

2023
2024



ROCKETSHIP
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WASHINGTON DC

YEAR IN REVIEW

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DC
LIFETIME
ROCKETEERS
SERVED

2,970

2023-24
DC STUDENT
POPULATION

Rocketeers: **1,376**
 Hispanic or Black: **98%**
 At-Risk: **72%**
 Experiencing Homelessness: **13%**
 Special Education: **13%**

Ward 8: **Rocketship Rise Academy**
 Ward 7: **Rocketship Legacy Prep**
 Ward 5: **Rocketship Dream Community Prep**

17 YEARS
32,244
ROCKETEERS
ACROSS THE NETWORK

Dear Rocketship Community,

Over the past 17 years, Rocketship has grown from a bold idea to rethink elementary education into a powerful collective of families, educators, and leaders united by our mission to unleash the potential of every child. What began with a single school in San Jose has expanded into a network serving thousands of students across the country. And we're just getting started.

As we chart the next phase of Rocketship's impact, we've turned to our community—families, educators, and leaders—to help shape our vision. Through these discussions, we arrived at a new vision for the next chapter of our movement: **Equal access to opportunity for all.**

This vision reflects our commitment to ensuring every child, regardless of background, has a fair chance to succeed. It's about leveling the playing field, removing barriers to opportunity, and providing the support and resources students need to achieve their dreams.

To bring this vision to life, we are launching a bold five-year strategic plan focused on **quality schools, community power, and scaled impact.** Our schools will remain rooted in delivering excellence, while expanding our work to honor and amplify the voices of families. Together, we will deepen and extend our impact, creating a culture where every child, family, and educator feels valued and supported.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey.



Preston Smith
Rocketship
Co-Founder and CEO



Greetings Rocketship DC Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with pride for the incredible progress our schools, students, and families have made. Despite ongoing challenges, our community has remained resilient, united by a shared mission to close the opportunity gap and ensure that all of our Rocketeers thrive.

This year, we saw academic gains at all three of our campuses. Our focus on personalized learning and data-driven instruction is making progress amongst many grades across each of our schools.

We also expanded our partnerships, particularly with organizations like Out Teach, to enrich our students' learning experiences beyond the classroom. And this partnership even included a visit from the NFL's Washington Commanders Football Team, who came to Rocketship Rise Academy, in May. The rookie class of 2024 Commanders played catch and did art projects with Rocketeers after partnering with Out Teach to build the outdoor Learning Lab space at Rocketship Rise Academy.

As we look to the future, we are more committed than ever to supporting the whole child. This means investing in academic growth, first and foremost. Family engagement and community partnerships will be key to supporting our Rocketeers in learning and growing. In the year ahead, we will deepen our partnerships, further improve our instructional systems, and continue advocating for equitable access to high-quality education for all students.

Thank you for your ongoing support, passion, and dedication to our mission.

In partnership,
Zakiya Sackor
Rocketship Washington DC
Executive Director





ELEMENTARY-ONLY BY DESIGN



Improving the Public Education Ecosystem

By focusing exclusively on elementary education, we work to improve the entire ecosystem of public education in the communities we serve.

We are not creating a parallel K-12 school system, we are focused on improving outcomes for kids and deepening engagement with parents at the elementary level.

Our expertise in elementary education prepares thousands of Rocketeers in their vital early years of education. When our graduates move on to attend different middle schools, those students are ready for the rigors of middle school. In fact, **a three-year study by SRI Education found that our Rocketeers across the country are a full year ahead of their middle school classmates in both math and reading.** This means middle schools are enrolling more students that are on grade level and ready to advance their education.

We're also sending Rocketeers off to middle schools and ensuring a smooth transition by partnering with our parents throughout the year and offering our Prepared for Liftoff Middle School Support program. Through this unique combination, parents become champions of their child's learning and learn how to harness the power of their voice to advocate for their children and their communities. Families also participate in middle school fairs and get connected to schools with high success rates. They also learn to hold leaders accountable, in the local school district or charters, and ensure their kids continue to receive the same excellence in education that they experienced during their elementary years at Rocketship.

