



'18
19

YEAR IN REVIEW

ROCKETSHIP
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EVERY DAY, MORE THAN 9,000 **ROCKETEERS** ENTER OUR SCHOOLS WEARING BRIGHT PURPLE POLOS WITH A STEADFAST DETERMINATION TO REACH COLLEGE AND ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS. THEY ARE TAUGHT TO BELIEVE IN THE AMAZING POWER OF THEIR POTENTIAL. AND THEY DO.

But our Rocketeers also come to school carrying heavy burdens.

Institutional racism. Generational poverty. Gun violence. The threat of deportation. Housing instability. Hunger. Lack of access to healthcare. The deck is often stacked against our students.

As public schools, our commitment to serve all students compels us to confront the daily trauma our students face. We must elevate our instructional model and support systems to help our Rocketeers understand and cope with the world around them. More importantly, we must empower, educate, and embolden our Rocketeers to be the change we need to see in our world.

Sometimes, it means we help a DC Rocketeer who is homeless express their anger through words instead of fists. Other times, it means we stay after school to go over math boards with a San Jose Rocketeer who fears going home to find their father deported. It means helping an East Bay Rocketeer with special needs overcome trauma due to excessive use of seclusion practices at their prior school, and adjust to our model that prioritizes inclusion for all students. It may also mean

visiting the new home of a Milwaukee Rocketeer who moved again after multiple evictions and is nervous to start yet another new school. And sometimes, it simply means we [find a book](#) in a Nashville Rocketeer's native language so that he feels included in his new community.

This is the work of social justice. It happens every single day at Rocketship. And it's more important than ever before.

When we unleash the potential of our kids and communities, we bring justice and equity to our fundamentally unequal country. Though these acts of compassion, love, and empathy may seem simple, they are life-changing for the thousands of children in our care.

This is our work, and this is our challenge: to further educational equity for all kids. Our Rocketeers excel at our schools, and their parents have become champions for equity and excellence in their communities. Our Rocketeer families are living proof of the change our movement is making every single day.

TOGETHER,
WE ARE
**UNLEASHING
POTENTIAL.**



Preston Smith, Co-Founder and CEO



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9,219 Rocketeers

75% Socio-economically Disadvantaged

55% English Language Learners

82% Hispanic or African American

SERVING
COMMUNITIES
IN NEED

STUDENTS
SERVED
LIFETIME:

20,000

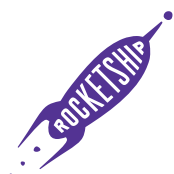
ELEMENTARY ONLY **BY DESIGN**

By focusing exclusively on elementary education, we are working to improve the entire ecosystem of public education rather than creating a parallel K-12 school system.

Our expertise in elementary education prepares thousands of Rocketeers in their vital early years of education who go on to attend different middle schools across the communities we serve. Those schools welcome our Rocketeers who are ready for the rigors of middle school. In fact, [a three year study](#) by SRI Education found that our Rocketeers are a full year ahead of their classmates in both math and reading in middle school. This means middle schools are enrolling more students that are on grade level and ready to advance their education.

We are sending powerful parents off to join their middle school communities, as well. During their time at Rocketship, our parents are deeply engaged in their Rocketeers' education. They become champions for their child's learning and learn how to harness the power of their voice to advocate for their students and their communities. They learn to hold leaders accountable and ensure their student continues to receive the same excellence in education that they experienced during their elementary years.

Excellent elementary schools beget stronger middle schools beget stronger high schools. It's a virtuous cycle designed to scale impact far beyond the number of seats offered by Rocketship. Our elementary only model is designed to improve the entire public education ecosystem in the communities we serve.



ANDREA GONZALEZ

Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary, 2009-2013
Santa Clara University, Class of 2023

Rocketship's story began in 1999, when Father Mateo Sheedy, Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, created the Juan Diego Scholarship to Santa Clara University for local, underprivileged students. After an extensive search for candidates, Father Mateo was surprised to discover that of the hundreds of children in his parish, none of them met the basic academic requirements to attend their hometown college, or any other top-tier university.

Father Mateo soon became convinced that the public schools around his parish were failing to

educate the students in his church and that kids needed an alternative option. Unfortunately, Father Mateo Sheedy passed away October, 2000, but his movement lived on at Rocketship. The community partnered with Preston Smith to open Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary in 2007.

This school year, Andrea Gonzalez was in the first class of Rocketeers ever accepted to Santa Clara University - fulfilling Father Mateo Sheedy's dream for San Jose low-income students of color.



I moved to Rocketship in second grade because I was not getting what I needed from my current school. My family heard about the core values of Rocketship and thought I would benefit from being part of the Rocketeer community.

From day one, I loved all of my Rocketship teachers. Each one invested in me as a learner and person. I got encouragement and wisdom every day and felt that I had people in my corner supporting me on to college.

Looking back 10 years later, I am extremely grateful for the crucial foundation that Rocketship gave me to thrive in middle school. Rocketship Mateo Sheedy is where my love of math started, specifically with those one minute multiplication quizzes we did all the time. My love for math and learning only grew in middle and high school and eventually led me to fall in love with computer science.

I am so excited to become a Santa Clara University Bronco next fall as the first in my entire extended family to attend college. I'm also proud that I will be supported by a full-ride scholarship to major in computer science. I hope to one day work at a tech company or start one of my own. I want to become a part of the Silicon

Valley that has surrounded me my whole life. This is especially important as a low-income Latina woman to bring my diverse set of experiences and perspectives to the big tech giants around us.

So thank you Rocketship, Father Mateo Sheedy, and my family for setting out a vision for what I could become and helping me fulfill that dream.”



