



## GET THE FACTS

### *Rocketship Education: Closing the Achievement Gap & Making a Difference in the Silicon Valley*

**MYTH:** Rocketship schools are private schools.

**FACT:** Rocketship schools are public charter schools. Any student in grades K-5 in Santa Clara County can attend for free. Rocketship’s focus is to serve the students most in need by opening schools in neighborhoods where access to excellent schools is limited.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship is for kids from wealthy families and is funded by rich and influential people.

**FACT:** **85% of Rocketship students are eligible for the free/reduced lunch program, and 66% of our students are English Language Learners.** Rocketship schools are located in the most underserved communities in Santa Clara County and focus on teaching the students most in need.

**Rocketship schools have a waitlist of about 2,500 students. Placement in a Rocketship school is held by public random lottery.** The majority of Rocketship’s charters were approved by the Santa Clara County Board of Education (two schools were approved by the Franklin-McKinley School District) and the schools receive public funding similar to traditional public schools.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship’s API scores are high because they cherry-pick their students and because they target engaged, motivated parents.

**FACT:** Rocketship is a public school system and proud to accept and serve all students who apply, including students with special needs. Because our mission is to eliminate the achievement gap, Rocketship believes there should be no reason for any child to miss the opportunity to receive a high-quality free public education. **Rocketship schools are intentionally built in communities where access to high-quality schools is limited, and recruitment efforts are focused on these neighborhoods. We don't select students, enrollment is only subject to capacity. When schools reach full capacity, a public, random lottery is held to determine placement. Additionally, Rocketship has never expelled a student—we are committed to serving every single Rocketeer.**

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**MYTH:** Rocketship parents and teachers are aggressively recruiting public school students from the Washington neighborhood.

**FACT:** **Rocketship believes that parents should be able to make choices about what’s best for their children. Therefore, Rocketship notifies parents in the community about a new school coming into their neighborhood.** Primarily, our students come to Rocketship schools after hearing about us from word-of-mouth recommendations. Additionally, in order to reach the highest-need students, Rocketship’s staff delivers presentations to local community groups, preschools, churches, and other civic, neighborhood organizations.

**2,500 students are on the waiting lists to attend schools.** The need is great, which is why we continue to bring in new sites across the county to best serve our youth in need.

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**MYTH:** We already have enough elementary schools.

**FACT:** Rocketship schools are only located in the most underrepresented neighborhoods with the highest levels of poverty. ***With a wait list of 2,500 students***, there is no question there is a need for more quality educational opportunities and choice. Rocketship schools consistently score higher than similar schools in the area, including higher API scores for low-income students and ELL students.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship does not have any instruction in Spanish to assist with ELL students.

**FACT:** Many of Rocketship’s teachers are bilingual but the daily instruction is in English in order to develop basic literacy skills that are important for student’s success.

**Rocketship provides all communication in both English and Spanish, including translated homework assignments.** In addition, we offer and support programs such as parent-student bilingual reading programs and afterschool programs in Spanish. At one of our schools with a high Vietnamese population, we offer all communication in Vietnamese as well as Spanish.

**Rocketship’s approach speaks for itself. Rocketship ELL students score over 800 on API each year, which is over 30 points higher than nearby schools and about 50 points higher than the statewide average for ELL students.**

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**MYTH:** Rocketship is increasing student-teacher ratio from 40:1 to 50:1 to generate \$200,000 in additional revenue for educating low-income students of color.

**FACT:** **Rocketship Education is a non-profit organization. Any and all revenue generated is reinvested directly back into our schools, teachers and services.** Rocketship's average student-teacher ratio is 26.8 students to every teacher.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship teachers are not credentialed and all of their teachers are supplied through Teach for America.

**FACT:** **All of our teachers are licensed to teach and 96 percent have either a full or emergency credential. Currently 32 percent of the teachers are in Teach for America, which has a highly selective screening process and recruits some of the smartest young professionals in the country.**

Rocketship teachers have a proven record of academic success with their students. We invest deeply in training and continued development of our teachers and leaders. At our schools, our teachers receive about 250-300 hours of additional professional development a year, including one-month of summer training, real-time coaching, and at least a half-day each week of professional development.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship mandates parents to volunteer in order for their child to attend their schools.

