RISE and Star Kids Scholarship Programs: An Initial Evaluation of Alumni Experiences and Outcomes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Johns Hopkins University Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) evaluated the Rhode Islanders Sponsoring Education (RISE) and Star Kids scholarship programs and the outcomes of its participants. These programs are comprised of three distinct organizations that work in concert with one another: RISE, Star Kids: New Bedford, and Star Kids: Newport / Fall River. The programs provide academic, financial, and wraparound support to children and young adults who have experienced parental incarceration, parental substance use disorder (SUD), or other significant life disruptions.

The exploratory evaluation employed a descriptive case study design to examine research questions related to the impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on their adult lives and the extent to which the program participants achieved academic success, employment and economic stability, and behavioral and socio-emotional wellbeing. Multiple sources of data were analyzed, including an online survey administered to program alumni as well as virtual interviews with a subsample of voluntary participants. The sample included 183 RISE and Star Kids alumni, of which 16 were interviewed.

Results showed that:

- Compared to the national average, program alumni reported exceptionally high levels of childhood adversity, though this did not necessarily lead to negative life outcomes. This relationship between ACEs and adult outcomes was nuanced, suggesting that negative childhood experiences can be mitigated through positive childhood experiences (PCEs), such as effective schools, supportive relationships, and other protective factors.

- Alumni consistently rated their RISE or Star Kids schools higher than their previous educational institutions on all measures. The scholarship schools were described as safer, smaller, more supportive, and more academically rigorous. Interviewees reported significant socioeconomic and cultural differences between home and school environments, and this required careful navigation and balancing of the two worlds.

- Program alumni yielded a high school graduation rate that surpassed the national average, despite their adversity. Nearly three-quarters of alumni credited this success to the RISE and Star Kids programs, specifically. Most alumni pursued secondary education degrees with many choosing service-oriented career paths.

- The vast majority of program alumni reported never having been arrested, incarcerated, or having been admitted to a rehabilitation center for SUD. However, these outcomes persisted for a smaller number of alumni, the majority of whom also had an incarcerated parent or a parent who experienced SUD. This

finding both illustrated the positive impact of the RISE and Star Kids programs for most, while also highlighting the difficulty in breaking these intergenerational cycles for a few.

- Alumni reported positive economic, financial, and personal outcomes in adulthood. Most were gainfully employed and made regular contributions to retirement and savings accounts. Though most alumni reported they were unmarried, without children, and did not own a home, these indicators are typical of younger adults who are currently enrolled in college or have recently graduated.

Overall, the findings indicated that the RISE program, the New Bedford Star Kids program, and the Newport / Fall River Star Kids program provided meaningful and lasting support for students who faced substantial childhood adversity. The personal and professional success of alumni might be attributed not only to their individual perseverance but also the effective educational environments and supportive relationships that were afforded to them through these scholarship programs. Alumni expressed overwhelming support for the RISE and Star Kids programs; 97% recommended the program to other young people with similar backgrounds. Many continue to partner with the RISE and Star Kids organizations to this day, participating in program outreach and advocating for intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of RISE and Star Kids

The RISE (Rhode Islanders Sponsoring Education) and Star Kids Scholarship programs share a common founder and are school- and community-based interventions designed to support children who have experienced parental incarceration, parental substance abuse, or other significant family disruptions. The programs use private schools – including faith-based and nonsectarian schools – for their interventions, which rely on an empowerment model that gives children of incarcerated parents (COIP) and children of parents with a substance use disorder (SUD) an expanded choice of schools. RISE and Star Kids partner with a broad range of private schools, and although program staff may assist or advise in the school selection process, the child and his or her caregiver ultimately decide which school to attend. In this pluralistic approach, Catholic schools often are overrepresented due to various factors such as caregiver and/or child preference, perception of fit, academic performance and outcomes, accessibility, and cost. RISE and Star Kids scholarship programs provide tuition support up to $5k per year for elementary school and up to $7k per year for high school, per individual.

There is an evidence-based framework that informs this program design. Partnership with private schools is predicated on the concept of "Effective Schools", which was developed by Dr. Ronald Edmonds in the 1970s and advanced by Dr. Anthony Bryk and his research on the effectiveness of Catholic schools with at-risk minority youth.[1] This framework identifies several school criteria that have demonstrated the ability to produce better outcomes with disadvantaged students, namely: small school size, autonomous governance, strong principal leadership, focus on academic fundamentals, a commitment to character-building, a strong sense of community, and a culture of trust. While caregivers do not formally select these criteria with a checklist-like approach, partner schools have these attributes, though they may vary in degree. The RISE and Star Kids programs subscribe to the theory of action that with foundational academic content and skill building in combination with a character-focused caring culture and strong in-school role models, schools can better position children facing adversity for success and break the intergenerational cycles of poverty, incarceration, and/or SUD, of which they are especially vulnerable.

RISE and Star Kids programs provide academic tutoring, summer camp opportunities, support for athletic programs, and related educational needs for high-risk, low-income children who have a parent with a history of incarceration and/or SUD. The RISE and Star Kids programs – and their three organizations – aim to mitigate the emotional, behavioral, and academic risks associated with the chronic stressors stemming from parental incarceration and substance abuse by providing structured, developmentally appropriate supports that promote resilience, stability, and positive social connections for at-risk youth. Some differences between the RISE and Star Kids programs do exist,

[1] Bryk, A. S., Lee, V. E., & Holland, P. B. (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good*. Harvard University Press.

however. The signature distinction between the two programs is that RISE provides scholarships to COIP, whereas Star Kids facilitates scholarships for COIP and for children or parents with a SUD. Additionally, the majority of students enrolled in the Star Kids program do not have a designated mentor but instead are provided with tuition support and other services. Comparatively, RISE utilizes a mentoring program that has varied in size over the years; those enrolled in the mentoring program also receive tuition support for attending a school that meets the "Effective Schools" criteria, though there is a cohort of COIP who receive mentoring only. Together, RISE and Star Kids represent complementary approaches within the continuum of supports for COIP and children of parents with a SUD.

Overview of the Evaluation

The aim of this study was to review the perceptions of former student participants in the RISE and Star Kids scholarship programs and the impacts of the programs on their adult lives, with specific emphasis on their educational attainment, employment and economic stability, and behavioral and socio-emotional wellbeing. Specifically, this case study examined these research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of traumatic background experiences, as captured by the Modified ACE-8, among RISE / STAR Kids alumni? How did these experiences relate to their life outcomes?

2. How do RISE / Star Kids alumni rate their program experiences compared to their previous educational institution?

3. To what extent do RISE / Star Kids students graduate from high school and then pursue further educational attainment, including college, vocational, or career training programs?

4. To what extent do RISE / Star Kids alumni experience incarceration, substance use disorder, or justice system involvement, particularly those who have an intergenerational history of incarceration and/or substance abuse?

5. What economic and life outcomes do RISE / Star Kids alumni perceive as a result of program participation?

6. Which elements of the Star Kids / RISE programs (academic, financial, or wrap-around support) do alumni view as most impactful?

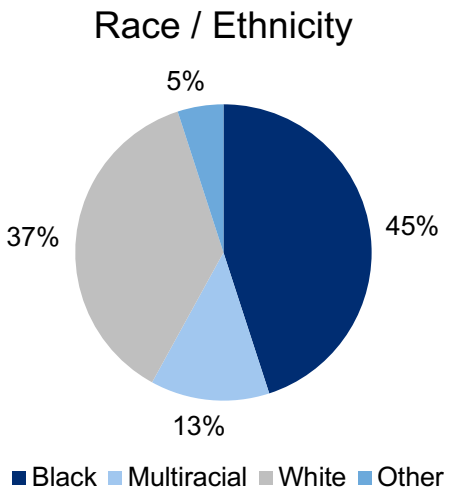
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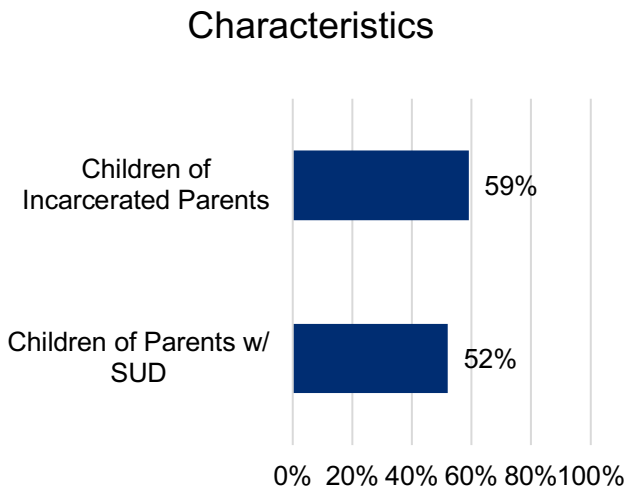
Research Design

This descriptive case study investigated the degree to which these scholarship programs afforded through RISE and Star Kids have impacted life outcomes of their student alumni and to examine their perceived effectiveness. To address these research interests, we utilized a descriptive case study design because it allowed for an in-depth analysis of participants' educational, career, and personal development experiences within the real-world context of these programs and, when applicable, compared to their prior educational experiences in non-scholarship schools. Drawing on survey responses and qualitative accounts from alumni, we examined patterns, perceptions, and outcomes associated with program participation. The exploratory nature of the design enabled the identification of emerging themes and unanticipated impacts, while the descriptive component provided a detailed understanding of alumni experiences and the ways in which the programs may have contributed to their long-term success.

