



2022
2023

YEAR IN REVIEW

ROCKETSHIP
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WASHINGTON DC

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DC
LIFETIME
STUDENTS
SERVED

2,970

Rocketeers: **1,493**
Black & Latino: **98%**
At-Risk: **77%**
Homeless: **13%**

Ward 8: **529**
Ward 7: **658**
Ward 5: **306**

2022-23
DC STUDENT
POPULATION

In 2016, Rocketship Washington DC opened its very first school. Today, we have grown into a formidable force in public education, with three schools serving wards five, seven, and eight with an additional 20 schools spread across California, Milwaukee, Tennessee, and Texas. Our growth and progress mirrors the rise of innovative public charter schools across the country.

A recent groundbreaking study from Stanford showcased that students in public charter schools consistently outperform their district school counterparts. The study's author, Margaret "Macke" Raymond, wrote that "What you're looking at is really the only story in U.S. education policy where we've been able to create a set of conditions such that schools actually do get better." The study recognized Rocketship Public Schools as a "gap-busting" network - proof that high-quality public education is possible in any community.

Charter schools were founded in 1988 by Albert Shanker, an education reformer and American Teachers Federation president. The founding premise of charter schools was to free educators from the bureaucratic constraints of traditional district schools and empower educators to experiment with innovative approaches to instruction, especially for students in disadvantaged communities of color who continued to be underserved by the traditional system. Charter schools were conceptualized as a means to revitalize the twin promises of American public education, fostering social mobility and unity in our diverse society. Our commitment to realize that promise is why over 30,000 families have chosen to send their children to Rocketship over these last 16 years.

While we celebrate the incredible progress our network has made, Rocketship remains a work in progress. Just as our Rocketeers continuously learn and grow, we, too, are committed to continuous learning. We are relentless in our pursuit of innovative methods to better serve our students, nurture our talent, and support our parents to champion equity and excellence in their communities. Together, our collective of parents, teachers, leaders, supporters, and students are igniting a movement to reshape the future for underserved communities throughout our nation. Together, we are unleashing potential. Together, we are unleashing potential.



Preston Smith
Co-Founder & CEO



Greetings Rocketship DC supporters,

Here at Rocketship DC, we ignite a love for learning in our students, families, and community. With each school day, we continue to see just how much of an impact the Covid -19 pandemic had on the academic and social emotional growth of our students. Yet each day we also see the significant strides we are making towards creating educational equity in DC. Each of our three campuses is full of joyful students who are excited to learn and actively engage in their own growth.

But don't just take it from us. This year, Rocketship Infinity was selected as a 2023 Bold Schools Award recipient by Empower K12. Rocketship Infinity had the highest growth of ANY school in DC! Furthermore, we are seeing a decrease in student truancy and absenteeism, with two of our campuses seeing a decrease by more than 20 percentage points. We also began a growing partnership with Out Teach to build an outdoor learning lab for Rocketeers at Rocketship Legacy Prep, allowing us to bridge the gap in science between indoor and outdoor learning. Thank you to our school leaders, staff and families for working to ensure that our Rocketeers receive the quality education they deserve.

Over the next year we are doubling down on our committed focus to wellness, academic growth, and strengthening our advocacy and engagement, all with and in support of our students, families, staff, and community. We are continuously looking for opportunities to improve food and nutrition options, physical and mental wellness, expand our outdoor learning spaces, and provide strong academic and enrichment programming that exposes students to opportunities for the future.

Together, we can give equal access to opportunity for all.

In partnership,

Candice Bobo
Executive Director,
Washington DC



Major New Stanford Study Highlights “Gap-Busting” Public Charter Schools

A major new [Stanford CREDO study](#) of more than 3 million public school students found that students at public charter schools outperform traditional public school students. More notably, the study highlighted Rocketship Public Schools as one of the charter sector’s “gap-busting” networks that are providing empirical proof that high-quality public education is possible anywhere.