FIRST YEAR ROCKETEERS ACHIEVE GAP CLOSING GROWTH

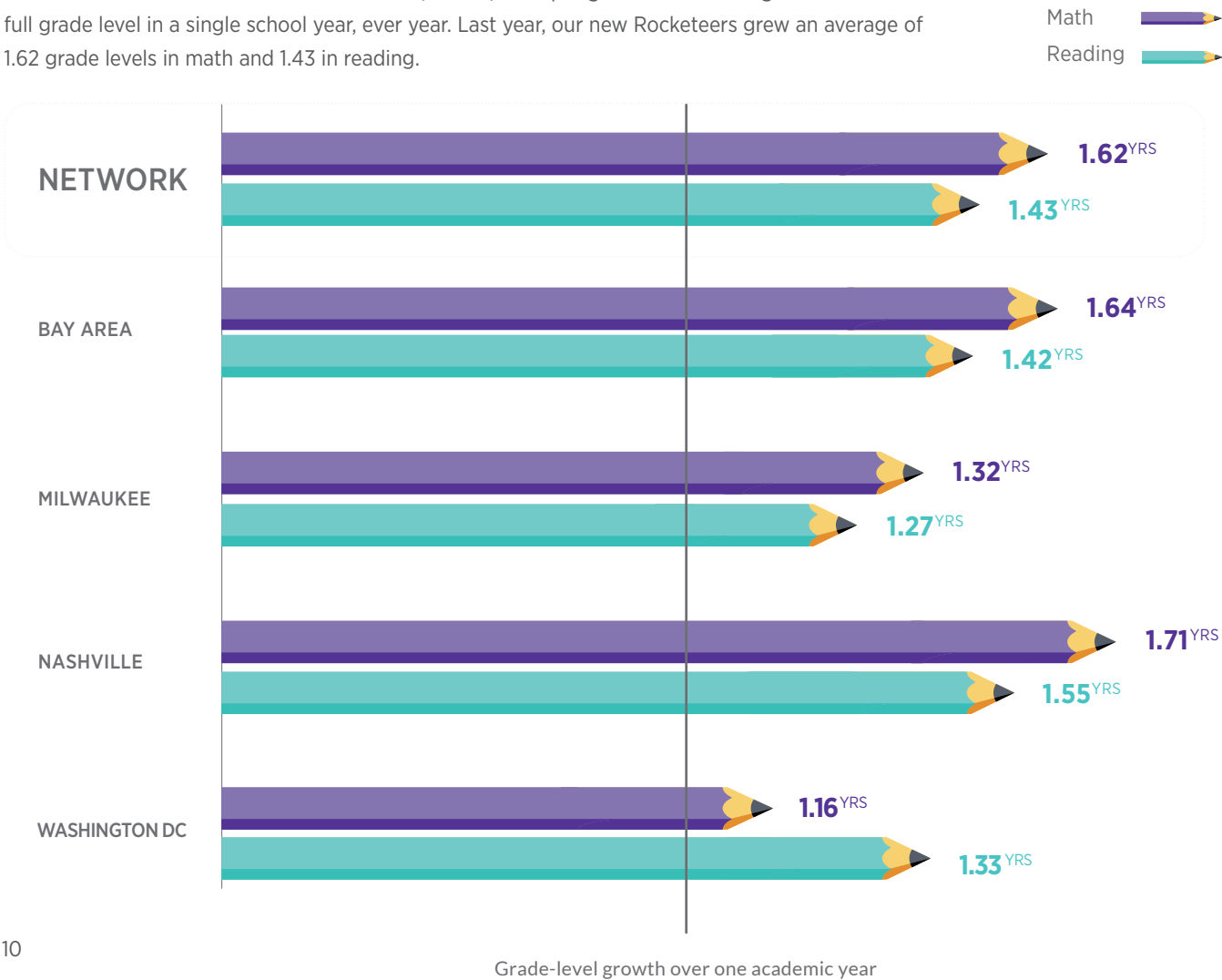
Every year a student spends in an underperforming school is another year they fall further behind their college-bound peers. Eventually those gaps become insurmountable. That is why Rocketship offers multiple grade levels in year one and continues to backfill students every school year. Of course, we do

not expect to close academic gaps that accumulated over several years of prior schooling in a single school year at Rocketship. We do expect major gains in academic growth that narrow the gap that separates them from their college-bound peers.

In the 2018-19 school year, our first year Rocketeers achieved remarkable gap-closing results in every region. By growing well over a grade level in a single school year, students are gaining solid ground on their college-bound peers and eliminating the achievement gap.

AVERAGE FIRST YEAR STUDENT GROWTH

NWEA™, the Northwest Evaluation Association, and its MAP Growth™ nationally-normed assessment, is used by more than 8,000 schools and districts throughout the world. Rocketship students take the MAP assessment in the fall, winter, and spring. Our Rocketeers grow more than a full grade level in a single school year, every year. Last year, our new Rocketeers grew an average of 1.62 grade levels in math and 1.43 in reading.



ROCKETEERS ACROSS THE NETWORK REACH HIGHEST ACHIEVEMENT EVER

Our goal is to get every Rocketeer on the college and career-ready path by the time they move on to middle school. One way that we measure this is by assessing how many Rocketeers score at or above grade level on the nationally-normed NWEA MAP exam. NWEA measures “on grade level” as scoring at or above the 50th percentile.

In the 2018-2019 school year, our national network reached the highest achievement levels ever in our

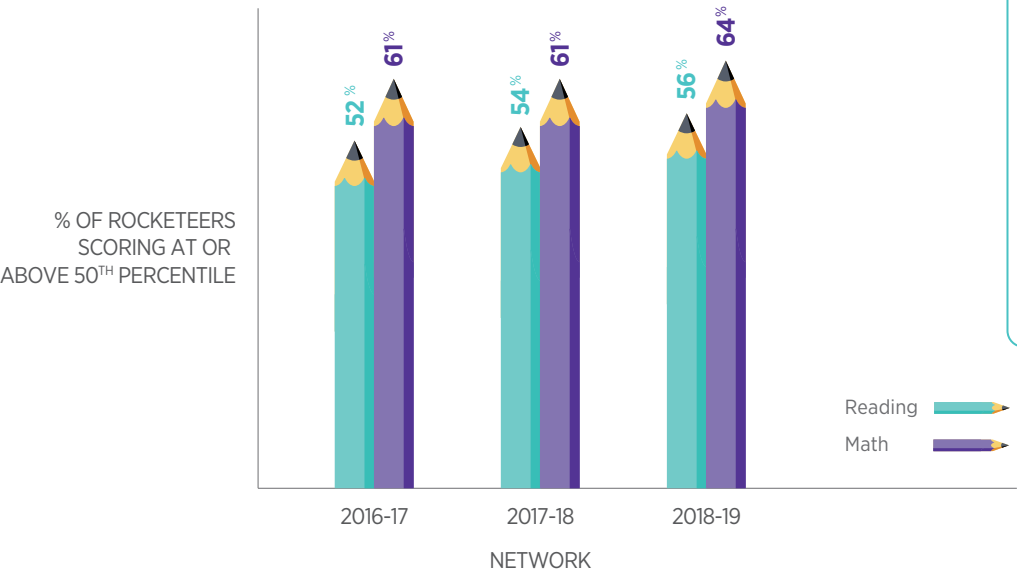
12-year history! These results translate into 5,900 Rocketeers at or above grade level in math and nearly 5,200 Rocketeers at or above grade level in ELA.

As this chart shows, our results keep getting better and better. Over the past three school years, we have seen higher and higher levels of achievement - all while we opened six brand new schools in three different regions. These new schools open with many students multiple

grade levels behind. But that doesn't stop our growth. As these results show, our Rocketeers continue to race ahead from coast-to-coast. We still have to push harder to get 100 percent of students at or above grade level, and we will. But like our Rocketeers, we are on the right path.

ROCKETSHIP NETWORK STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL

This chart shows the percentage of Rocketeers in every region scoring at or above grade level (50th percentile) on the nationally-normed NWEA MAP Exam.



2,118
GAPS
CLOSED

In the 2018-19 school year, over 2,000 Rocketeers eliminated the gap that separated them from their college-bound peers. By getting thousands of students up to and above grade level each year, Rocketship is well on our way to eliminate the achievement gap in cities across the country.



PARENT ACTION

On June 7, 2019, more than 2,500 parents, teachers, and students came together to “Stand With Great Public Schools” in downtown San José. The statewide debate in California about proposed education policy changes has overwhelmingly ignored the voices and interests of families in underserved communities.

Organized by parent leaders from Rocketship and supported by parents from Alpha Public Schools, Downtown College Prep, and KIPP, the event was designed to teach students about the importance of civic engagement and showcase how public charter school families, students, and staff are helping improve educational equity and excellence across the City of San José.

Rocketship parents showed San José, the state of California, and the entire public school sector that they will not stop fighting for their kids until their voices are heard. That’s parent power in action.



“



You are setting the trend for the rest of our city, for the rest of the Bay Area. You are showing the rest of the world how every student can earn and achieve at such a high level. No matter what neighborhood you come from in our city, that you can do great things and you can unleash your great potential. I am so grateful for the students and parents who worked so hard at our schools to show the value and importance of educational choice.”

Sam Liccardo
Mayor of San José



ROCKETSHIP CLASSROOMS SERVE ALL STUDENTS

Last year, we served nearly 800 students with mild to severe learning needs. As a network overall, nine percent of our students have special needs with some schools serving upwards of 14 percent. Rather than isolate and further stigmatize these students, we operate a meaningful inclusion model that ensures all of 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 percent of the day in the general

education environment. With this inclusive approach, our students with disabilities are exposed to the same instructional program as their typically developing peers. By coupling our meaningful inclusion model with individual supports including small group co-teaching and individual instruction, we help all Rocketeers achieve ambitious academic and social outcomes. Our students with an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) achieved 1.44 years of growth in math and 1.37 years of growth in reading last year.

