

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Absolute Priority: Low-Income Demographic</i></b>	1
<b><i>Competitive Preference Priority 1—Promoting Diversity</i></b>	2
<b><i>A. Rocketship Education is a High-quality Applicant</i></b>	5
1. Demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement	8
<i>The Rocketship Educational Program</i>	10
2. Rocketship’s academic achievement results for educationally disadvantaged students exceed the average results for such students in the State	22
<i>Annual Student Performance on Statewide Assessments</i>	22
<i>Annual Student Attendance</i>	27
<i>Retention Rates</i>	28
<i>Success Beyond Elementary School</i>	29
3. School closures, charter revocations, statutory or regulatory compliance issues, financial and operational management	30
<b><i>B. Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students</i></b>	31
1. Rocketship serves educationally disadvantaged students at rates comparable to or higher than surrounding public schools	31
<i>Rocketship’s Success Serving Students with Disabilities</i>	32
<i>Rocketship’s Success with English-Language Learners</i>	35
2. Rocketship will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students	36
<b><i>C. High-quality Evaluation Plan</i></b>	39
<i>Research Design Overview</i>	39
<i>Descriptions of Each Research Activity</i>	40
<i>Extant Data</i>	43
<i>Reporting</i>	44
<b><i>D. High-quality Management Plan and Personnel</i></b>	45
1. The management plan will achieve all project objectives on time and within budget and includes clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks	45
2. The qualifications, relevant training, and experience of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel	51
3. Sustainability of Rocketship’s replicated or expanded charter schools and multi-year financial and operating model	56

## ***Absolute Priority: Low-Income Demographic***

Rocketship was founded with the specific goal of eliminating the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students in our lifetime. We believe that all kids deserve access to an excellent education. Yet, three of four low-income students are behind grade level by fourth grade. Students who fall behind in elementary school struggle to catch up and may not ever reach their full potential and a better future. For this reason, **we intentionally create schools in neighborhoods where the vast majority of families subsist on low and very low incomes.**

We make specific efforts to recruit low-income students, making visits to local preschools, houses of worship, and apartment complexes near our schools to ensure the students who enroll in Rocketship schools are those who are most in need of high-quality educational options. In addition, our program is specifically geared toward supporting low-income families to become advocates for their students' education even after graduating from Rocketship.

Rocketship Education meets the Absolute Priority for this CSP Replication and Expansion grant. **Nationally, 50.3%** of all students in K-12 public education are eligible for free or reduced-price meals<sup>1</sup>. **Across the entire Rocketship network of 16 schools, 87.5% of all students served are from low-income families.** Table 1 shows the low-income student populations in each state and region where Rocketship operates.

<b>Table 1: Low-income Student Populations in Rocketship Regions</b>				
<b>2016-17</b>	<b>California<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Tennessee</b>	<b>Wash., DC</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>
<b>State Rate</b>	<b>State: 57.2%</b>	<b>State: 58.2%</b>	<b>District: 76.0%</b>	<b>State: 41.8%</b>
<b>Rocketship<sup>3</sup> Regional Rate</b>	<b>Bay Area: 83.8%</b>	<b>Nashville: 100.0%</b>	<b>DC: 100.0%</b>	<b>Milwaukee: 92.9%</b>
<b>% Point Difference</b>	<b>+26.2 points</b>	<b>+41.8 points</b>	<b>+24.0 points</b>	<b>+51.1 points</b>
<b>Percent Difference</b>	<b>+46.5%</b>	<b>+71.8%</b>	<b>+31.6%</b>	<b>+122.2%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/data-element-explorer.cfm/tab/data/deid/3/>

Across the Rocketship Education network (16 schools in 2016-17), we serve disadvantaged students at a rate of 37.2 percentage points (or 74%) higher than the national average of 50.3%. Please also see the Competitive Preference Priority section that follows for additional information on the diversity of enrolled high-needs students.

### **Competitive Preference Priority 1—Promoting Diversity**

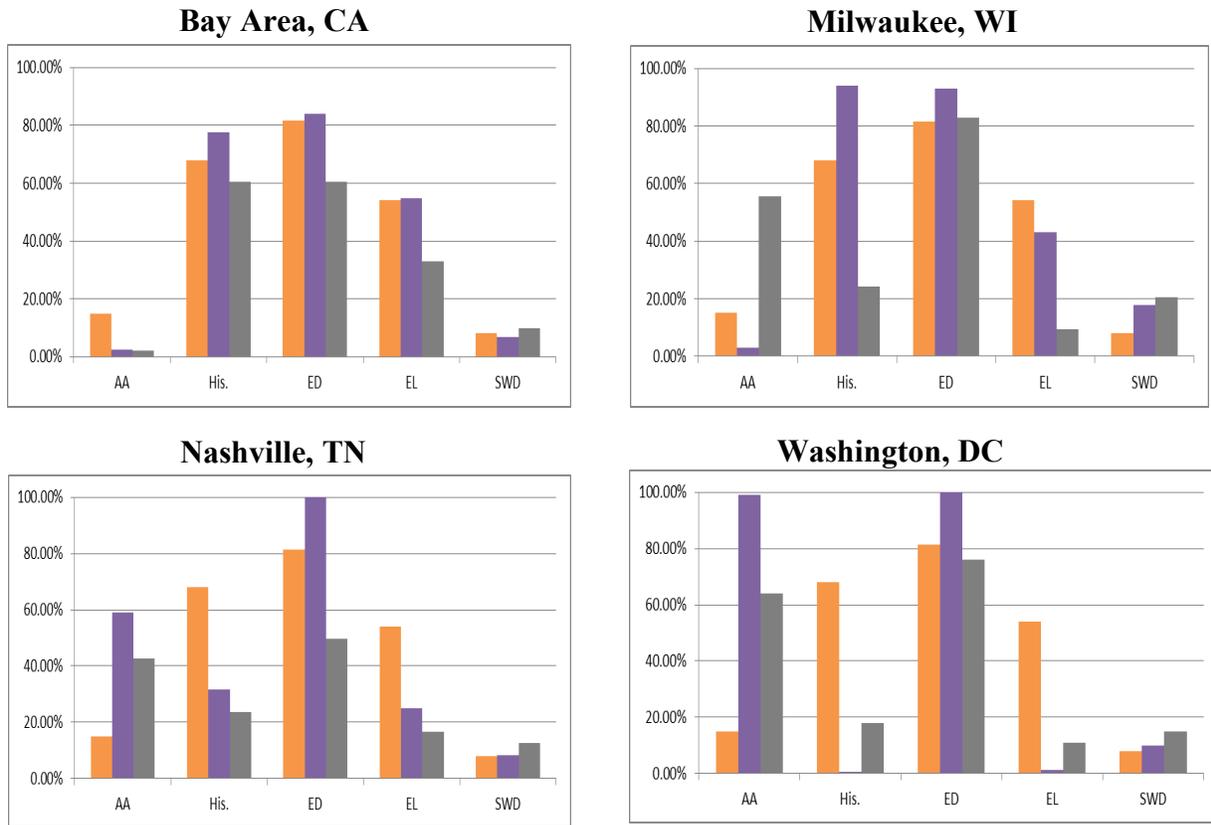
Rocketship Education is a network of **high-quality charter schools** as evidenced by our strong academic results and student growth (see page 22); our strong safety, financial, and operational history (see page 30); and our demonstrated success in increasing student academic achievement by subgroup (see page 22 and Appendix G). Table 2 details the many types of student diversity—**socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, cultural/language, and ability**—the Rocketship network is proud to enroll among our 2016-17 student body of 7,882 Rocketeers (the term that we use to refer to our students):

Indicator	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of Regions	1	2	3	3	4
Number of Schools	7	9	11	13	16
Enrollment	3,816	4,991	5,951	6,766	7,882
Growth Rate	--	31%	19%	14%	16%
% African American	2.2	2.5	7.0	9.0	15.0
% Hispanic	84	83	78	75	68
% English-language Learner	69	63	56	55	54
% Free/Reduced Lunch	87	85	88	85	87
% Special Education	4.9	5.5	5.8	7.5	7.9

Over the past five years, our student body has become less homogenous, enrolling a greater mix of ethnicities and students with disabilities.

Rocketship continually analyzes a variety of demographic data in our existing and potential new regions and their communities. With this data, we **recruit and enroll** a student population that reflects Rocketship’s mission of serving the educationally disadvantaged while also reflecting the diversity of our schools’ surrounding communities. Below are a series of charts

comparing the Rocketship network averages (in orange), to the Rocketship Regional averages (purple), to the surrounding districts (in grey)<sup>2</sup>.



As noted in the response to the Absolute Priority: Low-income Demographic section (page 1), we recruit high-needs students through visits to and partnerships with community sites and direct outreach to potential students and families. We also conduct recruitment events, where we showcase our high-quality, personalized-learning elementary school program and focus on how our approach meets individual students’ needs regardless of their prior educational history or

<sup>2</sup> African American (AA), Hispanic (His.), Economically Disadvantaged (ED), English Learner (EL), Students with Disabilities (SWD). **Surrounding districts** (in gray) include Bay Area districts (various), Milwaukee Public Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and DC Public Schools.

current level of ability. We also leverage current Rocketship parents for referrals. In 2015-16, 72% of Rocketship parents recommended our network to another parent, providing a powerful channel for recruiting and enrolling students in Rocketship schools. Please also see pages 6 and 8 and Appendix I.1 for more details on our approach to parent engagement<sup>3</sup>.

Rocketship translates all applications into the languages used most often by families in the communities we serve, including Spanish and Vietnamese. We have also been heavily leveraging Vietnamese, Spanish, and Arabic-speaking parent volunteers to help with translation and direct outreach to the communities in regions and neighborhoods where these families reside. Each of our regions purposefully uses marketing that reflects the student populations we aim to serve, which means students from Concord to Nashville see themselves represented in our flyers, Facebook ads, and marketing materials (please see Appendix I.2 for examples.). It is important to us that our recruitment teams are best able to support local communities by speaking the languages or understanding the communities represented there. Seven of eight recruiters in **San Jose** are bilingual: five speak Spanish and two speak Vietnamese. In **Milwaukee**, all three recruiters speak Spanish. Of eight recruiters in **Nashville**, where our students are from 16 different countries, including many Arabic-speaking and African nations, one of our recruiters speaks Spanish, and one speaks Arabic. Our Nashville team has Arabic, Somali, Spanish, and English speakers on staff, and we translate documents into Spanish, Arabic, and Somali as appropriate. And in **Washington, DC**, where language barriers are lower, all eight of our recruiters are residents of Ward 7 or Ward 8, the low-income Wards in which Rocketship operates and plans to expand, which is a crucial factor in our ability to build rapport with and recruit students from these neighborhoods. Additionally, our team has created strong

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<sup>3</sup> **Application Requirement H.**

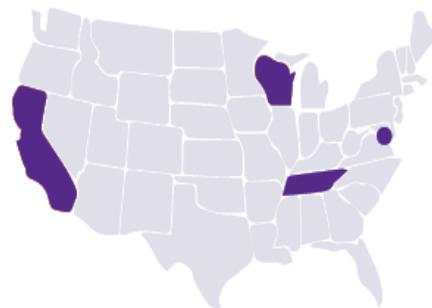
partnerships with local organizations tapped into cultural heritage. For example, in San Jose, we have forged strong relationships with major cultural groups and organizations, including the Mexican Heritage Center and Vietnamese Voluntary Foundation, where we participate in a range of activities from Cinco de Mayo celebrations to Tet Festivals.

Of special note is Rocketship Futuro, our first East Bay school, which is co-located on a district site with another elementary school. The district school has 29.8% socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) students and 15.7% ELLs, whereas Rocketship Futuro Academy has 90.3% SED and 50% ELL students; bringing a diverse social, economic, and cultural experience to students of both campuses.

Rocketship Education will continue to **recruit and enroll** educationally disadvantaged student bodies throughout the CSP funding period in our collective efforts to close the achievement gap for the highest-need students.

### ***A. Rocketship Education is a High-quality Applicant***

Rocketship Education is a non-profit network of **16 separate charter school campuses operating in four regions**<sup>4</sup> of the United States: 12 in the Bay Area of **California**; one in Milwaukee, **Wisconsin**; two in Nashville, **Tennessee**; and one in Washington, **D. C.** Our public elementary charter schools serve primarily low-income students in neighborhoods where access to excellent schools is limited. We believe truly transformative



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<sup>4</sup> **Application Requirement A:** Rocketship currently operates or manages more than one charter school. Please see **Appendices A, D, and E** for additional detail on our schools and our authorized public chartering agencies.

schools do more than educate students: they empower teachers, engage parents, and inspire communities. Table 2 (page 2) shows our growth into three new regions over the past five years as well as the increasing populations of educationally disadvantaged students across our network. Please see Appendix I.3 for this information broken down by region, and refer to the table of demographics and growth on page 2.

