

A young girl with dark skin and curly hair is the central figure. She is wearing a purple polo shirt, red-rimmed glasses, and a light blue face mask decorated with a pattern of black and white panda faces and pink clouds. Her right arm is raised high, with her hand open. The background is a blurred classroom setting with orange walls and fluorescent lights. A large purple circle with a yellow border is positioned on the right side of the image, containing the text '2020/2021 YEAR IN REVIEW'.

**2020**  
**2021**

# YEAR IN REVIEW

**ROCKETSHIP**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



In the 2020-2021 school year, we witnessed many major moments that reshaped our culture and communities right before our eyes. A global pandemic. The largest civil rights movement in U.S. History. California wildfires. The 2020 election. The U.S. Capitol riot. The Derek Chauvin trial. The southern border migrant crisis. A global vaccination campaign.

These are moments that will define this generation for years to come. But they aren't the moments that are making the biggest impact on the lives of our Rocketeers today.

It's the little moments at our schools, inside our classrooms, and in our communities that are truly making a difference in the lives of our Rocketeers.

It's when our Milwaukee school leaders knocked on the doors of our Rocketeers who were not regularly attending distance learning and told them that they were missed and reconnected them to their school community.

It's when our Nashville team distributed 450 meals a week for 10 months to support families during difficult times.

It's when our teachers in California found fun and creative ways to motivate students for their hard work, like a reward store that included a prize to have their teacher wear a unicorn costume to class.

It's when our DC educators created a new curriculum to help our Rocketeers proudly embrace the beauty of their identities and their powerful place in this world.

When the odds were stacked against our communities - our educators, our parents, our supporters, and our Rocketeers came together and showed up. Time and time again, we met the moment for our Rocketeers.

We met the moment through love. Through seeking to understand. Through dialogue. Through constantly working to bring our best, but also knowing we can always do better. We lived out our values.

As we look ahead and continue to fight for a more just and equitable society, we continue to push ourselves and each other to serve our Rocketeers with the equity, excellence, and empathy they deserve.

We are the people we are waiting for and our Rocketeers are looking for all of us to come together and lead the way.

That means all of us. Rocketship is a collective of parents, teachers, leaders, and champions that are working together to transform the future for our students and families. Together, we will continue to meet the moment and create the change we want to see in our communities.

AT ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS, WE ARE  
UNLEASHING POTENTIAL.



**Preston Smith,**  
Co-Founder and CEO





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10,199 Rocketeers

77% Socio-economically Disadvantaged

44% English Language Learners

84% Latinx or Black

SUPPORTING  
RESILIENT  
COMMUNITIES

STUDENTS  
SERVED  
LIFETIME

24,981





# MEETING THE MOMENT



## Reopening Our Doors During a Pandemic

Throughout this unprecedented school year, all 20 of our campuses and teams worked tirelessly to serve our Rocketeers with excellence. We ran weekly food drives, organized town hall meetings with health experts to educate our staff and families on COVID-19 vaccines, and engaged communities to advocate for their needs with elected officials. We started the school year with a **robust distance learning program**, provided a Chromebook for each student, and connected personally with families every week to ensure their basic needs were met. While proud of our best-in-class distance learning program, we knew our virtual schools would never replicate the full power of our model and community when our Rocketeers are on-campus. That is why we relentlessly monitored health conditions and requirements throughout the year and, in the second semester, we successfully and safely reopened every single Rocketship campus for in-person learning.

Our robust health and safety measures helped bring our students and staff back to campus with no transmission of COVID-19 on any Rocketship campus. Still, we know the impact of the pandemic is felt across our communities. The long-term risk to our kids' future is the social, emotional, and psychological toll of the last year and a half. That is why our reopening strategy focused on designing supportive school communities and classrooms that truly care for the whole child.

Children must feel safe, valued, and understood to fully engage in their learning. The power of the Rocketship model has always been putting relationships first. Now, with Rocketeers back on campus, we can unleash the full potential of our schools to eliminate the achievement gap in our lifetime.

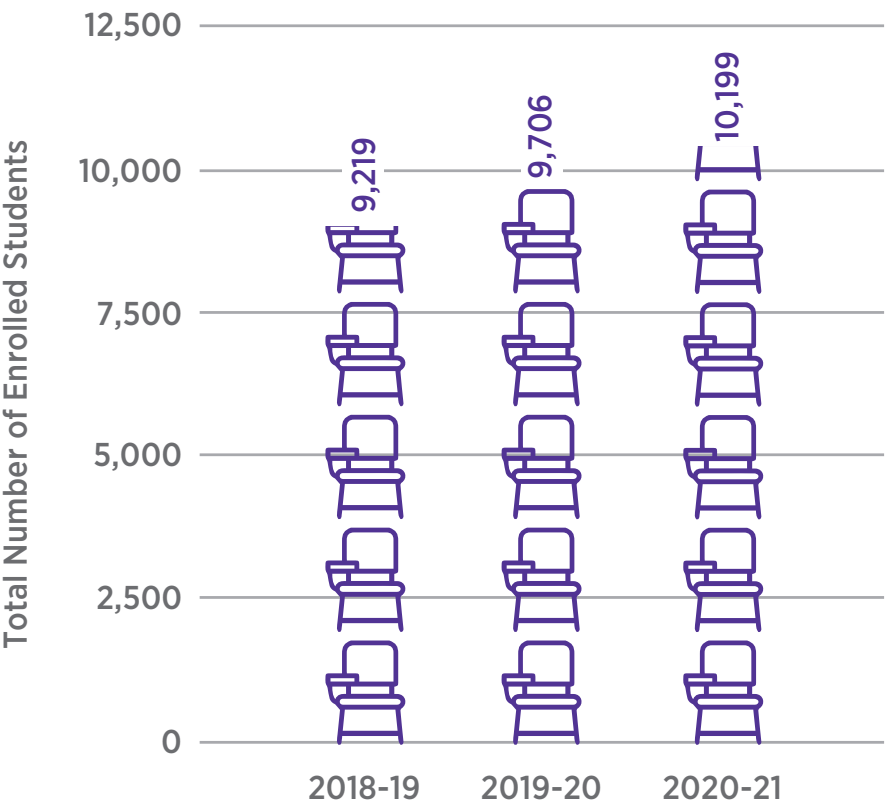




# Rocketship Enrollment Holds Steady During Massive Declines Nationwide

Public schools across the nation suffered massive enrollment declines during the 2019-20 school year. The New York Times and Stanford University published an analysis of public school enrollment at 70,000 public schools across 33 states showing that 10,000 public schools lost at least 20 percent of their kindergartners last school year. In contrast, kindergarten enrollment across Rocketship held steady last year and overall enrollment across our network increased slightly. Maintaining strong enrollment during the pandemic is a major testament to the strength of our schools and the deep relationships we build with our students, families, and the communities we serve.