**FACT:** **Rocketship does not require parent volunteers but rather encourages parents to be actively engaged in our schools. This fosters a stronger community spirit and culture of high achievement.** Two-thirds of the recommended engagement hours can be met by participating in parent/teacher conferences and monthly community meetings. Additionally, Rocketship has never removed a student who has a parent who does not fulfill the recommended hours, rather, we work with the parent's schedule and needs to tailor ways that they can be involved.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship is coercing parents to speak on their behalf at public hearings by offering credit for 10 volunteer hours.

**FACT:** **Parents overwhelmingly choose to participate and voice their support for the schools. They know firsthand the difference it has made for their children.** We send email communications about upcoming hearings and parents do get credit for hours they volunteer, however, there is no requirement for parents to do so.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship redesigned its teaching formula to an “open space” model – placing 100 students in a single room with two teachers – without research or proof of its effectiveness.

**FACT:** **The fourth and fifth graders, as they prepare for middle school, learn in a large flexible classroom in which the entire grade-levels’ teachers, paraprofessionals, and students share the space. There are still about 25 students to 1 educator.** This allows for increased personalization and flexibility so that teachers can ensure that each individual student is getting the right lesson at the right time by the right instructional method.

The facts for the Rocketship model speak for themselves: **Rocketship schools consistently demonstrate higher API scores for all of their students, including ELL and low-income students, than comparable schools.**

Rocketship embraces the spirit of the Silicon Valley and the purpose of charter schools to be an innovative and dynamic learning environment. We are constantly reflecting on ways to further improve our model in order to best meet the needs of our students and families.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship has adopted a classroom “rotational model” (students move throughout the day between different classrooms and spaces) to save money by hiring fewer teachers.

**FACT:** **Again, the facts speak for themselves. Rocketship has demonstrated that it is closing the achievement gap for low income and ELL students.** Rocketship is focused on student success and it is achieving its goals through these proven academic models. Rocketship does implement a rotational, blended learning model in grades K-3 for purposes of personalizing student learning. This innovative model allows Rocketship to reallocate resources efficiently and devote more dollars directly to teacher development and training. **Rocketship is also able to pay its teachers higher salaries—on average 30% than teachers in surrounding districts.**

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**MYTH:** Students are spending hours learning via computer programs.

**FACT:** **Part of the Rocketship’s model is for students to participate in the Learning Lab—a computer, tutoring, and reading center. Students only spend 40-80 on the computer minutes dependent on the grade level out of an 8-hour school day.** This use of technology allows Rocketship to truly personalize learning, Additionally, it prepares even young learners for life in the digital age and gives them the computer skills necessary for higher learning and eventually to join the workforce. Additionally, students

also have daily enrichment time in which they participate in physical education, art and music.

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**MYTH:** Rocketship charter schools are aggressively using their influence to site schools to circumvent the rules and regulations to site schools without community engagement.

**FACT:** **Rocketship Education has participated and complied with all of the regulations and laws required for any school in Santa Clara County.** Our charter schools have been subject to the CEQA process where the community is invited to provide public comment. **With the most recent proposed Tamien site, we extended the public participation opportunities beyond current law.**

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**MYTH:** Massive PAC donations helped in local elections in favor of Rocketship-friendly candidates.

**FACT:** **Rocketship Education does not run a PAC, and has never contributed to political candidates.** A few staff and board members have contributed to political candidates. Many of the leaders in the Silicon Valley and in the tech industry support candidates and some of them also are supporters of Rocketship.

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**MYTH:** The proposed Tamien site that Rocketship is attempting to secure is supposed to be designated for a park.

**FACT:** The Tamien Rocketship site will actually help bring a new park to fruition, meeting a longstanding community need. **Building the new school will include \$2.5 million to build a much-needed park. In addition, at no cost to the public, as part of the new school construction Rocketship will also construct and maintain a children's playground, picnic shelters, half basketball court, and parking area for the park. These facilities would be owned by the City of San Jose, maintained by Rocketship, and would be available for public use during non-school hours, weekends, holidays, and summers.**

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**MYTH:** Students from Gilroy or Palo Alto would be able to attend the Tamien site.

**FACT:** Rocketship has a countywide charter. According to the law, we must accept any student from anywhere in the county. However, **our focus remains the immediate local neighborhoods where we serve the students most in need.**