By 2020, we aim to replicate the catalytic change we have brought to the Bay Area in our other regions as we grow to fulfill the need for high-quality public elementary school options in additional high-need communities. In each of our expansion regions, we identified a need for high-quality public schools and unique local factors that met our greenlighting criteria (see pages 36 and 46). Educators in Milwaukee seeking new charter options gave Rocketship strong financial backing to bring our network to their city in efforts to combat one of the worst achievement gaps in the country. Nashville, located in a state that is one of the leading states in education reform, had few charter elementary schools. In Washington, DC, there is a reform-minded and supportive political landscape, and we similarly had local advocates and funders, in addition to high needs, particularly in Wards 7 and 8 where Rocketship is located.

By expanding our innovative educational model into regions outside of CA, we have demonstrated that what we have done in the Bay Area is possible nationally. We will grow our existing regions to catalyze change in those areas over the next five years, as we have done in CA, and look toward new regions to serve.

Our scaling strategy is not just about the number of Rocketship schools we open and high-quality seats we offer. **We aim to catalyze parent-led movements for educational equity that drives more choice and higher quality schools in historically underserved communities nationwide.** By engaging at an elementary level, we build lifelong parent advocates who will

demand high-quality educational options and go on to open high-quality middle schools and more.

We can look to San Jose as an excellent example of how Rocketship can make an impact in a community and support the development of a robust choice movement. Rocketship is the largest charter operator in San Jose, and there we have seen the development of a parent-led movement demanding high-quality options for their children. We serve nearly 6,000 students in San Jose today. But since we launched in 2007, an additional 6,000 high-quality middle and high school seats from charter operators like KIPP and Alpha have opened. Many of these charters were the direct result of Rocketship parents organizing and demanding better schools. The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) agrees. In its 2015 “Urban Charter School Study Report on 41 Regions”, the authors unequivocally stated, “Two urban charter sectors, New York City and South Bay [synonymous with San Jose], stand out for providing positive gains for their students in both math and reading and serving a student body with achievement equal to or higher than the average achievement within their state. Continuous enrollment in these charter sectors can be expected to result in steady movement up the state's distribution of academic achievement.”

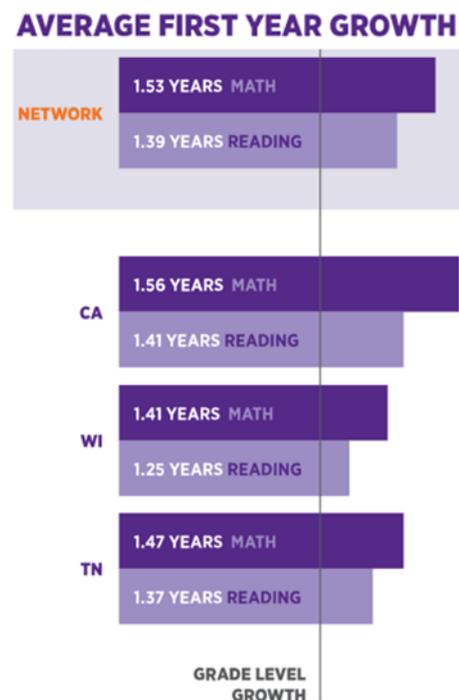
**And most importantly, we are growing with quality.** English-language learners and students in poverty attending San Jose charter schools realize remarkably significant gains in both reading and math – the equivalent of more than a month of additional learning in both reading and math, as reported in the CREDO Study on Urban Charters published last year.

Our unique approach to public education reimagines the traditional school system for today’s needs and tomorrow’s opportunities. **Our philosophy** is based on three core beliefs about excellent education:

1. **Excellent teachers and leaders create transformational schools.** Rocketship invests deeply in training and development to ensure teachers and leaders have a profound impact on students and communities.
2. **Every child has a unique set of needs.** Rocketship is rethinking the conventional school model, allowing each child to learn in their own way with a combination of traditional instruction, technology, and tutoring.
3. **Engaged parents are essential in eliminating the achievement gap.** Rocketship parents are actively engaged in our schools, from reading in the classroom to chaperoning field trips. We also develop parent leaders in our schools and communities to become powerful advocates for their children. Again, please see Appendix I.1 for how we involve parents in school governance as well.

### 1. Demonstrated success in increasing academic achievement

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



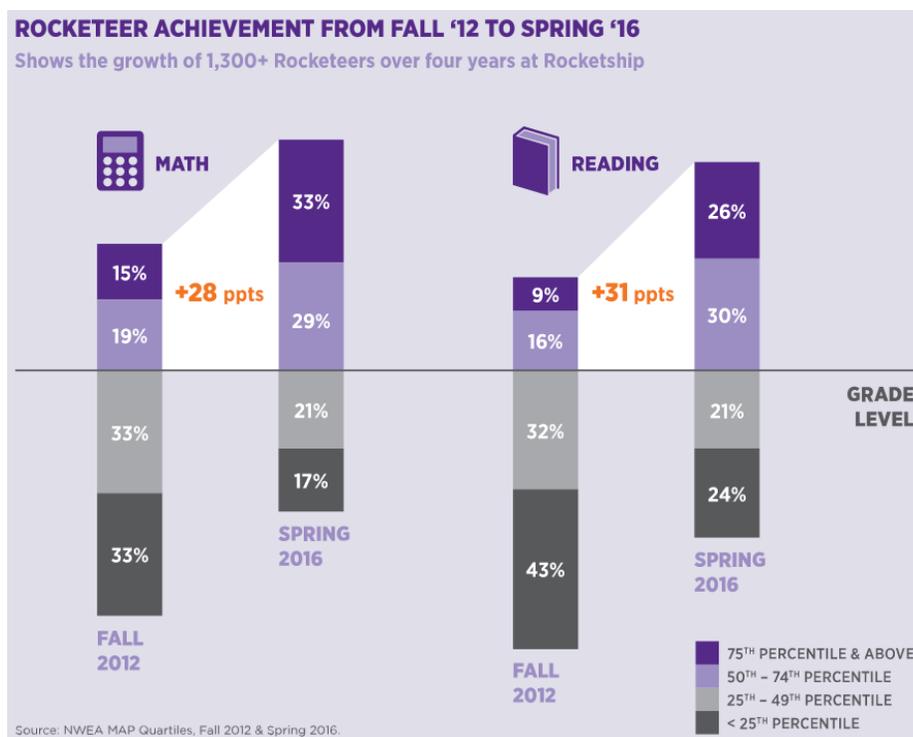
majority of our students start at Rocketship well behind grade level, but we **are committed to getting every Rocketeer on the college and career-ready path by the time they move on to middle school.** First-year Rocketeers, across all grade levels, grew an average of 1.53 years in math and 1.39 years in reading in 2015-16, as shown in the graphic on the preceding page.

The chart that follows shows achievement results for over 1,300 Rocketeers who began with us in Fall 2012 and were still with us in Spring 2016. This means they were in kindergarten through second grade at one of our seven schools in San Jose in 2012 and completed the most recent school year in third through fifth grade. In Fall 2012, just 34% of Rocketeers were at or above grade level in math. By Spring 2016, 62% were on track. In reading, only 25% of our students started 2012 on grade level. By Spring 2016, more than double (56%) were on the college-bound path. Although we still have more to do to get every Rocketeer on the path to a better future, we are inspired by the extraordinary progress of our teachers, families, and students. As is evident in the graphic on the following page<sup>5</sup>, we have strong academic results for students attending Rocketship for multiple years, lifting students from below grade level to at or above national norms. We measure student growth and proficiency compared to their peers with the Northwestern Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. NWEA MAP is a nationally normed, Common Core-aligned assessment we use to track student growth within a school year and absolute performance across years. Our students take the MAP assessment in the fall, winter, and spring. We use NWEA to norm across all regions and to create a common language to compare our student's growth and achievement. It is notable that MAP's national norms are based on the population of all students. Therefore, the

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<sup>5</sup> Data includes 1,350 students who attended a Rocketship school in the fall of 2012 and were still in the network in the spring of 2016.

fact that our students who are 74% more likely to be from a low income family are outperforming the national norm is remarkable.



Overall, our students show continued upward trajectory in the percentage of students at or above grade level, as measured by NWEA. The majority of Rocketeers are above the national norm in ELA with nearly two-thirds of students above the national norm in math. With the exception of a slight dip in 2015-16, the percentage of our students above the national norm has increased in both math and ELA for each of the past 3 years.

**Table 3: Percent of Rocketship Students Above National Norm on NWEA**

	% Above the National Norm		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b>Math</b>	64%	65%	61%
<b>ELA</b>	52%	53%	54%

### **The Rocketship Educational Program**

When we launched Rocketship ten years ago, we decided to focus exclusively on elementary

school—grades Kindergarten through 5. We believed that if we helped our Rocketeers build a solid academic foundation in those early years and helped foster corresponding non-cognitive skills, they would thrive in middle school, high school, and beyond. And they have. A 2016 study by SRI International concluded that Rocketship alumni are one year ahead of their peers in the first year of middle school, and that these gains persist into the second year. (See pages 29 and Appendix G for more on the SRI study). Our focus on a single school level, compared to some CMOs that operate K-12, enables us to hone our program to best serve these grades and more easily replicate our model. All classes and programs are co-educational (with no single-sex classes or extracurricular activities) and are highly personalized to meet students’ individual needs.

At Rocketship, personalized learning is about reaching each student with the right content at the right time using the right method of instruction. Our teachers lead the learning process for every single student we serve in both whole group grade level instruction and differentiated instruction that meets students at their individual level. We use tutors and adaptive online learning programs to augment teacher led instruction and provide valuable time for students to practice new concepts and develop the mastery they need to advance. This carefully orchestrated combination of instructional methods is made possible through robust and regular data streams that map precisely where students need support to achieve mastery – from concept acquisition all the way through practice and repetition. This is how we ensure we are purposeful in our use of technology, targeted in our tutoring, and optimizing our teachers’ talent and instructional time. Our model features six core components of instruction:

1. **Whole-group Instruction:** Teachers engage students in grade level Common Core standards instruction with their peers;

2. **Small-group Instruction:** Teachers and tutors utilize key data sources to plan and engage students in small groups of peers on their similar level;
3. **Targeted Intervention:** Teachers & tutors schedule small group, research-based intervention for students who are struggling with certain concepts. (Response to Intervention);
4. **Team Learning:** Teachers provide a framework for students to collaborate, share knowledge and build social skills through projects in small groups with their peers;
5. **Online Learning:** Adaptive online learning programs provide additional practice where a student is struggling and accelerate students beyond grade level when appropriate. Teachers utilize performance data from these programs to inform their in-class instruction; and
6. **Enrichment:** Students rotate through enrichment programs where they learn about health in physical education and further explore their creativity in the arts, languages, dance, and inquiry-based science.

We deliver these components through a **Rotational**

**Model.** In the Rotational Model, students spend the majority of their school day in the traditional classroom setting. About half of the day is spent in a humanities block and a quarter of the day is spent in a math block, with separate teachers who specialize in their respective subjects. Students receive large group instruction, experience small group and team learning, and receive targeted intervention from their classroom teachers.

SAMPLE 3 <sup>RD</sup> GRADE SCHEDULE	
	Launch: 7:45
	Universal Breakfast: 8:00
	Humanities: 8:20
	Enrichment: 9:00
	Humanities: 9:40
	Lunch & Recess: 12:00
	Integrated Math: 12:40
	*Break: 2:10
	Learning Lab + Tutoring: 2:20
	**Dismissal: 4:10
	***After-School Program: 4:10
	Final Pick-Up: 7:00

Students then rotate into Rocketship’s Learning Lab for adaptive online learning, additional small group instruction, team learning, and targeted intervention—all led by tutors who meet state-specific instructional aide qualifications.

Although Rocketship schedules differ slightly from school to school and grade level to grade level, each student’s day features similar components of instruction in humanities and STEM, led by subject specialist teachers, the Learning Lab, led by teams of individual learning specialists with the support of assistant principals, and enrichment. To meet the unique needs of each community, enrichment activities—for example, Spanish classes in schools with large Latino populations, art focusing on African American artists in DC—are selected by school leaders. In addition, every Rocketeer has regular access to physical education (at least 3 times per week) on top of a daily recess block at each grade level.

Subject specialization allows our teachers to be masters of their content domains. Humanities teachers lead two cohorts of students per day while STEM teachers lead four cohorts per day within a grade level. Each grade level team shares a common planning time to analyze assessment data, co-plan, and create personalized learning plans for students, and collaborate while their students experience enrichment classes.