## Rocketship Public Schools Enrollment



# 9 Rocketship Schools Recognized Among Best in the Nation by US News & World Report

US News & World Report named nine Rocketship schools on its first ranking of Best Elementary Schools in the nation! These rankings are based solely on state test scores – meaning that our schools are among the top in the nation, even compared to schools in wealthier zip codes.

**In Tennessee,** Rocketship United Academy is ranked as the #4 charter elementary school in the entire state. Rocketship United Academy is a richly diverse school, with students coming from more than 50 different countries. Our Rocketeers at United are showing what is possible for all students.

**In Washington D.C.,** Rocketship Legacy Prep is in the top 30% of all elementary schools. Achievement at this level shows that we can eliminate the achievement gap, as 70% of our Rocketeers at this campus are classified as at-risk and 15% are classified as homeless.

**In California,** seven Rocketship schools rank among the best in the state. Our schools rank in the top 30% of all elementary schools in California while serving students predominantly classified as socio-economically disadvantaged (80%) and English Learner (56%).

We know that this new ranking does not fully capture the richness and impact of our Rocketship model and school communities; not everything that matters can be measured. At Rocketship, our teachers constantly gather rich, qualitative information from regular interactions and deep relationships with students and their families. And our supportive learning environment and community school model create a critical foundation for our Rocketeers’ success in school and beyond. This national recognition from US News & World Report is just one more piece of powerful proof of the amazing potential of all our Rocketeers.





# Keeping Students Engaged Online with Interest Groups

One of the key challenges educators faced during distance learning was keeping students engaged in their learning. On campus, our Rocketeers experience a dynamic learning environment with lively classroom conversations, peer-to-peer interactions, singing, dancing, laughter, and spontaneous celebrations. During distance learning, teachers missed these moments with their students. While they undoubtedly found new and creative ways to spark joy in virtual classrooms, they also saw an opportunity to fill a gap and innovate. This became a common discussion among our educators during virtual lunch breaks that turned into brainstorming sessions. Our educators on the frontline of distance learning innovated new ways to keep students engaged in their learning and have more live time with their students.

This launched Rocketship’s first-ever Special Interest Clubs. Every day, our students logged on to Zoom and joined clubs such as Spanish, poetry, chess, yoga, American sign language, cooking, coding, art, multimedia, science, Folklorico dancing, and more! This not only improved engagement, but served as an innovative way to provide Rocketeers with the well-rounded, quality education they deserve.



# Engaging Parents During the Pandemic

Our approach to personalized learning is focused on building deep relationships with our Rocketeers and their families. It starts with our annual home visits. At the beginning of every school year, our teachers visit the homes of every student they serve. This annual practice enables our educators to develop much stronger relationships with our families and a deeper understanding of how to best serve every Rocketeer. Home visits became even more important during distance learning as our daily interactions with our students were confined to computer screens. Teachers and leaders across our network completed more than 10,000 virtual home visits with families before Thanksgiving break. We continued meeting with families three more times a year during family-teacher conferences. We also held monthly, virtual community cafecitos at each school to keep parents engaged and informed about school reopening plans, health and safety protocols, and opportunities to support their student’s learning and our broader school communities.



## BUILDING BLOCKS TO STRONG PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS

Teachers held  
**10,111**  
virtual home visits  
across the network

**93%**  
of parents volunteered 20  
hours or more to support  
their Rocketship school  
community

**80%**  
of parents believe  
“My Rocketship school  
has a strong and  
committed community  
that actively encourages  
family participation.”

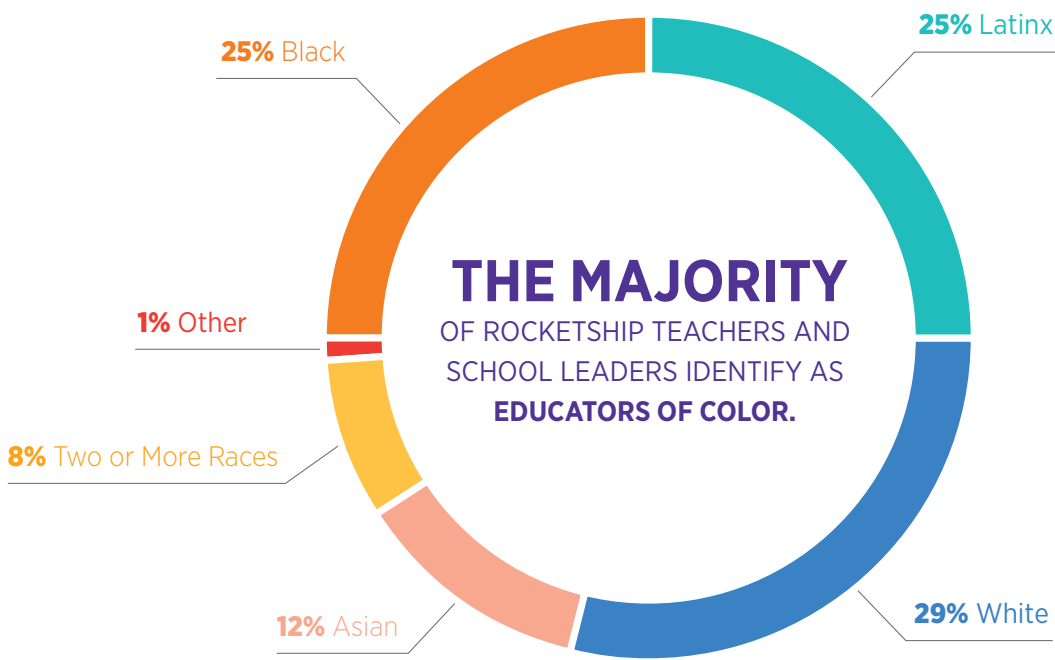


# Educator Diversity Benefits All Students

An increasing body of research shows that student achievement and attendance go up and suspension rates go down when students have at least one same-race teacher. Yet a recent federal [report](#) from the Institute of Education Sciences shows that America’s teaching force hasn’t increased in diversity, with 79% of the nation’s public school teachers classified as white in 2017-18. While public schools saw a slight increase in Latinx teachers since 2015, there was no change in the share of Black teachers, which has actually declined since the 1990s.

We are flipping the diversity in education script at Rocketship. The majority of our educators - 71% - identify as people of color.

