



**Monday, August 25, 2025**  
**Rocketship Tennessee Board of Trustees Meeting (2025-26 Q1)**

**Meeting Time: 11:30am CT**

**Meeting Location: 311 Plus Park Blvd Suite 130, Nashville, TN 37217**

**Webinar Link: <https://rocketshipschools.zoom.us/j/89202330785>**

**Webinar ID: 892 0233 0785**

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**1. Opening Items**

A. Call to order

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**2. Consent Items**

A. Approve minutes from the June 5, 2025 meeting of the Rocketship Tennessee Board of Trustees

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**3. Information Items**

A. Board Updates

B. Regional Health Dashboard Review

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**4. Action Items: Applications & Resolutions - Review and Approval**

B. Approve Resolution #2025-02 Appointing and Confirming the Achievement Committee Chairperson of the Rocketship Education Tennessee Board

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**5. Action Items: Operations - Review and Approval**

A. Approve Section 504 Policy

B. Approve Artificial Intelligence for Instructional and Assignment Purposes Policy

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**6. Information Items**

A. 2024-25 Achievement Recap and 2025-26 Response

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**7. Action Items: Finance - Review and Approval**

A. 2024-25 End of Year Financial Review and Approval of Revised 2025-26 Tennessee Budget, including all School Level Budgets

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**8. Information Items**

A. Rocketship Dream Community Prep Transaction Update

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**9. Break**

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**10. Information Items**

A. Growth Updates

B. Regional Focus Areas

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**11. Closed Session**

A. Closed Executive Session

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**12. Report Out**

A. Public report on actions taken in closed session

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**13. Adjourn**

A. Adjourn Meeting

# **Rocketship Tennessee Board of Trustees Meeting (2024-25 Q4) (Thursday, June 5, 2025)**

*Generated by Cristina Vasquez on Monday, June 9, 2025*

## **1. Opening Items**

### **A. Call to order**

At 2:07pm, Mr. Elliott took roll call. With a quorum of board members present, Mr. Elliott called the meeting to order.

Present: Abby Spaulding, Anderson Green, John Eason, Kanika Covert, Lindsey Margraf Rudd, Malick Gaye, Phil Elbert, Rob Elliott

Absent: April Taylor, Dr. Diarese George, Henderson Majors, Dr. James Hildreth, Jeff Brown, June Nwabara

## **2. Consent Items**

### **A. Approve minutes from the February 25, 2025 meeting of the Tennessee Board of Trustees**

### **B. Reappoint Anderson Green, Dr. Diarese George, Dr. James Hildreth, June Nwabara and Phil Elbert to the Rocketship Tennessee Board of Trustees for two-year terms from December 2024 through December 2026**

### **C. Approve the Rocketship Tennessee Board of Trustees 2025-26 meeting calendar**

At 2:09pm, Ms. Covert made a motion to approve the consent items. This motion was seconded by Mr. Gaye, and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Y: Abby Spaulding, Anderson Green, John Eason, Kanika Covert, Lindsey Margraf Rudd, Malick Gaye, Phil Elbert, Rob Elliott

N: --

Abstain: --

## **3. Information Items**

### **A. List of checks in excess of \$100k**

At 2:09pm, information item 3(A) was presented. No action was taken.

### **B. Mission Moment**

At 2:10pm, information item 3(B) was presented. No action was taken.

### **C. Board Updates**

At 2:15pm, information item 3(C) was presented. No action was taken.

## **4. Action Items: Agreements - Review and Approval**

### **A. Approve the Asset Transfer Agreement**

### **B. Approve Amendment 3 of the Food Service Management Contract with SLA Management Inc.**

### **C. Approve the 2025-26 School Year Student Transportation Services Contract Between Rocketship Education Tennessee and Gray Line Tennessee**

At 2:15pm, the board discussed action items 4(A-C).

At 2:27pm, Ms. Covert made a motion to approve the action items 4(A-C). This motion was seconded by Ms. Spaulding, and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Y: Abby Spaulding, Anderson Green, John Eason, Kanika Covert, Lindsey Margraf Rudd, Malick Gaye, Phil Elbert, Rob Elliott

N: --

Abstain: --

## **5. Action Items: Operations - Review and Approval**

### **A. Approve the 2025-26 Rocketship Education Employee Handbook for Tennessee**

### **B. Approve the 2025-26 Rocketship Tennessee Student and Parent Handbook**

### **C. Approve amended leases for Rocketship United Academy, Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary and Rocketship Dream Community Prep**

At 2:27pm, the board discussed action items 5(A-C).

At 2:36pm, Mr. Gaye made a motion to approve the action items 5(A-C), additionally authorizing staff to make minor modifications to the FERPA section of the student and parent handbook. This motion was seconded by Ms. Covert, and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Y: Abby Spaulding, Anderson Green, John Eason, Kanika Covert, Lindsey Margraf Rudd, Malick Gaye, Phil Elbert, Rob Elliott

N: --

Abstain: --

## **6. Action Items: Finance - Review and Approval**

### **A. Review and approve Amended Rocketship Fiscal Policies**

At 2:37pm, the board discussed action item 6(A).

At 2:40pm, Mr. Gaye made a motion to approve the action item 6(A). This motion was seconded by Ms. Covert, and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Y: Abby Spaulding, Anderson Green, John Eason, Kanika Covert, Lindsey Margraf Rudd, Malick Gaye, Phil Elbert, Rob Elliott

N: --

Abstain: --

## **7. Action Items: Budget - Review and Approval**

### **A. 2025-26 Annual Planning Review and Approval of 2025-26 Rocketship Education Tennessee Budget and all TN School Level Budgets**

At 2:41pm, the board discussed action item 7(A), the 2025-26 Annual Plan and Budget.

At 3:11pm, April Taylor joined the meeting.

At 3:38pm, Ms. Covert made a motion to approve the action item 7(A). This motion was seconded by Ms. Spaulding, and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Y: Abby Spaulding, Anderson Green, John Eason, Kanika Covert, Lindsey Margraf Rudd, Malick Gaye, Phil Elbert, Rob Elliott, April Taylor

N: --

Abstain: --

## **8. Break**

At 3:38pm, the board took a break.

## **9. Information Items**

**A. Tennessee Four and Five Update**

At 3:48pm, the board discussed agenda item 9(A). No action was taken.

**B. Enrollment Update**

At 4:22pm, the board discussed agenda item 9(B). No action was taken.

**C. Talent Update**

At 4:48pm, the board discussed agenda item 9(C). No action was taken.

At 4:50pm, Dr. Diarese George joined the meeting.

**10. Adjourn**

At 4:56pm, Mr. Elbert made a motion to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Gaye, and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Y: Abby Spaulding, Anderson Green, John Eason, Kanika Covert, Lindsey Margraf Rudd, Malick Gaye, Phil Elbert, Rob Elliott, April Taylor, Dr. Diarese George

N: --

Abstain: --

**Executive Summary**  
**Rocketship Education Tennessee**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**August 25, 2025**

<b>Agenda Item:</b> 4(A)  <b>Subject:</b> Approve Resolution #2025-02 Appointing and Confirming the Achievement Committee Chairperson of the Rocketship Education Tennessee Board	X	OPEN/ACTION
		INFORMATION
		CONSENT

**Recommendation(s):**

Staff members recommend that the Rocketship Tennessee (“**RSED-TN**”) Board of Trustees (“**RSED-TN Board**”) approve Resolution #2025-02 Appointing and Confirming the Achievement Committee Chairperson of the Rocketship Education Tennessee Board.

**Background:**

Under the Bylaws of RSED-TN, Section VI, the RSED-TN Board may establish standing or temporary committees as it considers appropriate. The Bylaws additionally state the RSED-TN Board shall appoint the members of the committee by majority vote, and name the Chairperson.

The RSED-TN Board established the Achievement Committee through Resolution #2024-02 at its December 11, 2024 meeting, naming Dr. Diarese George as the Achievement Committee Chairperson. As Dr. George is resigning from the RSED-TN Board, a vacancy has been created.

The TN Executive Committee and TN Executive Director recommend that the RSED-TN Board appoint current RSED-TN Board Trustee and Achievement Committee Member Lindsey Margraf Rudd as the Achievement Committee Chairperson effective immediately.

**Summary of Previous Board Action by Board:**

On December 11, 2024 the RSED-TN Board approved Resolution #2024-02, establishing the Achievement Committee and naming a chairperson.

**Fiscal Impact:**

None

**Submitted by:**

Eric Dailey, Executive Director, TN

Justin White, Director, Governance & Compliance

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**RESOLUTION #2025-02 OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**OF ROCKETSHIP EDUCATION TENNESSEE**

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**APPOINTING AND CONFIRMING THE ACHIEVEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE ROCKETSHIP EDUCATION TENNESSEE BOARD**

**WHEREAS**, Section 6.1 of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees (the “**Board**”) of Rocketship Education Tennessee, a Tennessee nonprofit public benefit corporation (“**RSED-TN**”), state “the Board of Trustees may establish standing or temporary committees as it considers appropriate”;

**WHEREAS**, Section 6.1 of the Bylaws state “a committee shall consist of three (3) or more Trustees”; and “the Board of Trustees shall appoint the members of the committees by majority vote and name the chairperson”;

**WHEREAS**, the Board has determined it is in the best interest of RSED-TN to maintain the Achievement Committee as a standing committee of the Board and desires to name a Committee Chairperson.

**WHEREAS**, the Board has considered a certain individual to serve as the Achievement Committee Chairperson of RSED-TN and desires to elect this individual as the Achievement Committee Chairperson of RSED-TN;

**RESOLVED**, that the Board hereby appoints Board Trustee Lindsey Margraf Rudd to serve as the Achievement Committee Chairperson effective September 1, 2025 for the duration of her term on the Board or until the appointment of a successor Achievement Committee Chairperson, with all of the authority, rights and responsibilities attendant to such position pursuant to RSED-TN's By-laws subject to the Board's ultimate direction and control;

**GENERAL AUTHORIZATION**

**RESOLVED FURTHER**, that any of the RSED-TN officers may execute, verify, and file any and all documents, and may take any and all such actions, as are proper and necessary to effectuate the purposes of these resolutions.

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**SECRETARY'S CERTIFICATE**

The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of *Resolution #2025-02 Appointing and Confirming the Achievement Committee Chairperson of the Rocketship Education Tennessee Board* that was duly adopted by the Board of Trustees of Rocketship Education Tennessee at a meeting thereof duly called, noticed and held on August 25, 2025 and at which meeting a quorum of the Board was present, and that these resolutions were adopted by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

WITNESS my hand this day of \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Abby Spaulding, Secretary of the Board  
Rocketship Education Tennessee

**Executive Summary**  
**Rocketship Education Tennessee**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**August 25, 2025**

<b>Agenda Item:</b> 5(A)  <b>Subject:</b> Approve Section 504 Policy	X	OPEN/ACTION
		INFORMATION
		CONSENT

**Recommendation(s):**

Staff members recommend that the Rocketship Education Tennessee (“RSED-TN”) Board of Trustees (“RSED-TN Board”) approve the Section 504 Policy.

**Background:**

The Rocketship Education Section 504 Policy has been reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local laws, and to reflect updates in school operations.

The primary content changes to the Section 504 Policy include:

- Revised language throughout the policy for greater clarity, accessibility, and ease of use by all school stakeholders, including families and staff.
- Improved clarity and organization of the Procedural Safeguards section, including easier-to-understand descriptions of parent/guardian rights, hearing procedures, dispute resolution options, and timelines.
- Updated policy language to reflect current Rocketship operational practices and organizational structure.