Participants

A total of 183 RISE and Star Kids alumni responded to the online survey. Their demographic characteristics were varied. A plurality identified as African American (45%, *n* = 81) and the majority were male (59%, *n* = 106). The ages of survey participants ranged from 16-63 years old, and the most frequently reported age was 21 (9%, *n* = 16). Survey respondents were predominately young adults, with the largest proportion of respondents between the ages of 19 and 28 years of age (58%, *n* = 105). Of those who responded to an optional question regarding their parents' background, more than half of respondents (59%, *n* = 106) identified as having a parent or guardian incarcerated, and as having a parent or guardian who was treated for a substance use disorder (52%, *n* = 94). The figures below provide a demographic snapshot of the survey participants.





Overall, the survey profile is that of young adults, racially diverse, and who largely experienced childhood with either an incarcerated parent(s) or a parent(s) with a substance use disorder. One-third of participants (33%, *n* = 61) experienced both sets

of conditions, having a parent(s) incarcerated *and* afflicted with SUD.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of survey participants from each scholarship organization.

Table 1
Associated Scholarship Programs of Analytic Sample

Scholarship programs	*n*	% of total sample
Rhode Islanders Sponsoring Education (RISE)	60	33%
Star Kids: New Bedford	74	41%
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	46	26%

Note. *n* = 180 respondents indicated their affiliation with an organization.

In addition to the online survey, CRRE researchers conducted interviews with a total of 16 RISE and Star Kids alumni via phone and online Zoom meetings. These interviews featured alumni who voluntarily expressed their willingness to be contacted, and purposive sampling was used to feature alumni who experienced an incarcerated parent, a parent with a SUD, or both sets of conditions.

Measures

Data sources for the study included an online survey and virtual interviews with alumni, as described below.

Alumni Survey. Instrument development began by identifying the primary outcomes and priorities, as articulated by the RISE and Star Kids leadership. Through a series of virtual planning meetings between JHU researchers and program leadership, the group identified survey items that were central to the evaluation of the RISE and Star Kids scholarship programs. Using feedback from program leadership, a survey draft was developed iteratively over the course of one month. Survey drafts were refined to ensure alignment between the study objectives and the instrument; the overall length of the survey also was carefully considered in order to balance the need for thorough data collection without placing an undue burden on the respondents.

The final version of the survey (see Appendix A) was written at a Flesch-Kincaid Grade level of 10 and included five sections containing a total of 54 closed- and open-ended items. These sections consisted of questions related to individual background (15 items), school characteristics and comparison (19 items), life outcomes (12 items), perceived impacts (five items), and overall attitudes towards the RISE / Star Kids program (three items). Embedded within the background section of the alumni survey was an 8-item questionnaire that was derived from the 10-item Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Questionnaire (ACE-10).[2] At the request of the program developers,

[2] Oláh, B., Fekete, Z., Kuritárné Szabó, I., & Kovács-Tóth, B. (2023). Validity and reliability of the 10-Item Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-10) among adolescents in the child welfare system. *Frontiers in Public Health, 11,* 1258798. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1258798

this abbreviated questionnaire omitted two items related to sexual abuse because of their sensitivity. The "Modified ACE-8" used a dichotomous scale consisting of "Yes" or "No", though participants also were given the opportunity to choose "Decline to Answer" for any of the items. The survey was hosted online via Qualtrics.

Alumni Interview Protocol. This semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B) was developed in conjunction with program developers and addressed six sections: program background; family, childhood, and neighborhood context; school comparison; educational attainment and career pathways; life outcomes and wellbeing; and program impact. Each of these sections contained a range of questions aimed at cultivating a detailed understanding in all areas related to the RISE / Star Kids program participation and perceptions and outcomes associated with it. Similar to the alumni survey, the development of the interview protocol was a collaboration between JHU researchers and program leadership. The length of the protocol also was an important consideration; virtual planning meetings were conducted, and multiple drafts of the interview protocol were circulated until a final instrument was completed and both parties were satisfied.

To address the research questions, the study team gathered and analyzed data derived from an online survey, which contained the Modified ACE-8, and virtual interviews (see Table 2).

Table 2
Research Questions With Data Sources and Measures

Research questions	Alumni survey	Alumni interviews	Modified ACE-8
1. What is the prevalence of traumatic background experiences, as captured by the Modified ACE-8, among RISE / STAR Kids alumni? How did these experiences relate to their life outcomes?	✓	✓	✓
2. How do RISE / Star Kids alumni rate their program experiences compared to their previous educational institution?	✓	✓	
3. To what extent do RISE / Star Kids students graduate from high school and then pursue further educational attainment, including college, vocational, or career training programs?	✓	✓	
4. To what extent do RISE / Star Kids alumni experience incarceration, substance use disorder, or justice system involvement, particularly those who have a family history of incarceration and/or substance abuse?	✓	✓	

5. What economic and life outcomes do RISE / Star Kids alumni perceive as a result of program participation?	✓	✓	
6. Which elements of the Star Kids / RISE programs (academic, financial, or wrap-around support) do alumni view as most impactful?	✓	✓	

Analytical Approach

Quantitative survey data were first cleaned and screened for completeness and missing data. Participant responses were optional, not forced, due to the sensitive nature of the survey questions; consequently, the total response count for each item varied. Survey responses that were started but did not record a response on any items other than the demographic questions (Questions 1-3) were deemed incomplete and were discarded. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, as appropriate to the evaluation questions, and were summarized using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to identify patterns and trends in participant responses. We modeled the relationship between ACEs and outcomes using logistic regression, predicting the binary life outcomes with the cumulative ACEs total, including covariates for age, gender, and race.[3]

Qualitative data from the open-ended items on the alumni survey and interviews were analyzed using the constant comparison approach described by Miles et al. (2020).[4] Interviews were conducted virtually using *Zoom* (2026) and transcribed using *Otter.AI* (2025). These transcriptions were de-identified and then uploaded for thematic coding in *MAXQDA* (Version 26.0). Per the research method established by Braun and Clarke (2006),[5] the initial codes were developed to reflect the study's research questions; following this initial coding, the AI Assist feature in *MAXQDA* was employed to suggest subcodes, which were then evaluated for relevancy and accuracy and refined accordingly. The findings of this analysis are summarized in tables and narratives displayed in this report.

Procedure

The 54-item alumni survey was programmed into the online survey host platform, Qualtrics, and a link was shared with prospective respondents via an email issued from RISE and Star Kids program officials. The survey was available during the months of

[3] Although the ACEs categories are commonly used as the metric in analyses of the impacts of ACEs on life outcomes (e.g., Bethell et al., 2017), there were so few alumni with 0 or 1-2 ACEs in this study, that this approach was not statistically feasible (i.e., sparseness prevented analysis of these bins).

[4] Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

[5] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

March – July 2026 and received 183 completed responses. The overall response rate is incalculable due to inconclusive records of alumni contact information and the unknown number of alumni who received the invitation to participate. Frequencies and descriptive statistics for the survey are presented in Appendices C-F.

Additionally, a total of 16 RISE and Star Kids alumni voluntarily participated in interviews with CRRE researchers in order to engage in deeper discussion of their experiences with the programs. CRRE researchers attempted to contact all alumni who indicated on the survey their willingness to be interviewed for this study. These interviews were conducted via Zoom and by phone and took place during the months of July and August.

RESULTS

This section of the report begins with findings related to school comparison, educational attainment and persistence, intergenerational outcomes, and individual wellbeing. In addition, we examine participants' responses on the Modified ACE-8 instrument embedded within the alumni survey and examine the relationship between ACEs and life outcomes of program alumni. Last, we report on participants' attitudes towards the RISE and Star Kids programs.

School Comparison

How do RISE / Star Kids alumni rate their program experiences compared to their previous educational institution?

Key Findings

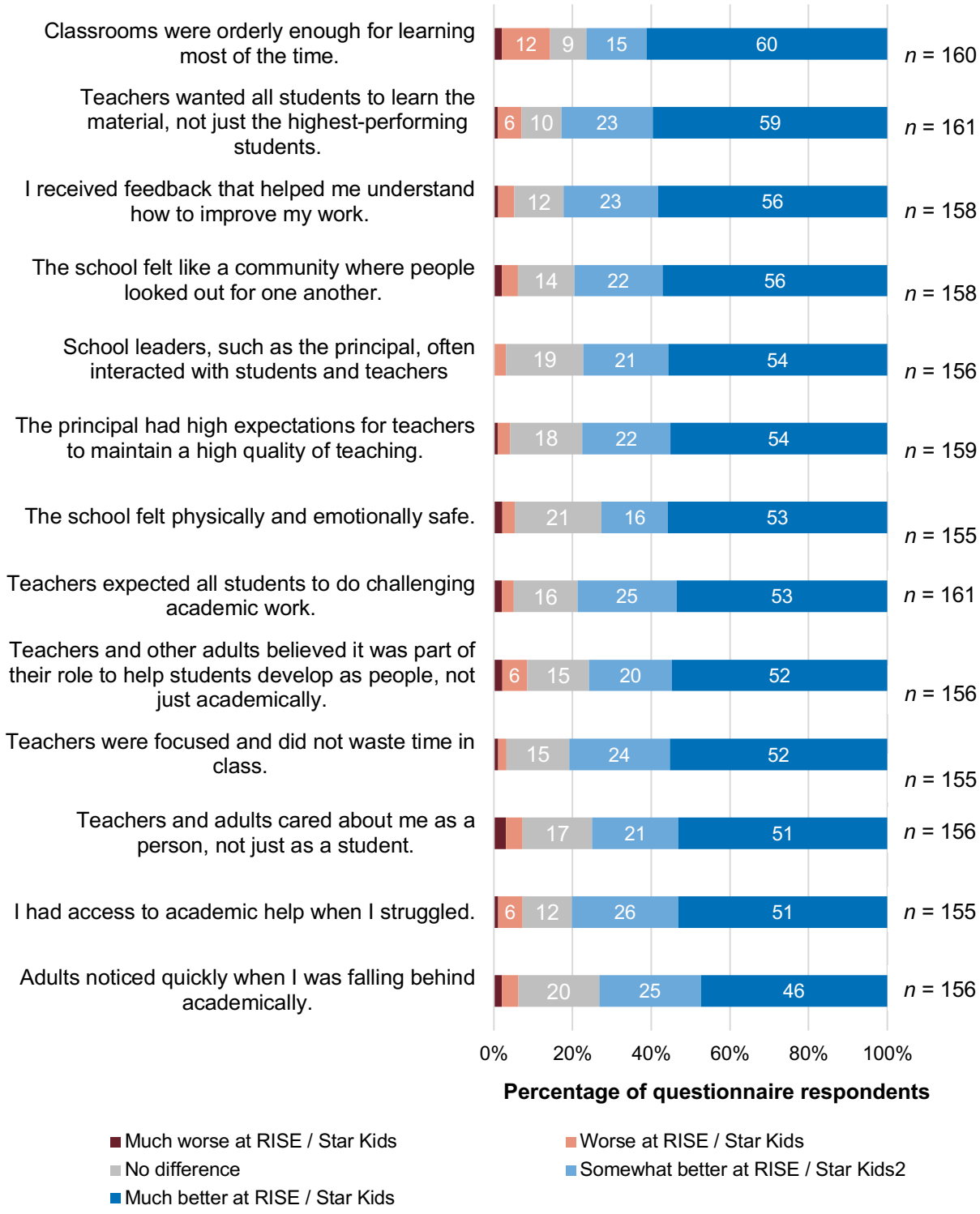
- Alumni perceived RISE and Star Kids schools to be stronger educational environments than were their previous institutions. Specifically, they reported feeling safer and having a strong sense of community in RISE and Star Kids schools, in addition to academic strengths such as smaller class sizes, higher academic expectations, and more teacher support.