DANIELLA MARTINEZ

Rocketship Sí Se Puede Academy, 2009 – 2012

Cal Poly Pomona - Class of 2023

I am a Rocketship Rocketeer. I am also the first person in my family to go on to higher education - starting as a freshman at Cal Poly Pomona in Fall 2019. I am also a future Rocketship Sí Se Puede Elementary literacy teacher.

Why do I want to become a teacher at the elementary school I graduated from years ago? Because Rocketship Sí Se Puede gave me the opportunity and hope to pursue my dreams, the skills to excel, and the inspiration to one day return to help kids like me in my community.

I came to Rocketship in third grade, after struggling with reading at my old school. I couldn't read well enough to do my homework and didn't get help from my teachers. After one particularly hard and embarrassing day, my parents searched for another option.

Rocketship was immediately different from my old school. My first day of school included a meeting with my mom and the Principal. She, and the rest of the school staff, made me feel so welcome. I even had a 'study buddy' who helped me understand the school and answer all my questions. Very quickly, I fell in love with school.

But it was also a tough year in many ways. I found out early on that in third grade, I was reading at a first grade level. My parents and I had no idea I was this far behind. How did my last school let

me get so far behind? I also struggled in math because I had no confidence in my abilities and had trouble understanding the material.

But with the support of my peers, teachers, and one-on-one tutoring, I got better. I am especially grateful to my math teacher who wouldn't let me give into frustration. Instead, she would have me say out loud "you're smart, you can do it" and push me through each problem. Day-by-day, she built up my confidence until I became a great reader and mathematician.

These skills and confidence propelled me through middle and high school, and helped me earn acceptance to a number of great colleges. At Cal Poly Pomona next fall, I will study to become a first or second grade literacy teacher. I want to do this because struggling to read is one of the hardest things a student can go through. I know that I felt powerless—unable to access the information everyone around me could. I never want another kid to feel the struggle that I felt. So I'm going to try to become as great and dedicated a teacher as my Rocketship Sí Se Puede teachers were for me.

I can't wait to stand in front of my own classroom one day and tell my students who are struggling that together, "sí se puede!"

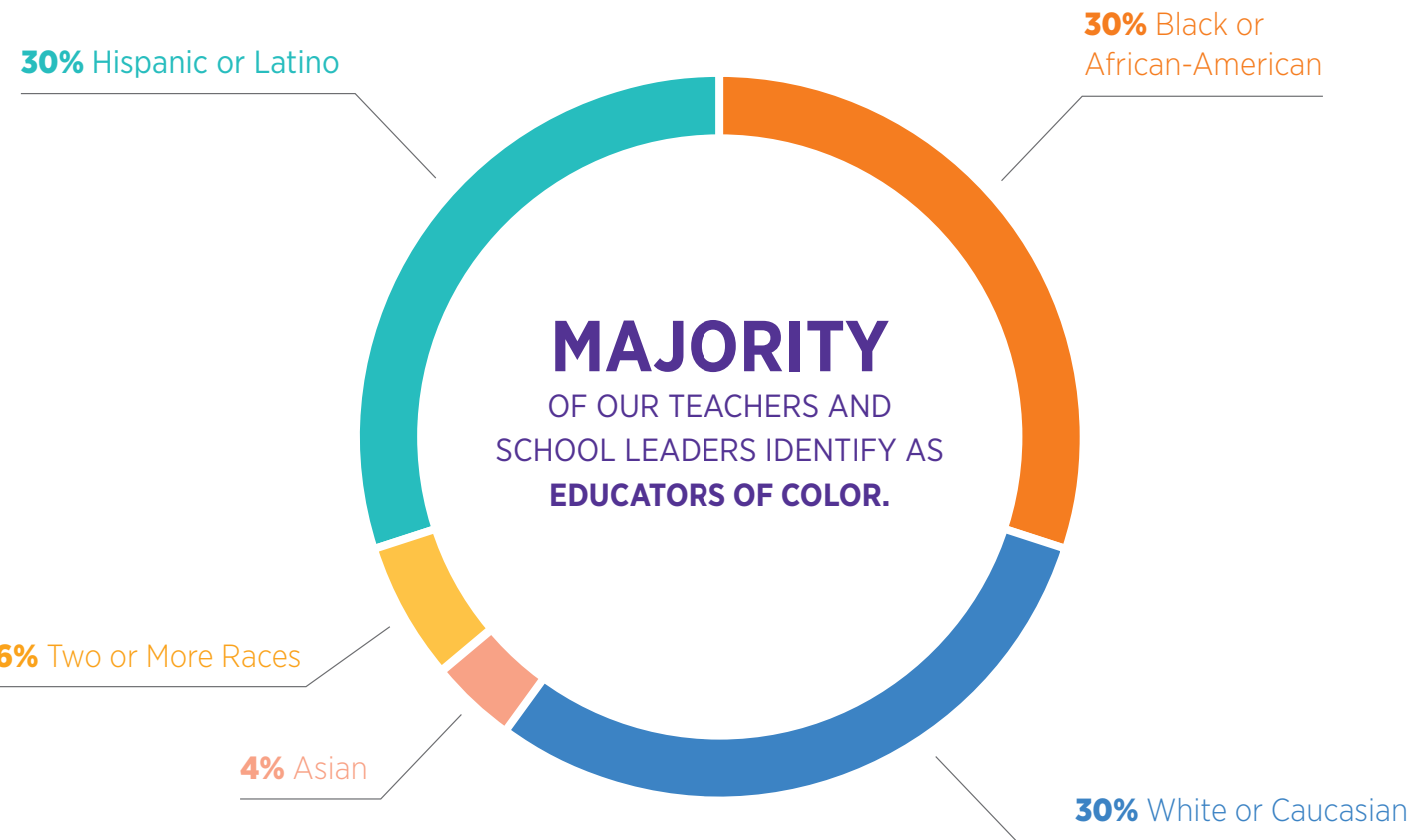


SÍ SE PUEDE!