The study also pushed back on a common, unfounded claim that charter schools “cherry pick” the best students as a way to improve their results. In multiple analyses, this major study found the opposite is true. Charter schools enroll students who are disproportionately lower achieving than the students in traditional schools. Charter schools are serving the students most in need and realizing stronger results.

Margaret “Macke” Raymond, founder and director of CREDO, put it best when she said that:

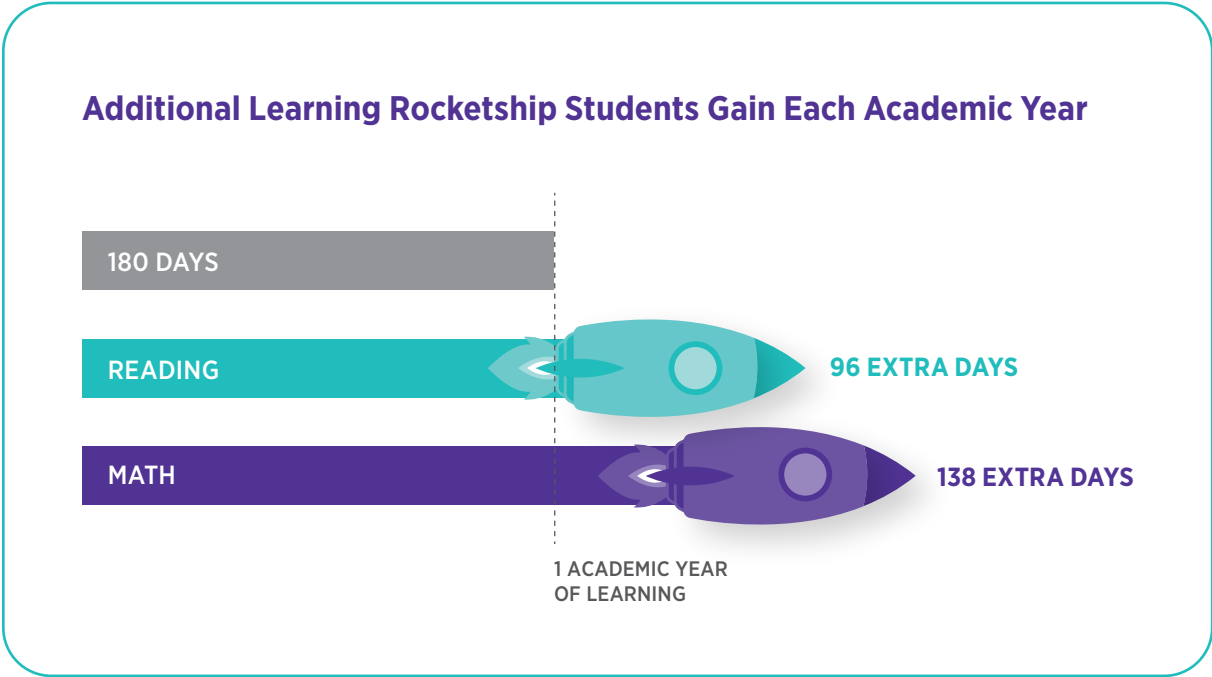
“What you’re looking at is really the only story in U.S. education policy where we’ve been able to create a set of conditions such that schools actually do get better.”

Indeed, this study makes it clear that public charter schools are driving significant progress in public education. And at the core of that progress is our commitment to continuous learning, innovation, improvement, and meeting the unique needs of all students and families. All of us at Rocketship are tremendously proud to play a significant role in demonstrating what is possible in public education.



Rocketeers Gain Five to Seven Months of Additional Learning per Year

The Stanford CREDO study found that nationwide, public charter school students gain the equivalent of 16 additional days of learning in reading and six additional days of learning in math compared to their peers in the traditional public schools they would have otherwise attended. At Rocketship, our Rocketeers gained significantly more — the equivalent of 96 additional days of learning in reading and 138 additional days of learning in math. That is equivalent to five to seven months of additional learning in a single school year. We truly are unleashing potential.