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 bring new perspectives, as well as reflect students’ backgrounds and experiences. That is why Rocketship is working relentlessly to ensure that our Rocketeers are taught by a representative team of educators who bring experiences, ideas, and perspectives to our classrooms that truly connect with our kids and communities.



# Rocketship’s DEI Vision

In 2019, Rocketship launched our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team to help unleash the full potential of our incredible staff by purposefully pursuing representation in our communities, breaking down barriers to power, and creating a safe, collaborative environment that celebrates our differences. We recognize the systemic inequality of opportunity in our society and seek to address those disparities through:

- **DIVERSITY:** Create a diverse collective of change agents with voices, experiences, backgrounds, and identities (at all levels), that authentically represent the communities that we serve.
- **EQUITY:** Acknowledge that systemic advantages and barriers exist in our society at large and work to break down those barriers to ensure all staff, families, and students have equitable access to opportunities regardless of identities.
- **INCLUSION:** Cultivate a culture of belonging where people of diverse values, backgrounds, and identities are valued and respected, as well as heard in decisions that impact our collective work.





# Parent Leaders Rally to Get Out the Vote

At Rocketship, we believe in unleashing parent power. An essential part of that is ensuring our parents’ voices are heard both on campus and in the local political sphere. As the 2020 elections approached, Rocketship partnered with When We All Vote. Families were informed of their rights to vote, registered, and showed up to make their voices heard. Parent leaders across all regions participated.



“I want those who fought for me to look over my shoulder from up high and see that I am not taking for granted the blood, sweat, and tears they shed to give me this right. My vote matters for the shoulders I stand on and for my children’s future.

As a parent organizer, we stand in front of public officials and advocate for our kids. Those public officials decide how we support our families, the food our children eat, and the type of education they receive. As parents, we should be the ones deciding who sits in those seats. Our Parent Organizing Committee at Rocketship Delta Prep [came] together to host a candidate forum for our local school board candidates to ensure that our questions and concerns, as parents, are addressed. Through this work, I hope that I can make a change for my community, like those who came before me.”

**Cynthia Cathey**

Parent Leader, Rocketship Delta Prep

# Parent Leaders Across the Country Advocate for Quality Education

Parent power is at the heart of our work. Although we have been in a global pandemic, that work goes on. In April of 2021, Rocketship parent leaders in San Jose partnered with parents at ACE, Alpha, Downtown College Prep, KIPP, and Yo Soy Tu Voz to hold the virtual “Stand With Great Schools” rally. Elected officials joined 5,500 parents to hear stories of parent leadership and calls for public school funding, support, and closer attention on voting rights for undocumented families and special education options.

Parent leaders across our national network engaged in advocacy efforts to improve public education in their community. In the East Bay, parent leaders held a forum for Antioch Unified School District Board candidates to inform our community about each candidate’s platform and encourage voting. In Washington DC, parent leaders held interviews with political candidates to voice their thoughts about the local education system. In Fort Worth, more than 60 parents traveled three hours to Austin to advocate for the approval of the charter to launch Rocketship Texas. Every year, our parent leaders use their advocacy skills to positively impact their communities. And every year, our movement gets one step closer to eliminating the achievement gap in our lifetime.







## Teacher PD Launchpad:

A FREE RESOURCE MADE FOR TEACHERS BY TEACHERS

Teaching today means navigating unprecedented challenges. Yet one thing remains - Rocketship educators will do whatever it takes to ensure students are learning and growing. As distance and hybrid learning offered new twists and turns, our educators innovated new ways to support student learning. They shared those practices with educators nationwide on our [Teacher PD Launchpad](#) - a free resource and learning series designed to share ideas and start a conversation with educators across the country.

This free professional development resource hub was created for elementary educators everywhere. Our Nashville educators led free professional development webinars and crafted advice blogs to help teachers boost student engagement, offer more social-emotional learning opportunities, and ensure all students had access to high-quality distance learning.

Over the course of nine months, 17,000 users accessed our Teacher PD Launchpad. We hope the ideas and resources we shared made a historically challenging year a little more manageable for fellow educators. Because no matter what challenges we face, we are all in this together.

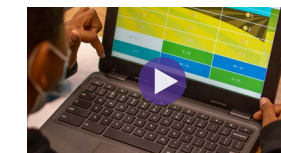


Professional development resources accessed by

# 17,000

educators over eight months

### Webinars for Educators



"Using Data to Accelerate Learning" Webinar



"Social-Emotional Lessons to Support Students Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis" Webinar



"How to Engage Students With Exceptionalities Online" Webinar





# ELEMENTARY ONLY BY DESIGN



## Changing The Public Education Ecosystem

By focusing exclusively on elementary education, we work to improve the entire ecosystem of public education in the communities we serve. We are not creating a parallel K-12 school system, we are focused on improving outcomes for kids and deepening engagement with parents at the elementary level. Our expertise in elementary education prepares thousands of Rocketeers in their vital early years of education. When our graduates move on to attend different middle schools, those schools welcome students 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 middle school classmates in both math and reading. 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 students continue 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. This is how our elementary-only model is designed to improve the entire public education ecosystem in the communities we serve.





# Rocketship's First Year of College Graduates Set Out to Change the World

**Isabel Hernandez,**

Alumna of Rocketship Mateo Sheedy

Today, I am a college graduate. I am a law student at Santa Clara University School of Law. I am a future immigration lawyer. I am a Mexican American – a child of immigrants – who is proud of my culture and cannot wait to fight for my people's legal rights. I am what it looks like to unleash potential.

I am proud to be a part of Rocketship's very first graduating class. I attended Rocketship Mateo Sheedy starting in third grade, and the skills and core values I learned have helped get me to where I am. Rocketship taught me and my entire class that we are not what our society consigns us to be. We are full of potential just waiting to be unleashed on the world to change our society for the better. For me, that's going to law school so I can give a voice to the voiceless and fight for social justice in our legal system.

The skills I use every day in college and will use in law school were first learned at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy. Our teachers made college exciting – with cohorts named after schools, college spirit days, and the belief instilled in each of us that we could and would go to college. And whether it was to challenge myself to read higher-level books with Mr. Nadeau or to live up to the very high standards of Ms. Guerrero, that foundation built in elementary school carries me forward today.