Personalization is critical to our Rocketeers’ success. We enroll students at all grade levels every year. Many of our students, particularly those in the upper grades, arrive at Rocketship performing far below grade level and with a diverse set of needs. We address these gaps by coupling a holistic instructional model that addresses academic and social-emotional needs via purposeful student groupings in class with thoughtfully-planned instructional opportunities in the Learning Lab through adaptive online programs and tutoring. By providing multiple opportunities to pursue mastery of content, Rocketship’s approach to personalized learning

allows Rocketeers to make gap-closing gains in academic performance. Importantly, we strive for this gap-closing growth for every single Rocketeer, every single school year. We do not enroll kindergarteners and count on five years at Rocketship to realize the results we are after. Further, Rocketship runs an extended school day. In comparison to nearby district elementary schools, our school day is over 100 minutes longer.

**Learning Lab:** The Learning Lab offers access to adaptive online learning programs, targeted tutoring instruction, leveled independent reading exercises, and purposeful independent work. This gives Rocketeers multiple and varied opportunities to master content at their level. In the Learning Lab, we reinforce concepts introduced in the classroom and provide repeated practice opportunities for students under the support of a trained tutor. The Learning Lab is akin to a high-quality afterschool program that is integrated into a student's extended school day and tightly tailored to their unique learning process and needs. Our students' time in the Learning Lab does not replace any time with a teacher, rather it augments their classroom learning by helping students learn at their own pace and develop more ownership of their learning.

Our teacher-led instruction supplemented by digital learning tools provides a customized experience for each Rocketeer, maximizing instructional time and talent to meet each student's unique learning needs. For example, while teachers spend time every day teaching small-group guided reading, students also use an online program to read independently, leveraging the program's extensive library and using its assessments to check for comprehension. Similarly, while teachers focus on building a conceptual understanding of mathematics, students build fluency on math facts through engaging online programs in the Learning Lab. Some of our online learning programs allow teachers to assign work in specific areas where they see a student

struggling, while others are adaptive, allowing Rocketeers to work through relevant content at their own pace. The Learning Lab structure also enables tutors to select students for narrowly-focused interventions.

Online learning is jointly managed by our teachers and tutors (Individualized Learning Specialists), who support teachers during online learning. Each Specialist helps to oversee the culture and effectiveness of online learning time, and meets with their partner teachers during daily common planning meetings to discuss on trends, review data, and plan data-driven individual student plans. They also work directly with students in small tutoring groups to provide academic assistance in literacy and/or math.

**Serving All Students - Students with Special Needs.** Our personalized learning model ensures success for all Rocketeers. For students with special needs, we offer a meaningful inclusion model that ensures all our students with disabilities spend most of their time in our inclusive general education environment. We do not isolate and further stigmatize our students with special needs. Please see page 33 for a description of our Special Education program.

**Fidelity to Rocketship Personalized Learning Model.** Rocketship supports consistent implementation of our model across schools and regions through standardized structures, practices, and resources. These include curriculum materials, student data analysis, coaching and professional development.

**Curriculum Materials and Instructional Programs.** Rocketship teachers follow a common scope and sequence in both subjects aligned to Common Core State Standards. We invest in the development of unit plans and exemplar lesson plans created by current and former Rocketship teachers so each teacher is beginning with a strong set of planning materials.

For our reading comprehension instruction, we have carefully curated and mapped out CCSS

standards for each grade. Reading comprehension lessons are internally created to truly integrate a diverse selection of culturally responsive texts. To meet the demands of Common Core, our reading comprehension instructions engage students in both narrative and nonfiction texts. These lessons are written by the planning leads in our network, and edited by the network team. For mathematics instruction, our core CCSS-aligned curriculum is created internally by lesson-planning leads for each grade level, in conjunction with the network STEM team. Lesson-planning leads are experienced teachers, with a proven track record of results. These plans combine various instructional approaches, including investigative tasks and direct instruction lessons. For other aspects of the humanities and STEM blocks, the national team reviews and suggests externally developed curricula to supplement our internally developed lessons. For a complete list of curricula, see Appendix I.4.

Teachers are encouraged to tweak and elevate plans using student data to best meet their students' learning needs. This flexibility and the network-wide work of our national team encourages our teachers to share engaging and effective lesson plans and best practices. Lead Teachers across the network also design our science and social studies curricula, which are integrated into the humanities and STEM blocks to ensure they are deeply rooted in matching literacy skills and have ample time for inquiry, hands-on experimentation, and extended research opportunities. Teachers focus on teaching an integrated curriculum that merges subjects so that students can more easily develop critical thinking skills and make connections between what they learn throughout the day.

Our model is becoming increasingly flexible where teachers can assign online learning programs to students based on need. While on computers, students split the time between online math programs and online reading programs. At most, students will spend 15% of their day

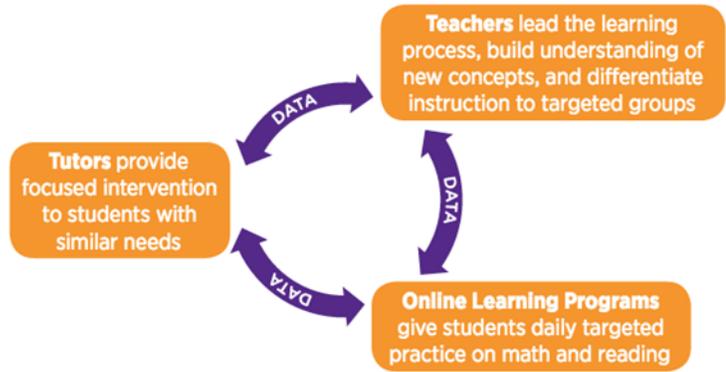
using online learning programs.

**Social Emotional Learning.** To prepare our students to thrive in school and beyond we must also equip them with critical character skills. Many of our students come from high-poverty communities. Research shows that children living in these communities experience more “toxic stress” than children living in middle or upper class neighborhoods. Toxic stress makes it difficult for children to manage their emotions, resolve conflicts, and respond to provocations. That is why we create a structured and supportive learning environment at Rocketship. A consistent, predictable, and positive school experience helps our students develop the social-emotional skills they need to succeed in the classroom and beyond. Our instructional programs include social emotional learning curricula taught roughly three times a week in morning community meetings. We utilized carefully-selected curricula differentiated for lower and upper grade students. In our younger grades, we use the Kimochis curriculum which is centered on five characters with unique temperaments and personalities, designed to give students depersonalized opportunities to practice the skills to recognize their emotions, demonstrate care for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations. The characters act as a safe third party that students can relate to as they consider their own strengths and development areas. Students in upper grades use RULER tools to track their behaviors, feelings, and progress in a mood journal.

### ***Data to Inform Planning and Grouping***

Our approach to personalized learning requires rapid turnaround of assessment data to enable teachers and tutors to monitor and adjust instruction. Thoughtful data analysis enables us to identify areas of understanding or knowledge gaps and to personalize instruction for students at a granular level. We use multiple assessments to measure students’ achievement levels and

growth, which in turn drive decisions about whether students need additional classroom support or tutoring. Data also allows us to progress-monitor our students throughout the year in a way that



annual assessments do not. Following administration of our bi-monthly interim assessments, Rocketship holds full days of professional development for teachers, Assistant Principals, and Principals to deeply analyze the data and plan their instructional responses. This includes adjusting unit plans and small group instruction to address student learning needs highlighted by the data.

Rocketship uses various tools to track and manage data and is continually synthesizing data into a single data warehouse to provide a comprehensive view of student achievement and progress for educators. For internal assessments, Rocketship uses Illuminate, an assessment platform, which enables educators to select standards-aligned unit assessments and quizzes, deliver them to students, and easily score them using the program. These digital resources ensure that educators can effectively measure the progress of their students and modify their approach as needed.

To aid teachers in reviewing and analyzing their student data to inform classroom instruction, Rocketship also uses the cloud-based Schoolzilla data warehouse and reporting system to collect and organize student achievement, enrollment, and attendance data. Rocketship partners with Schoolzilla to build toolkits and user-friendly reports and dashboards that translate simple data into actionable information that educators can use to modify their instructional

approaches. Schoolzilla incorporates data from state assessments, external assessments, student assessments in Illuminate, and a broad set of other data systems across the organization to allow educators to access and understand the needs of their students in real time. Through the use of Schoolzilla, Rocketship maximizes teacher and leader time by centrally providing analysis so that our instructional staff can focus using data to adjust instruction..

### ***Coaching and Professional Development***

The foundational piece of our ongoing staff development is customized, targeted one-on-one coaching that School Leaders provide for teachers and staff. Every week, all teachers receive at least four hours of support outside the classroom, are observed by Assistant Principals at least twice, receive at least two hours of professional development, and have a one-on-one meeting with their coaches. We also implement a variety of coaching strategies and practices. Coaches observe and provide written feedback, deliver in-the-moment feedback (i.e. speaking into an earpiece that the teacher wears during instruction), model instruction, and engage in co-observations with the teacher (i.e. watching a video of the teacher or observing a different teacher). The overarching principles of our coaching program are a tight feedback loop, regular opportunities for practice, the identification of root causes of problems and their accompanying solutions, weekly foci for teachers, and measureable goals for coaches to assess progress and collect data.

Rocketship teachers also participate in three weeks of summer professional development. This summer training allows staff to build trusting, collaborative staff and school culture shaped around personalized learning and the Rocketship identity. We provide training in classroom management and effective unit, lesson, and yearlong planning. We also introduce foundational components of the Rocketship program, including the process for the use of data, instructional

techniques, and the scope and sequence of curricula. In addition to summer training, Rocketship schools dedicate at least 200 hours throughout the school year for staff professional development. We dismiss students two and a half hours early one day a week to allow for an afternoon of purposeful and customized professional development and culture building for staff. The Principal and Assistant Principals at each school facilitate and organize sessions, targeting the areas of development they see as most beneficial to the staff, which personalizes supports for teachers.

### ***Evolving our Approach to Personalization***

Rocketship's commitment to continuous improvement is highlighted by our efforts to enhance and evolve our personalized learning model. During the past two academic years, we have been purposefully integrating online programs into our day-to-day classroom instruction to optimize Rocketeer mastery and teacher time, and to better integrate valuable data from those programs into our models for real time adaptation.

We are currently running pilots integrating emerging technology into classroom-based instruction to elevate both exposure to new concepts before instruction and to target specific skills and contexts for learners' practice and application of taught content. In addition, we are planning pilots to rethink intervention, targeted instruction, and at-home technology use. These initiatives will contribute to the next phase of our evolution, which will continue to focus on how we can optimize the learning time and experiences of our Rocketeers while also optimizing our teachers' time to ensure they are providing the highest possible lift for every learner, whether behind, at, or above grade level. We never stop learning, and we will always innovate and prototype new, better ways to serve our Rocketeers.

## ***Rocketship School Culture***

Rocketship deeply values community and we strive to provide our students and families with a welcoming school environment. At every Rocketship campus, we teach four core values—respect, responsibility, persistence, and empathy. Additionally, each school chooses a fifth core value of its own and names their school prior to opening. Every day, each Rocketship campus begins the school day with Launch, where we start the day together, celebrating our school values, academic achievement, and new skills. Additionally, the whole school, including the staff, dance and sing to start the day energized.

We also encourage our families to be active participants in their student’s education. Parents are invited to Launch each morning and many regularly attend. Parents are encouraged to complete at least 30 partnership hours each school year, however, this is not required nor a condition for admission or continued enrollment at a Rocketship school. Schools host monthly community meetings, which range from aiding parents in reinforcing an academic skill to something more celebratory like the recent all-school viewing of “Hidden Figures”, and parent coffees where parents get to give principals feedback.

## ***Assessment of Student Learning and Measures of Growth***

Because we operate as one CMO, we strive for all our schools to reach a high common standard. However, this is measured differently in different states, through different achievement tests. Schools in California and Washington, DC take state tests aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Our California schools take CAASPP (the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress) and our DC schools will take the assessment created by PARCC (the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers). Rocketeers in Wisconsin and Tennessee take state tests aligned to their own state standards, the Wisconsin Forward Exam and

TN Ready, respectively.

State-specific, criterion-referenced test results are informative, but Rocketship also measures student achievement and growth across all states and regions with the nationally norm-referenced NWEA instruments administered three times each school year. This has been especially beneficial in light of various regions' transitions to the CCSS and the uneven or stalled implementation of a corresponding state-level exam.