- Alumni reported significant cultural differences between home, neighborhood, and school environments. Aside from socioeconomic disparities, participants described having to balance multiple identities, known as code-switching, in order to navigate social dynamics.

- Alumni also detailed how their RISE and Star Kids experiences changed them in personal ways, including instilling more positive morals and values, developing emotional intelligence, and exposing them to new perspectives on life.

Alumni were asked to compare the school they attended prior to the RISE or Star Kids intervention. These comparisons included questions related to school infrastructure (e.g., school and class size, population, safety, opportunity for participation in extra-curriculars) as well as the structural conditions of the schools (e.g., instructional leadership, academic expectations and support, and relational trust). RISE and Star Kids alumni, on average, reported that their scholarship school was smaller than their previous school (63%, *n* = 92), had smaller class sizes (59%, *n* = 87), and felt considerably safer (83%, *n* = 116). Furthermore, three-quarters of alumni (75%, *n* = 109) reported that their RISE or Star Kids school had more options to become involved in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, and organizations. They perceived profound differences in educational experiences between public school and the scholarship schools; Figure 1 displays more specific comparisons between these settings.

Figure 1
Alumni Comparison of RISE / Star Kids Schools and Prior Institution



Note: *n* ranged from 155-161. Data labels are not displayed for scale frequencies < 5%.

Notably, respondents indicated that all conditions were either somewhat or much better at the RISE or Star Kids school compared to their previous institution. For all 13 items, respondents most frequently selected the response, “Much better at RISE / Star Kids” (ranging between 46-60% of responses). Additionally, a range of 15-26% of all respondents selected “Somewhat better at RISE / Star Kids”. The strongest overall ratings (defined as “Much better” + “Somewhat better”) were for statements related to high academic expectations (“Teachers wanted all students to learn the material”), monitoring and responsiveness (“I received feedback that helped me understand”), and moral community (“The school felt like a community”). The item related to emotional and physical safety registered the highest number of respondents who said there was no difference between schools (21%, n = 34). These findings suggest a wide range of individual experiences that were mostly positive but school dependent.

Alumni also were interviewed about their experiences at the school they attended prior to their placement in a RISE or Star Kids school. Of the 16 interviewees, seven were unable to recall these experiences either because they were too young or because they had begun their schooling in a RISE or Star Kids school. The remainder of interviewees transferred schools at different grades; some joined the RISE or Star Kids program during high school (Grades 9-12), others during middle school grades (Grades 6-8), and one individual described transferring to a private school in third grade. Interviewees often recalled the crowded classroom sizes in the public-school environment. This was not true of the RISE and Star Kids schools, where they experienced smaller class sizes and where they were held accountable academically. One person explained:

> *Coming into private school I had a very small class size, and the teachers knew I was behind academically. They never let me forget it. So, in that way, it was a rude awakening. But eventually, I did get up to speed, and it was worth it. And with the smaller class size, I couldn't easily fall through the cracks, even if I wanted to.*

Another individual told a similar story, remembering how at her public school, she used to skip school routinely. She talked about how she and her cousin would skip school in second grade to play on the school playground, during school hours, with no one questioning them or holding them accountable: “It didn't seem like they really cared, because we were literally right there, skipping school. No one came out and was like, ‘You guys need to be in school.’” The theme of anonymity emerged often in interviewees’ responses when recalling their prior educational experiences, which was perceived as apathy and indifference from school leaders.

Alumni were asked to compare the culture of their RISE or Star Kids school with their previous school and with the culture of their neighborhood. Table 3 details the themes that emerged in their responses.

Table 3

Cultural Differences Between Schools and Neighborhoods, According to Interviewees

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Socioeconomic differences	7 (29%)	Interviewees described a stark socioeconomic divide between their RISE/Star Kids school environments and their home neighborhoods. *It's a little bit more realistic in the real world, because…you can see how some people really live, whereas Star Kids private school is sometimes… you feel like you're living in a bubble.* *Kids from my [RISE] school didn't really know what it was like to have the specific hardship that I had growing up in my neighborhood. They didn't have financial struggles. They didn't have the drug culture where a lot of people they knew were affected by drugs. I remember one time, our history teacher was teaching us government assistance, and he said, "Does anyone know what EBT is?" And I was so naive that I thought everybody knew what EBT was. And everybody looked at me.*
Behavioral standards and accountability	7 (29%)	The RISE/Star Kids school environment emphasized accountability, discipline, and academic success. Many participants felt motivated (and even obligated) to meet these high standards to honor the time, money, and emotional investment provided by their mentors and program staff. *[I] wanted to make those people that are investing that time in me proud. The mentors spending hours and their own money and time into me and the [RISE] staff putting in all that time and work. I'm just like, 'Why would I show up to school today and cause ruckus or be a troubled kid if somebody's literally investing their own money to have me in this seat?' So, making them proud, making sure I didn't disappoint them was a huge piece of why I stayed on a straight track.* *That's where I feel like [Star Kids] prepared me most. It was a lot of these intangibles and discipline. Not in a bad sense, but you know you're gonna have to have routine and structure.*
Social dynamics	6 (25%)	Interviewees noted differences in socioeconomic status, racial demographics, and academic expectations compared to their home neighborhoods. Students sometimes felt isolated as the only person of color in their classes and often had to balance two conflicting worlds. *It was very difficult. More like opposites, in fact. Star Kids was calm, while my neighborhood was the world where*

Theme	n	Supporting quote
		you have to survive, take care of yourself, and watch your back. You had to be street smart; else you get killed or robbed. But Star Kids made me see that everything just doesn't involve a fight. *It was a culture shock because I was the only person of color in my class. Even the music that we were listening to, the way that we were speaking to each other, even the foods that we were eating at lunch were totally different than what I'm seeing when I go home. Everybody speaks totally different. Everyone is acting totally different. Everything is just very different. The cultures are like night and day almost.*
Future outlook	4 (17%)	Neighborhood environments were frequently perceived as lacking academic focus, with some interviewees noting a stark difference in peer attitudes toward future life paths and personal responsibility. *The kids from my neighborhood just were not academics. They didn't care. They were just out having fun, like pretty much future gang members.* *The track team held me accountable. I think being in that type of environment where people had expectations and rules was a shift for sure. It was very positive in the sense that it prepared me for a lot of things.*

Note: *n* = 16. Responses may have encompassed more than a single theme.

Alumni described how their RISE and Star Kids school experiences often clashed with their neighborhoods. These differences not only included socioeconomic disparities but also extended to social and behavioral expectations and personal responsibility. Academic discipline and future planning were among the expectations emphasized in RISE and Star Kids schools but were largely absent from the students' home environments. Consequently, interviewees often would behave differently when they were at school versus at home and in their neighborhoods; this practice is often referred to as "code switching" and was described as such:

> *You kind of put on an act everywhere you go. I was never really true to myself and who I was. Everywhere I went, I was playing a double life. I come from two different worlds.*
>
> *I 100% definitely acted different. As soon as I would [go to] the north side of [home city] where my school was, I had to turn it off. I had to turn that person off. And then as soon as that bell rings and I hop back on the bus and I go back to the south side, you know, I'm that kid in my home. I would act completely different in two different places.*

> *It's a big like identity crisis. It's hard to maintain friends – you know, my apartment complex and everything. That's a whole different world. it's like a lot of code switching and you know, trying to prove yourself to both groups.*
>
> *For the first few years, I had to constantly convince kids in the street that I'm still with them. I'm still the same person they knew, but it was difficult. At some point, I just had to leave it. Let them see me as who they want to see me [as] because I didn't want to constantly have to prove to them that I've changed. I'm better. They don't believe in such things, so I just had to let them be.*

The practice of code switching between school and home environments was not universally experienced by alumni, but those who code switched also talked about how this phenomenon was more prevalent at the start of the transition to a RISE or Star Kids school and became less pronounced over time. According to one interviewee, "As I got older, it was a lot easier for me." Another added, "Late junior year, I just stopped doing that [code switching]." Further, one interviewee justified this behavioral practice, pointing out that, "I still code switch. We all code switch. When I go to certain meetings or I'm talking to certain folks, I do hold some things back. I need to relate to that person." Overall, program alumni navigated very different worlds between school and home, each person finding their own way to reconcile the two.