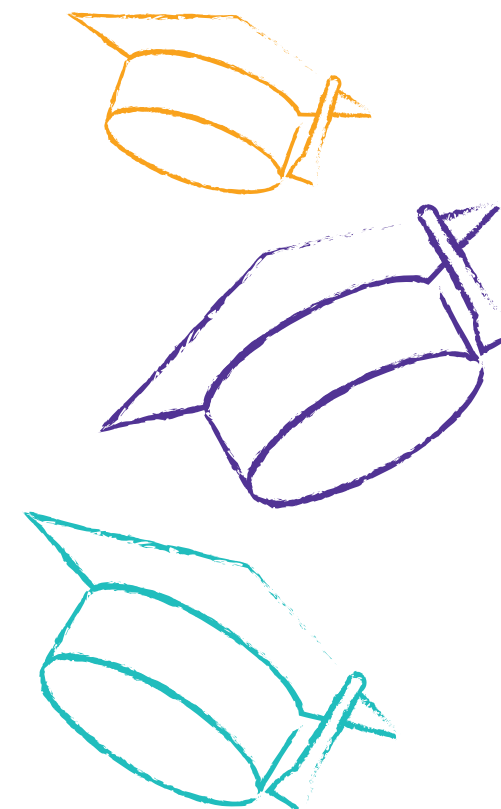
Rocketship's focus on academics wasn't the only thing that helped me grow in elementary school – it was also our school community. Our teachers, every single staff member, and all the families at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy came together to look out for each other. That connection between home life and school was invaluable. If something

happened at a Rocketeers' home, teachers knew about it and would adjust our lessons and support accordingly. This created a special bond between teachers and students that made us feel seen, loved, and respected. Our teachers pushed us to succeed, because they and the entire community knew we could – and they did everything to help us get there.

I got there, and thanks to the persistence I first learned at Rocketship, I helped get my mom there too. My mom graduated with her Bachelor's in Nursing at the same time as I graduated with my Bachelor's in Political Science. My mom had me when she was young, so she did not have the chance to go to college earlier in life. She was inspired by my persistence, my pursuit of excellence, and my drive to go to college, so she decided to enroll, too.

Today, as I prepare to enter one of the top law schools in the country, I carry with me the skills, values, and community of Rocketship. I am not alone in my achievements, but instead, I am emblematic of what is possible for every single child – children who look like me, children of immigrants, children who would be the first in their families to go to college, and every child who walks through those purple Rocketship doors.

I sincerely thank Rocketship educators for everything they do for their students every single day. Those students, like me, will carry that love, teaching, and expectations with them for the rest of their lives. I can't wait to see how many Rocketeers follow after me and my first classmates in graduating college, pursuing their dreams, and changing the world.



“

“I am emblematic of what is possible for every single child – children who look like me, children of immigrants, children who would be the first in their families to go to college, and every child who walks through those purple Rocketship doors.”

**Isabel Hernandez**



# ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALIFORNIA



6,887 STUDENTS

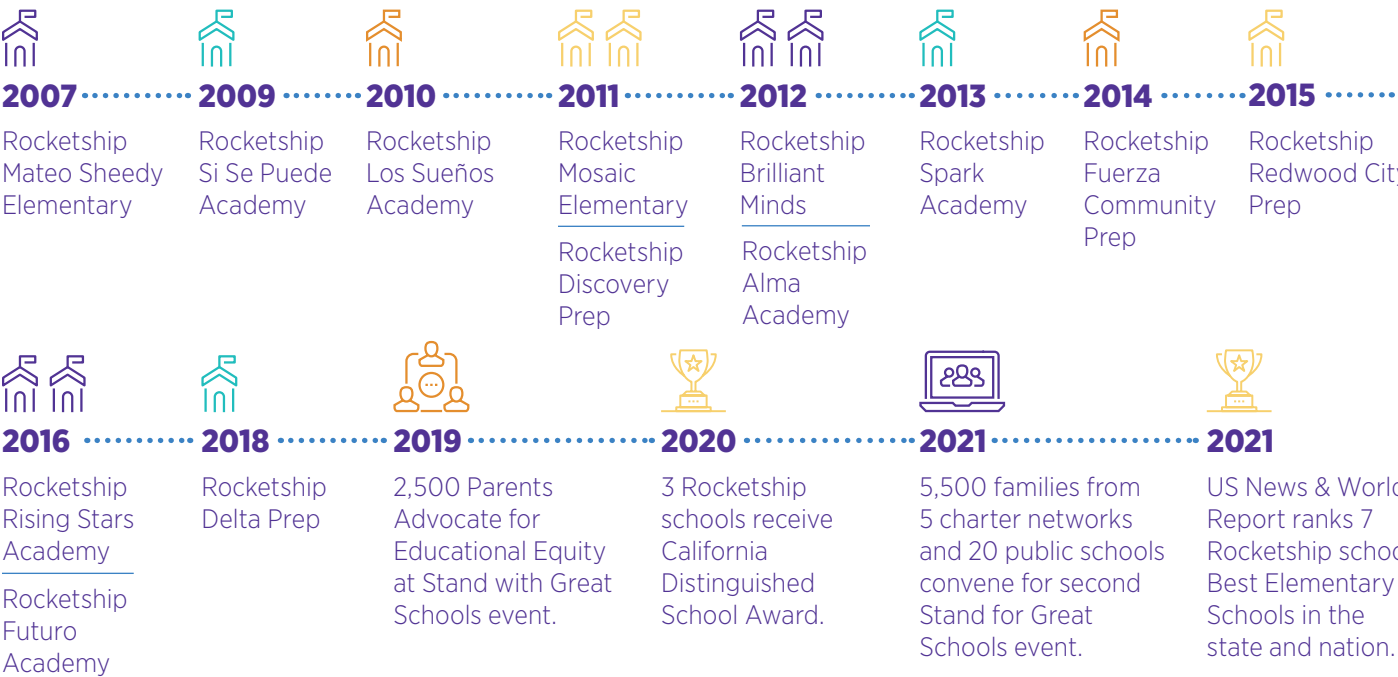
73% LATINX

80% SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

56% ENGLISH LEARNERS

Rocketship started in 2007 in a church in downtown San Jose with makeshift classrooms, seven fearless teachers, and 160 courageous Rocketeers. Building on an innovative model of teaching, learning, and parent power, Rocketship has grown to a network of 13 high-performing schools across the Bay Area serving nearly 7,000 students.

Our schools are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nowhere is the impact of COVID-19 more stark than within low-income communities of color in the Bay Area. During the height of the pandemic, people in the zip codes we serve were four times more likely to die from COVID-19 than those in the wealthiest zip codes. The economic impacts from the pandemic continue to exacerbate long-standing inequities in our Silicon Valley communities. Throughout this crisis, our 13 Bay Area Rocketship schools have been essential hubs for our communities providing support, resources, stability, and the excellent education our Rocketeers deserve.