EDUCATOR DIVERSITY BENEFITS ALL STUDENTS

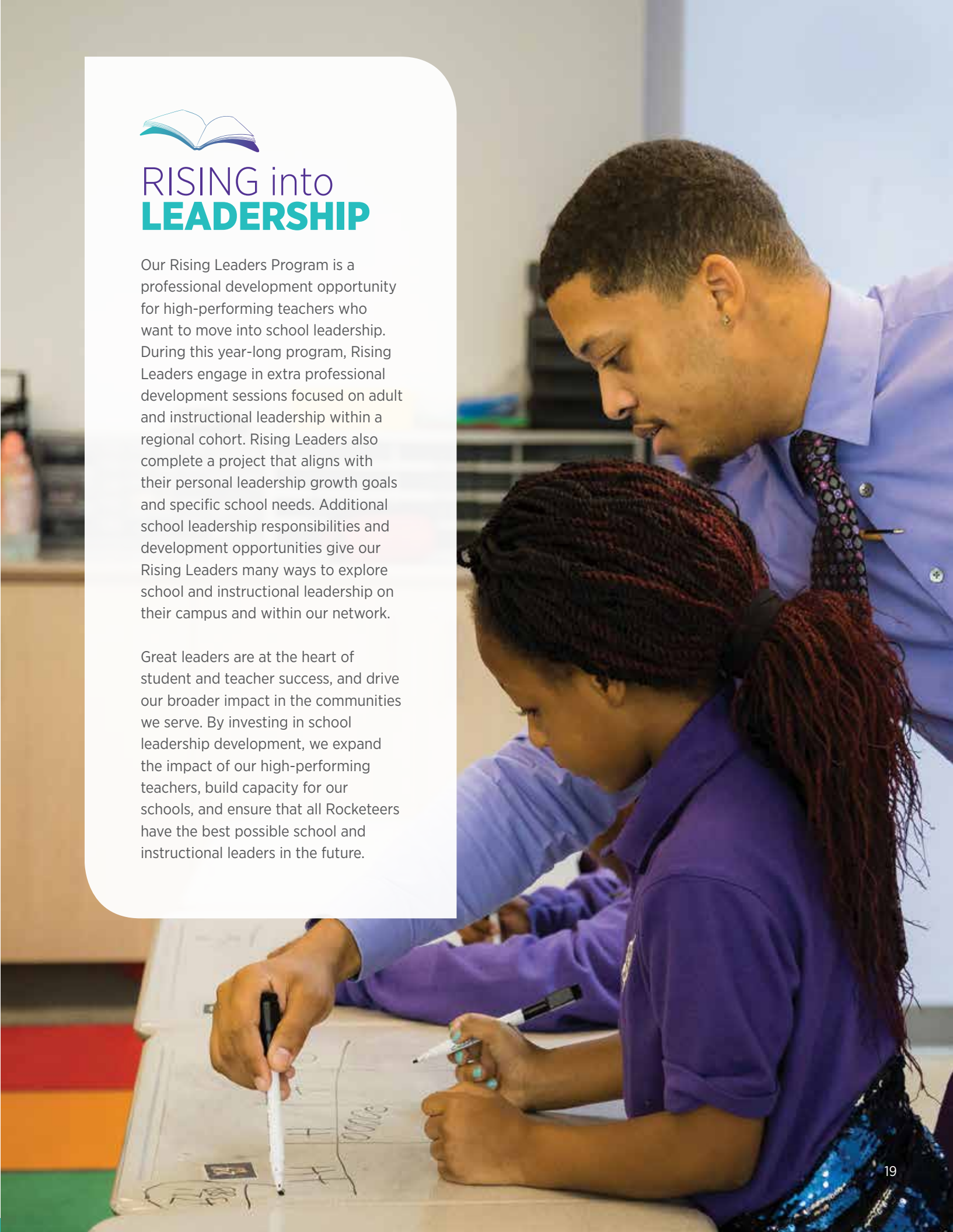
Equity in education is about providing each student with what they need to succeed. This includes learning from teachers who offer both windows and mirrors - people who offer new perspectives, as well as reflect their own background and experience. There is an increasing body of research showing that student achievement and attendance go up, and suspension rates go down, when students have at least one same-race teacher. That is why we are striving to create a more diverse workforce with educators that bring a rich variety of experiences, ideas, and perspectives to our classrooms.



RISING into LEADERSHIP

Our Rising Leaders Program is a professional development opportunity for high-performing teachers who want to move into school leadership. During this year-long program, Rising Leaders engage in extra professional development sessions focused on adult and instructional leadership within a regional cohort. Rising Leaders also complete a project that aligns with their personal leadership growth goals and specific school needs. Additional school leadership responsibilities and development opportunities give our Rising Leaders many ways to explore school and instructional leadership on their campus and within our network.

Great leaders are at the heart of student and teacher success, and drive our broader impact in the communities we serve. By investing in school leadership development, we expand the impact of our high-performing teachers, build capacity for our schools, and ensure that all Rocketeers have the best possible school and instructional leaders in the future.





LEARNING LAB REIMAGINED

The “enrichment gap” is another example of inequity in our public schools. Far too often, students in disadvantaged communities do not have access to the diverse array of enrichment opportunities and experiences that are commonplace in more affluent communities. Enrichment, extracurricular and experiential learning programs are essential aspects of an excellent

school. They advance student learning, promote social-emotional development, and help students develop key skills they need to thrive in the 21st century, including: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. That is why we recently embarked on an ambitious pilot project to reimagine our Learning Lab as a more dynamic learning environment focused on experiential and Project-Based Learning.

Rocketship piloted the new Learning Lab at three schools in 2018-2019. The new model is built upon centers, with students working in small groups on either experiential learning activities, adaptive online learning programs, or Project Based Learning opportunities. Experiential learning activities include Lego robotics, strategy games, art, and hands-on science, among others. Adaptive online learning programs offer students independent and individualized learning to

promote student agency. Project Based Learning (PBL) is where our Rocketeers extend their classroom instruction by working on student-centered projects that explore a real world problem or complex challenge that culminates with a student presentation at a family exhibition night.

By the end of the year, our pilot school sites saw a significant shift in student agency and staff excitement. This new Learning Lab model unleashes more creative energy on our campuses, fosters more joy in learning, improves student agency, and reduces behavioral issues. Students are more engaged and invigorated in their learning. In the year ahead, we’ll roll out this new model across the majority of our schools nationwide.



ROCKETSHIP BAY AREA

6,587
STUDENTS

73%
HISPANIC OR
LATINO

80%
SOCIOECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED

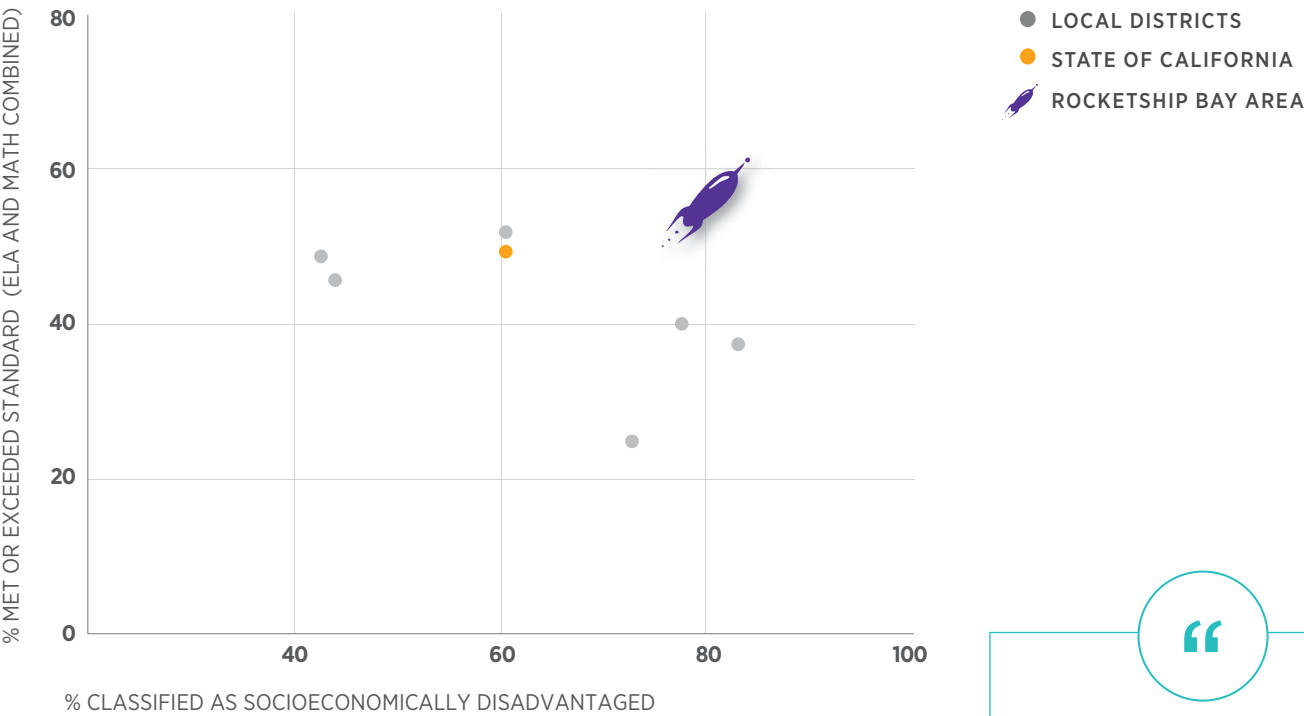
43%
ENGLISH
LEARNERS



The Bay Area economy continues to grow but many communities are being left behind. Families are getting priced out of their homes, and moving further from the region's economic centers. Commutes stretch longer each year. Families are fracturing. Affordable housing, good-paying jobs, and top-rated schools are rarely found in the same community. Rocketship's network of 13 Bay Area schools is working to ensure that students have access to strong schools in every zip code.