Interviewees also were asked whether attending the RISE or Star Kids school changed them personally. Specific prompts asked respondents to consider how the school changed the ways in which they handled conflict, chose friend groups, made plans for the future, and impacted their daily behaviors. Table 4 details the themes that emerged in their responses.

Table 4

Personal Change, According to Interviewees

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Values	12 (41%)	Alumni reported developing greater respect for others, improved manners, and a heightened sense of responsibility, often contrasting these learned behaviors with the lack of discipline they observed in public school environments or their home neighborhoods. *I was more respectful than a lot of people my age. There was consequences if you acted a certain way. We knew exactly what was supposed to be said [and] what wasn't supposed to be said, stuff like that. I feel like it helped me on a level of respect.* *I definitely learned a lot more life skills going to a private school supported by the Star Kids and manners. My parents were never very present to be like, 'Say please and thank you' and 'Wash your hands in the bathroom' and stuff like that. That was very much something that I got from Star Kids' program.*

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Emotional growth	10 (35%)	Interviewees reported that the RISE / Star Kids experience helped them cultivate emotional intelligence, discipline in their reactions, and a clearer sense of moral direction, though some noted this shift toward passivity or emotional restraint could be perceived as a weakness with peers outside the school environment. *I think it made me more soft than my peers in my neighborhood. I gain[ed] a sense of emotional intelligence, but at the same time, it made me look weak and soft or like I couldn't stick up for myself. But I also learned a sense of right and wrong. So, that was an inner dilemma for me to stay on the right track but also fit in with the neighborhood kids at the same time.* *Star Kids changed my life for the better. It changed everything: how I perceived situations, how I perceived people, the respect I had for people.*
Perspective	7 (24%)	Interviewees prioritized education, adopted more respectful modes of conduct, and recognized a broader range of life possibilities beyond traditional paths than they had understood previously. *Once I heard that education will break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and addiction and incarceration in my family, I went all in with my education. I took it very seriously. I wanted to break the cycle at a young age. I knew that I didn't want to live the life that I lived growing up.* *My behavior changed… it was really hard to disconnect from the ways that I grew up and some of the behaviors and habits that I learned from my family members and from the community versus the habits and behaviors that I should be doing, or I should know is right.*

Note: *n* = 16. Responses may have encompassed more than a single theme.

Overall, these findings suggest that alumni perceived RISE and Star Kids as providing a substantially more supportive, academically rigorous, and caring educational environment than the schools they previously attended, reinforcing the program's emphasis on the high expectations, strong student-teacher relationships, and a positive school climate. Alumni experienced a spectrum of challenges related to their home, neighborhood, and school cultures, which they were forced to navigate and balance during formative adolescent years.

Educational Attainment and Persistence

To what extent do RISE / Star Kids students graduate from high school and then pursue further educational attainment, including college, vocational, or career training programs?

Key Findings

- RISE and Star Kids alumni reported a higher rate of high school graduation compared to the national average. Subgroups of alumni who experienced incarcerated parents and who had parents with SUD had even higher rates of reported high school completion.
- Postsecondary degree attainment expectedly was less pronounced compared to high school graduation rates, though the vast majority of alumni did report pursuing a degree after high school. The most common disruptor of attaining a postsecondary degree was the financial cost of attendance.
- Interviewees elaborated on how the RISE and Star Kids programs buoyed their educational and career ambitions first by educating them of their possibilities then by providing them with individual guidance and support in their endeavors.

Several items on the survey asked alumni about their educational attainment. A vast majority of survey respondents (92%, *n* = 163) indicated they graduated from high school. Alumni further credited the RISE or Star Kids program for the success. Specifically, almost three-fourths (71%, *n* = 125) agreed or strongly agreed with the item, "I probably would not have graduated from high school, if it wasn't for RISE / Star Kids." For added context, the 92% graduation rate reported by RISE and Star Kids alumni is five points higher than the national average, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.[6] Within the entire survey sample, the graduation rate reported was even higher for RISE and Star Kids alumni who experienced childhood with an incarcerated parent (94.2%, *n* = 104), or with a parent who was afflicted with SUD (93.5%, *n* = 87).

Most RISE and Star Kids alumni (86%, *n* = 153) reported that they pursued a postsecondary degree after high school graduation. Roughly one-third of survey respondents (32%, *n* = 57) indicated that they are currently working towards this

[6] National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). High school graduation rates. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/coi.

degree. Other alumni reported having already earned their associate's degree (16%, *n* = 28), bachelor's degree (28%, *n* = 49), and master's degree (3%, *n* = 5). Two alumni responded that they have earned a professional degree (JD, MD, DDS, PhD, or EdD). Several others (6%, *n* = 10) received other education, training, or certifications (such as EMT, CNA, BSN, HVAC certification).

In an open-ended question, alumni who reported not pursuing postsecondary education were given the opportunity to elaborate further. Responses varied, with some providing highly specific, circumstantial explanations as to why they were unable to continue their educational pursuits. Of the 10 respondents, four cited insufficient funds as their main rationale for not pursuing a postsecondary degree of some kind. These responses included:

> *I could not pay for it.*
>
> *Low funds.*
>
> *Financial responsibility to my family.*
>
> *[I] was unable to get funded [for] school.*

Three others noted that they do plan to attend school in the future but that they are still deciding on where to go, what to study, and simply "want to gain work experience and take time before committing to further education." These comments are a reminder that the completion of postsecondary education is not a universal fit (as evidenced by one respondent who said they "just wanted to travel") and that the financial investment that accompanies a college education is a major obstacle for young people, regardless of their background.

Interviewed alumni were asked, "How did RISE / Star Kids impact your educational journey and subsequent career ambitions since leaving school?" Much like their divergent postsecondary experience and career paths, their responses varied widely. Table 5 displays the emerging themes.

Table 5
Program Impact on Educational and Career Ambitions, According to Interviewees

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Career direction and ambition	14 (54%)	The RISE and Star Kids programs expanded participants' horizons beyond the limited expectations of their upbringing. Many described a "full circle" effect where they now perform professional work in philanthropy or mentorship that mirrors the support they once received. *When I first started with the program, I had no idea of a career. I always just thought I'll probably only make it to eighth grade because that's what my dad did… But Star*

Theme	n	Supporting quote
		Kids definitely was there to help me pick a career and keep me on that path. *The support I received from the program helped me believe that I could pursue a career that matched my interests and abilities* *Growing up, [I was] surrounded by poverty and addiction and incarceration. I never really imagined a different path for myself until RISE showed me that there are other ways to build your life and your future.*
Expanded educational access	12 (46%)	Beyond immediate academic support, the programs instilled long-term professional ambitions, with alumni pursuing diverse fields such as law, engineering, social work, and medicine, often citing the programs' missions as a continued source of motivation. *Being in my school was my first exposure to technology. I felt kind of stupid coming in, but then I did a project, and it really went well, and everyone liked it. So that's what set the course for doing engineering. I kind of just clung onto that for dear life and then rode it all the way to college.* *Just being able to pursue my career. Thinking like, 'Oh I can go to college.' I don't have to just start working like everyone in my family did.* *[Star Kids] put me in a culture where kids were going to college. When I was going through the college application process, I had a lot of people helping me. Star Kids gave me a college mentor.*

Note: *n* = 16. Responses may have encompassed more than a single theme.

Program alumni benefitted largely from the increased exposure to educational possibilities and opportunities afforded to them by attending a RISE or Star Kids school; many described how this support was missing from their home and neighborhood environments. Interviewees identified specific occupations and careers that they currently are pursuing including, but not limited to a flight medic, attorney, college professor, artist, engineer, registered nurse, philanthropist, and several others who are striving to give back to their community as social workers. One respondent summed up the impact that their participation in the scholarship program had on their future ambitions, given their circumstances of having one incarcerated parent and another parent with SUD, saying, "It was a way out."

Intergenerational Outcomes

To what extent do RISE / Star Kids alumni experience incarceration, substance use disorder, or justice system involvement, particularly those who have an intergenerational history of incarceration and/or substance abuse?

Key Findings

- The majority of alumni reported having either a parent or guardian who was incarcerated or who was admitted to a rehabilitation center for SUD.
- A vast majority (91-94%) of RISE and Star Kids alumni indicated never having been arrested, incarcerated, or admitted to rehabilitation for SUD.
- For the small number of alumni respondents who experienced incarceration or who were admitted to a rehabilitation center for SUD, the majority also had a parent or guardian who experienced the same outcome, suggesting a strong intergenerational link that remained unbroken.