# Rocketship Parent Tells San Jose Families, “Don’t Settle”

When Maria Serrantos and her husband immigrated to this country over 20 years ago, they dreamed of launching their own careers in the land of opportunity. Their dreams quickly changed once they started a family. Suddenly, the Serrantos wanted nothing more than for their children to reach their full potential.

Maria soon realized that her children were not receiving the best education possible in traditional public schools. After looking for options, she enrolled her children at Rocketship Si Se Puede Academy and immediately noticed the difference.

At Rocketship, Maria was treated as an equal partner in her children’s education and the school community. She quickly engaged with the educators at Si Se Puede and grew to become a parent leader at her campus. Happy to volunteer her time, Maria helped any way she could from tidying up classrooms to organizing parents for charter school renewal hearings.

Maria continued supporting her children and their schools throughout middle school, high school, and their college application process. She has consistently advocated for all parents to actively participate in their children’s schooling. Her advice to parents: Don’t settle.



“

“I reflect on those decisions my husband and I made early on, and am grateful to have found quality public schools to help my children reach their college goals. Right now my son, Salvador, is in his second year of college, majoring in aerospace engineering at the University of California Irvine. My eldest daughter Marlene is in her first year of college, in the nursing program at San José State University.”

Maria Serrantos





## Partnering with Stanford Health Care to “Separate Fact from Fiction on the COVID-19 Vaccines”

As adults across the Bay Area became eligible for the COVID-19 vaccines, we knew there were targeted efforts to spread misinformation about the virus and vaccines in our communities. We wanted to ensure our families could access a trusted resource to get the facts and answers they deserved. We reached out to our families to gather their questions and concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines. Families wanted to learn about side effects, immigration status concerns, vaccine options, and they wanted to better understand how communities of color were involved in the trials. Then, we partnered with experts at Stanford Health Care to produce a virtual town hall - “Separating Fact from Fiction on the COVID-19 Vaccines” - for families across all 13 Rocketship schools in California. We also invited families from Alpha Public Schools, KIPP Bay Area, Voices, Downtown College Prep, and ACE charter schools to join so more families could have access to this essential information.

We learned through a survey that half of the families that attended our event had not yet received a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Before the event, 71% of unvaccinated attendees indicated they were either undecided or not planning to get vaccinated. After attending the event, 80% of those unvaccinated attendees indicated they were now planning to get vaccinated. As an education nonprofit, we know knowledge is power. We are proud that our families were equipped with the information they needed to make an informed decision that impacts their families and communities.



## Rocketship California Wins Competitive “Community Schools” Grant

The California Department of Education awarded Rocketship Public Schools a significant grant as part of the 2020 California Community Schools Partnership Program. Out of more than 100 applicants in this highly competitive program, Rocketship was one of just 20 grant recipients, and the only charter school network to receive the full award. This grant will help us build upon our community school model to integrate student supports, expand learning time and opportunities, engage families and communities, and develop collaborative leadership and practices.

“

SAN JOSE  
**spotlight**

“Community schools are like a neighborhood nerve center for families. They coordinate with local support programs to address the full-range of possible learning barriers including healthcare, food assistance, counseling services, housing assistance, and more. They emphasize authentic family engagement and understand that a strong relationship between family and school is the backbone of child development. Community schools provide students with extended learning time and experiential learning activities designed to help students take more ownership of their education and foster more joy in learning.”

**Maricela Guerrero**

Executive Director, Rocketship California



# ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS WISCONSIN



711 STUDENTS  
95% BLACK OR LATINX  
83% SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED  
11% SPECIAL EDUCATION

In 2013, Rocketship Wisconsin launched the largest charter school opening in the history of Milwaukee: Rocketship Southside Community Prep. Since opening, we have grown this school to over 500 students. In 2018, we launched our second school, Rocketship Transformation Prep. We are proud to now serve over 700 students on both the North and South Side of Milwaukee.

Our Milwaukee schools continued to push to new heights of impact in the midst of a global pandemic. Our schools brought students back in the spring, building relationships and engaging students in their learning in-person. Our parents advocated for their children - making their voices heard in virtual roundtables with the governor and conducting research meetings with other elected officials. Rocketship leaders worked tirelessly to make sure our Rocketeers had what they needed to thrive while keeping staff and students safe. They went out on weeknights to find Rocketeers who weren't logging onto virtual classes and helped daycare providers get Rocketeers logged for online learning. Our leaders embodied what it means to care for our community.



2013

## Rocketship Southside Community Prep Opens

This marks the largest charter school opening in the history of Milwaukee.



2014

## Exceeds Expectations

Rocketship Southside Community Prep recognized by State superintendent and receives four stars on DPI Report Card.



2018

## Rocketship Transformation Prep Opens

Second school launches in the Silver Springs Neighborhood Center, offering a new school of choice and a hub for the community on Milwaukee's North Side.



2019

## Rocketship Transformation Moves into its Permanent Campus

School enrollment more than tripled in just two years.



2020

## Parent Leaders Meet with Governor

60+ families from multiple schools join a governor's listening session to share parent testimonies and demand for equitable funding for charter schools.



2020

## Launched a Parent Organizing Committee

New parent-led group forms to lead research meetings with elected officials and gather parents from other charters to ensure families' voices are heard by elected officials.



## Exceeding Expectations in Wisconsin

Rocketship Southside Community Prep earned an "Exceeding Expectations" rating - four out of five stars - on its 2020-21 Accountability Report Card. Our flagship school in Milwaukee is in the top 20% of all public elementary schools in the state that serve a similar population. Rocketship Southside Prep's performance in "school growth" was especially strong, outpacing the Milwaukee Public Schools average. A strong school growth score is a promising indicator that our Southside Rocketeers are on the path to a brighter future.

Our North Side school, Rocketship Transformation Prep, achieved the top rating on Wisconsin's Alternate Rating System. The state uses this accountability system for small schools and new schools like Transformation Prep. It is a two-tier system and Rocketship Transformation Prep was one of just two schools in Milwaukee to achieve the top rating - "Satisfactory Progress." Our Rocketeers in the historically underserved community of Milwaukee's North Side are continuing to make meaningful gains that can change the trajectory of their lives.

These comprehensive report cards rate schools on academic achievement and growth, preparedness for higher education, closing gaps, attendance, and dropout rates. In a year marked by historic academic declines, Rocketship Wisconsin is thrilled to see that our Rocketeers continued to grow!



★★★★  
Exceeds Expectations





# Strong Parent-Teacher Partnership Helps Rocketeer Defy the Odds

**Jade Carr,**  
Parent at Rocketship Transformation Prep

“Your son won’t start reading until middle school.”