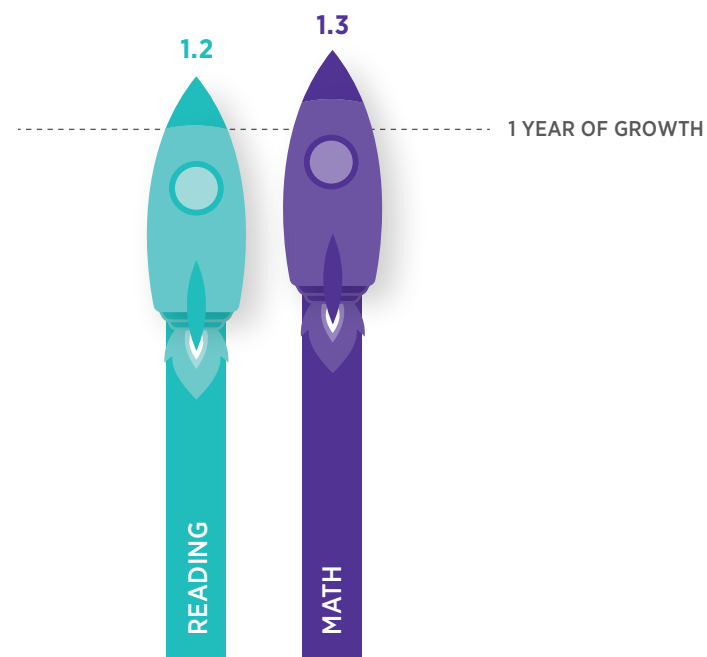


First-Year Rocketeers Narrow Achievement Gaps

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. But we do expect major gains in academic growth that narrow the gap that separates them from their college-bound peers. In the 2022-23 school year, our first-year Rocketeers achieved gap-closing results in every region. By growing over a grade level in a single school year, students are gaining ground on their college-bound peers and eliminating the achievement gap.

NWEA, the Northwest Evaluation Association, and its MAP Growth nationally-normed assessment, is used by more than 9,000 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 1.3 grade levels in math and 1.2 in reading.

Average New Student Growth



Bridging the Gap in Outdoor Education

We believe the right community partnerships help broaden opportunities for our Rocketeers. That's why Rocketship Washington DC and OutTeach, an outdoor education science lab, are bringing learning to life at Rocketship Legacy Prep.

OutTeach helps schools across the country transform the outdoors into active learning labs that unlock the wonder of science for students. This new program enhances Rocketship's in-classroom science curriculum by creating hands-on learning opportunities outside of the classroom, while also boosting the overall well-being of our Rocketeers by connecting with nature.

OutTeach's program is designed by educators with real classroom experience, OutTeach delivers personalized hands-on training, collaborative partnerships, and easily accessible resources that help our Rocketship teachers recast everyday outdoor spaces into exciting labs where anything is possible. Through this partnership, we're creating a future where every student – regardless of background, resources, or learning differences – can experience the wonder of science first-hand.

As part of OutTeach's model, teachers are trained on how to lead instruction in these outdoor spaces, creating a sustainable, on-going program for the future. After seeing such great success with this program, Rocketship looks forward to bringing these outdoor learning labs to both Rocketship Rise Academy and Infinity Community Prep in the future!



SRI Spotlights Rocketship's Parent Power

A parent is a child's first teacher and lifelong advocate. Parents hold extraordinary power to change outcomes for their children and improve the quality of their community. But they often don't have a seat at decision-making tables. We're working to change that.

SRI International, an independent nonprofit research institute that supports government and nonprofit agencies, spent months analyzing our parent leadership work and published a report detailing our model and results. The study authors noted that, "Rocketship parents are learning to use their voices to influence local and state policies that impact their families and communities."

We believe every parent can become a leader. Parents who get involved in this work typically do not have any experience in community organizing or advocacy. As they learn about new issues affecting their community and acquire new skills, our parents build power and create change in their communities. Rocketship families have pushed for better traffic safety measures, raised awareness about the importance of voting, participated in marches and rallies, and advocated for policies that are improving excellence and equity in public education. For many parents, these experiences have led to increased self-confidence, lasting friendships and, in some cases, jobs in advocacy and government.