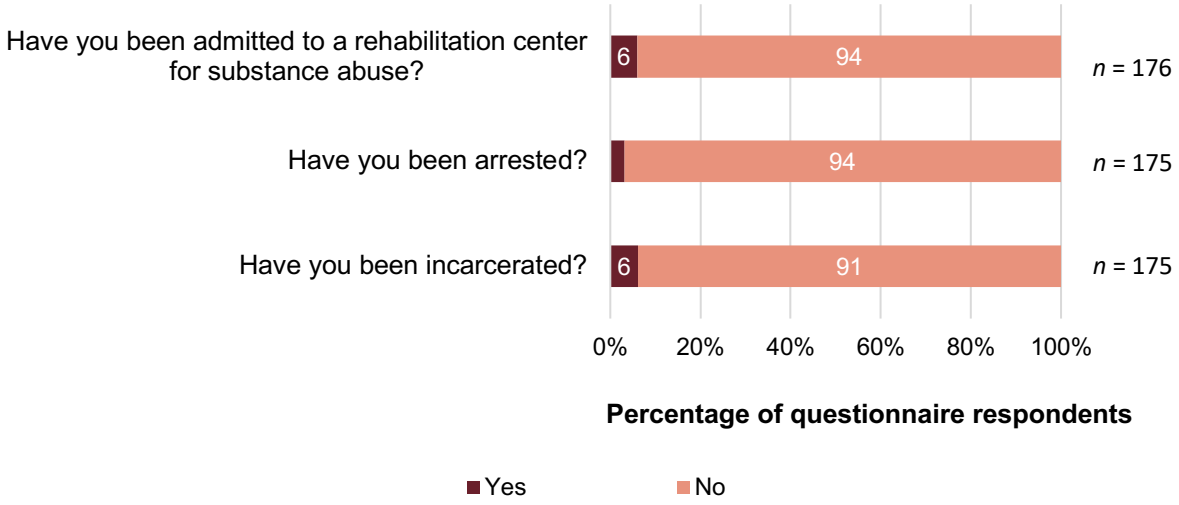
A central goal of the RISE and Star Kids programs is to break the cycle of destructive behaviors that are often passed down from parents to their children. The majority of survey respondents (52%, *n* = 94) identified as having a parent or guardian who was admitted to a rehabilitation center for substance abuse. This rate was highest for New Bedford Star Kids (64%, *n* = 47), then Newport / Fall River Star Kids (50%, *n* = 23) and RISE (40%, *n* = 24). Of the entire survey sample, 59% (*n* = 106) reported having an incarcerated parent or guardian. Newport / Fall River Star Kids had the highest rate of respondents with an incarcerated parent or guardian (76%, *n* = 35), followed by RISE (70%, *n* = 42) and New Bedford Star Kids (40%, *n* = 29).

Asked to elaborate on the most difficult thing about having a parent who was incarcerated or who struggled with SUD, respondents (*n* = 94) described themes of absence and loss, emotional distress and its psychological impact, the insecurity (emotionally and physically), and the early onset of adult responsibilities. One respondent explained it was “hard to understand why your parent is incarcerated when you’re so young.” Another said of her incarcerated father, “I always wondered why he couldn’t change…I felt like I wasn’t good enough. It felt like abandonment.” Others talked about what it was like to grow up with a parent with severe SUD: “It was like having your life unjustly stolen from you when they were using. It felt like your parent is choosing the addiction over you.” Clearly, the actions of their parent or parents reverberated throughout young adulthood for many RISE and Star Kids alumni, and for some, it persists to this day. One commented, “I’m an adult now and people still ask me

about it." Overcoming these adverse childhood experiences is what drives the RISE and Star Kids mission to provide young people with positive childhood experiences and supportive relationships.

Survey items further investigated whether RISE and Star Kids alumni experienced many of the same intergenerational outcomes as their parents, including involvement with the justice system, and their own struggles with substance abuse. Figure 2 shows the rates for each.

Figure 2
RISE / Star Kids Programs' Impacts on Intergenerational Outcomes



Note: *n* ranged from 175-176. Data labels are not displayed for scale frequencies < 5%.

The overwhelming majority of RISE and Star Kids alumni did not experience any of these outcomes; avoidance ranged from 91-94% of respondents. Alumni who indicated that they had been arrested (*n* = 6) were given the opportunity to provide an explanation of the charges that led to the arrest. Of these respondents, only three volunteered comments, which included shoplifting, driving while intoxicated, and simply being "falsely arrested" for "being in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong haircut."

For those who indicated that they had been incarcerated (*n* = 11), seven identified as children of incarcerated parents, suggesting the persistence of an unbroken intergenerational link. Similarly, of the alumni who reported having been admitted to a rehabilitation center for substance abuse (*n* = 10), eight experienced a parent with SUD. Furthermore, there was overlap in these responses; of the 11 alumni who indicated that they had been incarcerated and the 10 alumni who had experienced SUD, seven reported that they had experienced *both* sets of conditions. This finding suggests that exposure to these adverse childhood experiences has a profound effect intergenerationally, and it also may be likely that experiencing one of these outcomes heightens the chances of experiencing the other.

Individual Wellbeing and Program Impact

What economic and life outcomes do RISE / Star Kids alumni perceive as a result of program participation?

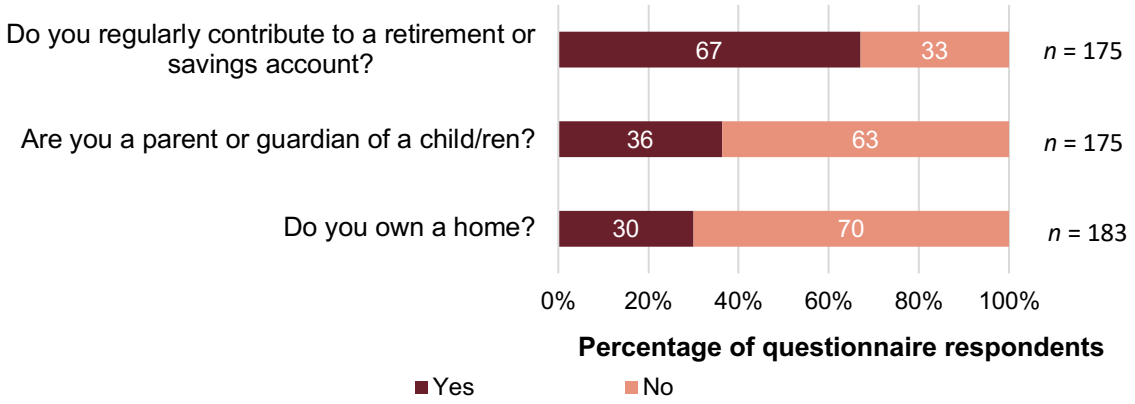
Key Findings

- Economic outcomes for alumni were positive, with the majority reporting gainful employment and making regular contributions to a retirement or savings account.
- Most alumni were unmarried, without children, and did not own a home. These findings likely reflect the demographics of the participant sample, many of whom were very young and still enrolled in postsecondary education or having recently graduated. Life outcomes of relationship status, home ownership, and parenthood increased with age.
- Alumni articulated the many impacts of program participation, ranging from academic and educational opportunities to financial, emotional, and personal support and guidance from program leaders, mentors, and sponsors.

The majority of RISE and Star Kids alumni reported being gainfully employed; a plurality (38%, *n* = 66) reported that they had been in their position for a duration of 2-4 years. The next most common response was for alumni to have been employed in the same position for 5-7 years (23%, *n* = 40), and 22% (*n* = 39) were employed in their position for less than one year. A small number (14%. *n* = 25) were experiencing unemployment at the time of the survey. This is not a surprising finding, though, given that approximately one-third of the respondents also reported that they were currently pursuing a postsecondary degree, which often supersedes full-time employment.

Alumni were also diverse in their domestic outcomes. Two-thirds (67%, *n* = 118) reported that they were single, and 31% (*n* = 54) indicated that they were married. Three identified as being divorced. Other life outcomes surveyed included items related to home ownership, parenthood, and financial planning (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
RISE / Star Kids Programs' Impacts on Life Outcomes



Note: *n* ranged from 175-183. Data labels are not displayed for scale frequencies < 5%.

While it was common for RISE and Star Kids alumni to contribute to a retirement or savings account (67%, *n* = 118), it was less common that alumni were a parent or owned a home. These data portray program alumni who were employed full-time, single without children, and who are planning for their future by contributing to retirement.

Because of the wide-ranging ages of survey respondents, further analysis was conducted based on age group for these items. Of those who reported their age (*n* = 161), most were ages 26-35 (37%, *n* = 59), followed by ages 21-25 (33%, *n* = 53), under 21 (19%, *n* = 31), and over 35 (11%, *n* = 18). There were differences between age groups for all items, where life outcomes generally coincided with older age. Regarding relationship status, those under 21 years old were all single (100%, *n* = 29), but for those who were 35 or older, most were married (81%, *n* = 13). Similarly, rates of home ownership increased with age; most respondents under age 21 (93%, *n* = 26) did not own a home, but for those ages 35 or older, most were homeowners (81%, *n* = 13). The same was true of parenthood; no respondents under age 21 were parents, but most respondents over 35 were (94%, *n* = 15). In the U.S., the average for owning a home is between ages 35-40[7], and the average age for becoming a parent is 27 years old.[8]

In interpreting these responses, it is important to keep in mind that these survey items related to life outcomes captured only a moment in time and were not necessarily true indicators of whether alumni can or will experience them later in life. Findings show that these outcomes increased sharply with age, with the clearest shift happening in the mid- to late-twenties. Younger survey respondents were mostly single, without children, and did not own a home. By later adulthood (35 or older), most program alumni were married, homeowning parents.

[7] National Association of Realtors. (2025). *Highlights from the profile of home buyers and sellers*. https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/highlights-from-the-profile-of-home-buyers-and-sellers

[8] National Vital Statistics System. (2025). *Trends in mean age of mothers: United States, 2016-2023.* https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr74/nvsr74-09.pdf

There were other perceived benefits to participating in the RISE and Star Kids programs. Table 6 displays the emerging themes in interviewees' responses to the question, "How did the RISE / Star Kids program improve your overall life and wellbeing?"

