



news release



The Broad Foundation Awards \$1 Million to Rocketship for National Expansion of Proven ‘Hybrid’ Charter Schools

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LOS ANGELES—The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation has awarded \$1 million to [Rocketship Education](#), a leading network of innovative K-5 public charter schools, the foundation announced today. The investment will support the first national expansion of a “hybrid school” model – which combines classroom instruction with online learning – helping Rocketship develop the infrastructure necessary to open 30 new hybrid charter schools nationwide by 2015.

“By using a combination of the best and brightest teachers and technology, Rocketship has literally redefined a traditional classroom,” said Eli Broad, founder of [The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation](#), which awarded the grant as part of its commitment to the White House Social Innovation Fund to fund innovative efforts in public education. “Rocketship has demonstrated that when schools offer every student access to a strong teacher and engaging instruction tailored to their individual needs, they can revolutionize education as we know it.”

Rocketship currently operates three public charter schools in San Jose, Calif., where it is slated to open two more in the fall of 2011. The Broad Foundation grant, which comes on the heels of \$6 million in support from the Charter School Growth Fund, will help Rocketship expand its network of schools nationwide. Rocketship is currently exploring potential partnerships with cities including Denver, Chicago, Tulsa, Okla., Houston, and Phoenix, to open 30 new schools by 2015. Rocketship plans to announce its next two expansion cities early next year.

“We are delighted and honored to receive The Broad Foundation’s support,” said Rocketship CEO and co-founder John Danner. “It validates our work and will allow us to expand nationally and fulfill our mission to eliminate the achievement gap, so that many more high-need students in cities across the country can excel academically.”

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Rocketship schools – which serve more than 1,300 students, nearly 90 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 75 percent of whom are English language learners – are open enrollment public charter schools.

Rocketship schools academically out-perform not only other low-income schools in California, but also wealthier California schools, such as the Palo Alto Unified School District. In 2010, Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary and Rocketship Sí Se Puede Academy ranked 5th and 15th among all California schools serving 70 percent or more low-income students on the state’s Academic Performance Index. Ninety percent of Rocketship students have demonstrated math proficiency, and 80 percent have demonstrated English language arts proficiency, compared to just 54 and 36 percent of students, respectively, in surrounding schools.

Among the reasons for Rocketship’s [academic success](#):

- Students in Rocketship schools receive a challenging, college prep curriculum during an expanded school day (8 a.m. to 4 pm.).
- Due to a strong partnership with Teach For America, many Rocketship teachers are Teach For America corps members and alumni.
- Like high school students, Rocketship students move between different classrooms and teachers for core subjects to benefit from teachers’ specific subject area expertise.
- Rocketship has developed a proven approach to individualized learning. Rocketship’s unique “hybrid school” model allows students to learn through a combination of working with highly effective teachers in the classroom and working individually on computers in a “learning lab”, or with tutors for additional support. Because basic skills are reinforced in the learning lab, teachers are able to spend more classroom time on high-level critical thinking skills, project-based learning and social skills. At the same time, frequent assessments allow Rocketship teachers to monitor student progress and tailor rich individual learning plans to each student’s specific needs, strengths and areas for improvement.
- Rocketship also strongly encourages parents to be involved in their child’s school activities. Rocketship teachers visit students and families at home each year. Some 90 percent of parents – the majority of whom are low-income – volunteer in the schools, and parents even weigh in on teacher recruitment and hiring decisions.

In addition to helping students achieve significant academic gains, the learning lab – which is staffed with non-certified personnel – saves Rocketship the expense of additional teachers and classrooms. Rocketship reinvests the resulting savings (about \$500,000 per school per year) back into efforts to raise student achievement, including small group tutoring, attracting the best teacher talent by paying teacher salaries that are 20 percent higher than surrounding districts, mentoring and developing teachers to continuously improve, and providing art, music and physical education.



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Rocketship schools can also be replicated more easily than other charter models because Rocketship’s cost-efficient model enables each school to sustainably operate solely on traditional public school funding. In contrast, philanthropic dollars are used to develop the infrastructure necessary to open and support more schools – not for day-to-day school operations.

“Rocketship may be the first charter school network that is fully scalable because it successfully attracts and develops great teacher talent, engages all students to achieve academically and costs far less,” said Luis de la Fuente, an associate director at The Broad Foundation.

About Rocketship Education. Founded in 2006 by John Danner and Preston Smith in San Jose, Calif., Rocketship Education is building a national network of high-performing urban college preparatory elementary charter schools whose mission is to eliminate the achievement gap. Rocketship has pioneered the transformative “hybrid school” model. The name “Rocketship” embodies the speed at which the schools raise student achievement and the precise engineering necessary to deliver a high-quality public education to students of all income levels. Danner was a founding director of KIPP Academy Nashville, a charter middle school in Nashville where nearly all students qualify for free and reduced price meals that has ranked among Nashville’s top middle schools since inception. Smith is a former Teach For America Sue Lehmann Award finalist, a national competition for Teach For America teachers with the strongest academic results. For more information, visit www.rsed.org.

About The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is a national venture philanthropy established by entrepreneur and philanthropist Eli Broad to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science and the arts. The Broad Foundation’s education work is focused on dramatically improving K-12 public education through better governance, management, labor relations and competition. The Broad Foundation’s Internet address is www.broadeducation.org.

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