“

Rocketship parents are learning to use their voices to influence local and state policies that impact their families and communities.

– SRI International

”



Voices for Change:
Parent Leadership &
Advocacy at Rocketship
Public Schools

SRI International®

Partnering with the Community

At Rocketship DC, we partner with those in our community to create bridges for Rocketeers that can benefit them today and after graduation day. Connecting with leaders who shape educational policies is one of the many ways we do this. Last December, our Rocketship Legacy Prep community hosted the Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellows Program. The program partners with senior-level political leaders who have the knowledge, skill, and will to be effective, equity-minded education policymakers at the state level. This powerful group of lawmakers and elected officials spent the morning at one of our Rocketship campuses learning directly from students, families, and staff. They began their day cheering with us at a student-led morning Launch and engaged in rich roundtable discussions with families about their Rocketship experience. They also visited classrooms to see our Rocketeers in action and connected with our school leaders.

From there, Rocketship teamed up with the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), which brings current and emerging global leaders to the United States for professional exchanges. Rocketship and IVLP partnered on the organization's first-ever project on early education where four Department of State Liaisons and 16 International Visitors from 16 different countries visited Rocketship Infinity Prep to help inform their own work in education. Rocketship was the only charter school they visited during their time in the United States.

Throughout the year we also collaborated with [Vision To Learn](#), a national nonprofit that travels to schools to provide free eye exams and glasses to students in need. However, Vision To Learn was experiencing some regulatory hurdles when trying to operate in DC. So, we decided to partner with DC Public Schools and other local public charter schools to write letters and have parents share their stories to help pass legislation to allow Vision To Learn to serve all public school students in DC. As a result, more than 900 students in DC public schools, including Rocketship, received free eyeglasses! These students are now more engaged in class, more confident in themselves, and more excited about learning. We know these benefits will follow students well into the rest of their academic careers and adulthood.

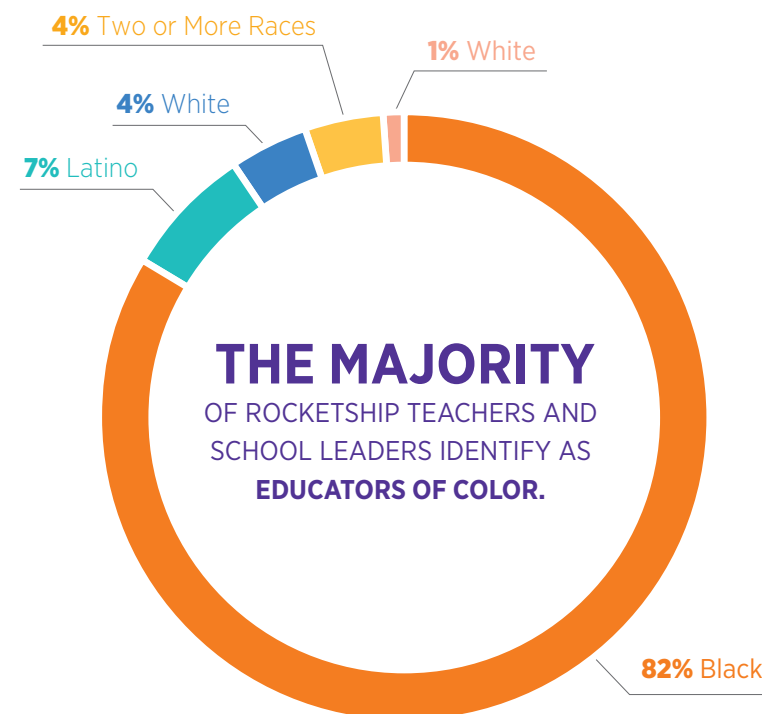
Local partnerships like this program help elected officials better understand the communities they represent and the power of having quality choice schools in Ward 5, 7, and 8.