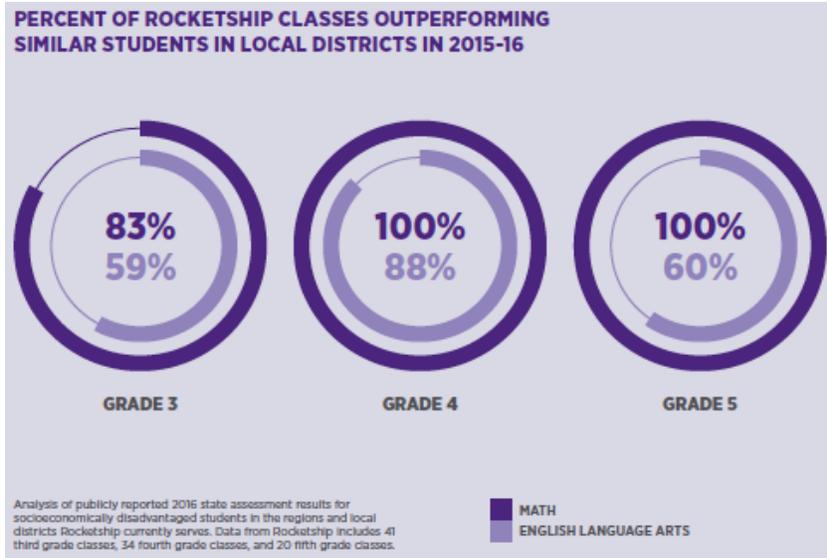
## 2. Rocketship's academic achievement results for educationally disadvantaged students exceed the average results for such students in the State<sup>6</sup>

### *Annual Student Performance on Statewide Assessments*

*Disadvantaged students do better at Rocketship schools than at district alternatives.* As mentioned earlier, three in four students from low-income families are behind grade level by fourth grade. These are the families Rocketship is committed to serving. **To ensure we are on the path to delivering an excellent education, we must first measure our performance against the schools our Rocketeers would otherwise attend.** The graphic on the following page shows the degree to which Rocketship students across our network outperform similar subgroups of students. It is an analysis of publicly reported 2016 state assessments for socioeconomically disadvantaged students in the regions and local districts Rocketship currently serves.

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<sup>6</sup> **Application Requirement B:** 1) Student assessment results; 2) Attendance and student retention rates; 3) Suspension and expulsion rates.

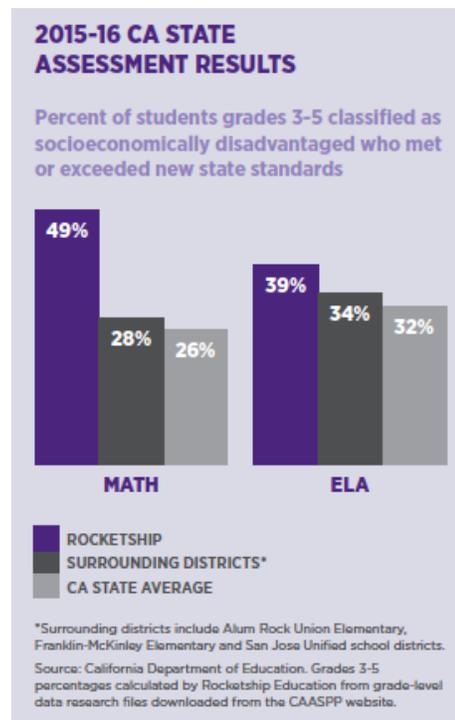


**Rocketship Bay Area**

*12 schools; 5,897 students; 83.8% socioeconomically disadvantaged; 54.6% ELL*

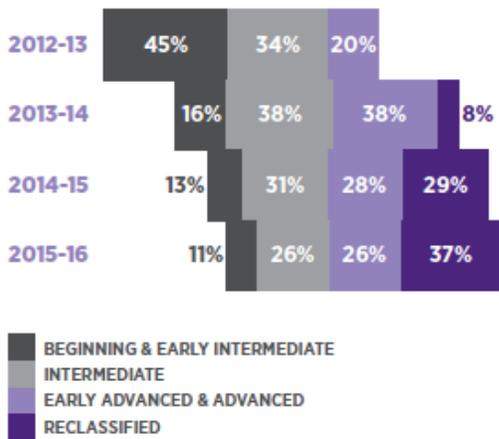
The Bay Area, home to Silicon Valley, is a hotbed of innovation and features a booming economy. This has caused housing prices to skyrocket, making the community unaffordable to many in the low and middle classes. Rocketship embodies the innovative spirit of this area and we want to be sure that innovation is benefitting everyone.

We help nearly 6,000 students in low-income communities get on the college and career ready path. **In addition, a 2016 study by Innovate Public Schools singled out six Rocketship schools—more than any other district or charter network—as top-performers for low-income minority students across the Bay Area.**<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> <https://reports.innovateschools.org/2016-top-schools/>

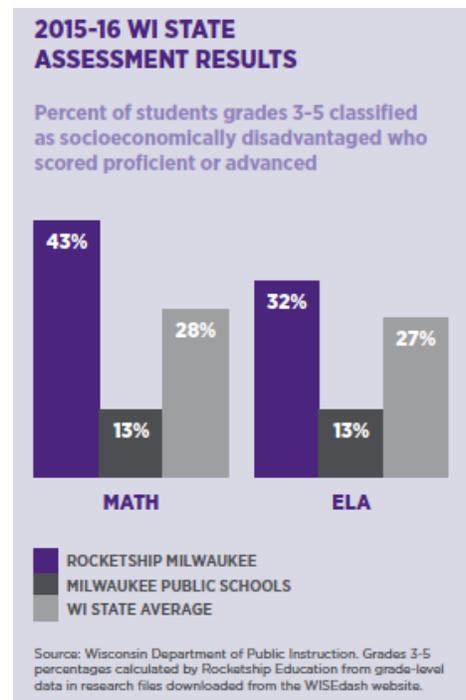
## ENGLISH LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT



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

**Rocketship Milwaukee**  
*1 school; 509 students; 92.9% economically disadvantaged; 43.2% ELL*

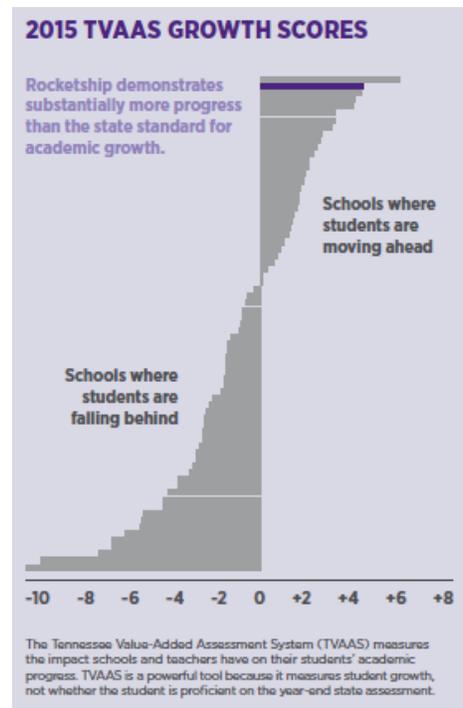
In January 2016, former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan asserted that Milwaukee’s consistently low test scores were a “national disgrace.” We share his concern. Rocketship Southside Community Prep is a rare



bright spot among Milwaukee schools, and the community deserves more such bright spots. Among more than 60 Milwaukee schools (district and charter) with similar student populations, **Rocketship Southside Community Prep ranked #1 on both math and English Language Arts performance on the first year of the state’s new Forward exam.** The graphic at right shows the degree to which the performance of Rocketship students far exceeds that of students in the city’s traditional public school district and across the state.

**Rocketship Tennessee**  
*2 schools; 1,038 students; 100% economically disadvantaged; 24.6% ELL*

The Volunteer State has been recognized as “fastest improving in the nation” in science, according to the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly known as the Nation’s Report Card<sup>8</sup>. However, student performance in Nashville is headed in the opposite direction. The achievement gap in Nashville grew by 11% between 2011 and 2014, with only one-tenth of low-income students attending a school that is closing the achievement gap.<sup>9</sup> As it stands today, over 15,000 elementary school students are falling behind.



In 2014-15, our first year in operation in Nashville, a

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tn.gov/governor/news/tennessee-students-the-fastest-improving-in-the-nation-in-science>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/tn/2016/03/22/achievement-gap-is-narrowing-in-memphis-growing-in-nashville-study-says/>

majority of TN Rocketeers started below the 25th Percentile on NWEA. 54% scored in the bottom 25th Percentile in math, and 52% in reading on the fall NWEA MAP assessment. Therefore, we are tremendously proud that our Rocketeers posted the second highest growth measure on the state assessment (see graphic at right) among all 73 public elementary schools in Nashville in 2015.

Tennessee cancelled its 2016 state assessment, leaving many schools in the dark on their school's comparative progress. But at Rocketship, we rely on multiple assessments throughout the school year to track progress and help further personalize our instruction. On the 2015-16 NWEA MAP assessment, our Rocketeers continued to achieve gap-closing growth. **TN Rocketeers achieved 1.5 years of growth in math and 1.4 years of growth in reading.**

**Rocketship Washington, DC**

***1 school; 438 students; 91.2% economically disadvantaged; 1.4% ELL***

Two decades after charter schools were introduced in the nation's capital and eight years after the District of Columbia gave the mayor control of its public school system, DC's schools have undergone a significant transformation. Student performance has improved and graduation rates have increased. However, progress has been uneven. In affluent Ward 3, 88% of elementary school students are on grade level. Across the river, in predominantly low-income Ward 8, just 36% of elementary school students achieve grade level proficiency. Even in the vibrant charter sector, less than 25% of children have access to high-quality schools. Not surprisingly, high-performing charter schools have long waitlists.

On August 22, 2016, Rocketship opened its first school on the East Coast in Southeast DC's Ward 8, where only 24% of fourth graders are on reading level.<sup>10</sup> Rocketship Rise Academy at

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<sup>10</sup> National Center for Education Statistics

the Ruth Rales Campus launched with 448 Rocketeers making it the single largest opening in the District’s twenty-year charter school history. We purposefully open large to better serve families with siblings across grade levels, while also gaining financial efficiencies at scale.

Because we are in our first year of operation in DC, we do not yet have state assessment data to compare our Rocketeer’s progress to their district peers. However, at mid-year we can project 1.3 years of growth. On the local accountability measure (Performance Management Framework), we are projecting we will be Tier 1, the highest level, based on performance to-date and informed by performance of similar first year Rocketship schools (i.e. in Milwaukee and Nashville). Our charter agreement with the District of Columbia’s Public Charter School Board authorizes Rocketship to open up to eight schools if we continue to meet high achievement goals. Just as we did in San Jose, we plan to build a high-performing and financially sustainable network of elementary schools serving at-risk communities across DC.

**Annual Student Attendance**

Across all campuses and regions, nearly 94% of Rocketship students are in class every day. Table 4 shows annual attendance for each region and the network as a whole. Please see Appendix I.5 for attendance by school for the years 2013-14 through 2016-17 (year-to-date).

**Table 4: Rocketship Attendance**

Region	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
CA	96.30%	95.56%	95.65%	95.11%
WI	91.12%	91.12%	92.18%	94.15%
TN	--	93.99%	93.29%	94.43%
DC	--	---	---	86.07%
Network	93.71%	93.56%	93.71%	94.40%

Attendance in our most established region (CA) is holding steady at 95%+, and attendance in WI and TN are increasing. The 2016-17 school year is our first in the DC region, and we are working to improve attendance there.

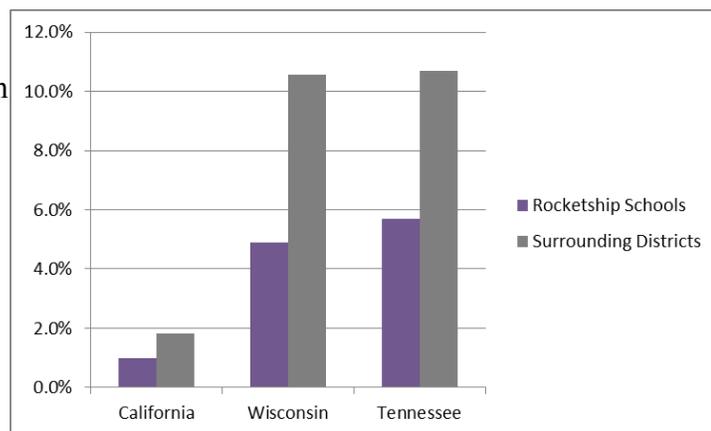
## Retention Rates

As a school of choice, the clearest demonstration of our excellence is the number of Rocketeers who choose to come back each year. Every student we serve has a seat in their zoned district school waiting for them, but they choose to come back to Rocketship. **In 2015-16, 90% of Rocketeers returned to their same campus.** We are humbled by this vote of confidence and work relentlessly to deliver on the promise our families see in our schools every year.