Table 6

Program Impact on Wellbeing, According to Interviewees

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Educational advancement	8 (40%)	Alumni credited the RISE and Star Kids programs with fundamentally altering their life trajectories by providing essential financial support to pursue academic endeavors. *[RISE] changed the trajectory of my future, and it continues to do so, and I know that I wouldn't be where I am now. I'd probably be incarcerated, or worse.* *I know I wouldn't be where I am today without RISE and their mentorship, and their scholarships and everything that they do for their students.*
Personal growth	4 (20%)	The RISE and Star Kids programs fostered significant personal growth and skill development by enhancing participants' confidence, motivation, and emotional regulation. Alumni also learned essential life skills and manners that were otherwise lacking. *Definitely gave me more confidence. Definitely gave me the motivation to ask more questions…Well, they definitely gave me more hope.* *[I have a] hustling mindset. Like, I'm always on to the next thing. I think that came from the Star Kids school because I was surrounded by students who I knew were going to be achieving big things.*
Increased opportunities	4 (20%)	Alumni reported that the RISE and Star Kids programs significantly enhanced their lives by providing access to diverse opportunities and experiences that would otherwise have been unavailable to them. *I don't know if I would have landed at a place where I'm at now if I went to the, like, my public high school.* *I can go to college and get a degree. And I'm gonna make more money and set myself up for success. [RISE] definitely helped me capitalize on opportunities.* *I attended so many things. I attended plays. There's so many experiences that I was able to have, and I would not have had it if it weren't for Star Kids, so I'm very grateful.*

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Sense of belonging	4 (20%)	RISE and Star Kids programs served as a vital "village" that provided a profound sense of community, belonging, and support during challenging periods of participants' lives. *It was just, like, a very welcoming community, like, no matter what you had going on, Star Kids was gonna be there.* *I would not be the way I am if I wasn't involved in Star Kids and how much love and support [they] poured into every kid. It was the same amount of love and support for everybody, and I think that helped me carry that into my everyday life of just trying to pour as much love into everybody as possible.*

Note: *n* = 16. Responses may have encompassed more than a single theme.

Alumni expressed appreciation and gratitude for the access, opportunities, and sense of belongingness that the RISE and Star Kids programs afforded them. One especially impactful quote came from one individual who said, "They say that it takes a village, and RISE was my village."

RISE and Star Kids Mentorship

Mentorship experiences differed for RISE and Star Kids alumni, with most interviewees (81%, *n* = 13) detailing a close, personal relationship with a mentor who provided guidance and support. Three individuals reported that they did not have a program mentor, specifically, but they remained connected to program leaders instead. Interviewees consistently described their RISE mentors and Star Kids sponsors as transformative figures who provided essential academic, emotional, and practical support during formative years. Beyond academics, these individuals served as vital role models, and in some cases as parental figures, helping participants develop self-confidence, social skills, and a sense of identity. One person explained, "One of the most important lessons I learned from my mentor was to believe in myself and not let my circumstances determine my future."

Many interviewees noted that their mentors and sponsors helped them broaden their horizons by exposing them to new environments, extracurricular activities, and professional networks, which contrasted sharply with their previous life experiences and childhood upbringing. Some even detailed specific stories of how their mentor cared for their basic needs such as providing a temporary place to stay, purchasing clothing, and even performing dental surgery at no cost. Throughout their responses, interviewees consistently expressed their gratitude for this relationship, which often was deeply personal and family-like. One reflected on their sponsor, saying, "They were so very friendly, and they were so nice to me. Gosh, they were so nice to me."

Interviewees also described how they have continued this relationship with their mentor, sponsor, or RISE and Star Kids program leaders well into adulthood. An interviewee said, “My mentor is still in my life, and he's been to all of my graduations: my high school graduation, college graduation, my law school graduation. So, you know, he's like the father figure I never had.” Another person said, “We used to get breakfast all of the time. We still do.”

Alumni were given the opportunity to tell a specific story of how the mentorship aspect of the RISE or Star Kids program affected them personally. Twelve interviewees responded, recalling specific moments where program leaders, mentors, or sponsors made a difference in their lives. Below are short vignettes that capture program impacts, as told by program alumni.

One individual described her challenging home life and how program leaders ensured that she finished high school:

> *May of 2025, I just turned 18. My home life wasn’t great, and I couldn’t deal with it. I got kicked out. [My sponsor] was one of the first people I texted, and she offered her guest house at her place. She said, “Feel free to crash.” She has a beautiful house. It’s like this pink mansion. It has a giant pool in the back with an infinity hot tub. You know, her house was always my dream house. In kindergarten, we would drive past that house, and I’d say “Oh, I love that house. I wish I could live there.” And then [I did]. I was living the life. [Star Kids] helped me finish out senior year and get into college. [My sponsor] and I would go out for coffee and talk. She’s actually a really cool lady. Really inspiring.*

Another recalled how the program continued to support him even after college graduation:

> *Actually, within the last couple of months, I reached out to [my sponsor] to ask if she knew of any job opportunities. She set up a Zoom call to go over my resume and see what she could do for me. I’m 25, and we’re still keeping tabs on each other. For me, it is so important that the organization still cares. They care about all their students, and that has a huge impact. Always knowing somebody is in your corner. That’s huge.*

And lastly, another alumnus told a story of personal inspiration and impact:

> *It was nice to have someone in my corner besides just my single parent. [My mentor] was honestly the best. She would help me with my schoolwork. I’d go to her house and we’d cook dinner. I was placed with a phenomenal woman. She introduced me to new things; I went on a sailboat with her and her family. As a kid, I was very close-minded. Like, it was my way or the highway. But she opened my eyes. She taught me it’s okay to ask for help, to be open-minded, and to hear what others have to say. That was very helpful for me because I was so hard-headed. She was a teacher and she definitely inspired me. She was a safe space for me as a kid. I want every kid in the world [to have] a safe space. I have so much love to give, and I want to make sure I’m making an impact the way that*

she was able to impact my life.

These individual stories illustrated the far-reaching effects of the RISE and Star Kids programs. For many, participation in the program meant that they would be supported individually as well as become part of a broader community.

ACEs and Life Outcomes

What is the prevalence of traumatic background experiences, as captured by the Modified ACE-8, among RISE / STAR Kids alumni? How did these experiences relate to their life outcomes?

Key Findings

- RISE and Star Kids alumni reported substantially high levels of childhood adversity, especially when compared to national and state averages.
- Higher cumulative ACE scores were significantly associated with both positive *and* negative adult outcomes. This finding supports existing literature that ACE exposure is nuanced and does not necessarily determine adult outcomes.
- RISE and Star Kids potentially provide positive experiences that work as protective factors that mitigate the childhood adversity experienced by program alumni.

What are ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, refer to potentially traumatic events that occur before age 18. This includes experiences involving abuse or neglect, witnessing violence in the home, living with a parent(s) who are experiencing substance use disorder, or having one or both parents incarcerated. Since the concept was first introduced in a landmark 1998 study[9], decades of research have shown that these early experiences don't stay confined to childhood; they can leave a lasting imprint on a person's health, behavior, and opportunities well into adulthood.

However, experiencing ACEs does not always lead to poor outcomes. Researchers

[9] Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14*(4), 245–258.

have emphasized that ACEs are not destiny; rather, they represent risk factors that can be lessened through "protective factors", or things like supportive relationships, mentorship, and community belongingness.[10] In other words, experiencing ACEs in childhood creates a heightened vulnerability to poorer life outcomes like substance abuse, incarceration, failure to graduate from high school or college, and unemployment, unless protective factors are put in place. This is precisely why understanding ACEs matters for programs like RISE and Star Kids, which serve young people who often come from backgrounds marked by hardship. By measuring the prevalence of childhood adversity among program alumni and examining how it relates to outcomes, this section aims to answer two questions: How much adversity did these young people carry into adulthood, and did it determine their trajectory, or, did other factors, including their participation in these programs, help shape a different story?

To better understand the wide-ranging backgrounds and the severity of trauma experienced by RISE and Star Kids alumni, the alumni survey included a sub-section of eight questions that we described as the "Modified ACE-8" instrument. Table 7 presents the total number of respondents as well as the count frequencies for each of these items.

Table 7
Descriptive Frequencies for the Modified ACE-8

Modified ACE-8 items	*N*	*Yes*	*No*	*Decline to answer*
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who had a problem with alcohol or drugs?	181	108 (59.7%)	68 (37.6%)	5 (2.8%)
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who was very sad, depressed, mentally ill, or tried to hurt themselves?	181	83 (45.9%)	94 (51.9%)	4 (2.2%)
Did a parent or caregiver ever go to jail or prison?	181	95 (52.5%)	73 (40.3%)	13 (7.2%)
Were your parents or caregivers ever separated, divorced, or did one leave for a long time?	181	118 (65.2%)	60 (33.1%)	3 (1.7%)
Did you often not have enough food, clean clothes, or a safe place to live?	181	69 (38.1%)	106 (58.6%)	6 (3.3%)
Were you ever scared at home because adults were fighting or hurting each other?	181	87 (48.1%)	90 (49.7%)	4 (2.2%)
Did a parent or caregiver often yell at you, insult you, or put you down?	181	104 (57.5%)	70 (38.7%)	7 (3.9%)
Did a parent or caregiver ever hit, push,	180	81	92	7

[10] Bellis, M. A., Hughes, K., Ford, K., Rodriguez, G. R., Sethi, D., & Passmore, J. (2018). Life course health consequences and associated annual costs of adverse childhood experiences across Europe and North America: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Public Health, 4*(10), e517–e528.

grab, or physically hurt you?		(44.8%)	(50.8%)	(3.9%)

Note. Cells with the response majority are shaded for each item.