This was the news I received regarding my son, Nzuri, when he was diagnosed with autism. Yet after transferring to Rocketship Transformation Prep from a local district school, my third grader is now defying the odds.

As the parent of a child with special needs, I need to be in close contact with my son’s teachers to understand what is and isn’t working for him at school. It was clear right away that Rocketship would treat me as a partner in my son’s education.

Not even a global pandemic could weaken my Rocketship family. When I couldn’t afford my internet bill anymore, Principal Vang showed up at my work with a Wi-Fi hotspot. Through a weekly text message survey, I got connected to food banks, tech assistance, and anything else my family needed to get through this hard winter. My Rocketship village got me - and hundreds of other Rocketeer families - through a very dark winter. And now Nzuri is back in school in-person! He is thriving in person and comes home every day with the biggest smile on his face, telling me all about what he learned that day.

Read the full article published  
in *Urban Milwaukee*.



# Using Summer School to Narrow COVID Learning Gaps

As schools across Milwaukee and the nation began coming to terms with a year marked by unfinished learning, we knew our most vulnerable students were most at risk of significantly falling behind. We couldn’t simply wait for the new school year to start. We launched our first-ever Summer School program at both Rocketship Southside Community Prep and Rocketship Transformation Prep. With generous support from Bader Philanthropies, we ensured that our students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic had a head start to the 2021-22 school year. Our Summer School consisted of small group tutoring and interventions in math and reading, as well as daily social-emotional learning and hands-on experiential learning. Our dedicated educators worked hard to close critical gaps in knowledge, focus on the whole child, and accelerate learning for our most vulnerable Rocketeers in Milwaukee.





# ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS TENNESSEE



1,076  
STUDENTS

93%  
BLACK OR  
LATINX

59%  
SOCIOECONOMICALLY  
DISADVANTAGED

27%  
ENGLISH  
LEARNERS

Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary launched in 2014 and Rocketship United Academy opened in 2015. Our two schools serve nearly 1,100 students. Yet Nashville children face obstacles that were in place far before their time at Rocketship.

It took a court order issued more than a decade after the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* for Nashville's public schools to fully integrate. Still a half century later, the stain of segregation on the city's public education system remains. Students of color and students from low-income families are more likely to attend low-performing schools, whereas students who live in more affluent neighborhoods attend higher performing schools.

Changing this fact is what drives Rocketship's work in Nashville. Both of our existing schools are Title 1, serving a majority of low-income families, and both have been named a "Reward School," the highest recognition for student achievement by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Nashville families are taking notice and advocating for more access to Rocketship's high-achieving elementary school model. Thanks to the support of parents, Rocketship received approval in late 2019 to open a third school in Southeast Nashville. It's the most diverse and fastest-growing part of the city, where nearly all district-managed schools are over capacity. We are eliminating racial inequity from public education in Nashville one community at a time.



2014

Rocketship Tennessee opens Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary.



2015

Rocketship United Academy, our most diverse campus, opens with a culture rooted in human rights and equity for all.



2018

Tennessee Department of Education awards Rocketship United Academy "Reward School" status.



2019

Rocketship Nashville Northeast recognized by state as "Reward School."



2019

Rocketship receives approval to open a third school with a music-enriched curriculum in Antioch.



2021

**Launch of Nashville Charter Coalition Parent Organizing Committee**  
Parent leaders from Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary hold conversations with local school board members to advocate for their approval to offer fifth grade at our campus.



2021

**Rocketship United Academy Named Top School in Nation**  
US News & World Report ranks Rocketship United Academy one of the Best Elementary Schools in the state and nation. Principal Tygima Steele was also awarded Administrator of the Year Finalist for 20-21.

## Nashville Students Reflect On What the First Female Vice President Means for Girls & Women

After the historic 2020 election, the Tennessean published a front-page story featuring Rocketship Nashville Northeast's fourth-grade teacher, James Cross, and his students engaging in an innovative unit on the U.S. Constitution and its amendments.



"Sometimes parents and teachers don't realize what young children are seeing and hearing or the questions they have.

'A lot of times, we think our kids aren't ready for this conversation, but they are,' said James Cross, a teacher at Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary.

Cross and his students explored the question, 'Who was the Constitution written for and inclusive of, and who was left out or ignored?'

The students not only discussed the historical significance of Harris' election but also studied the women's suffrage movement and Tennessee's role in the ratification of the 19th Amendment a century ago.

It's important for his students — who are mostly Black or Latino — to see people like them not only in the school's history curriculum but in positions of power in everyday life.

'It's really, really important for all kids to see that,' Cross said. 'Our principal talks a lot about how kids need access to windows and mirrors. It's important to give our students access to that and to see those images and reflections of themselves so they can understand that there are all sorts of people from different backgrounds who are in these positions and thriving.'

**Tennessean.**

November 18, 2020





## Parents Power Launch of New School in Nashville

In August 2022, Rocketship will launch its third school in Nashville. The campus will be located in the Antioch neighborhood of Southeast Nashville. Many of the families we currently serve at Rocketship United Academy drive 45 minutes each way to give their kids a high-quality education. Knowing other families in their community were interested in Rocketship, our parents organized to demonstrate the need and demand to open a high-quality public elementary school in their community. Without the voices of our families, 5400 Mt. View Rd. would simply be a plot of land. Instead, it will become an integral piece of Antioch's future, built on the hopes and dreams of its residents.

Rocketship Tennessee's new campus in Antioch will feature a music-enriched curriculum to help bring learning to life for the diverse community it will serve. Whether it's cheering at morning Launch or chanting in humanities, students will love school from the start. Studies have shown that music education prepares students to think critically, take risks, and persevere through challenges. Music is also a form of communication that brings together people from different races and cultures. Antioch is a diverse community with families from many different cultures and countries, and we are committed to making this school a reflection of the community. Music will be our shared language. Together, we will learn in harmony and soar towards opportunity.



## Supporting Families Outside of the Classroom

Rocketship Tennessee schools are more than just opportunities to get a great education. We strive to serve the whole child, supporting them academically, mentally, and emotionally. Because if a child's needs aren't met outside of the classroom, they can't show up fully inside the classroom.

The pandemic sparked new challenges for our families. As they navigated these obstacles, Rocketship staff saw an opportunity to lean in. Every Saturday, Sherrill Stratford and her team turned school parking lots into food distribution sites for the community. Car after car was greeted with a grocery box filled with essentials. Sherrill and her team supported an average of 450 families every Saturday for 10 months. The food drive not only fed Rocketeers but also brought our community together - something that is more important than ever before. Sherrill's incredible effort to support our communities led her to be a finalist for the Tennessee Charter Advocate of the Year.