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

ROCKETSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS WASHINGTON DC

3 SCHOOLS 1,376 ROCKETEERS 98% BLACK & LATINO

72% AT-RISK 13% EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In 2016, Rocketship Rise Academy opened in Southeast DC's Ward 8 as the largest charter opening in DC history. Rocketship Legacy Prep opened in Ward 7 a year later. In their very first year, both schools achieved Tier 1 status—the highest ranking for DC Public Charter Schools. In August 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, Rocketship Infinity Community Prep opened its doors as our third school in DC. Partnering with AppleTree Institute to provide high-quality pre-K education, we serve more than 1,000 Rocketeers every day—students who have the potential to be DC's next leaders and creative thinkers.



2023 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD for At-Risk Students EMPOWER K12, EDUCATION NONPROFIT

Looking Ahead:

Doubling the Percentage of College-Ready Rocketeers

Every year is a chance for students to thrive and reach their full potential, and at Rocketship, we're dedicated to ensuring that all our students are on the path to success. To support this mission, we offer individualized learning plans and review student-level data to adjust content and pace to meet each student's learning abilities. While we recognize that closing academic gaps won't happen overnight, we are committed to fostering significant growth that will help our students be confidently college-ready.

NWEA MAP is a nationally normed assessment that's predictive of entrance to and graduation from college. The national average for college entry and graduation for all students, irrespective of race, is roughly 40%, and adjusts to 28% for Black and 25% for Hispanic students. At Rocketship, 98% of students identify as students of color, which means our goal is to far outpace national averages based on who we serve. In the 2023-24 school year, 20% of Rocketship DC students performed in the top tier of the NWEA MAP test, giving us a benchmark to build from.

We seek to surpass the national averages of college readiness for Black and Hispanic students by 2028, ensuring 40% of our Rocketeers perform in the top tier in core subjects.

We know every year we'll get closer to this ambitious goal. Our Rocketship Legacy Prep Kindergartners proved just that by starting their academic journey. Based on the latest NWEA MAP results, Kindergarten Rocketeers at Legacy Prep averaged more than 1.4 years of growth in both math and reading! And all of our students increased their literacy skills by improving their English Language Arts proficiency rates by 15 points from the beginning to the end of the school year.

We're proud of the hard work our educators and Rocketeers put in every day and look forward to our collective growth ahead!





Igniting a Love for Learning in Wards 5, 7 & 8

"Rocketship is a place I call home. A place where I release my child to entrust their safety and wellbeing while I'm at work earning wages to provide for my family. A place where my child spends almost 10 hours a day building amazing relationships and breathtaking experiences that will last her a lifetime. Not to mention the community partnerships with other organizations that came together to foster the needs of the community."

CATHERINE PAIGE, PARENT ROCKETSHIP RISE ACADEMY

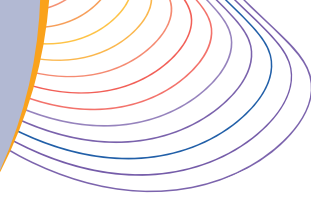
"There's no better feeling than having your children with a trusted source. I love Rocketship, especially the way they communicate with us parents. I love how the Rocketship staff knows almost each child by name. I love the after-school Rocketbooster program and how they strongly engage parent participation in school events and field trips."

ANGELA (KANE) WILLIS, PARENT ROCKETSHIP LEGACY PREP



WHY ROCKETSHIP PARENTS Love Our Schools





Walking the Walk

Rocketship DC proudly demonstrated their unwavering commitment to community, inclusivity, and social justice by walking the walk at some of Washington DC’s most meaningful events: the DC Pride Parade, the Martin Luther King Parade, and the Peace Walk.