The data indicate that RISE and Star Kids alumni experienced substantial childhood adversity related to parental separation, verbal abuse, and growing up in a household with an incarcerated parent or parent with SUD. These rates of adversity exceed those that are typically observed in the general population[11], and these findings provide important contextual understanding of at-risk youth and the challenges they faced.

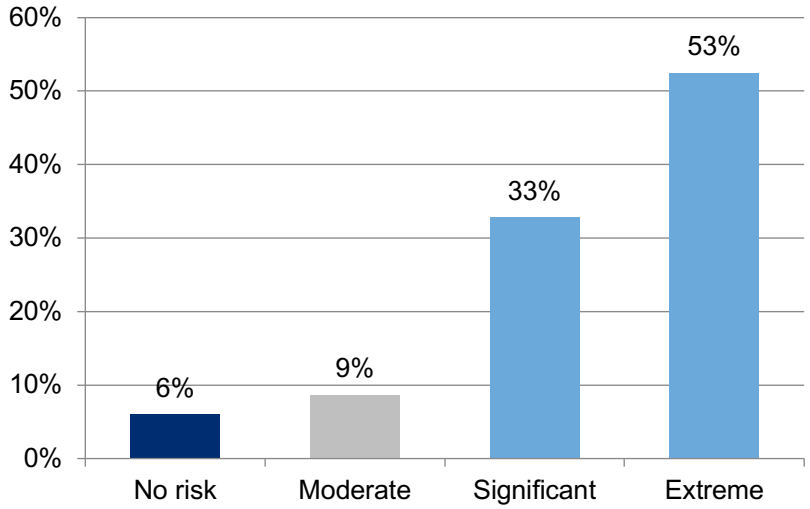
For each survey participant, a "cumulative scoring"[12] method was used to assess their level of overall risk. This methodology assigned one point to each survey item that was marked "Yes", creating a continuous ACE score for each individual. The ACE score was then interpreted using thresholds established by Bethell et al. (2017). Marking "No" on all ACEs items equated to a score of 0 and was categorized as "No Risk"; indicating one ACE was considered "Moderate Risk"; Selecting 2-3 ACEs was considered "Significant Risk"; and a cumulative score of 4 of greater was considered "Extreme Risk".

Importantly, research on ACEs cautions that the use of a single continuous score should not be interpreted as the *amount* of trauma one has experienced. For instance, someone who identifies with six ACEs does not necessarily have more (or double the) trauma than someone who identifies with three ACEs. Rather, formal screening for developmental trauma disorder (DTD) should be used to assess the types and patterns of these childhood experiences and their impact on life outcomes. In this study, we use the cumulative ACE score descriptively as a factor in an exploratory analysis of participants' lived experiences and outcomes. Figure 4 displays a breakdown of RISE and Star Kids' cumulative ACE scores according to severity.

Figure 4
Cumulative Modified ACE-8 Score Risk Categories

[11] Jockson, T.L. & Monteiro, K. (2021). Adverse childhood experiences and long-term health among adults in Rhode Island. *Rhode Island Medical Journal, 104*(9), 79-82.

[12] Bethell, C. D., Carle, A., Hudziak, J., Gombojav, N., Powers, K., Wade, R., & Braveman, P. (2017). Methods to assess adverse childhood experiences of children and families: Toward approaches to promote child well-being in policy and practice. *Academic Pediatrics*, *17*(7S), S51–S69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2017.04.161



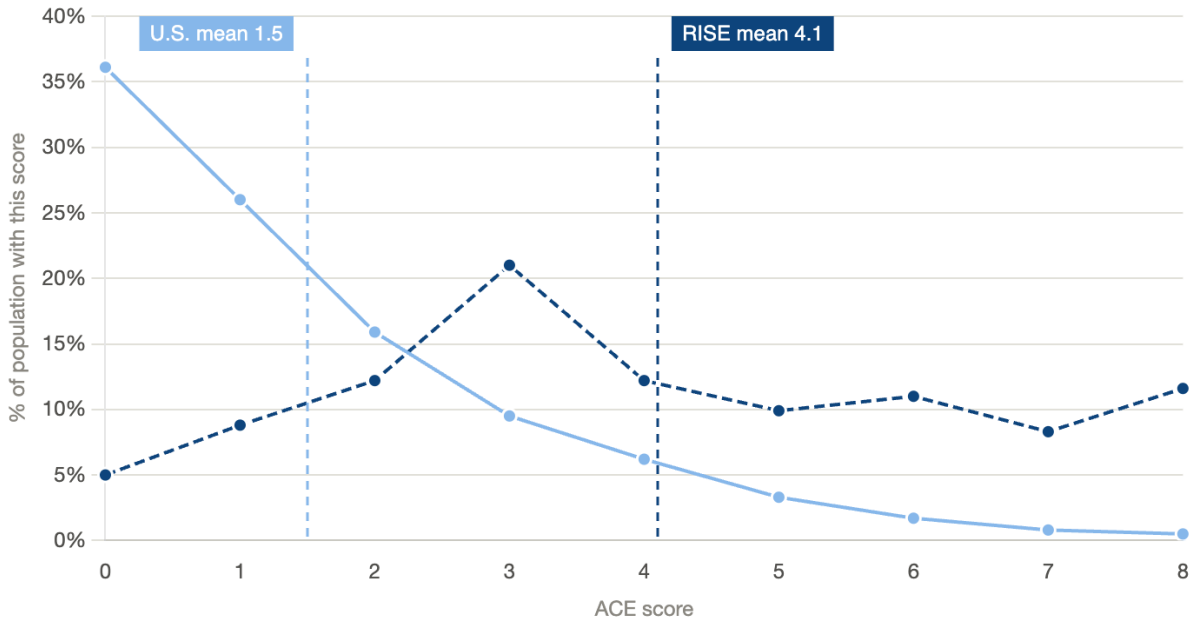
Note: *n* = 183.

Across the full sample of 183 participants, more than half (53%, *n* = 96) reported a cumulative ACE score of 4 or higher, indicating "Extreme" exposure to adverse childhood experiences. This stands in stark contrast with the U.S. general population, of which 17% report four or more ACEs,[13] and specifically within the general population of Rhode Islanders, of which only 16% of adults reported experiencing four or more ACEs.[14] The second-largest proportion of alumni respondents (33%, *n* = 60) fell within the "Significant" risk category (ACE scores of 2–3), while an additional 16 alumni (9%) indicated one ACE. This underscores the unusual extent to which RISE and Star Kids alumni were exposed to multiple adverse experiences at some point during their youth (see Figure 5).

Figure 5
RISE and Star Kids' Total ACE Scores vs. U.S. National Average

[13] Swedo, EA et al. (2023). Prevalence of adverse childhood experiences among U.S. adults — Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2011–2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Weekly Rep 72*, 707–715. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7226a2

[14] Rhode Island Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (2020). https://rhode-island-brfss-data-rihealth.hub.arcgis.com/



The U.S. population distribution is heavily skewed toward low ACE scores, with 36% reporting no ACEs and a steady decline thereafter, producing a national mean of 1.5. Alumni scores follow a different pattern, with 12% of alumni reporting the maximum score of 8. This results in an alumni mean of 4.1, which is nearly three times the national average. Childhood adversity among program alumni was not only more prevalent but also more severe than what is typically observed in the general population. Table 8 shows a further breakdown of risk categories according to each of the three organizations.

Table 8

Cumulative Modified ACE-8 Score Risk Categories, By Organization

Scholarship programs	No risk (0 ACEs)	Moderate risk (1 ACE)	Significant risk (2-3 ACEs)	Extreme risk (≥4 ACEs)	Total
Rhode Islanders Sponsoring Education (RISE)	4 (6.7%)	5 (8.3%)	21 (35.0%)	30 (50.0%)	60
Star Kids: New Bedford	3 (4.1%)	6 (8.1%)	25 (33.8%)	40 (54.1%)	74
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	2 (4.3%)	5 (10.9%)	13 (28.3%)	26 (56.5%)	46

Note. *n* = 180. Three survey participants did not indicate their organization.

Participants from Star Kids: Newport / Fall River exhibited the highest concentration of elevated ACE scores, with 56.5% of respondents registering as Extreme risk (ACE

score ≥ 4), followed closely by Star Kids: New Bedford and RISE. For each of the organizations, the majority of program alumni registered in the "Extreme Risk" category, highlighting the prevalence of childhood adversity within the surveyed population. There was a high consistency in the distribution of ACEs across all three organizations, which skewed heavily towards significant and extreme risk levels of participants.

To better understand how ACEs affected the subsequent life outcomes for RISE and Star Kids alumni, we estimated the relationship between participants' cumulative ACE score and specific indicators of educational and life outcomes. Because the outcomes were binary (e.g., high school graduation is either yes, graduated high school, or no, did not graduate high school), we estimated this relationship using logistic regression models, adjusting for alumni's age, gender, and race. Results from these analyses (in log odds) were translated into odds ratios (by exponentiation) to facilitate understanding and are shown in Table 9. Odds ratio values of 1 mean there was no relationship between more ACEs and the outcome (e.g., an odds ratio equal to 1 for high school graduation would mean there were equal chances of graduating high school or not for alumni with additional ACEs compared to those with fewer ACEs). Odds ratio values above 1 indicate that more ACEs were related with a greater likelihood of the outcome.