**Summary of Previous Board Action by Board:**

None

**Fiscal Impact:**

None

**Submitted by:**

Abigail Gifford, Senior Legal Counsel



## **Section 504 Policy**

Region(s): National

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504") is a federal civil rights law which protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination for reasons related to their disabilities – it is broader than IDEA in that it prohibits discrimination within any federally-funded agency (not just schools).

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance ... 29 USC 794(a).

As applied to public schools the Section 504 prohibits the denial of public education participation or enjoyment of the benefits offered by public school programs because of a child's disability. Section 504 provides a broad spectrum of protections against discrimination on the basis of disability. For example, all qualified students who meet the definition of an individual with a disability under Section 504 are entitled to receive regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet their individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met.

Section 504 also requires, among other things, that a student with a disability receive an equal opportunity to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities, and to be free from bullying and harassment based on disability.

Rocketship Education acknowledges its responsibility under Section 504 not to discriminate in policies and practices regarding its personnel and students. No discrimination against any person with a disability shall be permitted in any program or practices in the school.

### **Child Find**

Section 504 contains a Child Find requirement that requires Rocketship Education to locate, identify, evaluate and place individuals who are, or are believed to be, in need of special services due to a physical or mental impairment. As such, Rocketship Education must conduct an evaluation of students who, because of a disability, need or are believed to need special education and/or related services.

The parent/guardian, teacher, or any other school employee with knowledge of the student may initiate a referral for a 504 evaluation. For a student for whom a need for special education services is suspected, the student will follow the referral process outlined for suspected disabilities under IDEA.

### **Free and Appropriate Education ("FAPE")**

An "appropriate education" is the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet the student's individual needs as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students are met. An appropriate education must also be designed in accordance

with the procedures that satisfy Section 504's identification, evaluation, placement and due process requirements.

## **504 Team**

All decisions regarding a student's eligibility, 504 Plan, and placement will be made by the 504 Team. The 504 Team will be composed of persons knowledgeable about the student, the student's school history, the student's individual needs, the meaning of evaluation data, the placement options. Parents/guardians are necessary members of the 504 Team and will be encouraged to present information relevant to consideration of the 504 Team.

## **Identification and Referral**

A referral is a written or oral request for services made by the parent/guardian, teacher or any other school employee with knowledge of the student.

Circumstances that may merit a Section 504 referral include, but are not limited to:

- history of physical or mental impairment or disorder
- poor behavior with an impact on learning or academic performance
- poor academic performance
- excessive absenteeism including truancy
- serious health conditions
- returning to school after a serious injury or illness
- documented medical diagnosis by an outside agency or service provider
- increasing disciplinary infractions or suspensions which are excessive or repetitive
- finding by an IEP Team, after evaluation, that the student does not qualify for services
- failure to respond effectively to RTI intervention implemented with fidelity
- any other issues that may interfere with student's ability to participate in and benefit from the education program

## **Evaluation Process**

To determine whether formal assessments are necessary the 504 Team must review and consider the data already available to it. The 504 Team will convene to review the student's records including medical, academic and behavioral records to determine whether an evaluation is warranted. The term "evaluation" under Section 504 means to review information from a variety of sources and, if needed, obtain any additional information. An evaluation will review information from a variety of sources and, if needed, obtain any additional information. An evaluation may be broad (for example- including aptitude, psychological and achievement assessments, medical reports, social and cultural information, etc.) or narrow (for example- a single medical report). Formal assessments are not always required during an evaluation but may be in some instances.

The evaluation of the student must be sufficient for the 504 Team to accurately and completely describe:

1. the nature and extent of the disabilities,
2. the student's special needs,
3. the impact upon the student's education, and
4. what regular or special education and/or related aids and services are appropriate to ensure that the student receives a free and appropriate public education.

If a formal assessment or medical information is required to determine eligibility, Rocketship Education will either conduct the assessment at no cost to the parent/guardian or notify the parent/guardian that Rocketship Education will reimburse them for the cost of an outside assessment.

Assessment and information considered part of an evaluation includes (but not limited to):

Educational Records	Vision Screening/Assessment(s)
Classroom Observation	Academic Achievement Assessment(s)
Cognitive Assessment(s)	Speech-Language Assessment(s)
Hearing Screening/Assessment(s)	Occupational Therapy Assessment(s)
Physical Therapy Assessment(s)	Medical Records*

If the 504 Team determines that an evaluation is warranted, Rocketship Education will inform the parent/guardian of this decision and request consent to evaluate the student using the **Notice to Parent of 504 Referral and Evaluation Consent** form. The parent/guardian will also be provided with a copy of the **Notice of Parental Rights**. Consent for evaluation is voluntary and can be revoked at any time.

The evaluation must be conducted in a reasonable period of time. Although there is no specific requirement, Rocketship Education will aim to complete the evaluation within 45-60 days from the date of referral.

If formal instruments are used as part of the 504 evaluation, procedures used to administer assessments and other instruments must comply with the requirements of Section 504 regarding test validity, proper method of administration and appropriate test selection.

In general, the 504 evaluations should:

1. Include materials, tests, or evaluation procedures, as necessary, that are:
  - Validated for the specific purpose for which they are used;
  - Administered by trained personnel in conformance with the instructions provided by their producer;
  - Tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those which are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient;
  - Selected and administered so as best to ensure that, when a test is administered to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where those skills are the factors that the test purports to measure).
2. Be based on information from a variety of sources, i.e. teachers, other school staff members, parent/guardian, physician, nurse, and any other knowledgeable professionals;

3. Document and consider all available pertinent information, i.e. records, assessment data or medical reports related to the suspected physical or mental impairment, which may be substantially limiting a major life activity; and
4. Be conducted by a group of people, including those who are knowledgeable about the child, the suspected disabling condition, evaluative procedures, the meaning of evaluative data, and accommodation/placement options.

If the 504 Team determines a formal assessment or medical diagnosis is required to determine eligibility, Rocketship Education will conduct the assessment at no cost to the guardian or notify the guardian in advance that Rocketship Education will reimburse them for the cost of obtaining the specific outside assessment or medical diagnosis. Reimbursement is only available when the evaluation is both required and specifically requested by the Section 504 team.

Parent/guardian consent is required to evaluate under Section 504. When a parent/guardian refuses to consent, Rocketship Education cannot be held liable for failing to provide the student FAPE under Section 504.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

To qualify as a student eligible for FAPE under Section 504, a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity; or (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment. The determination of whether a student has a disability must be made on an individual basis.

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are automatically covered by Section 504; therefore, it is not necessary to identify students with disabilities who have a current IEP as eligible for accommodations under Section 504. The 504 eligibility process is intended to capture data for those students who are eligible for accommodations who are not receiving services under a current IEP.

### What is a Physical or Mental Impairment?

Section 504 defines physical or mental impairment as:

- Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the body systems – neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitor-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin and endocrine.
  - o This definition includes such diseases and conditions as orthopedic, visual, speech and hearing impediments, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, attention deficit disorder (ADD), acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and human immune deficiency virus (HIV+)
- Any mental or psychological disorder such as but not limited to mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

Section 504 does not provide an exhaustive list of specific diseases or categories that may constitute physical or mental impairments.

Simply having a condition or impairment does not automatically mean a student is eligible under

## Section 504.

### What is the meaning of Substantial Limitation?

The term “substantially limits” is not explicitly defined by Section 504. However, the following should be considered when determining if a student is substantially limited in performing a major life activity:

- In order to meet this standard, the student must be unable to perform a major life activity that the student’s average peers can perform OR, the student must be restricted to a substantial degree as to the condition, manner, or duration under which the major life activity is performed by the student’s average peers.
- An impairment need not prevent or severely or significantly limit a major life activity to be considered “substantially limiting.” Nonetheless, not every impairment will be substantially limiting.
- The term “substantially limits” should be construed broadly and determination of substantial limitation should not require an extensive analysis.
- The determination of whether an impairment substantially limits a major life activity requires an individualized assessment.

### What if the Impairment is Episodic or in Remission?

An impairment that is episodic or in remission is a disability that would substantially limit a major life activity when active. Impairments that are episodic (for example- seasonal allergies or asthma, migraines, rheumatoid arthritis) or in remission (for example- cancer that is in remission) should be considered for their impact over time. Students should not be denied eligibility because the disability is not limiting a major life activity at the time of evaluation, especially if it is known to have been substantially limiting in the past.

### What are Mitigating Measures?

The “substantially limits” determination must be made without regard to any ameliorative effects of mitigating measures. The 504 Team must make a Section 504 eligibility determination based upon the student’s disability as it presents itself without the mitigating measures.

Mitigating measures include but are not limited to:

- medication, medical supplies, equipment, or appliances, low-vision devices (which do not include ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses), prosthetics including limbs and devices, hearing aids and cochlear implants or other implantable hearing devices, mobility devices, or oxygen therapy equipment and supplies;
- use of assistive technology;
- reasonable accommodations or auxiliary aids or services; or
- learned behavioral or adaptive neurological modifications.

### What are Major Life Activities?

Major life activities include, but are not limited to, activities such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and working.

Major life activities may also include the operation of a major bodily function, including, but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.

### **Eligibility Determination**

If the 504 Team determines that the student is a student with a disability under Section 504, then the 504 Team must determine whether services are required in order to educate the student as adequately as their nondisabled peers.

If services are deemed necessary, the 504 Team must develop a formalized 504 plan to reflect the services necessary to ensure FAPE under Section 504.

### **504 Accommodation Plans**

If a student is determined to be eligible for FAPE under Section 504, the 504 Team must develop a 504 Accommodation Plan and determine placement for the student.

Although there is no specific requirement, Rocketship Education aims to finalize Plans within (30) days from the date of eligibility. The initial 504 Plan may be developed at the time the disability determination is made during the eligibility meeting, or at a subsequent meeting if appropriate.

There are no set regulations on what is included within a 504 Plan. Rocketship Education requires that all 504 Plans are documented in writing and describe the specific accommodations and/or services the student needs to participate in and benefit from their educational environment, and who is responsible for ensuring that all the components of the 504 Plan are implemented.

### **Placement**

All students will be educated with those who are not disabled to the maximum extent appropriate based on their individual needs. A disabled student shall be placed in the general education environment unless it is demonstrated by Rocketship Education that education of the student in the general education environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

In providing or arranging for the provision of nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, including meals, recess periods, counseling services, physical recreational athletics, transportation, health services, recreational activities, special interest groups or clubs sponsored by Rocketship Education, referrals to agencies which provide assistance to persons with disabilities, and employment of students, including both employment by Rocketship Education and assistance in making available outside employment, Rocketship Education shall ensure that disabled students participate with nondisabled students in such activities and services to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the disabled student in question.

### **Supplemental Aids and Services**

The 504 Team will determine what individualized services are required to ensure appropriate services designed to meet the individual need of the student to the same extent as the needs of

students without a mental or physical impairment.

The 504 Team should consider aids, services and other supports that are provided in the classroom, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings. Such services could include, but are not limited to:

- accommodation/modification to the educational environment
- accommodation/modification to the academic curriculum and lesson presentation
- accommodation/modification in assignment and grading requirements
- classroom and State-wide testing accommodations
- specialized equipment and supplies
- physical accessibility including navigation within the building
- level of staff supported need
- transportation to and from school
- self-care and adaptive supports
- assistive technology and auxiliary aids
- social-emotional and behavioral supports
- functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and/or behavior intervention plan (BIP)
- related services

If related services are provided to the student as part of their 504 Plan, Rocketship Education providers will document their services in a 504 service log that will be kept in the student's hard copy 504 student file.

