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Milwaukee Selected as Rocketship's First Expansion City

Successful Rocketship Charter Network to Partner with Milwaukee Community in Opening Eight High-Performing Schools Over Five Years Beginning in Fall 2013

Palo Alto, CA – Rocketship Education, a leading K-5 charter school system for low-income elementary students, in partnership with the Milwaukee Common Council, announced today that it has approved plans to bring eight high-performing charter schools to Milwaukee beginning in fall 2013. Expansion into Milwaukee marks the beginning of Rocketship's national presence beyond California and illustrates the tremendous amount of work that the Milwaukee community has put forth in partnering with Rocketship to transform the lives of students and families throughout the city in the coming years. Rocketship has developed a uniquely scalable public school system to grow to eliminate the achievement gap within a decade in interested partner cities around the country.

“Expanding Rocketship’s innovative model nationally in partnership with the City of Milwaukee is a critical step towards eliminating the achievement gap within our lifetime,” said Rocketship Education CEO John Danner. “We are eager to partner with cities, school districts and communities across the U.S. that share Rocketship’s sense of urgency. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with Milwaukee and learning from the Milwaukee community in the next 12 months so that together we can ensure that Rocketship schools continue to be transformative for students, families and community members.”

Rocketship Education’s charter, approved last November by the Milwaukee Common Council, will allow Rocketship to begin opening a network of independent charter schools in the fall of 2013, with the intent to eventually enroll up to 4,000 students in eight K-5 charter schools by 2017. In a first for the charter sector, Rocketship is committed to opening new schools only if existing schools are high performing and meeting exceptionally high academic benchmarks.

“I am excited that Rocketship has chosen to make Milwaukee their first city outside of California. We are excited to have them as part of the City of Milwaukee’s educational ecosystem and I look forward to their role in providing a rich and thriving educational environment for our children,” said Milwaukee Common Council President Willie Hines.

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett has been a strong proponent of bringing Rocketship to Milwaukee. “I am pleased to welcome Rocketship schools to Milwaukee. Their track record of performance with low-income kids is impressive. Rocketship will add to the great school options we have in this city.”

Over the last year, Rocketship Education has received overwhelming support from leaders of community organizations throughout Milwaukee. Schools That Can Milwaukee, a not-for-profit organization committed to quality education for low-income students, played an integral role in Rocketship’s Request For Proposal process.

“Though some saw Milwaukee as a dark horse for Rocketship’s first expansion site, the urgency and collaboration between city government, the business community, nonprofits, local high-performing schools and foundations quickly elevated Milwaukee to the top,” said Abby Andrietsch, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Schools that Can Milwaukee. “I believe Rocketship Education, in conjunction with the high-impact collaboration across Schools That Can Milwaukee’s partner schools, will create a tipping point for transformational change in Milwaukee education.”

Rocketship Education also announced today that Melissa McGonegle, who has served as Rocketship teacher, principal and is currently Rocketship Bay Area Director of Schools, will lead the first Milwaukee Rocketship school. McGonegle has been with Rocketship Education for four years and rose through the ranks through Rocketship’s Network Leadership Program, which prepares Rocketship teachers to serve as future school leaders for its schools nationwide. Under McGonegle’s leadership, Rocketship Sí Se Puede Academy in San Jose, California, earned an Academic Performance Index (API) score of 859 for 2011 and was ranked number three for elementary schools serving low-income students in Santa Clara County. Tim Sheehy, President of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce, will serve as the Rocketship Education Milwaukee local board chair.

Rocketship Education is the highest-performing elementary school system in California serving predominantly low-income students, achieving an overall score of 868 on the 2011 Academic Performance Index (API) growth score, with Rocketeers outperforming upper-income communities in California. In an effort to eliminate the achievement gap, Rocketship was recently approved by the Santa Clara County Board of Education to open 20 new Rocketship schools in Santa Clara County, in addition to plans to open a Rocketship school in San Francisco.

Rocketship Education considered multiple cities for its first expansion site beyond California. As a national school system, Rocketship considers the following criteria when engaging with communities: the ability to approve eight schools to open on a performance contract over five years; \$3.5 million in start-up funding for its regional support team; recruiting two teacher-leaders for each of the three years before initial opening to train with Rocketship in the Bay Area and ultimately return to their home city; and the regulatory changes needed around governance, facility approvals, and other operational issues to accommodate a national school system to open and operate schools effectively. Milwaukee met all of these criteria, leading to its approval as Rocketship’s first expansion city.

About Rocketship Education

Rocketship Education (www.rsed.org) is a leading public school system for low-income elementary students, eliminating the achievement gap by building a national school system of K-5 charter schools. Rocketship has pioneered the transformative Rocketship Model, which combines teacher development, parent empowerment and individualized learning to improve student achievement. Rocketship’s goal is to eliminate the achievement gap between low- and high-income communities across the country, allowing Rocketeers to succeed alongside their more affluent peers. Rocketship currently serves over 2,400 students, of whom nearly 90 percent are low-income, through five charter schools in San Jose.

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