gains for our Rocketeers that will carry them far in school and life.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Rocketeers are a year ahead of their classmates in math and reading after the first and second years of middle school.

2. Over 80% of Rocketeers reported high levels of key character skills associated with long-term success including self-efficacy, motivation, and grit.

3. The vast majority of Rocketeers attribute their preparedness for middle school to their elementary experience on every factor examined, including: preparing them to work hard (91%), learn new things (90%), work in groups (89%), study for tests (85%), keep track of assignments (88%), and learn independently (77%).

This chart shows predicted outcomes of the NWEA MAP math and reading assessments for Rocketship alumni and their peers in their second year of middle school. The average scores have been adjusted for demographic differences, grade level, and middle school attended. Nationwide, students in middle school improve MAP math scores by 6.3 points each year and reading scores by 4.3 points each year. Therefore, the estimated differences between Rocketship alumni and their peers is equivalent to approximately one year of growth.

When my son joined Rocketship Discovery Prep in second grade, he was two grades behind reading level. Within the first quarter, I witnessed a noted improvement in his reading skills but also in his confidence level. The staff and educators at Rocketship Discovery Prep understood his needs and went above and beyond to build a personalized support system around him. As my son entered middle school, I sent him with complete confidence in his ability to keep up with his peers. I am so proud of how he is excelling in middle school and cannot thank Rocketship enough.

MAGALI RIVERA
Parent of a Rocketship graduate and current 7th grader at Downtown College Prep in San Jose, California

“...
Rocketship United Academy launched in Nashville in the 2015-16 school year. Our diverse population of Rocketeers at United Academy proudly represent 16 nations as depicted by the flags on this page.
Rocketship is where good teachers go to become great. Our teachers are perpetual learners who are always striving to perfect their practice. And our school leaders’ top priority is to support the ongoing growth and development of our teachers. Just as our teachers relentlessly scaffold their lessons and differentiate instruction to ensure all their students achieve excellence, our leaders personalize the professional development of every teacher, no matter how long they’ve been teaching, to help them become true masters of their craft.

COURTNEY ENGLISH
Fourth grade humanities teacher
Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary

Great teachers are not born great. And they don’t become great through isolated trial and error in their classroom. Like all highly-skilled professionals, teachers need mentors, coaches, and training to realize their full potential. Rocketship teachers get one-to-one, real-time coaching in their classroom every week. During common planning time, teachers regularly meet in small group grade level cohorts to learn from their peers, collaborate on classroom management strategies, and share best practices. And all throughout the school year, our Network Support Team facilitates intensive professional development programs to ensure every Rocketship teacher has the support they need to achieve excellence in their practice. Together, we are redefining and elevating the role of teaching for the 21st century.
BUILDING PATHWAYS INTO THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

It is no secret that schools across the country are facing an ever-growing teacher shortage. And there is little relief on the horizon, as enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped by more than 70 percent in the last ten years. There are simply not enough teachers in training to fill the needs of public schools across the country.

Transformational teachers and leaders are the heart of our organization and fuel our collective success. To achieve our mission, we must recruit great talent to the profession, continuously support teachers in their professional development, and create pathways to develop their leadership in the classroom and beyond.

Last year, we launched our Rising Teachers program to attract new talent and provide professional pathways to teaching. Rising Teachers offers high-performing tutors, paraprofessionals and enrichment center coordinators the opportunity to participate in targeted professional development in preparation for a full-time teaching role. Many participants in our first class of Rising Teachers came from the communities our schools serve, strengthening our culturally responsive pedagogy and deepening our engagement with parents.

Our Rising Leaders program is an opportunity for teachers to learn leadership skills, management frameworks, and mindsets that are essential to leadership roles at Rocketship. Rising Leaders learn as a part of a community of dedicated teachers who reflect on and grow their leadership capacity to prepare themselves for the next step on their leadership path in the classroom, as a school leader, or on our Network Support Team. Teachers selected for the program have two or more years of teaching experience, a high track record of student achievement, and demonstrate our core characteristics: authenticity, community, innovation, tenacity, and pursuit of excellence.