By marching in these parades, our team not only celebrates diversity but also takes a stand for equality and justice. Each step taken in the DC Pride Parade reinforces our support for the LGBTQ+ community, while our involvement in the Martin Luther King Parade honors the enduring legacy of Dr. King’s fight for civil rights and equality. The Peace Walk, in particular, highlights our dedication to fostering a safe and positive environment for all.

Our engagement in these events is more than symbolic; it is a tangible expression of our core values. By actively participating, we send a clear message to our students and the community that inclusivity and support are not just ideals we talk about but principles we live by. Cultivating an inclusive culture where all Rocketeers feel seen, supported, and safe is of utmost importance, and our involvement in these parades serves as a testament to our commitment to ensuring that every student knows they belong and are valued. Through these actions, we continue to build a school environment where diversity is celebrated, and every individual feels empowered and embraced.

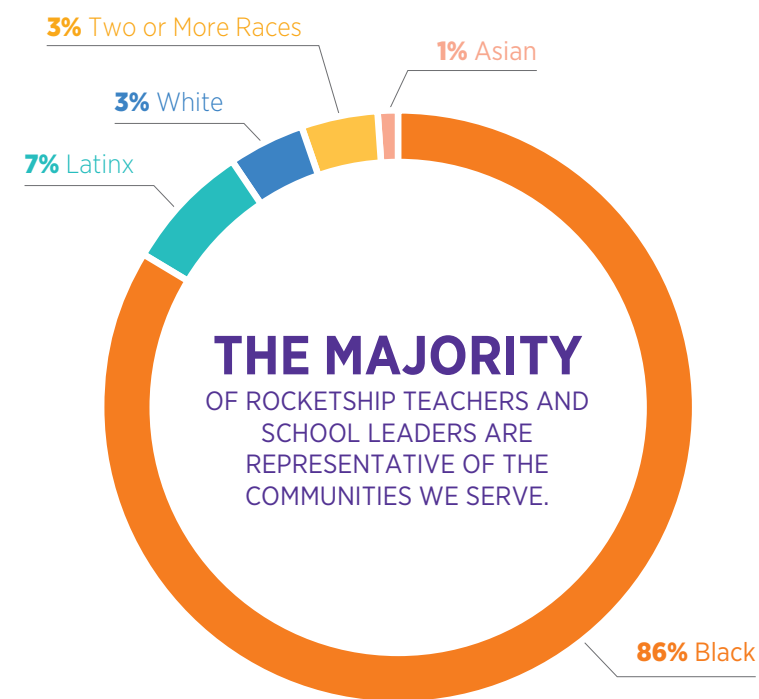


Rocketship Washington DC Educators Reflect the Communities We Serve

An increasing body of research shows that student achievement and attendance go up and suspension rates go down when students have at least one same-race teacher. Yet America’s teaching force has not increased in community representation over the years with only 20% of public school teachers in the U.S. who are people of color. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there has been a slight increase in Latino public school teachers since 2015 and the share of Black teachers has declined since the 1990s.

We are flipping the script at Rocketship. **Our educators reflect the communities we serve. The majority of our educators—97%—identify as people of color.**

Equity and excellence in education are about providing each student with what they need to succeed. This includes learning from teachers who offer both windows and mirrors—people who bring new perspectives, as well as reflect their own background and experience. That is why Rocketship is working relentlessly to ensure that our Rocketeers are taught by a representative team of educators who bring experiences, ideas, and perspectives to our classrooms that even more deeply connect with our kids and communities.



Bringing Healthy Living into the School Community

We believe the right community partnerships help broaden opportunities for our Rocketeers. That's why Rocketship Washington DC and Out Teach, an outdoor education science lab, are bringing learning to life across all three Rocketship schools.