When it comes to education, quality is critical. That's why we're proud that Rocketship ranks in the top 10 percent of California elementary school districts and charter schools that serve predominantly socioeconomically disadvantaged students. When families in underserved communities have options for free, high quality education, they don't just have agency over what happens through the elementary school years, they impact what doors will open later in life.

CHARTING A NEW COURSE FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS



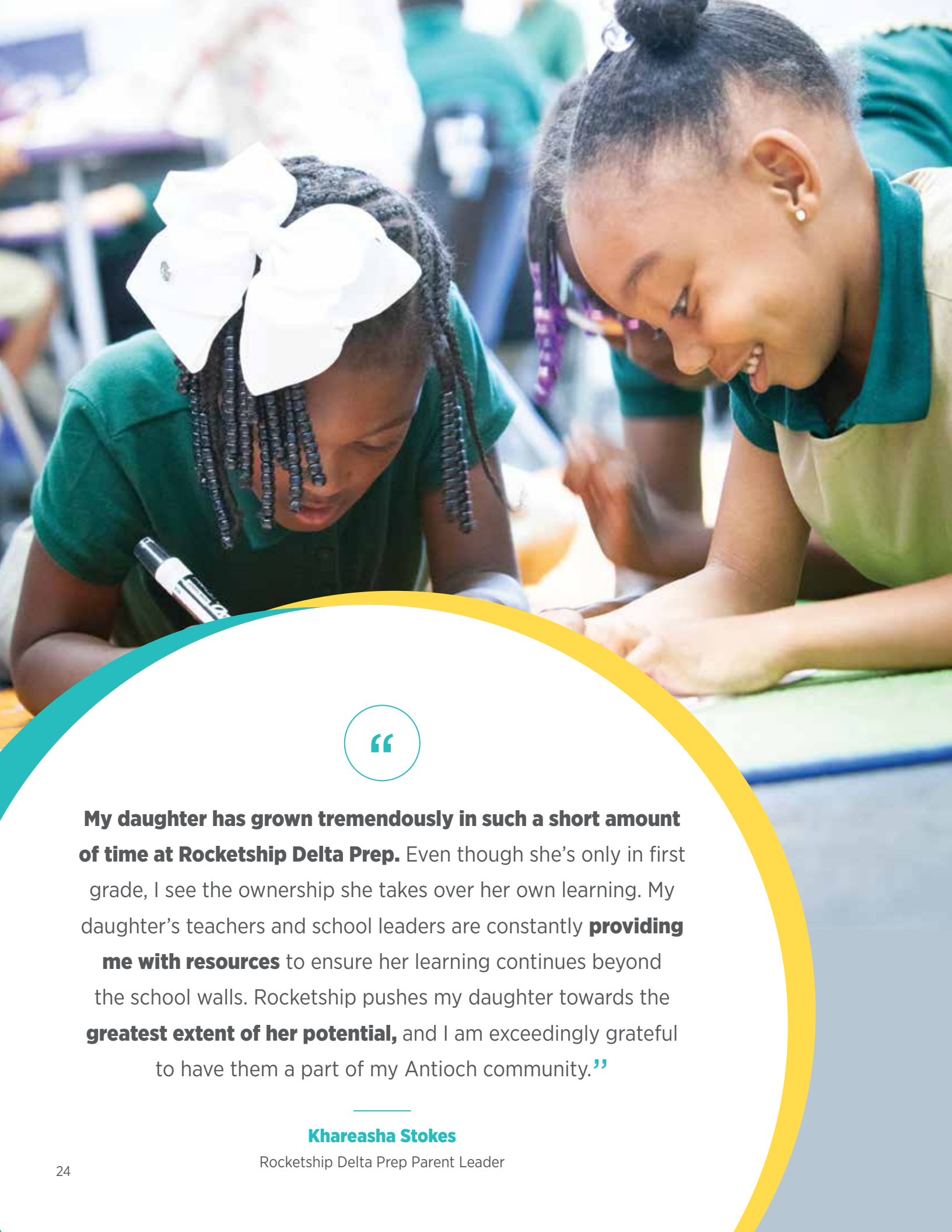
Source: California Department of Education. Percentages calculated by Rocketship Public Schools from grade-level data research files downloaded from the CAASPP website.

This year marks a major milestone for Rocketship in California – over 50 percent of our students met or exceeded the state standard for proficiency in both math and English Language Arts (ELA). Neither the state nor any of the six local districts where we serve students have yet to achieve this milestone since Common Core standards were first introduced five years ago. 61 percent of our California Rocketeers met or exceeded state standards in math and 51 percent did so in ELA. This marks the fifth straight year of gains at Rocketship. Over the last five years, our Rocketeers have improved 16 percentage points in ELA and 12 points in math.

The chart on this page shows 2018-19 California state assessment results plotted against the percentage of students classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged for local districts, the state of California, and Rocketship Bay Area. This analysis underscores how our Rocketeers are charting a new course for disadvantaged students in our state. They are proving that demographics do not define their potential.

Sometimes we wonder where we'd be if we didn't find Rocketship. We try not to look back. It was too painful at times...so we look forward and realize how proud we are to be Rocketeers. We march forward knowing we found an exceptional educational foundation for our son now and for his future. This is all we ever wanted for Jalen, and we've found it in our own backyard.”

Rosemary Scott
Rocketship parent



“

My daughter has grown tremendously in such a short amount of time at Rocketship Delta Prep. Even though she’s only in first grade, I see the ownership she takes over her own learning. My daughter’s teachers and school leaders are constantly **providing me with resources** to ensure her learning continues beyond the school walls. Rocketship pushes my daughter towards the **greatest extent of her potential**, and I am exceedingly grateful to have them a part of my Antioch community.”

Khareasha Stokes

Rocketship Delta Prep Parent Leader



RECOGNIZED AS TOP BAY AREA SCHOOLS FOR UNDERSERVED STUDENTS

Each year, Innovate Public Schools recognizes the Bay Area public schools achieving excellent results for low-income Latino and African American students. Their annual [Top Bay Area Public Schools for Underserved Students Report](#) examines state test results to identify schools that are closing the achievement gap. Since Innovate’s first report in 2014, few Bay Area schools have achieved this honor. Out of 1,278 schools in the Bay Area only 51 schools made the list in 2017-18. We are proud to report that seven of those are Rocketship schools. For the second year in a row, Rocketship had the most schools of any charter network or school district featured on the list.



ROCKETSHIP MILWAUKEE

572
STUDENTS

14%
SPECIAL
EDUCATION

84%
HISPANIC OR
LATINO

77%
SOCIOECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED

Year-after-year, Milwaukee holds the unfortunate distinction as one of our country's most segregated cities and the city with the largest academic racial achievement gap. These two gaps compound each other, leading to segregated neighborhoods with woefully under-performing schools. While some progress has been made in small pockets throughout the city, few have been able to bridge the gap and serve multiple racial communities with great schools.