## Suspension and Expulsion Rates

**We don't kick kids out of school.** That has been our stance since we opened our first school ten years ago. And while we have grown from a single school serving a couple hundred kids in a church basement to a national network serving 7,882 Rocketeers, **we have still never expelled a student at any school in any year.** Further, Rocketship suspends students at rates

below that of surrounding districts. In 2014-15, the most recent year for which complete data was available, Rocketeers were suspended at rates of almost half their surrounding districts, as evidenced by the graph at right.



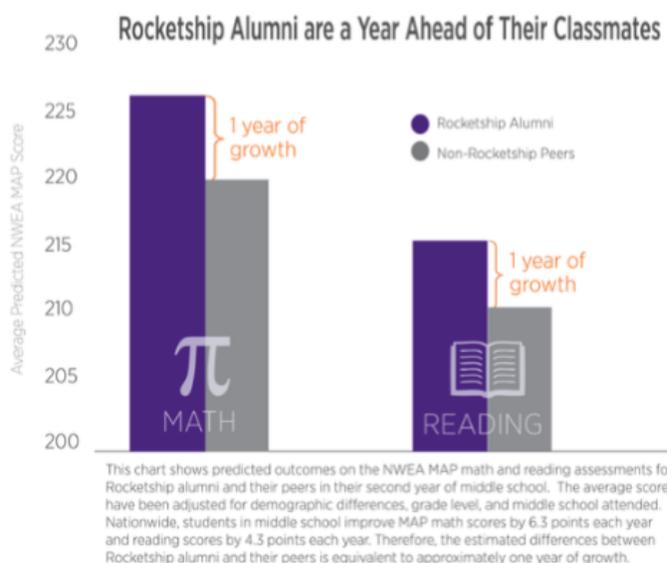
We are able to keep students in class as much as possible through consistent implementation of a robust Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework. The fundamental purpose of PBIS is to create learning environments that are consistent, predictable, positive, and safe, which helps our students develop their social and emotional intelligence. In our PBIS system, students are treated positively and with respect, with the goal of teaching students new behaviors and acknowledging

them when they exhibit their new skills. Removing a student from class, even in elementary school, is strongly correlated with negative academic, behavioral, and social outcomes. School suspension is a last-resort strategy that we only use when a disruptive student endangers the safety of other students, teachers, or school staff.

### **Success Beyond Elementary School**

We have had great success with our students at Rocketship elementary schools:

- **In California**, Rocketship ranks in the top 10% in both math and English Language Arts performance among all California elementary schools serving a similar student population;
- **In Wisconsin**, Rocketship ranks #1 in math and English Language Arts performance among more than 60 district and charter schools in Milwaukee that serve a similar student population;<sup>11</sup> and
- **In Tennessee**, Rocketship ranks #2 in academic growth among all 73 public elementary schools across Nashville.



But there's no doubt that middle school is one of the most challenging transitions in a student's academic journey. To examine how our Rocketeer alumni perform in middle school, we engaged SRI, an independent nonprofit research center, to conduct a three-year study on the

<sup>11</sup> For more on Regional Results, visit <http://www.rsed.org/year-in-review/2015-16/#regional-results> or see our Year In Review document in Appendix I.6.

performance of our Rocketeer graduates. The study (attached in Appendix G) followed nearly 2,000 students in seven San Jose middle schools with high concentrations of Rocketship graduates. SRI rigorously investigated academic performance, social and emotional skills, and student confidence navigating the middle school transition.

**Key findings from the SRI study of Rocketship are as follows:**

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

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

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

### **3. School closures, charter revocations, statutory or regulatory compliance issues, financial and operational management**

Rocketship Education operates charter schools in four regions under a total of seven charter authorizers<sup>12</sup> and **has never had any schools closed, any charters revoked, any statutory or regulatory compliance issues, any student safety violations or issues, or any financial or operational mismanagement.**<sup>13</sup> **Rocketship has clean audits, which are included in**

<sup>12</sup> These include the California State Board of Education, the City of Milwaukee, the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Franklin-McKinley School District (San Jose, CA), Metro Nashville Public Schools, Redwood City (CA) School District, and the Santa Clara (CA) County Office of Education.

<sup>13</sup> **Application Requirements B(4) and C:** Information on issue(s) resolution

## Appendix H.

### **B. Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students**

#### **1. Rocketship serves educationally disadvantaged students at rates comparable to or higher than surrounding public schools**

Across our network, Rocketship serves a student population that is **87.5% economically disadvantaged, 54.1% English-language Learner, and 8.0% are eligible for Special Education services out of a total population of 7,882.** In addition, **83% of our students are African American or Hispanic**—populations that have been traditionally underserved by public education—and **8.6% of our students are homeless.** Table 5 shows Rocketship’s educationally disadvantaged populations in relation to those of major traditional public school districts in each region where we operate.

<b>Entity</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	<b>English-lang. Learner</b>	<b>Special Education</b>
<b>Rocketship Education (ALL)</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>68.0%</b>	<b>87.5%</b>	<b>54.1%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>
<b>Rocketship Bay Area</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>77.5%</b>	<b>83.8%</b>	<b>54.6%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>
<i>Surrounding Bay Area Districts<sup>14</sup></i>	2.16%	60.48%	60.56%	32.79%	9.86%
<b>Rocketship Milwaukee</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>93.9%</b>	<b>92.9%</b>	<b>43.2%</b>	<b>17.7%</b>
<i>Milwaukee Public Schools</i>	55.7%	24.1%	82.7%	9.5%	20.6%
<b>Rocketship Tennessee</b>	<b>58.9%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>100.0%<sup>15</sup></b>	<b>24.8%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>
<i>Metro Nashville Public Schools</i>	42.8%	23.6%	49.7%	16.6%	12.5%
<b>Rocketship DC</b>	<b>98.9%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>
<i>DC Public Schools</i>	64%	18%	76%	11%	15%

This chart, in addition to the graphs on page 3 show that across all regions, Rocketship is serving minority populations, economically disadvantaged and, in three of four regions, English Learners at rates higher than surrounding districts. In our California region where we have the

most mature schools, Rocketship’s students outperformed local districts and the state in English Language Arts (ELA) and math in almost every comparison group for the past two school years (see following graphic). For additional information on how our students in Wisconsin and Tennessee compare to students in local districts and across the state, please see the tables in Appendix G. As noted above, we are in our first year of operation in Washington, DC and do not yet have state assessment data.

**Table 6: California State Assessment Data—Rocketship and Other Districts**

CA State Assessment: CAASPP					
% Met or Exceeded State Standard (Gr 3-5)		2014-15		2015-16	
School/District	Student Category	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
<b>RSED</b>	<b>All Students</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>51%</b>
Local Districts*	All Students	39%	34%	44%	38%
State	All Students	40%	35%	45%	39%
<b>RSED</b>	<b>Econ Disadv Students</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>49%</b>
Local Districts*	Econ Disadv Students	29%	24%	33%	27%
State	Econ Disadv Students	27%	22%	32%	26%
<b>RSED</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Local Districts*	Hispanic	26%	20%	32%	25%
State	Hispanic	28%	22%	33%	27%
<b>RSED</b>	<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>
Local Districts*	Students with Disabilities	12%	11%	13%	13%
State	Students with Disabilities	14%	13%	16%	14%
<b>RSED</b>	<b>St with Limited Engl Profic</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Local Districts*	St with Limited Engl Profic	13%	16%	12%	13%
State	St with Limited Engl Profic	14%	14%	16%	16%

### **Rocketship’s Success Serving Students with Disabilities**

This percentage of students with disabilities in our high-needs population is lower than that of surrounding area public schools (see previous table) and the national average (12.9%<sup>14</sup>) because we offer strong interventions and supports for all students so we do not end up labeling students as “special education” unless they truly qualify for it. In some public schools, students may sometimes be classified as having a learning disability when in reality they are simply struggling academically. Rocketship implements a **comprehensive pre-referral process**, which

<sup>14</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64>

includes the delivery of evidence-based interventions through a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. Through the implementation of these research-based practices, along with Rocketship's overall approach to individualized learning, we are able to remediate many non-severe learning differences through our general program. This results in a smaller number of students being classified as in need of special education services because **all students are receiving highly individualized instruction tailored to their unique set of needs.**

Rocketship's **Education Specialists** are responsible for managing the adherence to and caseload of IEPs for Rocketship students who require special education services. School leaders manage and coach Education Specialist to improve student outcomes through targeted academic and behavioral support. In addition, Education Specialists are supported by our network special education team who provide the technical expertise to ensure compliance and instructional expertise to ensure we tailor our behavioral and instructional supports to the needs of each student with special needs.

Rocketship is committed to serving the needs of each and every Rocketeer, therefore all Rocketeers with disabilities receive a free, developmentally-appropriate public education in accordance with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act<sup>15</sup>. We believe that the **least restrictive environment** starts in the general education classroom for all Rocketeers, and supplemental aides and services are added to students' educational plans according to their identified areas of need. The majority of students with disabilities enter Rocketship with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and others in need are quickly identified through home visits, parent meetings, observation, academic performance, and frequent testing.

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<sup>15</sup> **Application Requirement J.**

Rather than isolate and stigmatize these students, we operate a meaningful inclusion model that ensures **all our students with disabilities have daily access to our general education environment.** This means all students with disabilities spend at least half of their day in general education classrooms, with the vast majority spending over 80% of their day in the general education environment. **With this inclusive approach, our students with disabilities are exposed to the same Common Core-aligned instructional program as their typically developing peers.** By coupling Universal Design for Learning principles and co-teaching practices with strategic small group and individualized instruction, we help all Rocketeers achieve ambitious academic and social outcomes. We hold our special education students to the same growth expectations we have for all students—our students with disabilities (those with an IEP, or Individualized Educational Plan) achieved 1.3 years of growth in math and 1.2 years in reading last year.

ROCKETEERS WITH  
DISABILITIES SPEND  
**80%**  
OF THEIR SCHOOL DAY IN  
GENERAL EDUCATION  
CLASSROOMS.

Table 7: Growth Years (Actual RIT Growth/Typical RIT Growth)						
Student Category	2013-14		2014-15		2015-16	
Student Category	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
All Students	1.24	1.22	1.42	1.35	1.22	1.25
Students With Disabilities	1.25	1.06	1.49	1.2	1.29	1.19
Students Without Disabilities	1.24	1.23	1.41	1.36	1.21	1.25

***Academic Support for Students with Disabilities***

Our multidisciplinary special education team also provides a comprehensive range of specific and individualized services for students who are identified as having learning or behavioral disabilities. Because of our open lottery process, we have students with a variety of learning and behavioral needs in our schools, and have developed supports and structures for all learners .

The following is a breakdown of the special education eligibilities and services that are represented within Rocketship schools: Specific Learning Disability: 25.9%; Speech Language Impairment: 38.1%; Autism: 10.5%; Other Health Impairment: 12.6%; and Other: 12.9%. Our students with mild learning needs are also well-served through the strategies listed above. However, we know that our students with moderate-to-severe learning needs require additional support, so they are case managed by a teacher with a moderate-to-severe Education Specialist credential, on a caseload with a much lower student-to-staff ratio than students with mild learning differences. Our moderate-to-severe teaching staff have access to professional development opportunities uniquely designed for their specific student needs. Inclusion in the general education program is still a critical component of the educational program for students with moderate-to-severe learning needs, but we recognize that these students often have additional, unique needs that must be addressed. Towards that end, we use a suite of curricular resources specifically designed to support students with more significant needs, and our moderate-to-severe teaching staff weave support and instruction in adaptive lessons throughout the day.

### ***Rocketship's Success with English-Language Learners***

Over half (54.1%) of students in Rocketship schools are English-language Learners and, as the data on page 10 shows, our students achieve strong results in literacy proficiency. The online learning programs we use differentiate lessons to meet students at the level where they are struggling in learning basic math and reading, allowing teachers to focus on developing the students at a high-order skill level. In the classroom, teachers have been trained in the GLAD<sup>16</sup> model for English Language Development (ELD) instruction. We focus on including language acquisition into our lessons through a variety of written and oral language skills. This includes: a

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<sup>16</sup> <https://begladtraining.com/>

focus on oral and written retelling of narratives, building habits of discussion in the classroom, integrating science and social studies content throughout the day to expose to students to both fiction and nonfiction texts and integrating different learning modalities (auditory/visual/kinesthetic, etc.) by having our students build their listening comprehension during reading comprehension, visual supports in the form of anchor charts and cards, and TPR stands for "total physical response." (i.e. a tool in which teachers attach hand and body motions to concepts, to help students remember them. For example, a teacher might put their hands on their face and make the facial expression "oh no" when they are going over the term "problem." TPR can also be used in math.)

