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Rocketship Education 2009 Academic Results Highest Performing in San Jose and Santa Clara County, Tops Palo Alto Unified

San Jose, CA, September 16, 2009 -- Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary School, part of the Rocketship Education network, announced it earned a 926 API in 2009, an increase of 35 points over last year. Rocketship Mateo Sheedy serves low-income students in San Jose, nearly 73 percent of who are English Language Learners and 78 percent of who qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program.

These scores make Rocketship the **highest performing low-income elementary school in San Jose and Santa Clara County, and 3rd in California**. In competing with individual schools in San Jose Unified where it is located, Rocketship ranked number 5 of 45 schools. The four schools that had a higher API have student populations of less than 10 percent free and reduced meal counts of students tested compared to Rocketship's 78 percent.

Over the course of the year, Rocketship moved 91 percent of its students from the bottom two quintiles of performance in English Language Arts or Math (Far Below Basic & Below Basic) to the top three quintiles (Basic, Proficient or Advanced.) Preston Smith, co-founder Chief Achievement Officer of Rocketship said, "It's long been claimed that charters took only the highest performing kids. The reality is that we have the same students attending our schools as district schools around us. Students in these bottom two quintiles have significant problems in whole-class settings, because their basic reading, writing and math issues keep them from understanding. By focusing on moving students out of these bottom two quintiles in their first year at Rocketship, we give them the chance to make their classroom time valuable again."

For the second year, Rocketship surpassed Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) in Math with 92 percent proficiency vs. 86 percent proficiency for Palo Alto. This year, Rocketship also passed PAUSD in overall results with a 926 API compared to Palo Alto's 920. In 2009, Rocketship raised ELA proficiencies from 56 percent to 81 percent now within 5 points of Palo Alto, despite educating 73 percent English Language Learners compared to Palo Alto's 9 percent. By comparison, Palo Alto's proficiencies for low-income students were 44 percent and for English Language Learners were 65 percent. Citing the difference in results between Rocketship's students and the neediest students in Palo Alto, Rocketship Education co-founder and CEO John Danner said: "With commitment and hard work, Rocketship has proven that the Achievement Gap is a historical legacy, not an immutable fact of life. We encourage all districts to take the challenge of closing the achievement gap as a top priority and hope that we won't see a disparity in outcomes for low-income and ELL students 10 years from now."

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The Rocketship Secret

“There’s no secret,” said Preston Smith. Four key pillars to Rocketship’s education model enabled more than 320 K-5 students to succeed last year. In expecting every child to achieve with no exceptions, Rocketship Education creates a stronger link between family and school by visiting every home within the first semester of school, and hosting several community activities every month where there is over 70 percent attendance by families. In creating great teachers and leaders internally, Rocketship students receive specialized instruction by more deeply qualified teachers, and school culture is strengthened. Rocketship takes an individualized approach to learning by creating an Individualized Learning Plan for every student below grade level, providing almost two hours each day of practice in its innovative Learning Lab period using computers for extra practice in Reading, Math and English, and a rigorous after-school tutoring program to support in the bottom quartile of achievement. Finally, leveraging additional resources such as a full-time Academic Dean for each school, and a unique staffing plan for its Learning Lab provides more practice for kids, more focus for teachers, and \$500,000 generated per school for quality and scale.

Reed Hastings, seed funder of Rocketship, CEO of Netflix, and former President of the California State Board of Education, said, “What I like about Rocketship is that they are approaching the problem in a totally new way and have come up with a different way of doing things. This entrepreneurial approach is exactly what our public education system needs. I’m really excited to see Rocketship scale up. If they can replicate their approach successfully in future schools, it will have a phenomenal impact on San Jose.”

Poised for Growth – New Campus Opens This Year

To enable more students to become “Rocketeers,” on August 31 of this year Rocketship Education opened its second campus, Rocketship Sí Se Puede Academy, in the Mayfair neighborhood of San Jose. Following the Rocketship model, a new school facility was built at 2249 Dobern Avenue to accommodate more than 450 students. Cat Alexander, Rocketship’s Chief Operating Officer said, “We were really happy to work with Raza Development Fund, Merrill Lynch/Bank of America, Bill Gould Designs, Robert A. Bothman, and Enviroplex to complete our second project. We’ve got a very good understanding now of how to build great schools for our kids and work effectively with our partners to get it done on time and affordably. Since we are working with the highest-needs students in San Jose, it’s fantastic to see them have the best facilities as well as the best education in town.”

About Rocketship Education

Rocketship Education (www.rsed.org) is a non-profit charter school network dedicated to eliminating the achievement gap between low-income and middle-class students. Using a unique education model, Rocketship Education creates schools that are both high-performing and operate solely on government funding. Rocketship currently operates high-need elementary schools serving nearly 1,000 students at two campuses in San Jose, California.

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