Rocketship Educators Reflect the Communities We Serve

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 national data from the Institute of Education Sciences shows that America's teaching force hasn't increased in diversity. In fact, 79% of the nation's public school teachers are white. In contrast, 45 percent of the nation's public school students are white, according to the National Center of Education Statistics. While there has been a slight increase in Hispanic public school teachers since 2015, the share of Black teachers has actually declined since the 1990s.

We are flipping the "diversity in education" script at Rocketship. **Our educators reflect the communities we serve. The majority of our educators—96%—identify as people of color.**



*All Rocketship teachers and school leaders



Rocketship's DEI Vision

In 2019, Rocketship launched its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team to help unleash the full potential of our incredible team 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, respected, as well as heard in decisions that impact our collective work.



ELEMENTARY- ONLY BY DESIGN



Improving 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 students 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 of their child's learning and learn how to harness the power of their voice to advocate for their children and their communities. They learn to hold leaders accountable and ensure their kids continue to receive the same excellence in education that they experienced during their elementary years at Rocketship.

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 elevate the entire public education ecosystem in the communities we serve.



ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS WASHINGTON DC



1,493
ROCKETEERS

98%
BLACK & LATINO

77%
AT-RISK

13%
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. In August 2020, in the midst of the 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 more than a thousand Rocketeers every day — students who have the potential to be DC's next leaders and creative thinkers.



2016

Rocketship DC launches first school — Rocketship Rise Academy — opening with 448 students, the largest charter school opening in DC history



2017

Rise Academy scores in the Tier 1 category—the highest ranking for DC Public Charter Schools—after its first year serving students



2017

Rocketship Legacy Prep opens in the Fort Davis neighborhood in Ward 7



2018

Rocketship Legacy Prep scores in the Tier 1 category — the highest ranking for DC Public Charter Schools — after its first year serving students



2020

Rocketship DC launches Care Corps 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



2020

Rocketship Infinity Community Prep launches in Ward 5 with a focus on STEAM education



2020

Parent leaders organize a series of 10 virtual community conversations with candidates for City Council, DC Board of Education, and the Ward 8 Council



2021

US News & World Report ranks Rocketship Legacy Prep among the Best Elementary Schools in DC and the nation

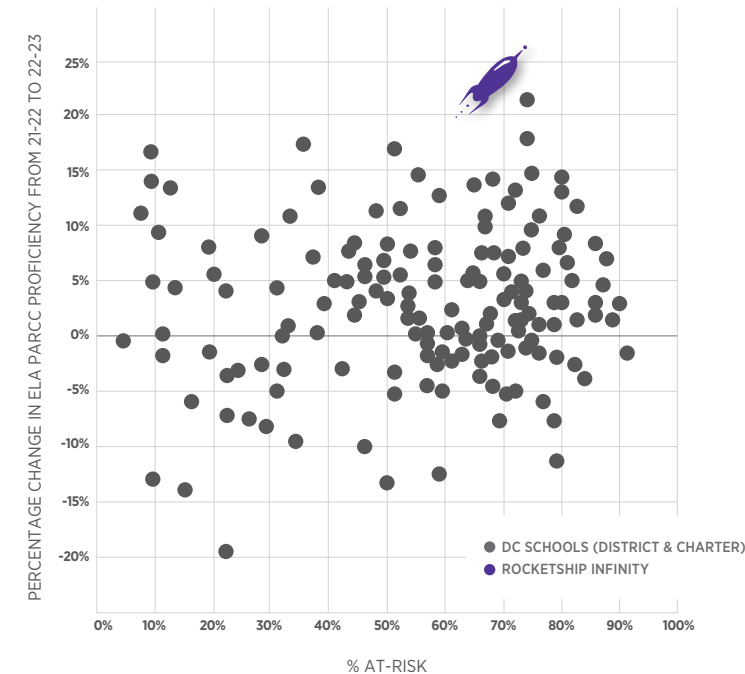


2023

Rocketship Infinity Community Prep honored for exceptional academic achievement for at-risk students by Empower K12

2022-23 PARCC School Results:

Year over year % growth in English Language Arts among students classified as economically disadvantaged