The combination of online learning programs' personalized instruction and the targeted teaching from our amazing educators have ensured that all Rocketeers are effectively learning, no matter how far behind or ahead a student is in their classroom.

## 2. Rocketship will recruit and enroll educationally disadvantaged students

The first step we take to evaluate and “greenlight” potential new regions for expansion is to **identify a high-need community with failing schools**. This naturally ensures that **we target, recruit, and enroll educationally disadvantaged students**. Specifically, our greenlighting diligence analyzes the overall size and growth of **students of color, economically disadvantaged students, English-language Learners, and students with disabilities in each geography**. Additionally, we look at elementary school performance in ELA and math in local districts and identify the size of these target populations in failing schools, while also seeking to understand potential new entrants to the market. Finally, we look at tailored metrics that reflect issues with which local communities are grappling, such as overcrowding in Nashville schools and out-of-ward school attendance in DC. Key to this process is our family and community

engagement focus, which authentically connects parents to community leaders, teaches them to advocate for their child, and mobilizes them to take action on behalf of public education, charter funding, and access to high-quality school choice. Parent outreach and involvement ensures that we continually enroll economically and educationally disadvantaged students and that we work with parents to identify and meet their needs. From advocating for our new school at community meetings, leading tours, meeting with local officials, and naming the school, our parents are the backbone of the movement. They even interviewed and helped select the founding teachers in our DC region, as featured in *The Washington Post* (see article in Appendix I.7).

Please see Section D, Management Plan and Personnel, for more detail on our three-phase process for expansion. These phases constitute the “big picture” of how we analyze the need for new Rocketship regions and how we simultaneously ensure that we are serving the students who need us most. Table 8 on the following page shows the number of our proposed Replication schools and total seats by CSP project year and Rocketship region. As shown in Table 1 (page 1), Rocketship significantly exceeds the 60% threshold for serving low-income students and will continue to recruit and enroll students from high-needs, educationally disadvantaged families throughout the CSP funding period.

**Table 8: Number of Schools and High-quality Seats at Full Enrollment by CSP Project Year<sup>17</sup>**

	Existing	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
<b>California</b>						
Total Schools	12	12	13	15	17	18
Total Seats	6,830	6,830	7,430	8,630	9,830	10,430
<b>Wisconsin</b>						
Total Schools	1	1	2	2	2	2
Total Seats	550	550	950	950	950	950
<b>Tennessee</b>						
Total Schools	2	3	3	4	5	6
Total Seats	1,100	1,650	1,650	2,200	2,750	3,300
<b>Washington DC</b>						
Total Schools	1	2	3	3	4	5
Total Seats	700	1,400	2,100	2,100	2,800	3,500
<b>Region 5</b>						
Total Schools	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total Seats	-	-	-	-	-	600
<b>Total Schools</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>
Total New Schools	-	2	3	3	4	4
Total New Seats	-	1,250	1,700	1,750	2,450	2,450
<b>Total Seats</b>	<b>9,180</b>	<b>10,430</b>	<b>12,130</b>	<b>13,880</b>	<b>16,330</b>	<b>18,780</b>

**Rocketship affords all applicants equal opportunity for an excellent education**

The initial stages of our enrollment process only require submission of a student lottery application. This form collects basic information (e.g., name, date of birth, grade, parent/guardian name, and contact information) to enter the student into the lottery and helps us contact the student/family after the lotteries. This sheet does *not* include any information regarding the student’s previous academic performance, any programs in which the student has participated (i.e. Special Education, Gifted and Talented Education, English-acquisition programs, etc.), or their economic status, all of which ensures that Rocketship is able to fully implement a “blind” selection process. **All students who apply and are selected during the lottery are accepted to Rocketship schools, regardless of their need for special education, English-language development, or other services.** Please see <http://www.Rocketship.org/enroll.cfm> or Appendix I.8 for more information on our recruitment and enrollment policies.

**(Application Requirement I)** By focusing our recruiting efforts in areas identified as having

<sup>17</sup> Schools in 2017-18 are funded by existing CSP grant funds. Total Seats depict number at full enrollment

the highest need, we are able to enroll students who may otherwise be underserved.

### **C. High-quality Evaluation Plan**

SRI International, a national nonprofit research organization, will conduct an independent evaluation of Rocketship Education’s replication effectiveness. The evaluation is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) **Implementation.** To what extent do replication schools (Rocketship schools established in 2018-19 and 2019-20) consistently implement the core elements of parent engagement, personalized learning, and excellent teachers and leaders? How, if at all, does implementation of these core elements differ by region?
- 2) **Challenges and supports.** What challenges do replication schools face in implementing the Rocketship model? How do the challenges differ by region? To what extent do the supports provided by Rocketship Education meet schools’ needs?
- 3) **Student outcomes.** How do student outcomes (i.e., attendance, retention, and academic growth trajectories) in replication schools compare to established schools, overall and by student subgroup? For replication, how do these student outcomes vary by region?

### **Research Design Overview**

SRI will use mixed qualitative and quantitative methods to document key elements associated with successful implementation of the Rocketship model, synthesize lessons learned in replicating the model, and provide descriptive analyses of Rocketship student outcomes. Table 9 on the following page charts the research topics by each data source and research activity.

Table 9	Qualitative Data		Extant Data		
Research Topics	Interviews with RSED central office staff	School site visits	Parent engagement data	NWEA MAP data	Publicly available school-level data
1) Implementation	X	X	X		
2) Challenges and supports	X	X	X		
3) Student outcomes			X	X	X

### *Descriptions of Each Research Activity*

This section describes each data collection activity in greater detail, including qualitative data collection and analysis of extant data.

**Qualitative Data.** Qualitative data will provide information about implementation, as well as highlight the structures and supports needed for high-quality replication. Qualitative data collection will consist of interviews with Rocketship central office staff (both at the national and regional level), and visits to Rocketship schools that include interviews with school staff and parents. SRI will collect data on existing Rocketship schools in spring 2020, and on replication schools in spring 2021. SRI will develop semi-structured protocols for each type of interview and focus group to allow for synthesis of findings across schools. Based on an analysis of data collected in spring 2020, SRI will develop an implementation framework focused on the three core model elements. In spring 2021, researchers will use this framework to examine implementation of the Rocketship model in replication schools.

**Rocketship Central Office Interviews.** In 2020 and 2021, SRI will conduct interviews with central office staff to better understand how these staff support implementation of the Rocketship model: the vision for Rocketship schools; the nature of recruiting, selection, and training of prospective principals; and any supports provided to school leaders to ensure fidelity to the Rocketship model. These interviews will also focus on the expansion strategies, implementation challenges in replication sites, and specific regional concerns.

**Site Visits.** Site visits will include interviews with regional and school-level staff (e.g. principals, teachers, parent liaisons) as well as parent focus groups and (if necessary) interviews. In spring 2020, SRI will visit three established Rocketship elementary schools in the San Jose, California region. Data gathered during this first round of site visits will provide a baseline understanding of how mature Rocketship elementary schools develop parent engagement, support excellent teachers and leaders, and foster individualized learning for students in model schools. In spring 2021, SRI will visit six replication school sites in regions across the network. After each visit, the team will engage in a thorough coding, sorting, and iterative analysis to compare, contrast, and synthesize findings and propositions from individual respondents to make more general statements. These findings will be considered in conjunction with extant data to identify areas of success and concern, and provide recommendations for improvement.

**School-level Interviews.** SRI will interview principals, teachers, and parent liaisons in each participating school. Principal interviews will explore the following topics: leadership (key principles, supports, and challenges); instructional design and strategies for personalization; parent engagement, including overall approach, successes and challenges, and means of measuring; teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention; and their perception of the regional context. SRI will interview four teachers at each participating school site. Teacher interview topics will focus on the teacher's perspective on the hiring and recruitment experience, on-the-job support and workplace conditions, professional development and the use of strategies for personalized learning (e.g., use of data to inform instruction, blended learning models), as well as parent engagement strategies, successes, and challenges.

In addition to teachers and principals, SRI will interview school-level staff responsible for

organizing and promoting parent engagement. Interview topics will focus on the various types of parent engagement available and approaches to parent outreach, as well as effective strategies for parent engagement, challenges and barriers, and means of measuring engagement.

#### **Parent Focus Group or Interviews.**

SRI will develop a rubric specifying three levels of parent engagement: low, medium, and high. SRI will identify and recruit parents from each level to ensure input that represents a range of experiences and perspectives. Because attaining data from a representative group of parents can be challenging, SRI will employ multiple targeted strategies to recruit parents for focus groups and/or interviews. The recruitment strategies will include offering a variety of opportunities to participate, such as conducting focus groups before and after school, offering to interview on the phone, or conducting one-on-one interviews at the parent's convenience in their home or other nearby location. SRI will provide a \$50 gift card for each parent, offer translators when needed, and work with the schools to arrange for food and childcare, to incentivize participation. Interviews and focus groups will investigate parents' motivation in selecting Rocketship for their child, how they want to engage with the school community (e.g., volunteer in their child's classroom or join school-based committees), the barriers to engagement, and any suggestions for reducing these barriers. Evaluators will probe on parents' success in meeting Rocketship's expectations for parent volunteer hours and in supporting their child's homework completion and regular school attendance. Parent perspectives will be particularly helpful in understanding the variance in engagement levels within and between schools, regions, and school maturity levels. Parent interview and focus group data will also be used to identify practices that engage parents effectively and potential levers to increase parent engagement.

## ***Extant Data***

In addition to the nuanced and rich qualitative data from site visits, SRI will obtain student achievement and parent engagement data from Rocketship. These data will allow SRI to explore questions around the relationship between parent engagement and student achievement, compare student academic growth trajectories in replication and established schools overall and for student subgroups, and explore trends in replication-school student outcomes by region.

**Parent Engagement Data.** Rocketship schools collect data on each parent’s volunteer hours, attendance at parent conferences, and number of home visits from Rocketship staff. Using a parent engagement rubric, SRI will categorize parents into low, medium, and high levels of engagement. SRI will then assess whether replication schools are as successful at engaging parents as established schools and whether there are any unique challenges by region. The data on parent engagement are also linked to students, allowing SRI to examine academic outcomes for subgroups of students with low, medium, and high parent engagement. Moreover, these data will inform the site visits by allowing SRI to tailor questions to staff and parents based on the level of parent engagement at each school.

**Student Attendance and Achievement Data.** SRI will collect student-level data on enrollment, attendance, and academic achievement from Rocketship. Rocketship schools administer the NWEA MAP assessments at each grade level. SRI will compare student success, attendance and retention in replication schools to those of similar students in established schools, adjusting for grade level and available measures of student background and prior achievement. SRI will also assess whether students’ growth trajectories on measures of academic achievement differ between replication and established schools. Rocketship schools administer the MAP assessment multiple times per school year, allowing estimation of a growth model for students in

replication and established schools with comparable grade levels and years of Rocketship enrollment. The base model will take the form:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(REP_i) + \beta_2(TIME_{it}) + (\beta_3)X_i + \beta_4(REP_i \times TIME_{it}) + \alpha_{0i} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where:

$Y_{it}$  = outcome  $Y$  for student  $i$  at time  $t$ .

$TIME_{it}$  = months enrolled in a Rocketship school.

$X_i$  = vector of covariates, including grade fixed effects and demographics.

$REP_i$  = dummy indicator representing enrollment in a replication school.

$REP_i \times TIME_{it}$  = interaction between enrollment in a replication school and months enrolled.

$\alpha_{0i}$  = random effect for students.

$\epsilon_{it}$  = random effect for time.

Through interaction effects, SRI will additionally test whether there are differential effects of attending a replication compared to an established school for student subgroups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, English Learner status, free or reduced-price meal enrollment, parent engagement level). SRI will also explore the appropriateness of employing a quadratic or cubic growth curve model, dependent on adequate number of measures available per student.

SRI will also examine student outcomes descriptively, summarizing replication school student outcomes by region and obtaining publicly available school-level data to describe the individual Rocketship schools relative to their regional neighbors. Public data include test score data for grades 3 and above, enrollment, student race/ethnicity, English learner status, special education status, free or reduced-price meal enrollment, and other demographic measures.

### Reporting

SRI will provide formative feedback to Rocketship Education throughout the evaluation, as well as a final, summative report. Table 10 on page 45 outlines the proposed deliverables.

**Table 10: Timeline of Evaluation Deliverables**

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize site-level parent engagement data systems</li> </ul>	Fall 2018
Framework memo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight implementation findings and propose framework for assessing the fidelity of replication sites to the Rocketship model</li> </ul>	Fall 2020
Final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present the complete results from extant data analyses, comparing student outcomes in replication and established schools</li> <li>Compare Rocketship schools to other public schools in their region</li> <li>Examine implementation in the replication sites relative to benchmarks</li> </ul>	2021
Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare research brief, conference presentation, or journal article</li> </ul>	2021

Naomi Tyler and Ashley Campbell will lead the SRI team (see Appendix B for resumes).

