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Response from Rocketship Futuro Academy



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April 26, 2019

Via: Mail and Electronic File

Lisa F. Constancio, Director
Charter Schools Division
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: CDE Requests Documentation for the June State Board of Education Academic Information Memo

Dear Director Constancio:

This letter is in response to a request sent by the California Department of Education (CDE) in an email dated April 9, 2019 requesting that Rocketship Futuro Academy ("RFA") prepare a written response to identify how the school has or will address in its 2019-2020 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and update the goals and timelines for improving performance schoolwide and for how the low student groups will be addressed. The email also asked the school to state how the it will address any areas of decline (if applicable) in the coming school year.

Rocketship Futuro Academy (RFA) opened in Fall 2016 serving Kinder through 2nd grade. In the 2018-2019 school year, which was its third year of operation, RFA enrollment increased to 424 students in grades Transitional Kinder through 4th grade from 290 students the year with a robust waitlist. Strong majorities of the school population, 77.6%, are classified as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged (SED), while 70.8%, are designated as English Language Learners (ELL). The special education population is 8.0%.

RFA took the CAASPP assessment for the first time in 2017-2018, and the results from this single third-grade cohort of 28 students set the school's baseline that will be used in subsequent years to set goals. Although the proficiency rates in the tested grade for all RFA students were on par in with the district and state averages for grades 3 through 5 in math (43%) and lagged behind the state and district averages in ELA (34%), the school performed better comparatively in key subgroups. Among SED students, RFA proficiency rate of 41% in math compared favorably to the state average of 30% and the district average of 23%. In ELA, the school's proficiency rate of 35% was just behind the state average of 37% and ahead of the district average of 31%. ELL

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performance tracked a similar pattern with the school math proficiency of 37% outpacing the state average (17%) and district (6%) while ELA results of 15% were close to the state average (16%) and ahead of the district average (5%). On the dashboard academic indicators, the school rated 11.5 points below the state standard in mathematics, which significantly outperformed the state's score that was 36.4 points below the standard. In ELA, RFA rated less favorably, with the school 42.6 points below the standard and well off the state, which rated only 6 points below the standard.

The only two state indicators with a second year of performance and thus were reported on the dashboard were chronic absenteeism, which was 17.7% -- an 11% improvement from the year before -- and rated "yellow," and student suspension, which 1.7% -- a 2% improvement from the prior year -- and rated "green." Attendance and absenteeism has been a major school focus. In addition to regular protocols, RFA has put in place a few different plans in place to support families with ensuring students are in attendance. Over the summer, we mail our school calendar to ensure families plan vacations in alignment to our days off. We provide the calendar at orientation and continue to send it out as part of our weekly parent report. This year, we also created a system around communication with families. We first have our office manager call parents once a student is marked absent; if we do not hear back from them or they do not have an excuse for their absence, teachers connect directly with families to figure how to support them in ensuring their Rocketeers attend school. Finally, if we do not see progress, the school leader who oversees the grade reaches out to once again try to establish a partnership around their attendance. Additionally, we have worked with families with transportation challenges by connecting them with other Rocketeer parents so they can work out a carpool system. We have also created incentives/recognition systems to celebrate attendance.

RFA met all of its local indicators on the dashboard. Local indicators are based off a variety of sources, including internal parent and student surveys, as well as assessment of the services provided to students. Our network provides Futuro with the resources to meet the Basic Services indicator, including ensuring teachers are appropriately credentialed, providing instructional materials and supplies and facilities repairs. The network also provides the school support in curriculum development, which is based off of standards-aligned materials.

Principal Jason Colon works to ensure the parents feel connected to the school and have ample opportunities for parent engagement. Parent engagement begins with home visits, where teachers visit every student's home either before school begins or early in the school year. RFA exceeded the network goal of completing 80% of home visits prior to December 1, 2018, and as of this letter has completed home visits for 99% of students. This also includes hosting community meetings and parent coffees. Parents are encouraged to volunteer at the school for at least 20 hours every year, and 89% of parents are currently on track to achieve this "Parent Partnership Hours" goal. Maintaining strong feelings of parent and student safety is another top priority for

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us, especially since the school is co-located. In order to this, we ensure that we have significant adult presence at high traffic times, such as arrival and dismissal.

Although RFA students have seen meaningful literacy growth in recent years -- with fall-to-spring school-wide growth reaching 1.23 years of growth in 2016-2017 and 1.15 years of growth in 2017-2018 as measured on the NWEA MAP assessment -- far too many students remain below the standard in ELA. The focus has led to new strategies this year that have shown promising results. To assist grade-level teams to address the wide range of differentiated reading levels within grades, we have added additional designated instruction groups. These instructional groups are based on a student's language level and provide students the opportunity to explore oral and written language further in a small, intimate setting with their teacher. This additional instructional block has proven to be effective, based on ongoing formative and summative data. Additionally, the school's "Love of Reading" campaign resulted in more students reading on their own, and now every student always has five books in their book bag and are seen immersed in these rich texts throughout their day.

RFA also has strengthened our systems across campus to set a stronger cultural foundation, which has allowed new teachers to acclimate more quickly and achieve greater process. It also resulted in a further reduction in the school's suspension rate, which to-date stands at 0.5% -- less than one-third of last year's 1.7% rate.

Please notify us if you require any additional information and we will make every effort to submit the supplemental documentation in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



Marie Issa Gil
Bay Area Regional Director
Rocketship Education

CC: Dr. Frederick Ferrer, President of the Rocketship Education Board
Preston Smith, CEO of Rocketship Education
Jason Colon, Principal of Rocketship Futuro Academy
Chad Owes, Education Programs Consultant for the SBE-Authorized Charter School