Rocketship Infinity Achieves Highest Growth in City Among Schools Serving Similar Populations

Rocketship Infinity Community Prep was named a 'Bold Performance' School by Empower K12, an independent research nonprofit, for their 2023 results on DC's Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam. Rocketship Infinity had the highest growth in the entire city from third to fourth grade last year. We are proud to have one of only 12 DC district or charter schools honored for boldly supporting priority students — students designated as at-risk, students with disabilities, and students of color — to reach academic success. Bold Performance Schools have 2023 PARCC proficiency rates that are an average 15.1 percentage points better than other schools serving a high priority student population and 11.5 percentage points better than the pre-pandemic average for schools with similar demographics.

Empower K12 noted that each Bold Performance School used five key strategies to achieve their success, all of which we see at Rocketship Infinity and across our other two schools each day:

- **Data analysis to drive instruction:** educators utilized student work, exit tickets, and progress monitoring trackers to adjust instructional support often
- **Teacher support:** instructional leaders provided coaching and professional development, often in-the-moment based on data
- **Family engagement:** with a focus on improving attendance, educators ensured that families were frequently updated on upcoming happenings at school
- **Joyful school climate:** school leadership teams emphasized the importance of a fun and joyful school environment for students and adults
- **Targeted small-group and individual student interventions:** to address specific skill gaps and achieve success on rigorous, grade-level content

Rocketship Infinity Community Prep is clearly beating the odds for students, helping them to achieve at high levels that put them on the path to college and career success.



One School, Three Campuses

Rocketship Rise Academy

- Our flagship campus opened in 2016 to serve families in Ward 8.
- We serve Pre-K3 to 5th grade
- A diverse community including a growing population of bilingual families
- Our school partners with Martha’s Table to provide families with food support options
- Students enjoy enrichment offerings in basketball, robotics, photography

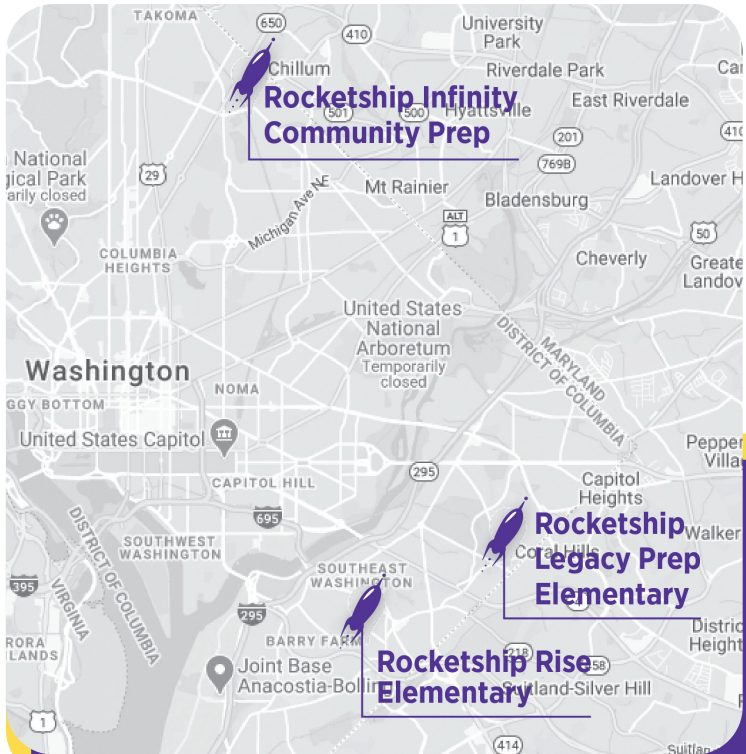


Rocketship Legacy Prep

- Our second campus opened in 2017 to serve families in Ward 7
- We serve PreK3- 5th grade
- Our school partners with Martha’s Table to provide families with food support options
- Rocketeers benefit from an outdoor science-focused learning lab
- Students enjoy enrichments in music, art, P.E., and health
- Students enjoy enrichment offerings in basketball, robotics, photography

Rocketship Infinity Community Prep

- This brand new, state-of-the-art campus opened in 2020 to serve families in Ward 5
- Serves Pre-K3 to 4th grade and growing to 5th grade
- A diverse community with our largest population of bilingual families
- 2022 Bold School Award Winner
- Students enjoy enrichments in science, music, and physical education.