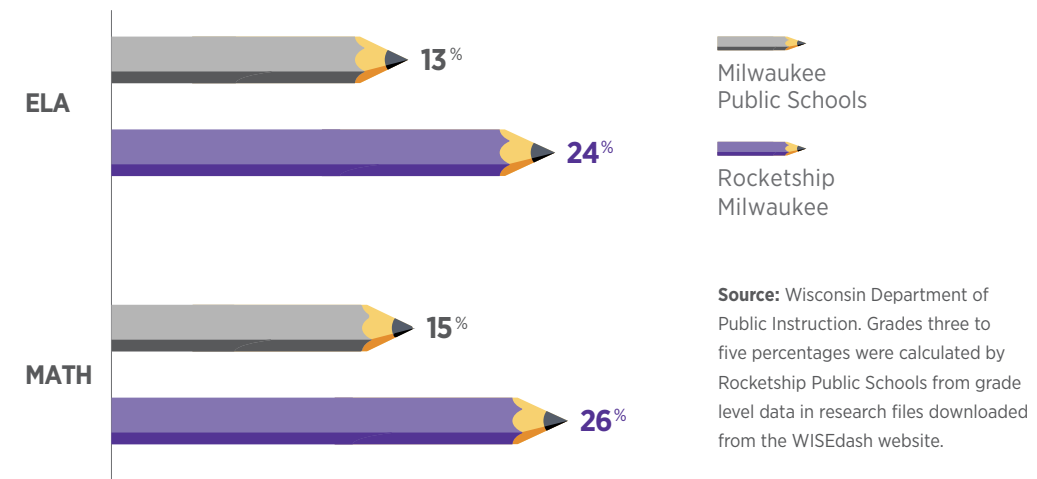
That is why we opened Rocketship Transformation Prep on Milwaukee's predominantly African American northside. Our second school joins Rocketship Southside Community Prep which is located in a majority Hispanic community. In our very first year with two schools, Rocketeers in Milwaukee are already significantly outperforming students in Milwaukee Public Schools in 2018-2019. Furthermore, we hold ourselves to the highest standards for all students. Last year, Rocketeers classified as Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED), English Learner, and/or Latino outperformed their peers in the Milwaukee Public School District in both math and reading. Together, we are working to eliminate Milwaukee's achievement gap, moving ever closer to achieving educational equity across the city.



ROCKETSHIP MILWAUKEE OUTPERFORMS PEERS

2018-19 WISCONSIN STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Percent of students classified as disadvantaged in grades three to five who scored proficient or advanced



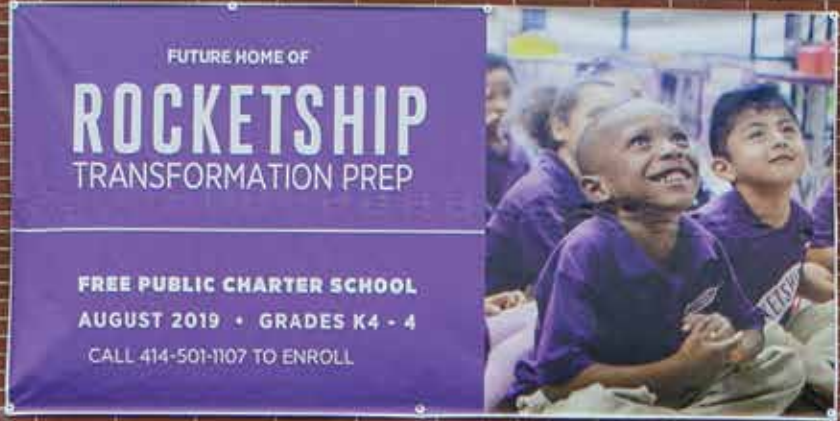


EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS IN THE BADGER STATE

Rocketship Southside Community Prep earned an “Exceeds Expectations” rating on its 2018-19 School Report Card compared to Milwaukee Public Schools “Meets Few Expectations” score. As part of Wisconsin’s state accountability system, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) produces report cards for every publicly funded school and district in Wisconsin. School Accountability Report Cards include data on multiple indicators including: student achievement, school growth, closing gaps, chronic absenteeism, and dropout rates. Rocketship Southside Prep’s performance in “school growth” was especially strong, considerably outpacing the state average. This is a value-added measure that quantifies how much growth students make over time after taking into account factors that are generally beyond a school’s control. A strong school growth score is a promising indicator that our Southside Rocketeers are on the path to a brighter future.

★★★★☆
Exceeds Expectations

Overall Accountability Ratings	Score
Significantly Exceeds Expectations	83-100 ★★★★★
Exceeds Expectations	73-82.9 ★★★★☆
Meets Expectations	63-72.9 ★★★☆☆
Meets Few Expectations	53-62.9 ★★☆☆☆
Fails to Meet Expectations	0-52.9 ★☆☆☆☆



TRANSFORMATION PREP ROCKETEERS GROW RAPIDLY IN FIRST YEAR

The vast majority of Rocketeers on the northside came into the 18-19 school year multiple grade levels behind. But after establishing good habits in the fall, Transformation Prep Rocketeers raced ahead in the spring to achieve the highest growth in the Rocketship network.

Rocketship Transformation Prep opened their doors in August 2018 in a temporary home at the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center. Rocketship came to the Silver Spring neighborhood in partnership with the Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, Carmen Northwest, and many other community groups because many school-age students were leaving their community to attend a high-quality school across the city. After their successful first year at the Neighborhood Center, Rocketship Transformation Prep moves into their permanent campus at the former Blessed Savior Catholic Church North Campus site in August 2019.



ROCKETSHIP NASHVILLE

976
STUDENTS

36%
HISPANIC OR
LATINO

78%
SOCIOECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED

51%
AFRICAN
AMERICAN

Economic growth in Nashville has been surging for the last five years. The pace of new construction and new visitors has never been higher. But the state of public schools in Nashville doesn't match the image that allures outsiders. For local Nashvillians, access to a high-quality public school is largely dependent on your zip code. Rocketship's goal is to change that reality.

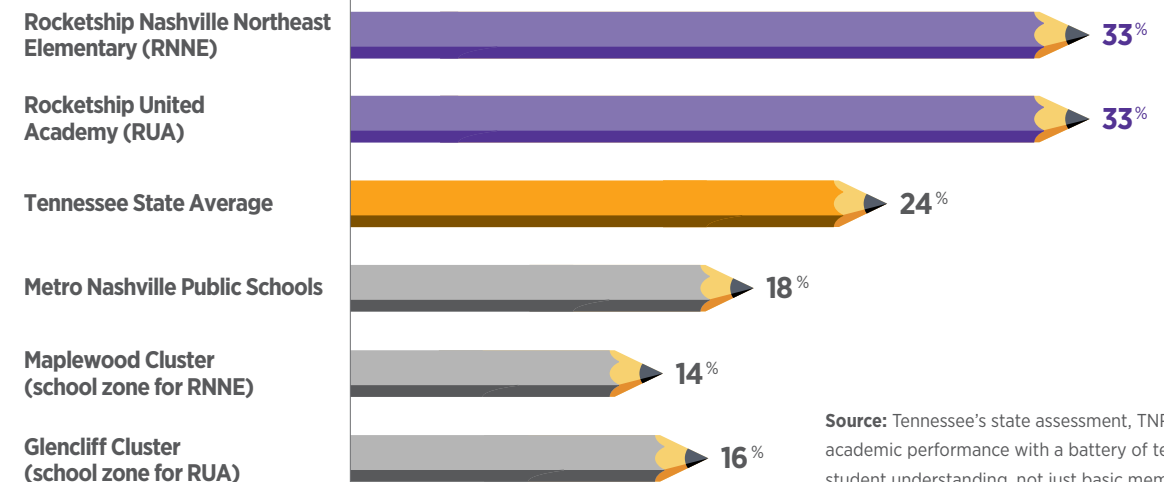
We currently have two schools located in underserved parts of the city. Both Rocketship Nashville schools rank among the top five highest-performing schools for economically disadvantaged students out of all 74 elementary schools in Nashville.