#### ***D. High-quality Management Plan and Personnel***

##### **1. The management plan will achieve all project objectives on time and within budget and includes clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks**

Rocketship’s growth and strategy teams have mapped out the following breakdown of new schools per region per year between 2018 and 2022. Over the past five years, Rocketship has opened at least two schools each year, often across multiple regions. This most recent year, Rocketship opened three schools: two in the Bay Area and our first school in Washington, DC. The growth plan below is consistent with our track record in opening multiple schools in multiple regions each year as shown in Table 11 on page 46.

**Table 11: Rocketship Education Growth Plan**

<b>GROWTH PLANS</b>					
	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
California	1	2	2	1	6
Wisconsin	1	-	-	-	1
Tennessee	-	1	1	1	3
Washington DC	1	-	1	1	3
Region 5	-	-	-	1	1
	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>

**Timeline for School Launch Activities**

Rocketship’s expansion is a cross-functional effort coordinated by our **Strategy and Scalability** team, which integrates inputs from the following teams at Rocketship: **Growth & Community Engagement, Talent, Facilities, Finance, Achievement and Operations.**

Rocketship follows a rigorous **three-phased process** for selecting and investing organizational resources to develop new schools within a new or an existing region. The first phase, “**Regional Launch,**” begins more than thirty months before a school opens and focuses primarily on the launch of a new region. The second phase, “**Greenlighting,**” focuses on the decision to open a new school within the region and happens 18-30 months prior to the school opening. The final phase, “**School Start-Up,**” starts 18 months leading up to the school opening, and is the org-wide preparation for a successful start of school.

At each phase staff examine both internal and external factors by applying a high standard of rigor across five criteria. Staff will extensively analyze the opportunity and likelihood for success in developing a new region, and they will do their due diligence in each criterion to ensure the organization is prepared to successfully operate a high-quality charter from day one.

- **Need & Community Support.** New regions must evidence a recognized need for better education alternatives, a desire for innovative educational approach to serve targeted student population, and indicators of potential partnerships with community organizations and

parents (Appendix I.1). If a geography meets our criteria for Need, our Facility team then identifies potential sites in these areas, and we run a localized needs analysis around each potential site. We identify the recruitment radius for the geography, usually dependent on the dominant mode of transportation. For example, the Bay Area is a driving city and typically sees a breakpoint of students coming from around 3-4 miles, whereas DC is a walking and public transportation city, where most students come from within 1-2 miles. Based on community demographics, local school performance, and recruitment radius, we assess the market share of the K-5 enrollment at failing schools that a Rocketship school would require to open in each geography. If an entirely new region, we also look at whether the market can sustain the number of Rocketship schools required for us to reach sustainability in the region on the public dollar. This is an important indicator of our ability to enroll a full school and scale in a region, while serving the communities we seek to serve.

- **Friendly Political Environment.** Legislative, regulatory, and political review must indicate ability to establish a sustainable level of operations (such as capacity to open eight schools within five years). Assessment must be made of a viable action plan for reforming prohibitive policies and practices, if any.
- **Strong Founding Team.** A pool of high-potential candidates for leadership positions must be identified and include four to six individuals expected to excel at leading Rocketship schools. Candidates will be immersed in existing regions in which Rocketship Schools are already operating as a part of the School Leader Development Program to internalize the Rocketship model and demonstrate their potential as principals. Many of these candidates participated in the Rising Leaders program.<sup>18</sup> The School Leader Development program

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<sup>18</sup> Read more here: <http://www.rsed.org/Leadership-Programs.cfm> .

places future Principals and Business Operations Managers at an existing school for a residency period, before taking over operations of their new school in March. Past participants have been more successful than their peers who were not in the program. This program is key to the success of Rocketship’s expansion, and as such, will be funded by this CSP grant.

- **Local Financial Environment & Support.** Regional operations of five to eight schools are expected to be financially sustainable based on public funding alone. Ability to secure start-up funding from local philanthropists or other sources must be identified to support initial investment and growth in new regions.
- **Facilities.** Team must see a clear path for available sites that provide affordable options for facilities, with clear pathway to receive appropriate zoning and entitlements.

**Table 12: Rocketship Education Three-phase Launch Process and Timeline**

	<b>Phase 1: Regional Launch</b> <i>(30+ months prior)</i>	<b>Phase 2: Greenlighting</b> <i>(18 - 30 months prior)</i>	<b>Phase 3: School Start-Up</b> <i>(18 months prior)</i>
<b>Need &amp; Community Support</b>	<b>Is there an unserved need?</b> - Size of need, scale in region - Population demographics - Location of failing schools	<b>Can Rocketship contribute?</b> - Existing charters size/performance - New entrants - What differentiates us	<b>What is our recruitment plan?</b> - Population segments/needs - Outreach channels/plan - Local challenges
<b>Friendly Political Environment</b>	<b>What is the political climate?</b> - Charter authorizer(s) - Charter granting/renewal issues	<b>Is there local support?</b> - Local stakeholders - Charter petition submitted - Clear path to charter approval	<b>What is our outreach plan?</b> - Charter approved - Identify partners/champions
<b>Strong Founding Team</b>	<b>How is the talent landscape?</b> - Assess local talent pool - Internal staff interest in new region	<b>Is the staffing pool adequate?</b> - 1-2 internal leadership candidates - Understand credentialing	<b>What is our recruitment plan?</b> - Founding principal identified - Internal transfers set - Outreach channels/plan
<b>Local Financial Environment</b>	<b>What is the charter funding?</b> - Current and future funding - Fundraising required - Other charters’ lessons	<b>Is it sustainable?</b> - Financial model w/ path to sustainability - Required fundraising committed	<b>What do actuals look like?</b> - Refined financial model w/ detailed budget created - Required fundraising received
<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Are there affordable sites?</b> - Site availability/affordability in target districts; zoning exemptions or entitlements	<b>Can Rocketship obtain a site?</b> - Potential parcels identified - Path to entitlement and site control	<b>Can the facility be completed?</b> - Site under contract, and deliverable one month before start - Affordable financing options

We have used and refined this framework to successfully open 16 schools across four regions over the past ten years. We have never had or chosen to close a school. This is a testament to the rigor we set at the onset of deciding to grow to a new region and/or open a new school, and the cross-functional diligence of successfully executing on such a decision.

### ***School Development Schedule***

If a region meets the goals stipulated under these five criteria during each phase, the Rocketship executive team presents their findings to the Rocketship Education Board of Directors. The Rocketship Board reserves its February Board meeting annually to greenlight new regions and schools. After a region and/or school have been approved, there is an 18-month development schedule before the school is opened within the region.

As noted in Table 11 on page 46, **Rocketship plans to open three schools in 2018-19:** one in Antioch, California, one in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and one in Washington, DC. Teams across the organization have been diligent in meeting necessary milestones in our greenlighting process to ensure successful opening of the first set of schools we plan to fund under this grant. Specifically, Rocketship has secured charters for both Antioch and Washington, DC, and is in contract negotiations with Milwaukee Public Schools for the planned opening in Milwaukee. Similarly, sites have been secured for both Milwaukee and Antioch, with a site identified for Washington DC. Our existing 16 schools (plus two new schools scheduled to opening in 2017-18) across four regions create a strong pipeline of leadership candidates for our planned openings in 2018-19. Additionally, **Rocketship expects to launch at least one new region as early as the 2021-22 school year** and is exploring locations in Arizona, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, Ohio, and Texas. **To complete the CSP funding period, Rocketship will open three schools in Year 2 and four schools each in Years 3 and 4.**

### ***Timeline for Project Management Activities***

Table 13 on the following page illustrates the key program activities, responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for this CSP project that will ensure fidelity to the Rocketship school launch model, adherence to program budget, and the timely accomplishment of all program goals

and objectives. **Items will repeat annually throughout the grant with the exception of items marked with an asterisk (\*)** that are one-time activities. Following that is the timeline for data collection to measure progress toward project objectives and outcomes. (Note: Timeline reflects the grant project quarters, ex: Q1 = October - December, etc.)

**Table 13: Major Project Management Activities and Milestones**

Description of Activities	Position(s)	Timeline
Announce notice of CSP grant award to Rocketship learning communities*; meet with stakeholders, including parents, to review goals, objectives, activities, and budget as appropriate	CEO and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Q1
Designate CSP Project Director* (PD)/ to be responsible for compliance and reporting related to this initiative	CEO	Q1
Conduct grant kick-off call to begin implementation planning with key personnel: Chief Growth & Community Engagement Officer (CGCEO); Chief Programs Officer (CPO); Chief Financial Officer (CFO); VP Marketing & Communications (VPMC); Senior Director of Strategy & Scalability (SDSS); Manager, Analytics (MA); others as appropriate	PD and support staff	Q1 each year
<b>MILESTONE: Staffing for Project Management Complete</b>		
Establish reporting procedures, timelines, and methods	PD and External Evaluator	Q1-Q2 each year
Update baseline demographics and other data	PD	Q1 each year
Consult with business and community partners to implement and actualize CSP expansion and replication	SLT; Regional Directors	Q1-Q4 each year
Conduct data gathering for project evaluation	CFO, SLT, PD	Q2-Q4 each year
Meet with Rising School Leader Development Participants to discuss CSP plan and targets for school leadership readiness	CEO, VP of Schools, and PD	Ongoing
<b>MILESTONE: Project Systems, Baselines, and Targets Established</b>		

Description of Activities	Position(s)	Timeline
Hire Family Engagement Managers; Hire Teacher Recruitment Manager	VP of Human Resources	Q2-Q3
Purchase/receive/store/distribute/install supplies, materials, and equipment to support project implementation	PD, Principals of new schools	Q1-Q4 each year
Complete annual interim financial and management reports; share with stakeholders via board meetings	PD, CFO	Q2, Q4 or as required
School leaders and teacher/instructional leaders apply to, are selected for, and attend training and development programs for the purpose of staffing new schools	VP of Schools	Q3 each year
Begin annual budget cycle with all schools and departments for upcoming school year	CFO and team	Q3 each year
Hire new teachers and staff for upcoming year	Principals	Q3-Q4 each year
Disseminate results of CSP project to US Dept. of Education, national and local stakeholders, education/business/community partners, and others	SLT, PD	Q4 or as required
<b>MILESTONE: Project Successfully Completed; 14 Replication Schools Established; Project Objectives/Outcomes Achieved</b>		

In addition to major project management activities as outlined above, the Project Director will communicate with Rocketship’s Senior Leadership Team and others in supporting roles to gather, analyze, and report on data to measure progress toward project goals, objectives, and outcomes. Data types, instruments and systems, and frequency of data collection and analysis is outlined below. Please also see the Evaluation Plan for additional detail.

**2. The qualifications, relevant training, and experience of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel**

Led by **CEO and Co-founder, Preston Smith**, our network has assembled a highly

qualified and talented team<sup>19</sup> to implement its replication plans. Preston co-founded Rocketship in 2006 after serving in numerous positions, including teacher, principal, director of schools, VP Bay Area, and chief advancement officer. Preston holds a Bachelor of Arts in Latin American Studies, a Master in Education Leadership and Administration, and a Master of Business Administration. He is also a parent of two Rocketship students.

**Fred Ferrer, former CEO of The Health Trust, is the Chair of our National Board,** which is charged with the objective of guiding Rocketship to meet our scaling objectives nationally. Our Board of Directors is composed of diverse and experienced community leaders with a broad range of expertise in relevant fields, including academics, education reform, community engagement, finance, management, real estate, law, and fundraising, and who serve for such agencies and organizations as The Health Trust, Charter School Growth Fund, Leadership Public Schools, New Schools Venture Fund, and other key community and business entities. In addition to our National Board, we have **two Regional Boards in Wisconsin and Washington DC**, with efforts of **creating a Regional Board in Tennessee** as well. Each chairperson on our Regional Boards is also a member on the National Board to ensure strong cohesiveness across the organization<sup>20</sup> and we will continue to seek representation from any new regions. As proscribed by our bylaws, our Board of Directors will meet at regular intervals, which is generally every quarter.

**Project Director for this CSP grant is Melanie Steger.** Melanie currently serves as Rocketship's Director, Financial Planning and Analysis and is an experienced manager of large financial and grant projects, including the 2011 CSP grant Rocketship received. She is well

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<sup>19</sup> Please see Appendix B for resumes and bios of all staff noted in this section.