“

“A good community school knows what families need. This food drive was about supporting the whole child and meeting their needs both inside and outside of the classroom.”

**Sherrill Stratford**

Associate Director, Growth & Community Impact, Rocketship Tennessee



# ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS WASHINGTON DC



1,525 STUDENTS  
96% BLACK  
72% AT-RISK  
20% HOMELESS

In 2016, Rocketship Rise Academy opened in Southeast DC's Ward 8 as the largest charter opening in DC history. Rocketship Legacy Prep opened in Ward 7 a year later. In their very first year, both schools achieved Tier 1 status - the highest ranking for DC Public Charter Schools. Last August, in the midst of a global pandemic, Rocketship Infinity Community Prep opened its doors as our third school in DC. Partnering with AppleTree Institute to provide high-quality pre-K education, we serve over 1,500 Rocketeers every day - students who have the potential to be DC's next leaders and creative thinkers.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit our DC students hard - exacerbating already deeply-entrenched inequalities in power, opportunity, and access to resources. Our schools are fighting to change those patterns. We show that income and zip codes do not limit the potential of our Rocketeers. Our schools brought joy to our students every single day, welcomed kids back to campus in large numbers in the spring, supported staff and student mental health, and much more. The learning, growing, joy, and love that our Rocketeers experience every day is putting every student on the path to a better future.

 <b>2016</b> <b>Rocketship DC launches first school - Rocketship Rise Academy</b> Rocketship Rise Academy opens with 448 students - the largest charter school opening in DC history.	 <b>2017</b> <b>Rise Academy Earns a Tier 1 Rating in its First Year</b> Rocketship Rise Academy scores in the Tier 1 category - the highest ranking for DC Public Charter Schools - after its first year serving students.	 <b>2017</b> <b>Rocketship Legacy Prep Opens in the Fort Davis Neighborhood</b> Rocketship DC opens a second school in the region in Ward 7.	 <b>2018</b> <b>Legacy Prep Earns a Tier 1 Rating in its First Year</b> Same as Rise Academy, Rocketship Legacy Prep scores in the Tier 1 category - the highest ranking for DC Public Charter Schools - after its first year serving students.
 <b>2020</b> <b>Launches CareCorps &amp; Staff Wellness Services</b> Rocketship DC launches CareCorps to support our families more holistically and partnered with the WISE Center's counseling services to help staff in trauma-sensitive schools feel safe, connected, and supported.	 <b>2020</b> <b>Rocketship Infinity Community Prep Launches in Ward 5</b> Our new STEAM-focused school opens in Ward 5.	 <b>2020</b> <b>Parent Leaders Organize to Engage Candidates for Elected Office</b> Parent leaders organize a series of 10 virtual community conversations with candidates for CityCouncil, DC Board of Education, and the Ward 8 Council.	 <b>2021</b> <b>Rocketship Legacy Prep Named Top School in Nation</b> US News & World Report ranks Rocketship Legacy Prep among the Best Elementary Schools in DC and the nation.



## Launching A New School During A Global Pandemic

Rocketship Infinity Community Prep opened its virtual doors in August 2020 and invited students back in-person to their brand new campus in Ward 5 in the spring. This science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) school was named Rocketship Infinity Community Prep by our parents to reflect the unlimited potential of the Ward 5 community.

DC board of directors, and leaders on our team worked together to identify a truly exceptional leader who exemplifies the spirit of our Ward 5 campus - Romaine B. Thomas. A native Washingtonian and lifelong leader in DC public education, Ms. Thomas is the recipient of the National Distinguished Principal Award for her outstanding leadership in providing quality education for children.

As is our tradition in DC, we also name our campus after a distinguished leader in our community. A coalition of parents, community leaders, members of the Rocketship

“

“Community doesn't always mean that you have to be sitting next to each other in the same room all the time. Community is the essence of the people who are working together, who support each other no matter what, and are driving towards the same goals and vision. Rocketship Infinity Community Prep is firmly rooted in the community as the campus is named after local leader Romaine B. Thomas - a nationally-recognized elementary school principal and civic leader who is deeply committed to community development around our school. We are honored to be able to name our campus after this local hero and thrilled to continue cultivating this new, vibrant school community.”

**Angel McNeil**

Founding Principal, Rocketship Infinity Community Prep at the Romaine B. Thomas Campus





## Wellness Team Supports School Culture During Challenging Times

Shayla Kimble, a first-grade math and science teacher at Rocketship Legacy Prep, was trying to adjust to teaching her students over Zoom last year, all while being at home with two young children and finishing her last year in graduate school. It all felt like too much—a relatable feeling for many teachers.

Using the skills she gained in Rocketship DC's staff wellness sessions, Shayla worked with her supervisor to create a work-life boundaries chart. She developed some guardrails for herself and improved her trauma-informed teaching practices for her students.

Rocketship DC is continuing to invest in teacher well-being as a long-term strategy to prioritize the whole educator. It's an investment we need to make in public education across the board and with the same sense of urgency we've seen with addressing the pandemic itself. Once again, lives and livelihoods are at stake.



## Planting Seeds of Civil Power In Social Studies Lessons

It's the ultimate responsibility of our public education system to prepare students to be engaged and informed citizens. Our democracy depends on it. Understanding modern society through the context of history is a critical part of every student's education. That's why Rocketship DC developed a new social studies curriculum - Seeds of Civil Power - which is equal parts social studies and social-emotional learning. The idea is that we are planting the seeds of a civic education for students so they will one day be able to convert that understanding into power. We're doing this by helping them learn and question the world around them. It starts with exploring the idea of community and how our students fit in. In DC, 96% of our students identify as Black so we particularly focus on ensuring Black students feel the beauty and power of their cultural identity. We want our Black Rocketeers to understand that they are a part of a rich, historic culture that's worth studying. We want them to see themselves in the texts they read. By planting the seeds of a civic education, we hope one day those seeds will bloom into power.

Read the full article published in *The 74*.





# ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

T E X A S

## Launching a New Region In the Lone Star State

In June of 2021, Rocketship Public Schools Texas was approved by the Texas State Board of Education to open schools in Tarrant County, Texas. Our first school will open in the Stop 6 neighborhood of Fort Worth in August 2022. It's the same community where our superintendent, SaJade Miller, and our founding principal, Dr. Christina Hanson, were born, raised, and served as teachers and accomplished school leaders.