### **Implementation**

All relevant staff must be notified and provided a copy of the 504 Plan. A copy of the plan shall be kept in the student's file in a manner that permits access to staff involved in the 504 process and/or the provision of the student's 504 Plan.

### **Annual Reviews and Reevaluations**

The 504 Team will monitor the progress of the disabled student and the effectiveness of the student's educational plan at least annually, or sooner if necessary or requested, to determine whether the plan is appropriate and necessary and that the disabled student's needs are being met as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students.

Similar to the initial evaluation for eligibility, the team will use *various sources* in determining whether the student continues to demonstrate significant impairment with a major life activity that is the result of a handicapping condition or disability. If it is determined that the student continues to require a 504 Plan, the team may need to modify the previous plan to fit the student's current needs.

Under Section 504, reevaluations are required to be conducted periodically. Rocketship Education recommends that the 504 Team conducted a reevaluation at least every three years, or sooner if necessary or requested. Reevaluations must also occur prior to any significant change in placement whether for disciplinary reasons or otherwise.

Sometimes, a student may no longer require a 504 Plan to access their education and will exit the 504 Plan process. In these cases, the team will fully assess the student's needs prior to exiting a student from a 504 Plan.

## **Procedural Safeguards**

A parent/guardian will be provided with written notice of their rights and procedural safeguards (***Notice of Parental Rights***) at any time they are notified of decisions regarding the identification, evaluation or educational placement of the student.

These safeguards include the right to receive notice, the opportunity to examine relevant educational records, the right to an impartial due process hearing with participation by the parent/guardian and representation by counsel, and access to a review procedure following the hearing decision.

### Right to Due Process

A parent/guardian or guardian who disagrees with the identification, evaluation, contents, or implementation of a Section 504 plan shall have the right to request a hearing on the issue. The process for students covered under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is driven by state and federal statutes

### Requesting a Due Process Hearing

The Section 504 hearing process is a two-step procedure. The first step involves a school-level review by the school's Section 504 coordinator (in consultation with the superintendent) of the issues raised by the student's parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian remains dissatisfied after the school-level review, s/he can request a hearing before an independent hearing officer.

**Step 1: Rocketship General Complaint Process:** Parents/guardians who have concerns or complaints regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student under Section 504 must first follow the **Rocketship Education General Complaint Process** to seek resolution at the school level.

**Step 2: Independent Hearing:** If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the outcome of the General Complaint Process, they may submit a written request for an independent hearing to the Regional Executive Director within five (5) business days. A request for hearing should include:

- The specific decision or action with which the parent/guardian disagrees.
- The changes to the 504 Plan the parent/guardian seeks.
- Any other information the parent/guardian believes is pertinent.

Rocketship Education will appoint a hearing officer who is not an employee of the school to preside over the hearing and issue a decision. The hearing officer shall be familiar with the requirements of Section 504. Rocketship Education is responsible for the compensation of the hearing officer. Rocketship Education is not responsible for the cost of parent/guardian's legal counsel or any other parent/guardian representatives or parent/guardian -secured witness.



The hearing officer shall attempt to schedule the hearing within 45 days of the parent/guardian's written request for hearing. This timeline may be extended for good cause or by mutual agreement of the parent/guardian and the regional Executive Director or their designee.

The hearing shall not exceed two (2) days in duration, and each party shall have a maximum of three (3) hours to present their case including presentation, direct examination, cross-examination, and argument. Both the parent/guardian and the school may be accompanied by legal counsel or individuals with special knowledge of the student. The party seeking relief bears the burden of persuasion and the burden of proof.

The hearing officer shall issue a written decision within ten (10) calendar days of the hearing. The hearing officer must confine their orders and rulings to those matters that involve identification, evaluation, or placement of children under Section 504 and to the provisions of the regulations implementing Section 504. A hearing officer may not award attorneys' fees, other monetary relief, or reimbursement as a part of relief granted to a parent/guardian. The decision of the hearing officer is binding on all parties.

If desired, either party may seek a review of the hearing officer's decision by a federal court. The decision shall be implemented unless the decision is stayed, modified or overturned by a court.

If a parent/guardian files a complaint or requests a hearing and then later withdraws it, they cannot raise the same issues again if those issues are more than 30 days old at the time of a new request for review.

At any time, the Rocketship Education may offer the parent/guardian an optional alternative resolution process. An alternative resolution process can only change the timeline for an independent hearing through mutual written agreement between the parent/guardian and the school.

Rocketship Education shall not retaliate in any way against parents/guardians or students who exercise any rights under the procedural safeguards and/or Section 504.

### **Suspension and Expulsion, Special Procedures for Students with Disabilities**

A student who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is subject to the same grounds for disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion, and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to general education students except when federal and state law mandates additional or different procedures. Rocketship Education will follow Section 504 and all applicable federal and state laws when disciplining any student who has a disability, is suspected of having a disability, or is eligible for protections under these laws.

In instances of student conduct that require discipline, Rocketship Education shall follow the Rocketship Education Behavioral Expectations and Discipline Policy.

### **Section 504 vs Special Education**

Eligibility for protections and services under Section 504 is not the same as eligibility under IDEA. Section 504 has a broader definition of a disability. Section 504 provides protection from discrimination for students with disabilities in a general education setting who do not need specially designed instruction.

Students covered under IDEA with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) do not need a separate Section 504 plan, as provisions covered under Section 504 are covered under IDEA. Therefore, students who are covered under IDEA must have an IEP that addresses both the special education needs and any accommodations that would be provided under Section 504. Rocketship Education has no flexibility or discretion to provide services and accommodations under Section 504 when a student is IDEA-eligible.

**Executive Summary**  
**Rocketship Education Tennessee**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**August 25, 2025**

<b>Agenda Item:</b> 5(B)  <b>Subject:</b> Approve Artificial Intelligence for Instructional and Assignment Purposes Policy	X	OPEN/ACTION
		INFORMATION
		CONSENT

**Recommendation(s):**

Staff members recommend that the Rocketship Education Tennessee (“RSED-TN”) Board of Trustees (“RSED-TN Board”) approve the Artificial Intelligence for Instructional and Assignment Purposes Policy.

**Background:**

This policy provides clear guidelines for the appropriate use of artificial intelligence (AI) by students, teachers, and staff in instructional and assignment-related settings. Originally developed in response to Tennessee state requirements, this policy is now being expanded for implementation across all four regions.

The policy is structured to allow for updates as AI technology continues to evolve. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects current best practices and continues to support effective teaching and learning.

**Summary of Previous Board Action by Board:**

On December 22, 2024 the RSED-TN Board approved the AI Use Policy.

**Fiscal Impact:**

None

**Submitted by:**

Abigail Gifford, Senior Legal Counsel

## Artificial Intelligence for Instructional and Assignment Purposes

Region(s): National

This Policy governs the use of AI by students, teachers, and staff for instructional and assignment purposes.

Rocketship is committed to ensuring that staff and students utilize AI effectively, securely, ethically, and in furtherance of our educational mission.

The successful integration of AI-based technologies depends on the collective efforts and collaboration of our entire organization. Therefore, we encourage all personnel to actively engage with this Policy, provide feedback, report concerns, share ideas, and contribute to our continuous improvement efforts, as we work together to harness the potential of AI in a responsible and ethical manner.

This Policy supplements (and does not contradict, limit, or replace) other Rocketship policies, requirements, prohibitions, and obligations. Any use of AI technologies must comply with all relevant policies and applicable laws. This Policy is not intended to restrict communications or actions protected or required by applicable law.

All personnel must comply with this Policy, and violations may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

For more information on technology and AI related policies, please refer to the Rocketship Employee Handbook and the Rocketship Student and Parent Handbook.

### Guiding Principles

Rocketship will adhere to the following guiding principles with respect to the use of AI:

- **Purposeful and Responsible Innovation:** Our goal is to help every student succeed, and we will get to this goal by using AI to make learning stronger and smoother.
- **AI as a Partner, Not a Replacement:** Our teachers, students, and families are at the center of learning. We use AI to support - not replace - the human connections that matter most.
- **Data-Informed, People-Led Decisions:** With equity and students at the center, we use AI to spot patterns and ask better questions, but people always make the final decisions.
- **Empowering Adults for an AI-Driven Future:** We use AI to help adults personalize learning and spend more time with each student, while also making sure our students learn to use AI responsibly, creatively, and with confidence to lead in an evolving world.

- **Empowering Students for an AI-Driven Future:** Every student deserves safe, age-appropriate, and fair access to AI.
- **Community Collaboration & Transparency:** We believe in shared ownership of AI use among teachers, leaders, and families. Families deserve transparency and a voice in decisions, as our collective efforts benefit everyone.

## Definitions

The following definitions apply to this Policy:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI): Computer software and systems capable of tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as understanding natural language, recognizing patterns, learning from experience, and making predictions, recommendations, or decisions. AI includes any machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments and that is capable of using machine and human-based inputs to perceive real and virtual environments, abstract such perceptions into models through analysis in an automated manner, and use model inference to formulate options for information or action.
- Generative AI (Gen AI): An AI system or tool that, in response to prompts from users, generates text, images, video, and other content or media based on the data and information on which it was trained.
- Artificial General Intelligence (AGI): AI that matches or surpasses human cognitive capabilities across a wide range of cognitive tasks. AGI would possess the ability to perform any intellectual task that a human can do, demonstrating flexibility, learning from experience, and applying knowledge across different domains without being limited to narrow tasks.

## Use of AI by Students

Teachers may allow students to use approved AI tools for instructional purposes. Any use of AI tools shall align with approved instructional standards and curriculum. Students may only use AI for instructional purposes when approved by the applicable teacher.

Students shall disclose their use of any AI tool on assignments. The use of AI to circumvent the learning process, including for submission as authentic student work where the use of AI is not permitted or where the use of AI is not specifically disclosed, is a violation of this policy and could lead to disciplinary consequences under the Rocketship Behavioral Expectations and Discipline Policy. As part of the disclosure, students may choose to cite their use of an AI system using an approved methodology for the course.

This Policy supplements (and does not contradict, limit, or replace) other Rocketship policies, requirements, prohibitions, and obligations regarding academic integrity.

**Use of AI by Staff**

Personnel may use approved AI tools in the completion of their work consistent with the Rocketship Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy.

Personnel shall not place personally identifiable information, financial information, intellectual property, or other confidential information into an AI system.

Outputs from AI shall be reviewed and verified, including for accuracy, relevance, and quality, prior to use in order to reduce the risk of errors and inaccuracies.

**Approved AI Tools and Use Cases**

AI technologies may only be used in compliance with other Rocketship policies regarding the use of technology. Students may only use AI where directed by their teacher. Only approved AI tools may be utilized and only for approved purposes.

The lists of approved AI tools and use cases will be reviewed at least annually. Rocketship expressly reserves the right to change, modify, or delete the technologies in this list without prior notice.

**Review and Selection of Approved AI Tools**

The Rocketship AI Champion Working Group is responsible for reviewing and approving AI tools.