Out Teach helps schools across the country transform the outdoors into active learning labs that:

- Unlock the wonder of science for students through hands-on learning
- Teaches urban gardening practices that can help reduce food scarcity
- Inspire healthy living and boost overall well-being through time in nature
- Encourage teachers to use these blooming outdoor spaces as learning spaces throughout the day

Out Teach's program is designed by educators with real classroom experience, and delivers personalized hands-on training, collaborative partnerships, and easily accessible resources that help our Rocketship teachers recast everyday outdoor spaces into exciting labs where anything is possible. Through this partnership, we're creating a future where every student – regardless of background, resources, or learning differences – can experience the wonder of science first-hand. As part of Out Teach's model, teachers are trained on how to lead instruction in these outdoor spaces, creating a sustainable, ongoing program for the future.



Keeping Rocketeers Safe During At-Risk Hours

Safeguarding our Rocketeers is a top priority at Rocketship DC. Students not only need a space to learn and grow during school, but also deserve a support system they can rely on after school during at-risk hours. But we're not alone in that vision. Washington DC's Mayor Bowser and DC's Deputy of Education Department feel the same and awarded Rocketship DC a three-year grant to revitalize our afterschool programming at Rocketship Rise Academy! This award expands access to our high-quality afterschool program at Rocketship Rise in Ward 8 and serves as a pilot program for what we hope to extend to all of Rocketship DC schools.

Our new extended learning program at Rise brings Rocketeers:

- Daily High-Impact Tutoring (HIT) in both reading and math in partnership with Northstar Tutoring. High-dosage tutoring uses academic data from the school day to help students grow specific skills over a specific time frame. Each Rocketeer is grouped with 3 to 4 other students during this daily, 1-hour tutoring time.
- Visual and theatrical arts, which provides enrichment, social-emotional development, art therapy, and co-curricular field trips for participating Rocketeers in partnership with Creative Youth Development (CYD) and Project Create
- Recreational and sports programs to let kids be kids while also building key leadership tenants
- Summer Academy, where from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Rocketeers can continue receiving all of the above during July and August while also going on more summer-specific field trips in the community



"When students have great programming during school and after school, we know that benefits their learning and social and emotional well-being, it keeps them safe, and it gives kids one more reason to be excited about coming to school."

— MAYOR BOWSER





Launching Strong into Middle School

The transition to middle school can be tough. We know Rocketship DC provides a solid foundation for our Rocketeers, but students need an increased level of support beyond 5th grade to thrive from middle school to college. To ensure a seamless transition post-graduation, Rocketship DC offers Prepared for Liftoff. This middle school support program helps 5th-grade Rocketeers choose a quality middle school and helps them navigate the academic, social, and emotional challenges they may experience once they're there.

We're always looking for new, innovative ways to strengthen DC's pipeline from Pre-K to high school and beyond. Prepared for Liftoff is a conduit for this.

SUPPORTING ALUMNI BEYOND ROCKETSHIP

After our students graduate from 5th grade, Rocketship's Prepared for Liftoff team will set alumni up for success. We'll help students maintain strong work habits, feel supported, and forever be a part of the Rocketship community as they make it to and through 9th grade.

PREPARED FOR LIFTOFF ALSO:

- Creates opportunities for Rocketeers at the same school to support each other
- Evaluates their attendance and grades
- Offers family workshops on both academic and social matters
- Equips students with information on middle schools, high school, and college options
- Creates opportunities to visit middle, high schools, and colleges
- Supports our Rocketeer alumni and helps strengthen the DC education ecosystem

Washington Commanders Rookies Volunteer For Day of Service at Rocketship Rise Academy

In a heartwarming and fun-filled event, the NFL's Washington Commanders Football Team made a special visit to Rocketship Rise Academy in Southeast Washington, DC. The rookie class of 2024 Commanders played catch and did art projects with Rocketeers after partnering with Out Teach to build out the outdoor Learning Lab space at Rocketship Rise Academy.

Rocketship's partnership with the Commanders began with the intention to model healthy lifestyle choices. The Commanders were previously involved with our Out Teach program, and Toys for Tots program, and we look forward to continuing to find creative ways to bring new programs and excitement to our DC campuses throughout the year.