Andrew (Andres) Aguilar joined Rocketship in 2014 as a fourth-grade humanities teacher. He was selected to join the Rising Leaders program in 2015 and now serves as an assistant principal at Rocketship Fuerza Community Prep.

84% OF OUR RISING LEADERS RETURNED TO ROCKETSHIP FOR THE 2015–2016 SCHOOL YEAR.

I began my career in education at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy. In 2011, while teaching third-grade math, I was selected to join Rocketship’s leadership development program. This program helped me understand the importance of professionalizing education and my purpose in the fight for equitable education. I have since gone on to become the Director of School Design for SPARK Schools in Johannesburg, South Africa. I feel tremendously fortunate to have Rocketship in my DNA as I now work to increase access to high-quality education in a country that consistently ranks among the worst performing education systems in the world.

BAILEY THOMSON
Director of School Design, SPARK Schools, South Africa
ROCKETSHIP CLASSROOMS SERVE ALL STUDENTS

During the 2015-16 school year, Rocketship schools served over 600 students with disabilities. Rather than isolate and stigmatize these students, we operate a meaningful inclusion model that ensures all our students with disabilities have daily access to our general education environment. This means all students with disabilities spend at least half of their day in general education classrooms, with the vast majority spending over 80% of their day in the general education environment. With this inclusive approach, our students with disabilities are exposed to the same Common Core-aligned instructional program as their typically developing peers. By coupling Universal Design for Learning principles and co-teaching practices with strategic small group and individualized instruction, we help all Rocketeers achieve ambitious academic and social outcomes.

Our students with an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) achieved 1.2 years of growth in math and reading last year.
Los Dichos is a parent-led Latino literature program. Parent volunteers come into the classroom to read Spanish language stories that illustrate important values of Latino culture. We do not let language become a barrier to parent involvement in our schools. Los Dichos is one powerful way we’ve deepened the connection of our Spanish speaking parents to their child’s education and our school community.

MARIA LORENA ROMERO
Founding parent, Rocketship Fuerza Community Prep
Los Dichos Site Coordinator

On our annual parent satisfaction survey we asked parents “Have you recommended Rocketship to another family this year?” 2,276 parents responded to that survey with nearly 3 of 4 Rocketeer parents saying they have recommended Rocketship. They did not simply say they “would recommend” Rocketship, they actually did recommend Rocketship. Of course, not every parent is happy every single day. But on most days, the vast majority of parents love their Rocketship school so much that they tell other families to enroll.

72% OF ROCKETSHIP PARENTS HAVE RECOMMENDED ROCKETSHIP TO OTHER PARENTS
Karen Martinez is a board member of a local school district in San Jose. She is a passionate advocate for education reform in her community, harnessing her voice and influence to bring new, quality schools to low-income and minority children. But seven years ago, she was simply a parent frustrated by the failing schools her five sons attended.

In 2009, Karen Martinez was a mother of seven working as an executive assistant, with a daughter identified as having special needs. Her five older sons attended district schools, but they all struggled to thrive. Karen and her husband were searching for a different path for their two daughters. Karen didn’t know much about Rocketship, but she could clearly see that Rocketship was different from the schools her sons attended, so she enrolled her girls in Rocketship Sí Se Puede Academy. Little did she know that her decision to put her daughters on a different path would do the same for her life as well.

The Martinez family became deeply engaged in the school community at Sí Se Puede. This started with their annual home visit; Karen had never hosted a teacher in her home before. When her daughter’s teacher came to her East San Jose home in October of 2009, Karen was struck by their conversation that night. She remembers how attentively Daniella’s teacher listened to her concerns and the questions she asked to truly understand how to best serve her daughter. Karen felt like an equal partner in her child’s education, no longer a powerless bystander.

Karen’s involvement in Rocketship grew as she started attending school site councils and community meetings that involve families in key school decisions. Karen and other parents learned how they could harness the power of their voices by meeting with elected officials and attending school board meetings to support the opening of new schools. By the time her daughter graduated from Rocketship, Karen had become a leading advocate in a community of mobilized and engaged parents working to open a new high-quality middle and high school network in San Jose. They succeeded and helped open Alpha Public Schools. Now, several years later, her daughters are thriving at Alpha, where Karen manages the Alpha Parent Center. In 2012, Karen was elected to the Alum Rock District School Board in East San Jose, continuing to grow her involvement and impact in the local education landscape.
RESPECT
PERSISTENCE
RESPONSIBILITY
EMPATHY

In addition to the four core values that all Rocketship schools share, every school selects a fifth core value to capture the unique identity of their school community.