In addition to annual review, the lists of approved AI tools and use cases will be updated by the Rocketship AI Champion Working Group from time to time when additional AI technologies or use cases are approved by Rocketship or if approval of an AI technology or use case is revoked.

All requests to procure, develop, or otherwise obtain or access any AI must be directed to the Rocketship AI Champion Working Group.

Personnel should report any concerns, inaccuracies, or issues related to AI usage to the Rocketship AI Champion Working Group.

**Confidentiality & Data Security**

Rocketship data may only be disclosed to an approved AI tool.

When entering formal contracts with any AI technology, Rocketship will, where applicable, take steps to ensure compliance with all applicable data protection laws and regulations. Unless otherwise authorized by the Rocketship AI Champion Working Group, Rocketship will limit (via contract or otherwise) a vendor's ability to utilize Rocketship's information for purposes other than provision of the applicable services to Rocketship.

Rocketship will, where applicable for a particular AI technology:

- establish and maintain data retention periods based on the type of data, legal/regulatory requirements, and technical limitations; and
- take steps to ensure data is securely deleted and/or destroyed at the end of its retention period.

### **Monitoring and Enforcement**

Rocketship may implement technical and administrative controls and processes to monitor compliance with this Policy. Rocketship may, when appropriate and in accordance with its audit policies and practices, conduct periodic audits and assessments of AI usage and related processes, including with respect to accuracy, data use, effectiveness, and data protection. Rocketship may periodically collect and analyze feedback from personnel to identify areas for improvement in AI usage, training, and support.

Personnel should report suspected violations of this Policy to Rocketship AI Champion Working Group. Rocketship will promptly investigate reported violations and take appropriate corrective action, which may include additional training, disciplinary measures (up to and including suspension or termination), or process improvements, depending on the nature and severity of the violation.

Rocketship will periodically review and update this Policy as needed, including (i) evaluating the Policy's effectiveness in promoting responsible and secure AI usage; (ii) identifying any areas for improvement; (iii) incorporating feedback from personnel; and (iv) updating this Policy to reflect changes in technology, legal requirements, and best practices.

### **State Specific Reporting Requirements**

#### Tennessee

Each year, by July 1, Rocketship will report to the Tennessee Department of Education regarding its compliance with Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-118. The report will include a copy of this Policy and describe how Rocketship will enforce this Policy in the upcoming school year.

# Q1 Rocketship Public Schools Tennessee Board of Trustees Meeting

August 25, 2025





# Agenda

## 1. Opening Items

- A.** Call to order

## 2. Consent Items

- A.** Approve minutes from the June 5, 2025 meeting of the Rocketship Tennessee Board of Trustees 

## 3. Information Items

- A.** Board Updates
- B.** Regional Health Dashboard Review

## 4. Action Items: Applications & Resolutions - Review and Approval

- B.** Approve Resolution #2025-02 Appointing and Confirming the Achievement Committee Chairperson of the Rocketship Education Tennessee Board

## 5. Action Items: Operations - Review and Approval

- A.** Approve Section 504 Policy 
- B.** Approve Artificial Intelligence for Instructional and Assignment Purposes Policy 

## 6. Information Items

- A.** 2024-25 Achievement Recap and 2025-26 Response

## 7. Action Items: Finance - Review and Approval

- A.** 2024-25 End of Year Financial Review and Approval of Revised 2025-26 Tennessee Budget, including all School Level Budgets

## 8. Information Items

- A.** Rocketship Dream Community Prep Transaction Update

## 9. Break

## 10. Information Items

- A.** Growth Updates
- B.** Regional Focus Areas

## 11. Closed Session

- A.** Closed Executive Session

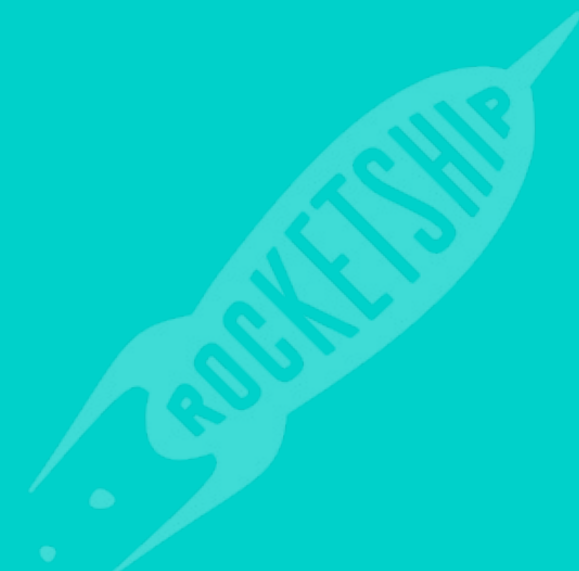
## 12. Report Out

- A.** Public report on actions taken in closed session

## 13. Adjourn

- A.** Adjourn Meeting

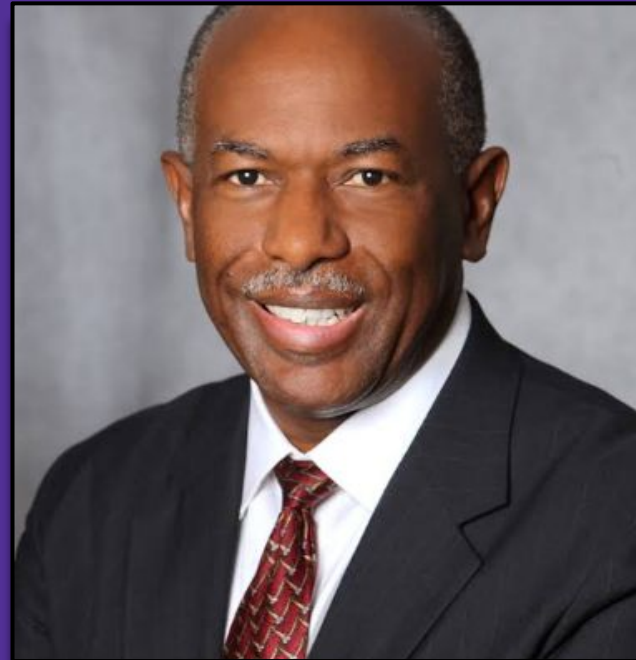
# Consent Items



# Board Transitions

Drs. James Hildreth and Diarese George will transition off of the Rocketship TN Board of Directors effective August 31, 2025.

Thank you for your service and continued support!



# Welcome to Rocketship, TN Principals!

- **Ben Smith**, Rocketship United Academy
- **Sarah Strode**, Rocketship Nashville Northeast (Interim)
- **Antigua Joseph-Woods**, Rocketship Dream Community Prep



# Board Updates



# Regional Health Dashboard Review



By 2030, we will double the number of students in the top third or at the 67th percentile in Math and Reading.



# 5 Essential Questions for Regional Health

- **Quality Schools**

Are our Rocketeers progressing and achieving academically?

- **Scaled Impact**

Are we serving the students that need us the most?

- **Community Power**

Are our families and partners impacting the broader system?

- **Culture of Belonging**

Do our people feel like they belong at Rocketship?

- **Finance**

Are we operating a financially sustainable organization?





# Purpose: TN Regional Health Dashboard (RHD)

## Dashboard example

Strategic Lever: Quality Schools		Goal 1: By 2028-29, 55% of all Rocketeers are performing at the 67th percentile on NWEA Reading/Math Goal 2: By 2028-29, 60% of Rocketeers enrolled for 3 or more years are performing at the 67th percentile on NWEA Reading															
Activity: Personalized Learning		A coherent and targeted approach to student learning experiences across core, supplemental and intervention programming and daily use of formative data to facilitate students' ability to make accelerated growth towards mastery of grade level standards.															
Indicator		EOY 23-24	Quarterly Actuals					Targets				Quarterly Rating					
			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
% at NWEA Map Reading 67th %ile		X	31%	22%	26%	N/A	31%	31%	34%	X	37%	1	1		2		
% at NWEA Map Math 67th %ile		X	35%	27%	33%	N/A	39%	34%	37%	X	40%	2	2		2		
% at NWEA Map Reading 67th %ile for students enrolled 3+years			34%	26%	29%	N/A	31%	34%	37%	X	40%	1	1		1		
% of Rocketeers meet NWEA Reading Tiered Growth			38%	N/A	40%	N/A	43%	X	47%	X	50%		2		2		
Dibels BOY, MOY, EOY - % at benchmark		X	53%	42%	47%	N/A	56%										
% mastery CKLA Skills unit assessments (GK-G2)		X	37%	47%	51%	52%	53%										
% of Rocketeers meet NWEA Math Tiered Growth		X	42%	N/A	47%	N/A	47%	X	45%	X	48%		3		2		
% mastery Eureka module assessments		X	44%	41%	48%	54%	55%										
Years growth on NWEA Map Reading		X	1.17	N/A	1.12	N/A	1.19	X	1.33	X	1.33		2		2		
Years growth on NWEA Map Math		X	1.18	N/A	1.25	N/A	1.25	X	1.25	X	1.25		3		3		
			Rating										1.33	2.00	X	2.00	

Strategic Lever: Scaled Impact		Goal: By 2028-29, 44,000 Lifetime Rocketeers															
Activity: Schools and Seats		Strategies to increase enrollment, retain Rocketeers, and increase seats across all regions.															
Indicator		EOY 23-24	Quarterly Actuals					Targets				Quarterly Rating					
			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
# of lifetime rocketeers (Dec - 80+ is considered on track, June - 150+)			32244	N/A	32,497	N/A	33,033	X	X	X	35000				2		
% Enrollment to BSP			94%	91%	90%	95%	85%	100%	100%	100%	100%	2	2	2	2		
% retained Rocketeers SYTD			90%	98%	95%	93%	92%										
# new rocketeers for Oct 15 of current SY			3021	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A										
Projected new students for Oct 15 of next SY			2398	N/A	N/A	N/A	2603										
Projected retained students for Oct 15 of next SY			7498	N/A	N/A	N/A	6905										
			Rating										2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	

The Regional Health Dashboard (RHD) is a tool for tracking progress on key metrics tied to our 5-year goals. The metrics, like the goals they are tied to, are classified by Strategic Lever (Quality Schools, Community Power, Scaled Impact) or Key Enabler (Culture of Excellence and Belonging, Finance).

These and the network version - the Organizational Health Dashboard (OHD) - are reviewed regularly at several levels of the organization and by each board (National and Regional) mid-year and end of year.