Public schools in Tennessee earn a "success rate" that reflects the percentage of students who are on-track or mastered in state standards. The success rate for economically disadvantaged students at both Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary and Rocketship United Academy is over double the average rate for similar students in nearby neighborhood schools. (See chart on next page.)

While the data provides a valuable proof point, perhaps even more compelling are the stories we hear from Rocketship families who knew their children weren't reaching their potential in their former public school settings. Now, these parents tell us they feel valued and connected to their children's education, which is what all families in Nashville deserve.

NASHVILLE ROCKETEERS OUTPERFORM THEIR PEERS

Percent of economically disadvantaged students achieving "success rate" for math and ELA on the 2018-19 Tennessee state assessment



Source: Tennessee's state assessment, TNReady, measures student academic performance with a battery of tests designed to assess true student understanding, not just basic memorization.

BREAKING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Paraprofessional Chris Evans, of Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary, starts most school mornings bonding with a group of boys over Cocoa Puffs cereal. Mr. Evans formed a mentorship group that meets every morning and regularly after school. Members of the group were selected by teachers who identified students struggling with issues at home that were affecting their behavior in school.

Mr. Evans wrote about the program in a "Teacher Voice" article in [The Hechinger Report](#). "A year ago, these boys were on their way to entering our country's devastating school-to-prison pipeline. They were routinely disrupting their classrooms

and commanding disproportionate amounts of attention from school leaders. All of them are black. Most lack a consistent father figure in their lives. Now, they're part of a brotherhood where they push themselves and one another to be great. We call our group 'The Movement.'"

The connection Mr. Evans builds with students helps him intervene and offer support when they have a tough day. And it works: Behavior incidents are down and academic achievement for the Rocketeers in the program is up.

 **THE HECHINGER REPORT**





Rocketship Nashville Northeast was named a “Reward School” by the Tennessee Department of Education for the 2018-19 school year.

This is the state’s highest recognition for student performance and progress. To be eligible for “Reward” status, a school in Tennessee must demonstrate overall student academic achievement and student growth for all students and for subgroups of students. Rocketship Nashville Northeast achieved this honor by increasing the percentage of students who scored “on track” or “mastered” on annual state tests at a pace more than three times greater than the rate of improvement across Nashville schools. This is faster than any other elementary school in Nashville.

And Rocketship Nashville Northeast serves all students with excellence. Economically disadvantaged students at Nashville Northeast grew their success rate by 21 percentage points from the previous year - seven times the rate of improvement seen among similar students in Nashville. More than 93 percent of Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary students are classified as economically disadvantaged.

Building on the Reward School status of Rocketship United Academy in the 2017-2018 school year, this is a major milestone for our Nashville Rocketeers. Such successes propel us forward toward our ultimate goal of eliminating the achievement gap in Music City.



“

Separating opinion and fact in today’s media environment can be difficult even for adults, so how do we make these concepts accessible to young students? At Rocketship, we decided to take a project-based learning approach. Our students work for several weeks to produce news stories of their own, interviewing different staff in the building on topics they are curious about. Throughout the semester, we weave in lessons about the role of journalists in society — how we rely on them to get information we need or are curious about. We talk about source credibility and what it means to be biased. There are many educational benefits from learning to be a discerning consumer of news. But perhaps most importantly, it gives our students real-life practice with developing their critical thinking skills.”

Rene Milan

Theatre Arts and Media Literacy Coach
Rocketship United Academy

ROCKETSHIP WASHINGTON DC

1,084
STUDENTS

98%
AFRICAN
AMERICAN

73%
AT-RISK

25%
HOMELESS

The consistent and well-established focus on education reform in the District of Columbia has shifted the landscape of public schools in our nation’s capital. As a result, student achievement is steadily improving in both district schools and charter schools. Student enrollment is climbing too, reaching numbers not seen in over a decade. With an influx of families, racial and demographic diversity of the overall student population is starting to broaden as well, but not in the neighborhoods we serve. True to the mission of Rocketship, our Washington DC schools are providing high-quality public school options in historically underserved communities.

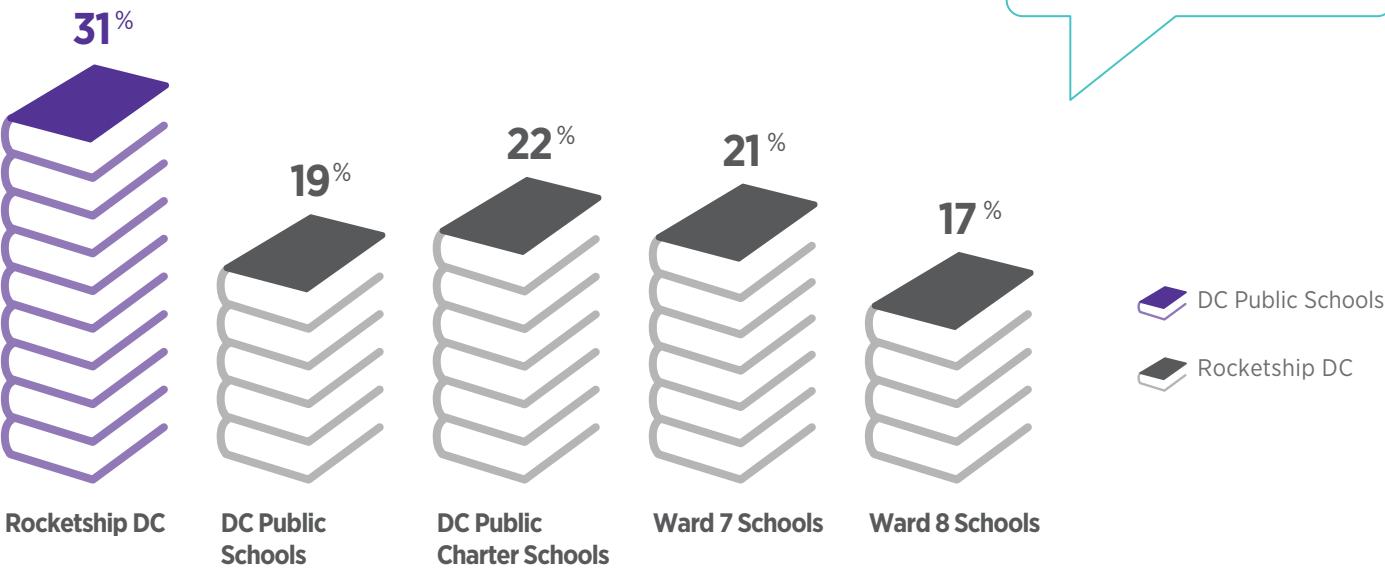
While many DC neighborhoods are experiencing wholesale change from a surge in new housing and economic development, Wards 7 and 8—where Rocketship Legacy Prep and Rocketship Rise Academy, respectively, are located—remain racially segregated and economically distressed.

Our schools reflect the community, serving a greater percentage of at-risk students than most other public elementary schools in DC. Nearly three-fourths of DC Rocketeers are considered at-risk, including 25 percent who are homeless. Together, we are proving that income and zip codes don’t have to limit their potential. At-risk students at both of our DC schools are achieving in the top quartile in reading among all DC public schools—district and charter. And an astonishing 64 percent of homeless students are approaching or meeting standards in both reading and math.