<sup>20</sup> **Application Requirement F.** Please see additional detail attached in Appendix E.

positioned for success as the CSP Project Director as her duties and responsibilities encompass **financial planning**, including overseeing organization-wide budgeting, forecasting, and long-term financial modeling; **federal and state compliance** of public revenues and programs such as Federal Title programs, National School Lunch Programs, and Charter School program; and overseeing the system administration of **student information systems and services** for the Rocketship network. Melanie holds a double Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Sociology and a Master of Arts in International Development and Economics.

The Project Director will be supported by the following key network staff:

**Cheye Calvo, Rocketship’s Chief Growth and Community Engagement Officer**, leads the team that partners with communities, stakeholders, parents, and families to grow and support Rocketship’s network of highly successful public elementary charter schools. He joined Rocketship after seven years with The SEED Foundation where, as chief expansion officer, he worked with communities across the country to explore innovative educational options for underserved students and opened and sustained urban, public college-preparatory boarding schools. Prior to SEED, Cheye worked for multiple state associations, most notably the National Conference of State Legislatures, where he served as a policy expert and directed federal affairs on a diverse array of issues impacting states and communities. Early in his career, he worked for the County Council in his native Prince George’s County, Maryland. From 2004 to 2015, he served as the six-time elected mayor of the town of Berwyn Heights, Maryland, just outside of Washington, DC. Cheye holds a Bachelor and a Master of Arts in History.

**Lynn Liao, Chief Program Officer**, is responsible for the teams that develop and implement programs to recruit, develop and retain staff. In addition, Lynn leads teams that analyze data to in order to improve our schools and that support organizational strategy and

cross-functional projects, including the rigorous three-phased process for selecting and investing organizational resources to develop new schools within a new or an existing region described on page 46. Lynn joined Rocketship from The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems where she co-founded and led the growth of The Broad Residency, a national program to attract and support emerging business leaders to join urban school systems. Under her leadership, the program graduated over 200 Broad Residents, 90% of whom remain in K-12 education. Prior to joining The Broad Center, Lynn served as a director at The Broad Foundation and was responsible for the Foundation's portfolio of investments in district and national principal leadership programs. She also served as the Foundation's liaison with districts including New York City, San Diego and Philadelphia, supporting their work on district redesign and restructuring. Lynn holds a Bachelor's degree in political economy, a Master of Business Administration, and a Master of Education.

**Keysha Bailey, Chief Financial Officer.** Keysha's background includes two decades of diverse finance and strategic operational experience. She began her career in investment banking with J.P. Morgan in New York where she advised on capital structure and raised over \$10B in the public debt markets for real estate, energy, and diversified corporate clients. She followed as Principal of a Colorado-based construction enterprise, with a focus on resort based development. Upon moving to San Francisco 10 years ago, she led the strategy for over \$2B in commercial real estate investments including operations, development and joint ventures with Prudential Real Estate Investors. Most recently she has acted as a consultant, focused on advising corporations and not for profit organizations on strategic finance and real estate matters. Additionally, Keysha serves as a Board Member for Envision Education, a charter network with four Bay Area schools. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and a Master of Business

Administration in Finance.

**Lige Shao, Senior Director of Strategy and Scalability**, focuses on growth strategy and building scalable systems at Rocketship. In her first two years at Rocketship, she completed the Broad Residency, earning a Master of Arts in Education Management from the Broad Center for the Management of School Systems. Previously, Lige was an Engagement Manager at McKinsey & Company, where she led projects in marketing and sales strategy and growth strategy in Consumer/Retail and Education. Prior to McKinsey, as an Education Pioneer, she served as the Interim Director of Operations at Visions Academy, helping found the first charter high school in Newark, NJ. She speaks Mandarin Chinese, French, and English. Lige holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, a Master of Arts in East Asian Studies, and a Master of Business Administration in Entrepreneurial Management.

**Susan Paterson Manager, Analytics at Rocketship**, has served in the Data Analyst and Senior Data Analyst roles prior to her current appointment. As Manager, she conducts analyses to determine the effectiveness of network programs and provides guidance for data-driven decisions within the organization. Susan is a highly trained economist with a broad range of interests and is practiced in the art and science of data analysis and the application of economic principles to the practical solutions of problems. Susan has taught at both the advanced undergraduate and MBA levels in topics ranging from econometrics to economic history. Her background as an educator has helped her develop communication skills and an ability to explain complex technical issues at a level appropriate to any audience. Her research interests include poverty reduction, community development, water resources and public policy. Susan holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and both a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Philosophy in International Economics.

**Additional Key Personnel.** The Rocketship **senior leadership team** also includes the following highly qualified and experienced personnel who will lead in their respective areas of responsibility during the CSP funding period: VP of Personalized Learning and Achievement Adam Nadeau, VP of Operations Carolyn Lynch, VP of Schools Jaclyn O’Brien, and, VP of Human Resources Dynasti Hunt. Please see their bios, attached in Appendix B.

### **3. Sustainability of Rocketship’s replicated or expanded charter schools and multi-year financial and operating model**

Rocketship ensures strong fiscal health across its network by running financially viable schools. At full enrollment all schools are expected to operate solely on public funding and have a positive net asset balance. Although Rocketship does open relatively large, we do not expect schools to reach full enrollment in their first year. Schools open with approximately 450 students, and reach full enrollment by their third year of operation. First year enrollments and grades offered may vary slightly due to region or local/school context. For example, in DC we provide pre-kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, whereas, in Tennessee elementary schools stop after fourth grade. Regardless of region, enrollment increases each year, and once schools reach full enrollment, they are able to operate solely on public funding. **CSP enables us to bridge the funding gap between the planning year and full enrollment.** Based on our budget, this program will fund \$822,406 of school start-up costs for each new school we open through 2022 (see budget narrative on how this breaks-down by cost). This CSP funding allows our schools access to the necessary resources while it grows and enrolls students to reach financial sustainability. Table 14 on page 57 illustrates the dependence our schools have on this \$822,406 CSP funding in the planning and implementation year of a typical Rocketship school. However, once the school is able to grow to full enrollment our financial model illustrates the school’s

ability to generate positive net assets by its second year, without the support of CSP funding.

**Table 14: RSED School Path to Financial Sustainability**

(\$ in Thousands)	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Enrollment	-	450	500	550	600
Revenue Count	-	428	475	523	570
<b>RSED School</b>					
<b>Revenue</b>					
Public Revenues (Recurring)	-	5,237	5,819	6,401	6,983
CSP Revenue	244	579	-	-	-
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>5,815</b>	<b>5,819</b>	<b>6,401</b>	<b>6,983</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Compensation	224	2,201	2,531	2,785	3,063
Other	20	1,767	1,409	1,484	1,518
Management	-	786	873	960	1,047
Facilities	-	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>5,754</b>	<b>5,813</b>	<b>6,229</b>	<b>6,629</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets (CINA)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>354</b>
<i>Cumulative CINA</i>	-	62	67	239	593

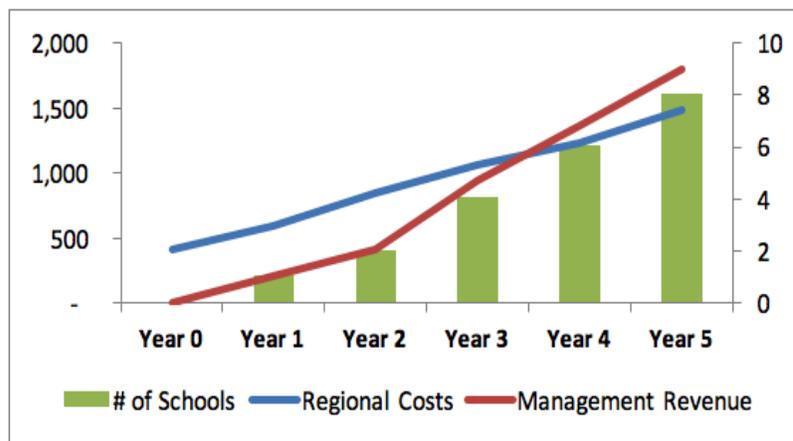
Per-pupil public revenues differ significantly across regions. The financial due diligence during the greenlighting process confirms the funding in our regions can cover the school costs in those regions at full enrollment. During this process funding formulas are confirmed, as well as regional cost of living adjustments for specific expenses like compensation and facilities.

Rocketship’s model is highly centralized. Services that benefit the school, and that are typically provided directly at the school in a traditional public school environment, are provided by Rocketship’s central office. This structure allows school leaders to focus their time and energy on instruction and student/parent engagement and provides more efficient and effective centralized delivery of various support services. These centralized services are provided by regional and national Network Support Teams (NeST). They include, but are not limited to:

National NeST:	Regional NeST:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Human Resources;</li> <li>▪ Accounting &amp; Finance;</li> <li>▪ Payroll;</li> <li>▪ Legal Support;</li> <li>▪ Compliance;</li> <li>▪ IT Support;</li> <li>▪ Operational Policy Support;</li> <li>▪ Talent Recruitment and Management;</li> <li>▪ Data Analytics (Student Information &amp; Student Assessment);</li> <li>▪ Personalized Learning &amp; Achievement Strategy; and</li> <li>▪ Lottery Management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School Leader Management;</li> <li>▪ Regional Operational Support;</li> <li>▪ Family Recruitment;</li> <li>▪ Parent Leadership;</li> <li>▪ Community Organizing and Engagement; and</li> <li>▪ External Stakeholder Relationships (i.e. Authorizers).</li> </ul>

To cover the cost of these services schools are charged 5% of revenues for the Regional NeST, and 10% to National NeST. (Note some reimbursed revenues are not included, i.e. CSP and National School Lunch Program revenues.) NeST Regions reach sustainability once there is a cluster of 4-8 schools within the region all paying 5% of their revenues to the region. The number of schools required to break even will differ by each region depending on the funding and costs of proving these regional supports to the schools. The graph below illustrates the break-even point at six schools, when the management fee revenue equals the costs of the regional supports. Rocketship’s San Jose area reached this sustainability in 2014-15, and we expect other regions to follow suit as they grow. The collection of San Jose schools provides

enough management fees to cover the support the Bay Area NeST provides to those schools. This CSP grant will cover the funding gap at each new school



in our growing regions until the school reaches full enrollment.

Projections indicate Rocketship National NeST will reach sustainability at ~30 schools across the nation. This CSP grant will fund the remaining schools to reach this target of 30 schools, at which point National NeST operations will be 100% covered by the 10% of management fee it receives from all its schools.

**Table 15: National Path to Sustainability**

National Path to Sustainability						
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Total # of Schools	16	18	21	24	28	32
Nat'l Mgmt. Fee Rev.	8,152	9,037	10,614	12,453	15,222	17,991
Nat'l Operating Expenses	12,510	13,636	14,454	15,321	16,241	17,215
Change in Net Assets	(4,358)	(4,599)	(3,840)	(2,869)	(1,019)	776
% YOY School Growth	23%	13%	17%	14%	17%	14%
<b>National Gap Size</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>-5%</b>

Rocketship Education has continued to operate more and more efficiently in light of the continued growth in schools. The national gap between operating expenses and management fee revenue has been declining. Since 2013-14, Rocketship has narrowed this gap by 24 percentage points, and projected to close this gap each year until sustainability is reached in 2021-22.

Rocketship is also efficient in comparison to other charter organizations. In a 2015 review of 38 CMOs in Charter School Growth Fund's portfolio, Rocketship had the fifth smallest central office and school FTE to student ratio, serving 3.5 students more than the average among the cohort (13 students versus 9.5 students). Since our inception in 2006, we have held and acted on the belief that to truly transform public education and meet the needs of all students, our ongoing school operations must be sustainable on public support. As a result, the majority of our historical philanthropic revenue has been dedicated to growth and to the innovation of our school model. Similarly, this current philanthropic support is funding our ability to open new schools and build our organization. By 2020, public revenues will be enough to both cover operating

expenses for our existing schools and fund sufficient working capital reserves to manage the natural fluctuations in our revenues and expenses. Our operational goal is to have the financial health, the organizational capacity, and the strong network in place to serve as a platform for responsible growth. CSP funding will allow us to continue expanding our network to serve more high-needs students in additional communities.

Over the past three years Rocketship Education has raised \$17M from foundations and influential individuals who believe in Rocketship's ability to close the achievement gap at scale. This fundraising has bridged the gap at National and supported our regions in their growth. Key partners include Charter School Growth Fund (\$5M), entrepreneurs who live/work in the Bay Area (\$6.5M) including Reed Hastings and Arthur Rock, and The Rales Family Foundation (\$2M) in Washington DC. To bridge the remaining gap at National and backstop any financial support needed at our regions, Rocketship will run another \$18M campaign over the next three years (2017-18 - 2019-20).