3: Meets or Exceeds

2: Approaching (80% target)

1: Does not meet

## Rocketship Key Metrics

		Current performance	Target for current period
Quality Schools	Years growth on NWEA Map Reading	1.19	1.33
	Years growth on NWEA Map Math	1.25	1.25
	% of Rocketeers meet NWEA Reading Tiered Growth	43%	50%
	% of Rocketeers meet NWEA Math Tiered Growth	47%	48%
	% of families meet FPH goal	78%	90%
Scaled Impact	% Enrollment to June BSP	85%	100%
Culture	NPS: Net Promoter Score	2	7.5
Finance	% of schools forecasted to close EOY on budget	52%	100%



3: Meets or Exceeds

2: Approaching (80% target)

1: Does not meet

## TN Key Metrics

		Current performance	Target for current period
Quality Schools	Years growth on NWEA Map Reading	1.09	1.3
	Years growth on NWEA Map Math	1.09	1.3
	% of Rocketeers meet NWEA Reading Tiered Growth	37%	50%
	% of Rocketeers meet NWEA Math Tiered Growth	35%	50%
	% of families meet FPH goal	51%	95%
Scaled Impact	% Enrollment to June BSP	90%	100%
Culture	NPS: Net Promoter Score	13	7.5
Finance	% of schools forecasted to close EOY on budget	0%	100%

## TN Highlights from Other Metrics

	Current performance	Target for current period
% Re-enrollment	N/A	85%
New Apps	709*	545
Parent Organizing Committees	3	3

# Action Items: Applications & Resolutions - Review and Approve

## 4. Action Items: Applications & Resolutions - Review and Approval

**B.** Approve Resolution #2025-02 Appointing and  
Confirming the Achievement Committee  
Chairperson of the Rocketship Education  
Tennessee Board



# Action Items: Operations - Review and Approval

## 5. Action Items: Operations - Review and Approval

**A.** Approve Section 504 Policy

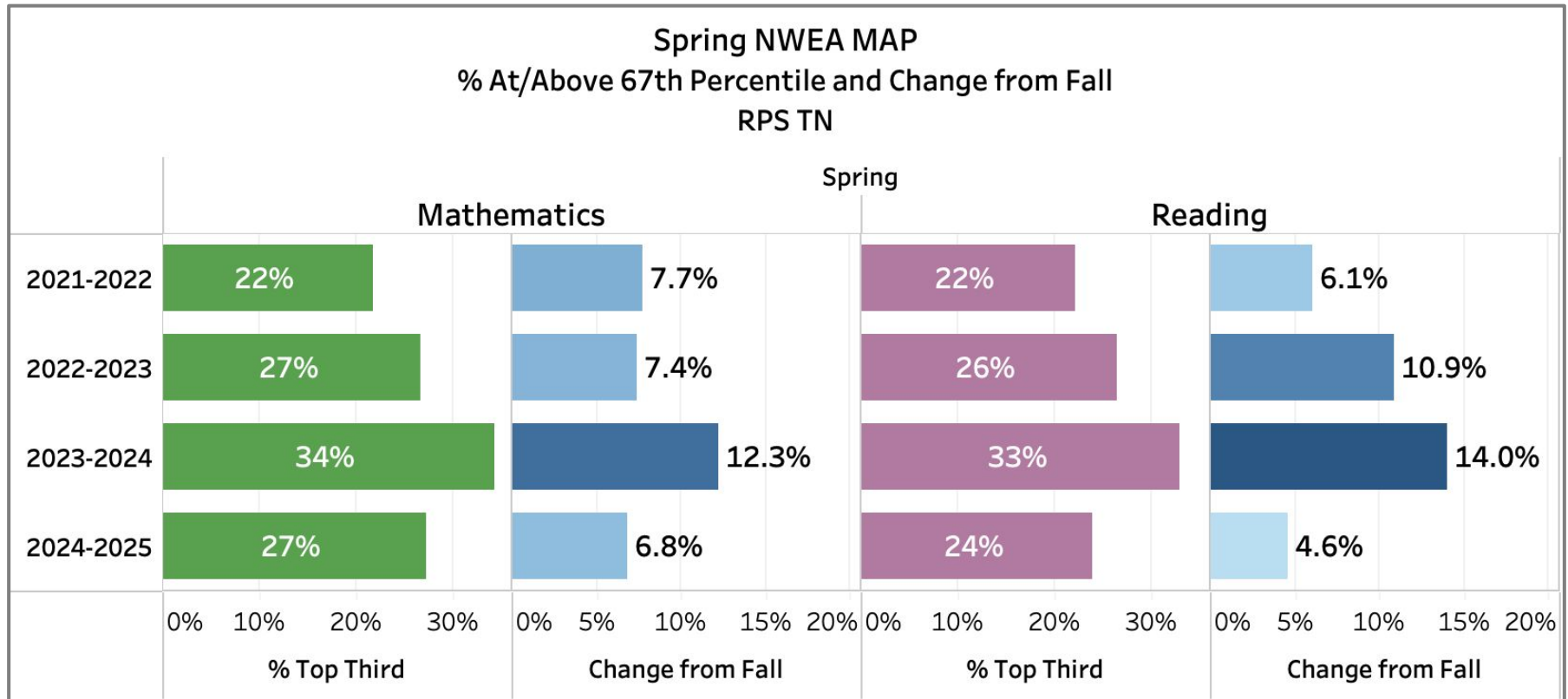
**B.** Approve Artificial Intelligence for Instructional and Assignment Purposes Policy



# 2024-25 Achievement Recap and 2025-26 Response

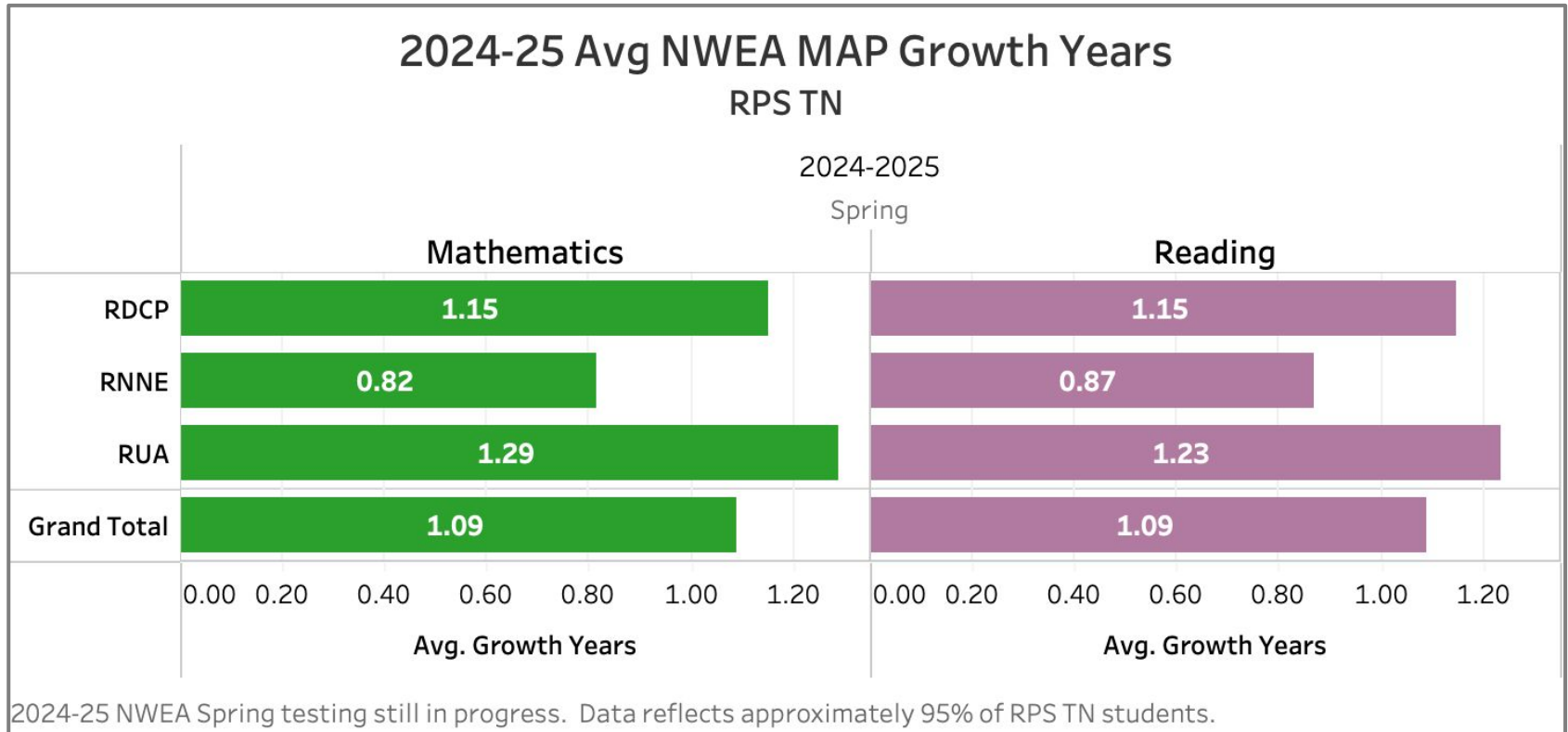


In TN, there was a regression in absolutes and fall-to-spring growth across both subject areas.





TN schools are on different growth trajectories with RUA achieving almost 1.3 years of growth in each subject and RNNE growing less than 1 year



- Decline in 2024-25 average regional growth rates due to large decline at RNNE
  - RNNE achieved <1 year of growth in both subjects
  - RUA realized higher growth rates than last year
  - RDCP had similar growth rates as last year

# TN Ready Results

2024-25 Preliminary TNReady Proficiency and TVAAS Change from Prior Year				
School	Math	ELA	Science	TVAAS
RDCP	+5%	+18%	+5	Level 5
RNNE	+0%	-4%	-4%	Level 3
RUA	+2%	+0%	-5%	Level 5
RPS TN	+4%	+3%	-1%	N/A

School	Composite TVAAS	TVAAS for Bottom Quartile Students	Succeed Rate Rating	Expected TN School Grade
RDCP	Level 5 (+1)	Level 5	4	A
RNNE	Level 3 (+1)	Level 3	1	D
RUA	Level 5 (+1)	Level 4	2	C

# TN Ready Highlights

- **RDCP** ranks above all the district schools in the Antioch Cluster (2nd if we include the other charter school, KIPP Antioch Elementary, in the rankings).
- Across the state, **RDCP** also ranks above the 50th percentile for all students in Math and ELA and in the top decile for reported Economically Disadvantaged elementary results.
- **RUA** ranks 2nd in Math within the Glenclyff cluster for all students.

# Program Headlines

## **RNNE Absolutes & Growth**

Regression in regional average growth and absolutes driven by underperformance at RNNE - all grades averaged less than one year of growth overall with bottom tier starting students also averaging 1 year or less.

## **Upper Grades (3-5)**

Significantly lower movement of upper grade students into 67th percentile compared to lower grades.

## **Students in Bottom Third**

Students starting in the bottom tier are below target of 1.4 years of growth and are only on-track to achieve similar growth as their higher starting peers.

Growth of students in lowest tier on TNReady is more heavily weighted on TVAAS.

## **New Regional & School Leadership**

Coaching & development for new regional and school-based leaders.

New leadership provides opportunity to realign to core regional practices across all campuses.