"This is incredible," wide receiver Luke McCaffrey said. "This is kind of the rookie's first opportunity to really dive into the community. For the guys that aren't from here, this is our new home. This is kind of the place we're going to take pride in, and it's special to be able to connect with that."

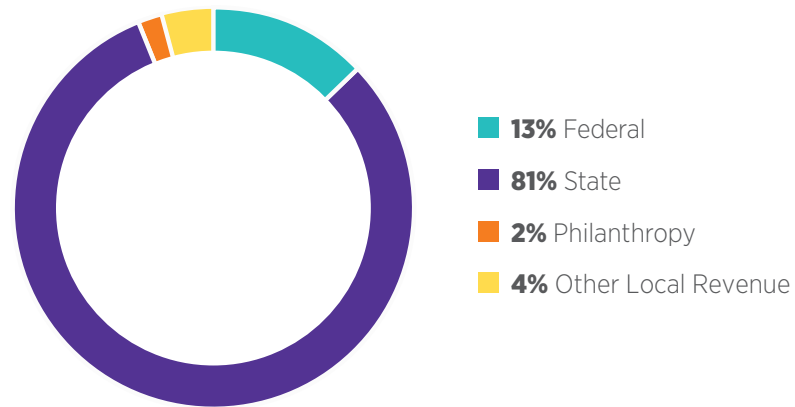




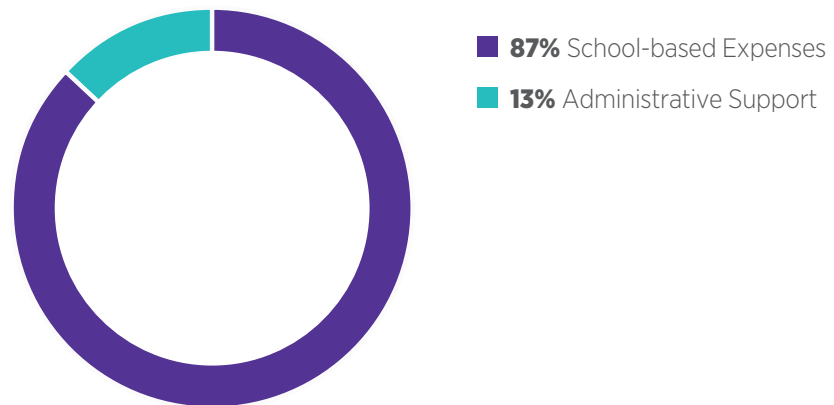
Rocketship Washington DC Financials

Rocketship Washington DC is building a scalable and financially sustainable non-profit school model that propels student achievement in underserved communities across the country. In 2023-24, 94% of our funding came from public sources. School-based expenses accounted for 87% of our spending.

REVENUE



EXPENSES



Scan the code to support Rocketship DC today!



We Can't Do This Work Without You

A heartfelt thank you to our board of directors and existing team of supporters who make our work possible. We couldn't do this work without you.

As our vision and efforts grow, we need your support to continue expanding our programs and give Rocketeers the high quality education they deserve.

DC REGIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Rena Johnson, CHAIR
- Jennifer McManus
- Jolene Hall Slotter
- Kamuzu Saunders
- Lauren Marcus
- Matt Aaron
- Melissa Martin
- Nana Hanson-Hall

AUTHORIZER

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

MAJOR DONORS

Thank you for your generous support of our educators, communities, and Rocketeers. Below are supporters who gave \$1,000 and above.

- Albertsons-Safeway Foundation
- Barry Rosenthal
- CityBridge Foundation*
- Gamba Family Foundation
- Matt Aaron
- Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation
- Stanley & Jolene Slotter Family Foundation
- Teach for America
- The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation*



* Indicates single year of multi-year commitment



ROCKETSHIP
INFINITY COMMUNITY PREP