Fuerza Community Prep:
GANAS

Discovery Prep:
CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Alma Academy:
SERVICE

United Academy:
GRATITUDE

Los Suenos Academy:
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Brilliant Minds:
INITIATIVE

Redwood City Prep:
BRAVERY

Spark Academy:
CURIOSITY

Southside Community Prep:
ESFUERZO

Mosaic Elementary:
GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP
The Bay Area used to be a launching pad for the American dream. But in recent years, housing prices have skyrocketed, the region’s rich and poor have segregated, and middle-class jobs have all but disappeared. The region’s booming economy isn’t benefiting all communities.

Rocketship’s network of 10 schools in the Bay Area is working to restore equity in the land of opportunity. We are helping over 5,000 students in low-income communities get on the college and career ready path. Among all elementary school districts serving a similar student population across the entire state, Rocketship ranked in the top 10% in both math and English Language Arts performance.

Over 50% of our Rocketeers in the Bay Area are classified as English Learners. Language proficiency can be a major obstacle to both academic growth and social and emotional development. That is why English language development standards are embedded across our curriculum in all subjects. On the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) our Rocketeers are showing major progress toward language proficiency year-after-year. Among 1,128 English learners at Rocketship in the 2012-13 school year, nearly half were classified in the bottom two levels of proficiency. Four years later, nearly two-thirds of that same cohort of Rocketeers scored advanced or higher including over 400 Rocketeers who were reclassified as English fluent.

A 2016 study by Innovate Public Schools singled out six Rocketship schools as top-performers for low-income minority students across the Bay Area.

**2015-16 CA STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

Percent of students grades 3-5 classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged who met or exceeded new state standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rocketship</th>
<th>Surrounding Districts*</th>
<th>CA State Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP BAY AREA SCHOOLS FOR UNDERSERVED STUDENTS**

A 2016 study by Innovate Public Schools singled out six Rocketship schools as top-performers for low-income minority students across the Bay Area.

**ENGLISH LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Beginning &amp; Early Intermediate</th>
<th>Early Advanced</th>
<th>Reclassified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Surrounding districts include Alum Rock Union Elementary, Franklin-McKinley Elementary and San Jose Unified school districts. Source: California Department of Education. Grades 3-5; percentages calculated by Rocketship Education from grade-level data research files downloaded from the CAASPP website.
In January 2016, former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan asserted that Milwaukee’s consistently low test scores were a “national disgrace.” We share his concern. While there are a few bright spots of progress across the city, we need more.

Rocketship Southside Community Prep is one of those bright spots. Among more than 60 Milwaukee schools (district and charter) with similar student populations, Rocketship Southside Community Prep ranked #1 on both math and English Language Arts performance on the first year of the state’s new Forward exam.

ROCKETSHIP RANKS

#1

IN MATH & ELA

IN MILWAUKEE AMONG MORE THAN 60 DISTRICT AND CHARTER SCHOOLS WITH SIMILAR STUDENT POPULATIONS.

2015-16 WI STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Percent of students grades 3-5 classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged who scored proficient or advanced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>ELA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learners</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Grades 3-5 percentages calculated by Rocketship Education from grade-level data in research files downloaded from the WISEdash website.
In 2015-16, Rocketship United Academy launched with over 350 Rocketeers.

The Volunteer State owns the title of “most improved” in the nation as measured by the Nation’s Report Card. However, student performance in Nashville is headed in the opposite direction. In the first half of this decade, the achievement gap in Nashville expanded by over 10%. As it stands today, over 15,000 elementary school students are falling behind.

Our Rocketeers in Nashville start with us very far behind. We do not expect to close academic gaps that accumulated over several years of prior schooling in a single school year. But we do strive for major gains in academic growth to abruptly shift the trajectories of our students. We are tremendously proud that our Rocketeers posted the second highest growth measure among all 73 public elementary schools in Nashville.