# Foci for Start of the Year

## Strengthening Foundational Aspects of Our Core Model

**Danielson Domain 2** - Learning Environment (student culture & behavior management)

**Danielson Domain 3** - Learning Experiences (use of instructional materials & resources, explaining content clearly)

**Home Visits** - Setting a strong foundation for relationships with families

**Systems and Routines** - Students are ready for a year of smooth learning

## Aug 13 Planning Stepback

National and Regional teams are finalizing our plan for the year to ensure that the region builds momentum and that RNNE drastically improves its performance

# TN Region and National Program Team Partnership Plan

## Initiative #1: Strengthen Tier I Coaching Practices

- ❖ SLT/ILT Meeting Execution
- ❖ Diagnosing/Writing Teacher Goals
- ❖ Real-time Coaching
- ❖ New Principal Training

## Initiative #2: Deepen Content Knowledge of Teachers & Leaders

- ❖ Unit Launch Meetings
- ❖ Weekly Content Huddles for Coaches
- ❖ Content-Specific Walkthroughs

## Initiative #3: Targeted Data Analysis

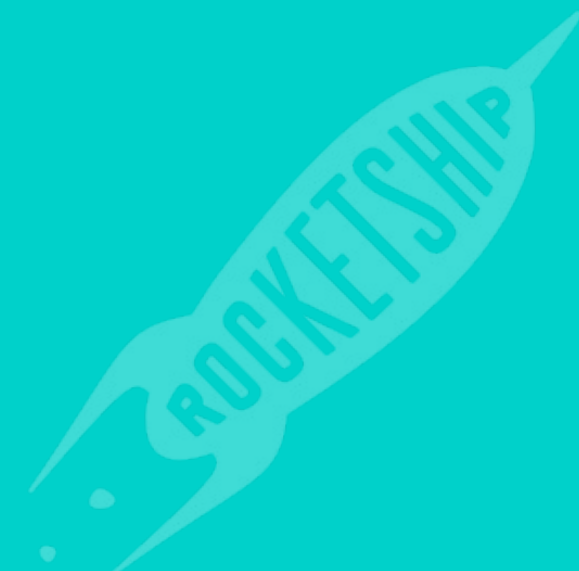
- ❖ End of Unit Data analysis meeting
- ❖ Monthly Principal Data Stepbacks

# Additional RNNE Support

Improving outcomes at RNNE will require a deliberate focus on (1) developing the instructional capacity of its teachers and (2) providing even more targeted learning opportunities for all of its students.

- Weekly 1:1s with Priority Coaches
- Lesson Plan Rehearsal
- Lesson Planning Clinics
- Tailored Principal Support
- Prioritized Regional and National Team time on campus
- Tutoring implementation

2024-25 End of Year Financial Review and  
Approval of Revised 2025-26 TN Budget,  
including all School Level Budgets





# FY25 Year End Budget to Actual

	RNNE	RUA	RDCP	TN Schools Total		
	FY25 Actuals			FY25 Budget	FY25 Actuals	Var
<b>Revenues</b>						
Federal Income	1,005,683	731,357	648,838	2,980,800	2,385,878	(594,922)
State Revenue Sources	7,091,857	8,106,430	6,795,838	24,733,920	21,994,126	(2,739,794)
Other Local Revenues	20,516	35,907	16,408	50,400	72,832	22,432
Internal Transfers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grants and Fundraising	59,698	64,007	49,141	0	172,845	172,845
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>8,177,754</b>	<b>8,937,702</b>	<b>7,510,226</b>	<b>27,765,120</b>	<b>24,625,682</b>	<b>(3,139,438)</b>
<b>Expense</b>						
Personnel & Benefits	4,596,104	4,781,926	3,950,650	14,232,676	13,328,681	903,995
Books and Supplies	475,738	440,115	386,234	1,198,747	1,302,087	(103,340)
Food Services	503,078	426,352	408,960	1,166,400	1,338,391	(171,991)
Services and Other Operating Expense	1,358,436	1,380,635	1,323,889	3,790,528	4,062,959	(272,431)
Travel & Conferences	52,958	50,146	20,112	118,922	123,216	(4,294)
Dues and Insurance	62,843	58,800	47,052	153,592	168,696	(15,104)
Rental, Leases, & Repairs	751,267	717,187	1,632,396	2,516,215	3,100,850	(584,635)
Network Support Fee	1,134,538	1,268,225	1,068,562	3,969,288	3,471,325	497,963
Capital Outlay	22,190	21,442	2,213	12,041	45,846	(33,805)
Interest Expense	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous Expense	993	0	0	0	993	(993)
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>8,958,145</b>	<b>9,144,829</b>	<b>8,840,069</b>	<b>27,158,408</b>	<b>26,943,043</b>	<b>215,365</b>
<b>CINA</b>	<b>(780,391)</b>	<b>(207,128)</b>	<b>(1,329,842)</b>	<b>606,712</b>	<b>(2,317,361)</b>	<b>(2,924,073)</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>2,627,290.34</b>	<b>6,437,218.31</b>	<b>(2,661,263.75)</b>			

**Year end results** are a \$2.3mm deficit, driven by a total \$3.1mm variance to the revenue budget (detail on next slide).

**Year-end expenses** are consistent with our January and April projections: Compensation is 6% under budget, with supplies and services overspending targets, resulting in a ~1% savings on total expenses relative to budget.



# TN Revenue Variance Detail

All in, the region finished the year with a \$2.6mm (11%) core per-pupil revenue variance to budget. This has several sources:

- 3.75% enrollment miss: 54 students (1,386 ADM vs 1,440 budgeted)
- 1.5% Reduction in Per Pupil Revenue from original budget (\$16,846 vs \$17,093)
- FY24 Revenue Recoupment by MNPS
- Reserve for likely FY24 Revenue Recoupment

Source	Amount	Percent of Total Miss
Enrollment Variance to Budget	\$909,729	34%
Per Pupil Variance to Budget	\$354,486	13%
FY24 Revenue Recapture	\$727,142	27%
Reserve for FY25 Revenue Recapture	\$654,630	25%



# FY25 Year End Balance Sheet: TN Region Year over Year

	FY25	FY24	Difference
	Rocketship TN		
<b>Assets</b>			
Total Cash and cash equivalents	\$7,034,591	\$7,908,952	(\$874,361)
Total Accounts Receivable	\$654,984	\$2,124,365	(\$1,469,381)
Total Prepaid expenses and deposits	\$352,645	\$249,008	\$103,637
Total Security Deposits	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Property, plant & equipment	\$39,740,400	\$39,351,847	\$388,552
Total Less: Accumulated depreciation	(\$3,194,033)	(\$2,069,336)	(\$1,124,696)
Total Note receivable	\$0	(\$28,872)	\$28,872
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$44,588,587</b>	<b>\$47,535,963</b>	<b>(\$2,947,376)</b>
Total Accounts payable	\$272,003	\$204,856	\$67,147
Total Accrued liabilities	\$1,141,333	\$571,170	\$570,163
Total Accrued lease payments S-T	\$769,626	\$559,392	\$210,233
Total Deferred Revenue	\$0	\$6,198	(\$6,198)
Total Deferred management fee S-T	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Intercompany Loan	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Current portion of loans payable	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Current Liabilities	\$2,182,961	\$1,341,616	\$841,346
Total Accrued lease payments L-T	\$36,714,224	\$37,471,528	(\$757,304)
Total Accrued Interest	\$0		\$0
Total Loans payable L-T	\$0	\$745,846	(\$745,846)
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$36,714,224	\$38,217,374	(\$1,503,150)
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$5,691,402</b>	<b>\$7,976,973</b>	<b>(\$2,285,572)</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$44,588,587</b>	<b>\$47,535,963</b>	<b>(\$2,947,376)</b>

Following several years of positive cash accumulation, FY25 was RPS TN's first negative cash year.

## Cash was negatively impacted by:

- Operating loss of \$2.2mm
- Reduction in long-term debt of \$745k

Cash loss was mitigated by a reduction in Accounts Receivable.  
Overall cash position is still very strong: \$7.034mm or 89 days of FY26 operating expenses.



# FY26 Budget: TN Region June vs August

In response to enrollment progress throughout the summer, we are reducing enrollment targets by net 7 (some grades/schools up or down). Expenses have shifted slightly, with net 3 fewer roles but higher compensation per role.

Contract actuals increase benefits and services budget.

Bottom line across the region is nearly the same as June.

	June TN Schools	August TN Schools	Change B/(W)
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>1545</b>	<b>1538</b>	<b>-7</b>
<b>Staffing</b>	<b>162.0</b>	<b>159.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Federal Income	2,465,534	2,440,220	(25,314)
State Revenue Sources	26,463,519	26,430,366	(33,153)
Other Local Revenues	55,226	54,975	(250)
Internal Transfers	-	-	-
Grants and Fundraising	-	-	-
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>28,984,278</b>	<b>28,925,561</b>	<b>(58,717)</b>
Personnel & Benefits	14,886,406	14,873,540	12,866
Certificated Salaries	7,204,299	7,136,347	67,951
Classified Salaries	4,214,542	4,216,127	(1,585)
Employee Benefits	3,467,565	3,521,065	(53,500)
Books and Supplies	1,374,955	1,368,793	6,162
Food Services	1,278,077	1,272,286	5,791
Services and Other Operating Expenses	3,883,691	3,983,052	(99,360)
Travel & Conferences	121,874	121,348	526
Dues and Insurance	168,298	155,974	12,324
Rental, Leases, & Repairs	2,821,475	2,784,031	37,444
Management Fee	4,207,666	4,142,929	64,736
Capital Outlay	4,813	4,813	-
Interest Expense	-	-	-
Miscellaneous Expense	-	-	-
<b>Expense</b>	<b>28,747,255</b>	<b>28,706,766</b>	<b>40,489</b>
<b>CINA</b>	<b>237,023</b>	<b>218,795</b>	<b>(18,228)</b>



# FY26 Budget: TN Region by School

We are not currently meeting our goal of all schools break even:

RDCP's facilities costs are ~2x the other two schools, and distort its bottom line relative to RUA.

RNNE is in an investment year and a modest loss to fully staff the school and get achievement back on track is our best path.

	August RDCP	August RNNE	August RUA	August TN Schools
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>1538</b>
<b>Staffing</b>	<b>53.0</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>159.0</b>
Federal Income	769,023	918,315	752,882	2,440,220
State Revenue Sources	8,872,810	8,133,564	9,423,992	26,430,366
Other Local Revenues	18,480	16,907	19,588	54,975
Internal Transfers	-	-	-	-
Grants and Fundraising	-	-	-	-
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>9,660,313</b>	<b>9,068,786</b>	<b>10,196,462</b>	<b>28,925,561</b>
Personnel & Benefits	4,905,691	4,906,908	5,060,941	14,873,540
Certificated Salaries	2,403,977	2,318,751	2,413,619	7,136,347
Classified Salaries	1,384,619	1,388,760	1,442,748	4,216,127
Employee Benefits	1,117,094	1,199,396	1,204,574	3,521,065
Books and Supplies	446,049	427,481	495,263	1,368,793
Food Services	427,680	391,282	453,324	1,272,286
Services and Other Operating Expenses	1,295,405	1,266,297	1,421,350	3,983,052
Travel & Conferences	35,235	39,894	46,219	121,348
Dues and Insurance	51,919	49,448	54,607	155,974
Rental, Leases, & Repairs	1,291,073	777,293	715,664	2,784,031
Management Fee	1,384,052	1,294,333	1,464,544	4,142,929
Capital Outlay	-	2,661	2,153	4,813
Interest Expense	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous Expense	-	-	-	-
<b>Expense</b>	<b>9,837,104</b>	<b>9,155,596</b>	<b>9,714,065</b>	<b>28,706,766</b>
<b>CINA</b>	<b>(176,791)</b>	<b>(86,810)</b>	<b>482,397</b>	<b>218,795</b>



# Motion

A motion to:

Approve the Revised 2025-26 Tennessee  
Budget, including all School Level Budgets





# Rocketship Dream Community Prep Transaction Update



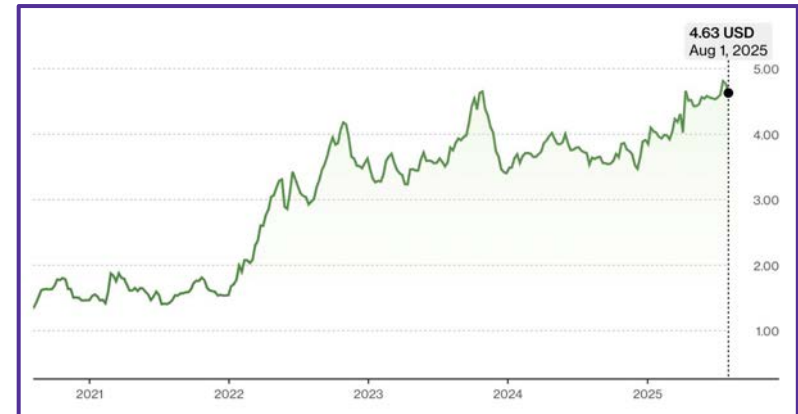
# RDCP Transaction Updates

Following our first two years of occupancy, we're now obligated to either buy RDCP from its developer, or get locked into the next 28 years of the lease.