TOP PERFORMING SCHOOLS FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS

Percent of at-risk students meeting or exceeding reading standards on the 2018-19 D.C. state assessment



Rocketship Legacy Prep was one of only five schools recognized by the DC Public Charter School Board for “closing gaps with at-risk students.” This designation was given based on at-risk students at Legacy Prep exceeding the average proficiency rates for students across DC and matching the success of not at-risk peers within their school.

Source: The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, is the District of Columbia’s annual assessment of student proficiency in mathematics and English language arts/literacy, based on the Common Core State Standards.



BOTH DC SCHOOLS NAMED ‘BOLD PERFORMANCE’ SCHOOLS

Across the country, student academic performance closely correlates with socioeconomic status. Changing this fact one school and one neighborhood at a time is at the heart of Rocketship’s mission. Both Rocketship schools in Washington DC were recognized this year for breaking away from this mold, receiving the notable designation as [“Bold Performance” schools by EmpowerK12](#).

EmpowerK12 is a DC-based nonprofit that specializes in helping schools with data analytics, data infrastructure, and the strategic use of data to drive improvement. The organization uses the Bold Performance awards to recognize schools that serve a high concentration of at-risk students and achieve combined math and reading proficiency rates that are dramatically higher than schools with similar student demographics.

Using machine learning models, EmpowerK12 projects what percentage of students were expected to be proficient at every public school in the District of Columbia based on their demographics. This is compared to each

school’s actual performance on DC’s annual standardized test and schools that outperform the model are given a score described as Points Proficient Above Expectations (PPAE). Bold Performance award-winning schools have actual proficiency rates at least 10 percentage points higher than their expected rate. The PPAE for Rocketship Legacy Prep was 15 percent and Rocketship Rise was 14 percent.

Only seven of the 28 schools that received the Bold Performance designation had at-risk student populations that account for over 70 percent of the school’s enrollment; both Rocketship schools are among those. To be eligible for the award, the school must be open enrollment and serve at least 30 percent at-risk students in tested grades. “At-risk” students in DC are defined as those in foster care, experiencing homelessness or whose family qualifies for government assistance benefits. Approximately 45 percent of DC students tested in 2019 were considered at-risk.



CORE VALUE LAB

At Rocketship DC, we know that to best serve all students we need to adapt their school day and model to meet our students’ unique needs. One way we do this is through a space called the “Core Value Lab.” At Rocketship Rise and Rocketship Legacy Prep, our Kindergarten and first graders take part of their time in the Learning Lab to put core values and social emotional learning in action through play-based collaboration.

Each day starts with a social emotional learning lesson that connects to free play throughout the week. Lessons are aligned with common childhood and lifelong experiences, providing our Rocketeers the opportunity to practice such skills as learning to apologize, advocating for themselves, sharing, seeking help from others, among many others. The instructor then coaches students in line with this lesson as they free play.

Rocketeers in the Core Value Lab get to choose what and how they want to play. This teaches them to navigate negotiating with other students on activities, regulate their needs, and explore imaginative play. Research shows that learning how to play teaches collaboration and community building.

The Core Value Lab is just one example of how Rocketship DC serves all student needs with excellence and is creating educational equity in Washington, DC.

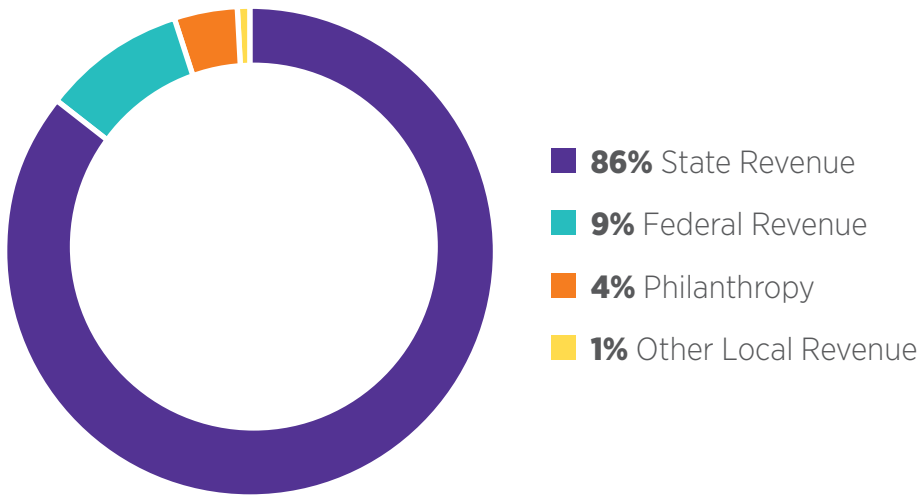


FINANCIALS

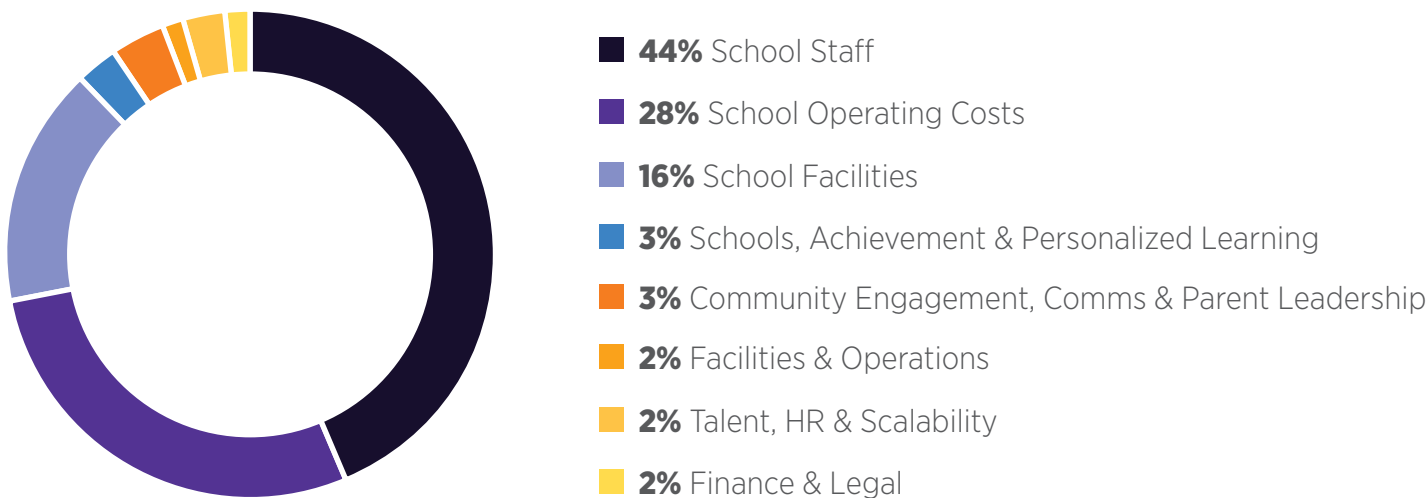
Rocketship is building a scalable and financially sustainable non-profit school model that propels student achievement in underserved communities across the country. In 2018-19, 95 percent of our funding came from public sources. School-based expenses accounted for 88 percent of our spending.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
Fully enrolled schools reach financial sustainability within three to five years of launching. Each region is financially sustainable at five to eight schools. Our Bay Area region is our first fully sustainable region, meaning that our 13 schools and the regional team supporting them operate solely on public funds. We are on track to achieve organization-wide financial sustainability by 2023.

REVENUE



EXPENSES



SUPPORTERS

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Rocketship couldn't do this work without the partnership, support, and expertise of our authorizers.

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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.

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