Serving Wards
5, 7, and 8

Making Academic Strides Across the Region

Across Washington, DC, public district and charter schools are struggling to recover from the significant toll COVID-19 took on our students' academic performance. The learning loss from pandemic closures only further exacerbated historic inequities for our at-risk students, especially those east of the river.

At Rocketship, our NWEA MAP and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam results show us that we are making progress towards recovery but it will take accelerated growth to get back to our pre-pandemic performance and beyond. That is why Rocketship DC made concrete changes to the many aspects of our school year, week, and day for the 23-24 school year. From additional, targeted professional development for all staff to dedicated time for science education in second through fifth grade at each school, we are making the changes needed to truly unleash our Rocketeers' full potential.

There were some bright spots in students meeting or exceeding standards:

- **Rocketship Rise** increased three percentage points in English Language Arts.
- **Rocketship Legacy Prep** increased four percentage points in math.
- **Rocketship Infinity Community Prep's** Rocketeers grew 24 percentage points in English Language Arts from spring 2022 to spring 2023, and seven percentage points in math! Rocketship Infinity Community Prep also ranked the fourth highest-scoring school in Ward 5 for socioeconomically disadvantaged students in both subjects.



Celebrating Exceptional Leaders

DC Rocketeer of the Year:

Jennifer Lewis, Reading Specialist, Rocketship Legacy Prep.

Jenn's loyalty, tenacity, and work ethic are unmatched. She enjoys being up close and personal with her students, and her dedication and hard work have gotten them results. If there was ever a Rocketeer of the Year, current and in years past, it is Jennifer Lewis. Her commitment to our organization and our Rocketeers is unparalleled, and she is a true asset to our team.

Community Award:

Martin Washington, Operations Coordinator, Rocketship Legacy Prep.

Mr. Washington leans in whenever and wherever. His spirit is contagious and permeates throughout our building. The connections he has with students and staff help build a strong home-to-school connection as he is able to leverage relationships that impact our school community.

Tenacity Award:

Jessica Spiegler, Mathematics Achievement Manager, DC Network Team

Through the launch of a new curriculum and a new role, Jess has exemplified tenacity within our network this year. Jess developed professional development sessions that allowed teammates to reflect on previous practices and inspire them to own a more standards aligned approach to math instruction.

Innovation Award:

Hailey Nettles, Integrated Special Education Teacher, Rocketship Infinity Community Prep.

Ms. Nettles created systems to integrate special education and general education curricula, systems to integrate external supports with the school community, and above all ensure that our growing caseload of students with special needs received services and accommodations to better access the general education space.



Authenticity Award:

LaToya Cromwell, 5th Grade Humanities Teacher, Rocketship Rise.

LaToya's unwavering commitment to her students' growth and learning is truly commendable. Her humility shines through in her constant pursuit of growth and improvement, as she actively seeks feedback and guidance to enhance her teaching practice. Her dedication to building strong relationships with her students is evident in her unwavering belief in their genius. LaToya creates a nurturing and inclusive classroom environment where each student feels valued and supported.

Angel McNeil, the founding and former Principal of Rocketship Infinity Community Prep was also named a finalist for **The Washington Post's Principal of the Year Award**. Angel was nominated by the DC Public Charter School Board and was selected as the charter school principal finalist among all of the charter school nominees throughout the region.

Congratulations to our award winners and the rest of our wonderful Rocketship DC educators! It is because of these exceptional educators that our Rocketeers learn, grow, and live out our core values each year. Thank you for all of your encouragement of Rocketship DC - this year and every year. Your support is truly changing lives.

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Become a Rocketship Supporter!



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Rocketship couldn't do this work without the partnership, support, and expertise of our authorizers, District of Columbia Public Charter School Board

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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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