Purchase price will be \$14.9mm.

We have until 11/30 to buy the building - possibility of extending a month or two but not much longer.

At current rates, we project a minimal cash savings over the next 2-3 years, but more substantial savings compared to the current lease in the long-term. RPS TN board members should anticipate a special meeting in September or October to review and approve specific deal terms.



The 30 year AAA municipal bond index is near its post-COVID high point. Rocketship bonds have typically closed between 180 and 220 basis points above AAA.

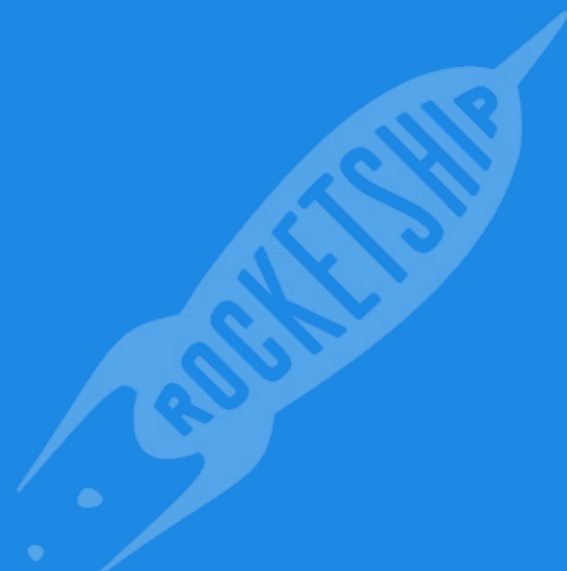




Break



# Growth Updates



# TN4 and TN5

Please read TN4 Appeal Letter and Growth Memo attached to the board materials.

## Headlines

- We will appeal TN4 and not TN5.
- The board will play a critical role in the appeals process for TN4.
- Appeals vote is Oct 16-17

**Discussion Questions w/ focus areas:** Academics, Rutherford demand, start up ability, organizational growth, and multilingualism.

Board Members (2)	Which board members are uniquely positioned to participate in the public hearing?
Experts (2)	What experts might be uniquely positioned to participate in the public hearing?
Parents	The region is working to activate families for public hearing and capacity interview activities.
Students	

# Regional Focus Areas: Enrollment



# Enrollment terms & definitions.

**Budget Target:** This is the minimum number of students needed to be enrolled throughout the school year to afford the staffing model.

**Enrollment Target:** The number of students that should be registered the day before the first day of school. This target is ~108% of our budget target to account for beginning of year attrition. Can also be understood as **Registration Target**.

**Application Target:** We need 2 applications for every 1 open seat. The 2:1 ratio for is based on historical performance as well as a nationwide enrollment study by Charter School Growth Fund.

## Budget

Target= 1,512

## Enrollment

Target= 1,650

## Applications

Target = 1,184



## Enrollment Update (data as of 8/19/2025)

25-26 Budgeted Enrollment	25-26 Enrollment Targets	Current Enrollments (As in PowerSchool)	Progress to Budget Target	Progress to Enrollment Target
1,538	1,650	1,562	102%	95%

### Risks & Takeaways

- As projected, the region was able to meet budget target in time, with continuing progress towards the enrollment target.
- Since last update, RNNE shortfall continues in K-2. We're launching an additional campaign to help bridge the gap by driving lead generation through digital ads.
- The region is projected to retain 89% of it's returning students
- The region will continue to focus on funnel movement and prioritize start of school warm engagement strategies (i.e. Orientations, Ice cream socials, annual BBQ, home visits, and day before school phone calls).

## Enrollment by School (data as of 8/19/2025)

School	Budgeted Enrollment (approved in June)	Current Enrollment	% to Budget Goal	Returners	New Students
RDCP	517	534	103%	352	182
RNNE	473	466	98%	320	145
RUA	548	562	103%	410	147
Total	1538	1562	102%	1082	480

# Daily Student Counts (as of August 19)

- Average attendance at the end of Week 2 was 97% to budgeted target
- Week 3 is off to strong start. Historically, Week 3 is the week where we see the largest decline in attendance for our students..
- RUA has a waitlist!

Please update by 10am local time		RNNE	RUA	RDCP	TN Total
Date	Budget Target (updated 8/18)	473	522	517	1512
Week of 8/11 Average	DSC as % of BSP	90.2%	101.1%	98.5%	96.8%
	Unique Attendance	454	562	538	1,554
	Unique Attendance as % of BSP	96.0%	107.7%	104.1%	102.8%
Mon, Aug 18	Students enrolled in PowerSchool	465	564	536	1565
	<i>Show rate</i> DSC % of students in PS	88.2%	94.7%	91.8%	91.8%
	Daily Student Count	410	534	492	1436
	DSC as % of BSP	86.7%	102.3%	95.2%	95.0%
Tue, Aug 19	Students enrolled in PowerSchool	463	564	535	1562
	<i>Show rate</i> DSC % of students in PS	91.1%	96.5%	94.6%	94.2%
	Daily Student Count	422	544	506	1472
	DSC as % of BSP	89.2%	104.2%	97.9%	97.4%



# Evaluating Budget Targets after Start of School

Year	Week 1 Average Attendance	Week 1 Unique Attendance	Eventual Full-Year Average Enrollment
22-23	1,228	1,337	1,347
23-24	1,309	1,361	1,410
24-25	1,284	1,364	1,398
25-26	1,437	1,550	

- In the first few weeks of school, it is challenging to know what “real” enrollment is: Students are enrolling and disenrolling, attendance is variable.
- Over the last three years, we’ve seen a pronounced relationship between early attendance and eventual enrollment outcomes:
  - First week average attendance has been 91- 93% of eventually year long enrollment.
  - First week **unique** attendance (students who attend at least once) has been between 96% and 99% of eventual enrollment.
- In Week 1 of 2025-26, average attendance in TN was 1,437 (153 more than prior year) and unique attendance was 1,550 (212 more than prior year).
- **Both metrics indicate enrollment between 1,560 and 1,580 would be consistent with prior years and would position TN to hit its budgeted target for the year.**

# Enrollment Discussion

How do we continue to build Rocketship's external brand in Nashville to support our recruitment efforts so that Rocketship is the "go-to" school for families in the city?

Are there any community partnerships you'd recommend we explore to accelerate our recruitment efforts?

# Regional Focus Areas: Talent



# Talent

Rocketship TN has critical vacancies as we enter Week 4 of the 25-26 school year. This function has presented the greatest challenge for the region this year. Notably, Integrated Special Education (ISE) and English as a Second Language roles present the greatest challenge for the region.

- What innovative staffing strategies might you recommend?
- Do you recommend any local partners that specialize in special education and multilingual credentialing for teachers?

Closed Executive Session



**The Board is in Closed Executive  
Session.**

**Rocketship TN Board of Trustees Meeting**

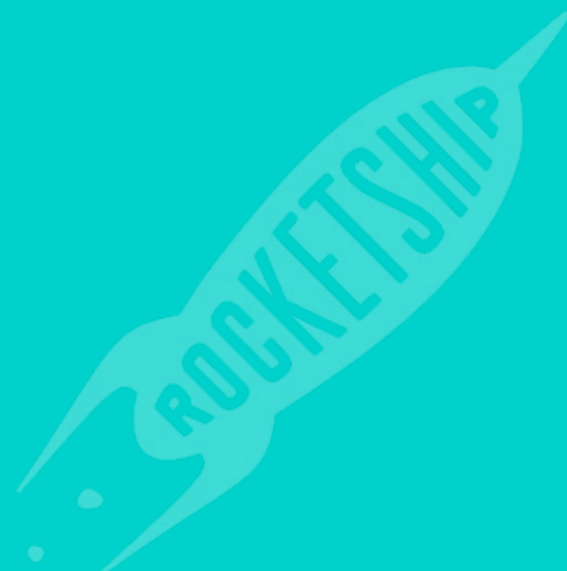
**August 25, 2025**



Closed Session: Report Out



Adjourn







**August 5, 2025**

Rocketship Public Schools, Tennessee  
Eric Dailey, Executive Director  
c/o TN Board of Trustees, Rocketship Schools NET, and TN Regional Leadership Team

**Growth Memo**

As Rocketship TN embraces “scaled impact” as part of its 25-26 regional strategic plan, this memo serves as an update on the region’s current growth pursuits, namely, TN4 and TN5. These updates were determined after consulting a diverse group of internal and external stakeholders and after a thorough review of each application’s review materials.

**TN4 | Rutherford County**

The Rutherford County School Board denied Rocketship’s new start application in late July by a slim margin. The initial vote by the board was a tie with a vote of 3-3-1 and the subsequent vote was 4-3 for denial. The reason for the denial was noted as “discrepancies in the application.” As you may know, we intentionally stewarded the school board —met with each board member to share more about our plans and to learn more about their concerns, and disseminated a Fact Sheet in response to the district’s Findings Report. We are proud of our pivots this summer that kept this application viable and believe we emerged from the vote in a strong position to appeal.

**As such, Rocketship submitted its [Notice to Appeal](#) to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission on August 4th.** We believe that our notice of appeal accurately expresses the case we will make to the commission— a case that demonstrates our readiness to effectively start a new school in Rutherford County. There are likely two areas that the region must be ready to defend during the appeals process: (1) the performance of Rocketship Nashville Northeast and (2) parent demand for Rocketship. We believe we have the clearest path to win an appeal with this application.

**TN5 | Davidson County**

The Metro Nashville Public School Board denied Rocketship’s new start application in May. **While Rocketship initially appealed this decision, the region has now withdrawn its notice of appeal.** Rocketship will not appeal this application for five reasons. Cumulatively, these reasons presented little to no chance of winning on appeal.

- Little to no demonstration of demand from parents given the region’s focus on TN4 last Fall
- Charter school saturation in the proposed cluster (Antioch and Cane Ridge). New KIPP and LEAD elementary schools will open for the 25-26 school year.
- Potential cannibalization of RDCP

- Timeline of appeals process provides no opportunity for regional preparation given focus on start of school year activities
- RNNE portfolio review concerns

Despite wide ranging political implications of our decision to withdraw, we believe this decision is in the best interest of our brand, our existing schools, and future plans to grow in Nashville. Given the state's new replication law and more investments in charter school facilities funding, we believe we have a viable path to start new schools in Nashville in the coming years.

### **Next Steps**

The region will meet with the national Strategy Team on 8/6 to prepare for the appeals process (public hearing and capacity in middle to late September) for TN4. No official dates have been set for the public hearing or capacity interview activities; however, the commission will vote on this appeal on October 16-17.

After aligning with the national Strategy Team, I will invite a small group of cross-functional stakeholders to support this appeals process through direct engagement in appeals' activities like the public hearing and/or capacity interview and expert thought partnership and strategic brainstorming. We will publish a project plan in the coming weeks to keep you abreast of our planning for this appeals process.