Nearly 70% of third graders from disadvantaged families in Tarrant County are not reading on grade level, and the vast majority are students of color. If students don't learn to read by third grade, they can't read to learn in fourth grade and beyond – putting them at high risk of falling chronically behind. Rocketship Texas is uniquely suited to join the coalition of changemakers working to solve this challenge in Tarrant County.

By focusing exclusively on elementary education, our model is designed to help improve the entire system of public education in Tarrant County. When our prepared students and engaged parents move on to different middle schools, those schools will welcome students who are ready for the rigors of middle school and parents who know how to advocate for their students, partner with educators, and hold leaders accountable. This is how our elementary-only model is designed to help improve the entire public education system in Tarrant County.

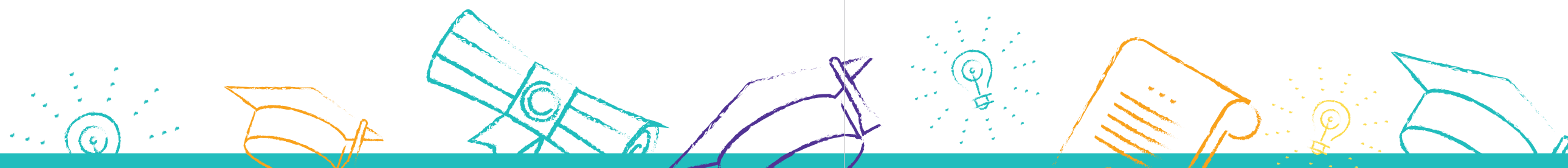


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*“The investments Rocketship Texas is making in our public education ecosystem and in our community are helping move Fort Worth forward.”*

**Mattie Parker**

Fort Worth Mayor





# Powered by Tarrant County Leaders

Rocketship Texas was founded by a diverse coalition of widely respected Tarrant County leaders with deep expertise in public education, community organizing, financial management, and parent engagement. We aim to develop a network of community schools that eliminate barriers to student success. Through collaboration with community partners to access essential services, we support student well-being and provide an excellent elementary education that meets the unique needs of every child. The network is led by Superintendent SaJade Miller, a proven education leader who was born and raised in Southeast Fort Worth's Stop 6 neighborhood. As the former principal of Dunbar High School and the Assistant Superintendent of Innovation for Fort Worth ISD, Mr. Miller has dedicated his entire career to working to eliminate the achievement gap in Texas and is passionate about partnering with the community to improve equity and excellence in public education across Tarrant County.



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Former Superintendent,  
Fort Worth ISD



**Vincent Davila**  
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**Victoria Puente**  
Founder,  
Long Game Consulting, LLC



“Improving equity in public education starts with supporting our exceptional leaders of color in Tarrant County. You will find no better leader in our great city than Mr. SaJade Miller. As Superintendent of Rocketship Public Schools Texas, Mr. Miller will ensure that all students have access to an excellent elementary school that opens the door to opportunity.”

**Christene Moss**

Former President, Fort Worth ISD Board of Education



# Parents Spark Change for SE Fort Worth Community

More than 60 parents traveled nearly 200 miles from Fort Worth to Austin, Texas to use the power of their voice to express their support for Rocketship Texas at the State Board of Education public hearing on our charter. These 60 powerful parent leaders were representing the more than 900 families that had already expressed interest in Rocketship. Before Rocketship Texas had even secured a charter to operate schools, the region spent nearly two years listening to families' needs and dreams and building strong relationships focused on helping parents realize their power to effectively champion their child's education and advocate for their community.

Our parents showcased their power on that momentous day in June. Indeed parent power is a major reason Rocketship is launching in Fort Worth and we're honored to serve the families that brought us here.



“Parents’ passionate pleas pushed the State Board of Education to allow Rocketship Public Schools to establish in Fort Worth’s Stop Six neighborhood.”

**Fort Worth Report**



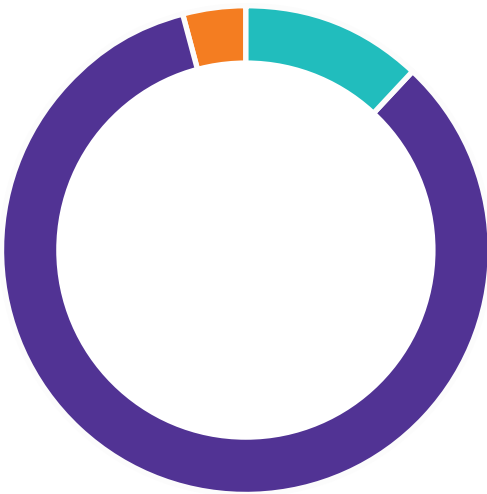
# FINANCIALS

Rocketship is building a scalable and financially sustainable non-profit school model that propels student achievement in underserved communities across the country. In 2020–21, 96% of our funding came from public sources. School-based expenses accounted for 84% of our spending.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

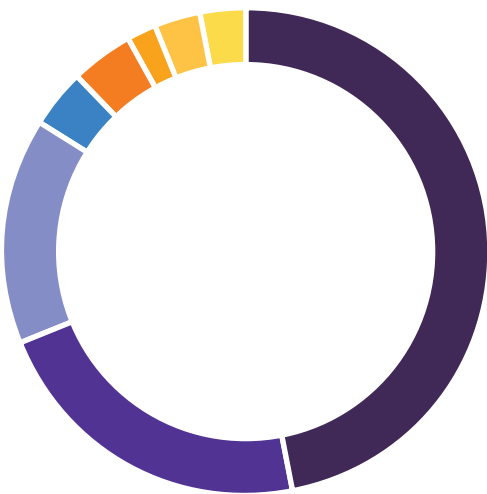
Fully enrolled schools reach financial sustainability within three to five years of launching. Each region is financially sustainable at five to eight schools. Our Bay Area region is our first fully sustainable region, meaning that our 13 schools and the regional team supporting them operate solely on public funds.

# REVENUE



- 12% Federal
- 84% State
- 4% Philanthropy

# EXPENSES



- 47% School Staff
- 22% School Operating Costs
- 15% School Facilities
- 4% Achievement & Personalized Learning
- 4% Community Engagement, Comms & Parent Leadership
- 2% Facilities & Operations
- 3% Talent, HR & Strategy
- 3% Finance & Legal

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

- Antioch Unified School District
- Mount Diablo Unified School District
- Tennessee Department of Education
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Office of Charter Schools
- 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
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*Thank you for your generous support of our educators, communities, and Rocketeers. Below are supporters who gave \$1,000 and above.*

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\*Indicates single year of multi-year commitment



$$(5 \times 6) + 4$$

$$30 + 4$$

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