Tennessee cancelled its 2016 state assessment leaving many schools in the dark on their school’s comparative progress. At Rocketship, we rely on multiple assessments throughout the school year to track progress and help further personalize our instruction. On the 2015-16 NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment our Rocketeers continued to achieve gap-closing growth.

Nashville Rocketeers achieved 1.5 years of growth in math and 1.4 years of growth in reading.
Two decades after charter schools were introduced in the nation’s capital and eight years after the District of Columbia gave the mayor control of its public schools system, DC’s schools have undergone a significant transformation. Student performance has improved and graduation rates have increased. However, progress has been uneven.

In affluent Ward 3, 88% of elementary school students are on grade level. Across the river, in predominantly low-income Ward 8, just 36% of elementary school students achieve grade level proficiency. Even in the vibrant charter sector, less than 25% of children have access to high-quality schools. Not surprisingly, high-performing charter schools have long waitlists.

The region’s philanthropic leaders are committed to doubling the number of students served by high-quality charter schools while closing low-performing charter schools across the city. In their nationwide search to identify innovative and impactful public education models, regional leaders singled out Rocketship as uniquely poised to catalyze this movement to transform the city’s most underserved communities.

On August 22, 2016, Rocketship opened its first school on the East Coast in Southeast DC’s Ward 8. Rocketship Rise Academy at the Ruth Rales Campus launched with 448 Rocketeers making it the single largest opening in the District’s twenty-year history of charter schools.

This remarkable new state-of-the-art campus would not have been possible without the persistent, resilient, and enthusiastic support of our founding parents. From advocating for our new school at community meetings, leading tours, meeting with local officials, and naming the school, our parents are the backbone of the movement we launched in DC. They even interviewed and helped select our founding teachers, as featured in The Washington Post.

We are just getting starting in DC. Our charter agreement with the District of Columbia’s Public Charter School Board authorizes Rocketship to open up to eight schools if we continue to meet high achievement goals. Just as we did in San Jose, we plan to build a high-performing and financially sustainable network of elementary schools serving at-risk communities across DC.

“For many of the school’s parents, this is the first time that they have played such an active role in their child’s schooling.”

KATHERINE BRADLEY
President, CityBridge Foundation
FINANCIALS

Rocketship is building a scalable and sustainable nonprofit school model that propels student achievement in underserved communities across the country. In 2015-16, 92% of our funding came from public sources as we continue on a path towards financial sustainability. School-based expenses accounted for 81% of our spending.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Fully enrolled schools reach financial sustainability within 3 to 5 years of launching. Each region is financially sustainable at 5 to 8 schools. Our Bay Area region is our first fully sustainable region, meaning that our 10 schools and the regional team supporting them operate solely on public funds. We are on track to achieve organization-wide financial sustainability by 2020.

REVENUE

- 80% State Revenue
- 11% Federal Revenue
- 8% Philanthropy
- 1% Other Local Revenue

EXPENSES

- 42% School Staff
- 17% School Facilities
- 22% Other School Expenses
- 3% Achievement & Personalized Learning
- 8% Finance, Facilities & Operations
- 4% Talent, HR & Scalability
- 4% Community Engagement, Parent Leadership & Comms

SUPPORTERS

AUTHORIZERS

Rocketship could not do this work without the partnership, support, and expertise of our authorizers.

California State Board of Education
City of Milwaukee
District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
Franklin McKinley School District
Metro Nashville Public Schools
Redwood City School District
Santa Clara County Office of Education

2015-16 MAJOR DONORS

Thank you to our donors for their generous support, which allows us to continue innovating across our network and growing to provide high-quality schools for more Rocketeers across the country.

$1,000,000+
- Arthur & Toni Rembe Rock Charter School Growth Fund
- The Norman & Ruth Rales Foundation

$500,000+
- Reed Hastings & Patti Quillin
- Tipping Point Community

$100,000+
- Anonymous
- Charles & Helen Schwab Foundation
- CityBridge Foundation
- John & Catherine Debs
- Kathryn & Rob Stewart
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