If you have questions or want to learn more about the region's decisions, feel free to reach out to me directly. Thanks to everyone that supported the submission of both applications– your support was meaningful.

Eric Dailey

*Via Email and Hand-Delivery*

August 1, 2025

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission  
Attn: Tess Stovall, Executive Director  
Beth Figueroa, Director of Authorizing  
500 James Robertson Parkway 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Davy Crockett Tower  
Nashville, TN 37243  
[CharterSchool.Appeals@tn.gov](mailto:CharterSchool.Appeals@tn.gov)

**Re: Appeal of Rutherford County Schools Denial of Rocketship TN4's Charter Application**

Dear Ms. Stovall and Ms. Figueroa,

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Section § 49-13-108, Rocketship Education Tennessee ("RSED-TN") submits this letter to initiate its appeal before the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission ("TPCSC") of the July 24, 2025 decision made by the Rutherford County Schools ("RCS") Board ("RCS Board") to deny RSED-TN's amended new start charter application (the "Application") of Rocketship TN4 ("TN4").

The RCS Board's decision does not reflect the full merits of the Application, which, when reviewed, meet or exceed the standards outlined by the Tennessee Department of Education. An approval of TN4 is in the best interests of students, families, and the community. TPCSC should approve the Application and authorize TN4 for operation within Rutherford County.

**1. Approval of the Application Is in the Best Interest of Students, Families, and the Community.**

For over a decade, Rocketship has delivered high-quality education in Tennessee, operating safe, joyful learning environments within modern, well-equipped facilities. All three RSED-TN schools have earned recognition for their impact on student achievement<sup>1</sup>, two have recently received unanimous charter renewals<sup>2</sup>, and the region was awarded a FY26 Charter School Program grant to support TN4<sup>3</sup>. These accomplishments, unanimous charter approvals, and financial investments<sup>4</sup>, demonstrate broad confidence in Rocketship's ability to deliver transformative student outcomes in Tennessee, a strong foundation on which Rocketship is committed to bringing the same academic excellence, student growth, and community partnership to TN4.

Rocketship's elementary-only model is centered on accelerating academic growth for all students through personalized learning and by fostering close partnerships with families and the communities served.<sup>5</sup> This approach has delivered positive results.<sup>6</sup> Between Fall 2021 and Spring 2024, Rocketship schools in Tennessee nearly doubled the percentage of students performing at or above grade level on the nationally normed NWEA MAP assessment.<sup>7</sup> In 2024 alone, Tennessee Rocketeers achieved an average of 1.38 years of growth in reading and 1.29 years in math on the NWEA MAP, marking the region's highest gains in three years. This is equivalent to an additional 68 days of learning in reading and 52 additional days in math within a single school year.

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<sup>1</sup> The State of Tennessee designated Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary as a Reward School in 2018–19 and Rocketship United Academy in 2017–18, 2021–22, and 2022–23. Rocketship Dream Community Prep earned a Level 5 on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System for 2022–23.

<sup>2</sup> Rocketship United Academy and Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary, recently received unanimous charter renewals from MNPS and TPCSC, respectively, allowing Rocketship to continue serving students and families for another ten years.

<sup>3</sup> The federal Charter School Program is a competitive grant designed to expand access to high-quality charter schools and empower parents to choose the educational option that best meets their child's needs.

<sup>4</sup> A broad coalition of private, national, and local education investors including City Fund, Charter School Growth Fund, and Scarlett Family Foundation support Rocketship's growth in Tennessee.

<sup>5</sup> Engaged parents are a core pillar of Rocketship's model and critical to our Rocketeers and their long-term success. Beyond supporting their own students, the community is improved by parent voice in our daily work and as external advocates on Parent Organizing Committees.

<sup>6</sup> Rocketship's national network of public elementary schools has demonstrated strong educational performance, as shown in a 2023 Stanford University CREDO study of over 3 million students. The study found that public charter school students outperform traditional public school students and identified Rocketship as a "gap-busting" network within the charter sector.

<sup>7</sup> Between Fall 2021 and Spring 2024, the percentage of RSED-TN students performing at or above grade level rose from 27% to 53% in math, and from 25% to 55% in reading, based on NWEA MAP assessment data.

Rocketship's proven success in Tennessee, combined with the urgent need for additional elementary capacity in Rutherford County, make a compelling case that TN4 is well positioned to deliver strong outcomes for students in the LaVergne/Smyrna area. Rutherford County has experienced significant population growth in recent years, leading to a districtwide rezoning within the RCS system, yet many schools remain overcapacity with enrollment at 105% or higher. Alongside overall population growth, a notable rise in English Language Learner ("ELL") students has created an urgent need for expanded ELL program within the county. RSED-TN has demonstrated strength in serving ELL students, and TN4 is uniquely qualified to meet the critical community need. Approving this appeal would expand access to a high-quality public school option for families who are currently underserved or attending overcrowded schools.

**2. The Application Meets or Exceeds the Metrics Outlined in the Department of Education's Application Scoring Rubric.**

On July 24, 2025, the RCS Board voted to deny the Application based upon the RCS Charter Review Committee Findings ("Findings") indicating the Application did not meet or exceed all standards on the required sections of the Tennessee Charter New Start Application Rubric (the "Rubric"). RSED-TN maintains that an objective read of the record demonstrates that the Application meets or exceeds the Rubric's standards, and on that basis, it appeals the decision of the RCS Board.

**A. The Application Meets or Exceeds Standards in Academic Plan and Capacity.**

As acknowledged by the Findings, RSED-TN's record of success demonstrates the strength of its academic program. In an attempt to substantiate its denial of a strong charter application, the RCS Board misconstrued charter requirements, and drew unsupported conclusions to justify a partial rating. The RCS Board's reasoning suggests an expectation that TN4 replicate RCS practices, rather than offer the innovative school choice envisioned by the Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act. There is absolutely no requirement to replicate RCS practices. First, by way of example, while state standards do not require fixed instructional time for Science and Social Studies at the elementary level, the RCS Board faulted the Application for not specifying time allotments. The record reflects that RSED-TN portfolio schools have demonstrated strong instruction in these subjects using high quality science curriculum and social studies content embedded in CKLA Amplify curriculum. This Application cannot be discredited for failing to specify time blocks for these subjects, as this is not required. Second, RCS Board suggests that a focus on Life Skills Development "*may*" not align with RCS goals and policies and "*could*" have a negative impact on student performance on state standards assessments, yet no evidence substantiates these conclusions or justifies discounting the Application's score.<sup>8</sup>

**B. The Application Meets or Exceeds Standards in Operations Plan and Capacity.**

The Findings acknowledge the Application meets or exceeds standards in this area of Operational Plan and Capacity.

**C. The Application Meets or Exceeds Standards in Financial Plan and Capacity.**

Rocketship is a known quantity, and it has been serving in Tennessee for over a decade. Even the Findings recognize Rocketship's history of financial success and stability in operating charter schools. The Findings highlight RSED-TN's proven fiscal success and plan to open TN4, and praise RSED-National's extensive financial expertise and support for RSED-TN. Despite these expressions of confidence in the organization's long-term financial viability, the Findings rate the Application as only "partially meets" the standard for Financial Plan and Capacity. This conclusion rests solely on TN4's plan to seek a state-permitted waiver for slightly higher student-teacher ratios<sup>9</sup> and the absence of a school counselor in the budget.<sup>10</sup> TN4's staffing model is intentionally designed to support its personalized learning model. Rejecting legally permissible differences from the RCS model contradicts the Rubric's guidance, state charter law allowing for flexibility, and overlooks the

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<sup>8</sup> One of the Findings reasons for downgrading the Application's score to partially meets is the suggestion that Life Skills instruction may remove students "from core content instruction, potentially resulting in a negative impact on student performance on state standards and assessments." However, the Application clearly states Life Skills occur outside instructional time, and the record contains no evidence of negative impact on student performance.

<sup>9</sup> Similar authorizer-approved waivers have been approved and successfully implemented by the three other RSED-TN schools.

<sup>10</sup> The Application's budget does not include a professional titled "school counselor"; however, it includes funding for a social worker, a role RSED-TN's believes is more appropriate to serve TN4's anticipated student population.

comprehensive evidence in the Findings and Rocketship's historical track record. Given RSED-TN's strong financial record of success, the Application clearly Meets or Exceeds the standard.

D. The Application Meets or Exceeds Standards in Portfolio Review and Performance.

The Portfolio Review should have resulted in a meets or exceeds rating. The Findings failed to fairly evaluate RSED-TN's overall performance over the course of over a decade's body of work by focusing disproportionately on one school facing first-time challenges. Instead, this review should have considered the overwhelming success of the three schools over their years of service, and if any singular comparison were to be made (which it should not), the review should have focused on the school anticipated to be most similar to TN 4, Rocketship Dream Community Prep ("RDGP")<sup>11</sup>.

RSED-TN operates three elementary schools in Davidson County. RDGP and Rocketship United Academy ("RUA") both perform exceptionally well, regularly earning A and B growth ratings, Level 4 or 5 TVAAS scores, and recognition as Tennessee Reward Schools. Rocketship Nashville Northeast ("RNNE") has operated for 11 years, receiving strong ratings for 9 of those. In 2023-2024, RNNE experienced a change in its performance, with its TVAAS score dropping to Level 2 after years of Level 4 or 5 ratings. The Findings focus on this recent drop while ignoring both RNNE's prior achievements, history of outperforming local district schools, and RSED-TN's clear plan for recovery and growth, including new resources and staffing changes.

In response to RNNE's recent data, RSED-TN began designing and implementing an improvement plan aimed at strengthening RNNE in particular, and RSED-TN's entire region, including TN4, if approved. This plan includes leadership changes: new Executive Director and principal appointments for 2024-2025, and the hiring of Ms. Carly Reiss, an experienced Rocketship leader with award-winning success in another Rocketship region, and strong personal ties to Tennessee, as Director of Schools for 2025-2026. These changes, combined with targeted corrective measures, are expected to restore RNNE's performance to prior levels, rivaling those of RUA and RDGP.

Driven by data, RSED-TN will continue analyzing outcomes and engaging in a continuous improvement project until RNNE's challenges prove out to be a temporary setback in its longstanding record of excellent education for RNNE students. The same data-driven, continuous improvement approach will apply to the other RSED-TN schools, and TN 4 if authorized.

Recent fluctuations at one RSED-TN school should not overshadow the overall record: Rocketship schools have generally outperformed other schools within their district or geographic cluster across comparable metrics during the past ten years. Moreover, insofar as TN 4 is concerned, RSED-TN is prepared to serve LaVergne/Smyrna children well, and to meet any challenges that may arise.

E. The Application Should Have Been Approved As It Meets or Exceeds the Rubric's Standards.

Under the Rubric, the Application should have been approved. The RCS Board's reliance on the staff recommendation demonstrating multiple instances of misinterpretations and misapplications of applicable standards, fails to support its denial of a strong petition by a proven provider. Accordingly, RSED-TN submits this appeal seeking TPCSC's independent, de novo review with the belief that this Application will achieve a score of "Meets" or higher in all required sections.

Should your team have additional questions regarding this appeal, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Eric Dailey Executive Director  
Rocketship Education Tennessee

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<sup>11</sup> RDGP operates just over the Rutherford/Davidson County border from the TN4 planned location.