Table 9
Relationship Between ACEs and Alumni's Life Outcomes

Outcome	Odds ratio (total ACEs score)	SE	n
High school graduation	1.48	0.25*	155
College attendance (any)	1.49	0.22**	149
College degree (any)	1.22	0.12*	155
College degree – bachelor's or more advanced	1.39	0.12***	155
Incarceration	1.11	0.20	145
Substance Use Disorder	1.73	0.37**	149
Arrest	1.91	0.65	146
Child	1.28	0.13*	152
Marriage (ever)	1.28	0.16*	153
Savings account	1.34	0.13**	153
Own home	1.10	0.11	152

Note. * p <.05; ** p <.01; *** p <.001.

Across all outcomes, a greater number of ACEs was associated with a greater likelihood of the outcome in question, including both positive and negative outcomes, as indicated by the odds ratios all being greater than one. For example, for program alumni, every additional ACE was associated with 1.48 times greater odds of high school graduation, compared with alumni with fewer ACEs (p < .05). However, every increase in one ACE was also associated with 1.73 times greater odds of having a substance use disorder for alumni (p <.01). In other words, a greater proportion of

alumni with more ACEs developed a substance abuse disorder, relative to the proportion of alumni with fewer ACEs who developed a substance abuse disorder. Although the odds ratios for individual ACEs were small in magnitude, the overall relationship for multiple ACEs—which reflects the experience of most program alumni—was non-negligible and substantive in size (representing a small to medium effect size). Additionally, the statistical significance for eight of the eleven outcomes in this small sample indicates a non-negligible relationship. As stated earlier, caution should be used when interpreting these results, as ACEs are not meant to be interpreted solely on a continuous scale.

We frame the subsequent sections of this report not strictly through the lens of ACEs experienced by program alumni in their childhood, but instead through the positive experiences that were afforded through their participation in the RISE and Star Kids programs. In particular, we examine the impacts of these programs as perceived by alumni, with regards to their childhood environment; school culture; educational persistence and attainment; intergenerational, economic, and life outcomes; and overall attitudes towards the RISE and Star Kids scholarship programs.

Childhood Environment

To further contextualize the degree of adversity experienced, interviewees reflected on their childhood neighborhoods in which they were situated. Specifically, they were asked to recall the degree to which they felt safe in their childhood neighborhood and whether there were informal rules that they were expected to follow to fit in. Table 10 presents the themes that emerged in interviewees' responses.

Table 10

Description of Childhood Environment, According to Interviewees

Theme	*n*	Supporting quote
Community dynamics	13 (33%)	Neighborhood experiences varied significantly, ranging from environments characterized by poverty, addiction, and multi-generational households to safer, more stable settings. As such, social dynamics within the neighborhood often were governed by informal rules. *You don't talk about, like, what happens or goes on in the home. That was always very private. Nobody shared that with each other, and no snitching, no talking to the cops, kind of, like, street rules like that.* *You had to show respect, but you also had to stand up for yourself if someone challenged you.* *It was very known not to be so open or speak with strangers, not to look at people for so long, no staring, no pointing your fingers. You can't do that.*
Family	10	Family influence played a critical role in shaping how participants experienced

Theme	*n*	Supporting quote
influence	(25%)	their neighborhoods, often serving as a protective buffer against environmental instability or danger. Caregivers (parents and/or extended family members) often would implement strict rules such as enforcing curfews, restricting outdoor play, or keeping children indoors to avoid neighborhood conflict and crime. *My dad was basically a really big control freak. [He] would never really let me outside anyway. When I got older, like after like fourth grade, I wasn't allowed outside anymore because of the neighborhood kids, so I was, what's the word, held hostage inside.* *I grew up in a rough neighborhood, definitely poverty-driven, and a high-crime area with gang affiliations. Our parents instilled in us, don't be a product of your environment. Strive to be better and not go down the pathway of the older kids that lived within that neighborhood.* *My grandmother was a pastor of a Pentecostal church, so we grew up in church, and that's one of the things that she taught us - not to be in that mix, not to be in that crowd.*
Safety and security	9 (23%)	Experiences of neighborhood safety varied significantly, ranging from feelings of security in quiet, suburban, or well-managed apartment settings to environments characterized by high crime, poverty, and gang activity. *The house I'm in now, which we moved into when I was probably, like, 11 or 12, [is in] a very nice neighborhood, very quiet. I have no fear of anything.* *It's a little complicated for me since I've lived in many different places. I guess [it's] less safe compared to the surrounding area, but I wasn't worried. I was always busy with school and kept to myself. It was fine.* *Where I lived, my apartment complex was pretty safe. I know it was very secure. The doors were always locked. It was, like, a big apartment complex. But outside of the apartment complex? No.*
Negative influences	8 (20%)	Most participants described their childhood neighborhoods as environments defined by pervasive poverty, substance abuse, and high crime rates, often necessitating a constant state of vigilance and the adoption of 'street smarts' to ensure personal safety. *If you went to public school in my neighborhood, there was definitely a lot of negative influence on the public-school kids…I didn't feel like that much a part of it because I didn't really have any friends from my own neighborhood.* *My parents had personal struggles, including substance abuse, sometimes legal issues. So that made me quite anxious. I worried a lot, and I found it difficult to trust people. Even kids in the neighborhood had the same upbringing. No one was safe. Everyone had to watch over their shoulders.*

Note: *n* = 16. Responses may have encompassed more than a single theme.

Responses to this question varied widely among alumni. For some, their childhood environment was not only devoid of academic opportunity but also physically and emotionally unsafe. Many described a survivalist need to navigate environmental threats while striving to avoid becoming a product of one's surroundings. For other alumni, though, their childhood environments were characterized as “normal”, “stable”, and “ordinary”.

Interviewees also were asked whether there was a “price to pay” in their neighborhood for breaking the mold and attending a private school. Most interviewees (81%, *n* = 13) indicated that there was no price paid, or at least that they were not aware of any. For those who did experience a social consequence within their neighborhood, they discussed varying degrees of judgment, from “being clowned for wearing a uniform” to becoming socially outcast in their neighborhood. One interviewee explained, “I lost face. Because of the fact that I was going to college, my friends saw me as a rat. I lost the [little] trust that I was able to build with people in the neighborhood.” Others described feelings of “being disconnected” and a sense of “losing your Black card.” There was not a common, singular experience shared by all program alumni with regards to their childhood environment, or the community repercussions that they faced for attending a RISE or Star Kids school.

Program Attitudes

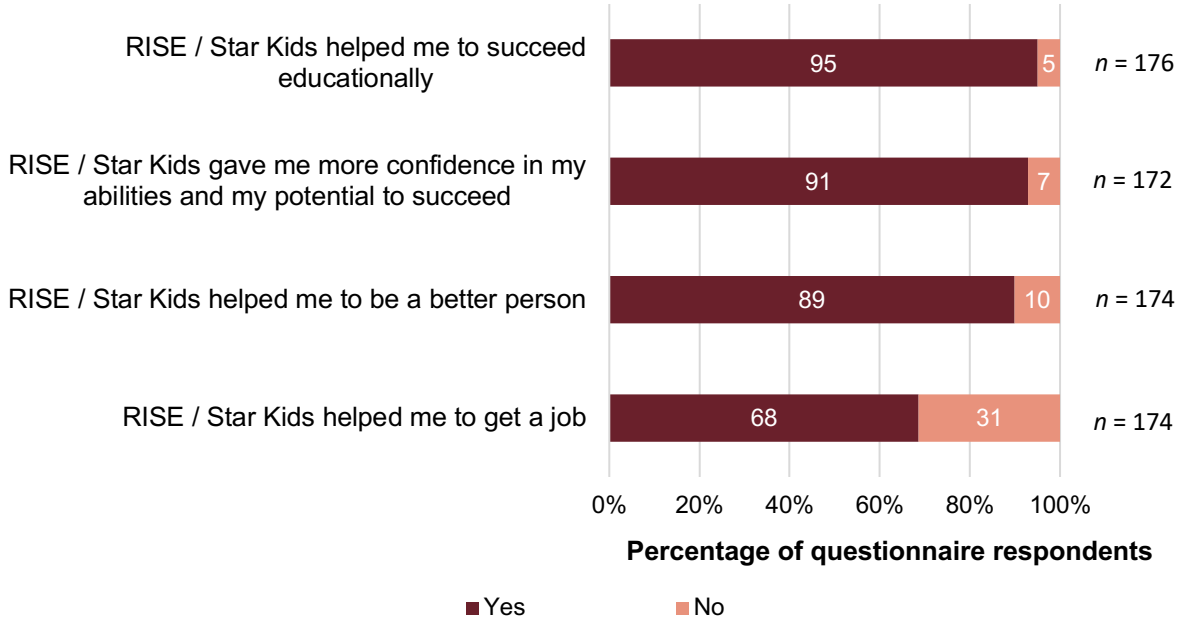
Which elements of the RISE / Star Kids programs (academic, financial, or wrap-around support) do alumni view as most impactful?

Key Findings

- RISE and Star Kids alumni attributed educational and personal success to the programs, specifically. A vast majority of respondents credited their program with helping them to thrive educationally, increase their confidence, and become a better person.
- In addition to academic support and opportunities, alumni valued the personalized support, which helped them to grow and feel a sense of belonging.
- Some challenges were expressed by alumni, often stemming from the abrupt shift from their previous environment into a more fast-paced and academically demanding school setting.

Alumni responded to survey items related to their life satisfaction and the role that their scholarship program played in these outcomes. Figure 5 displays how most respondents directly attributed RISE or Star Kids with their personal development.

Figure 5
RISE / Star Kids Programs' Contribution to Life Satisfaction



Note: *n* ranged from 172-176.

Survey respondents consensually credited RISE and Star Kids with helping them to succeed educationally. Similarly, a vast majority indicated that the programs increased their confidence in their abilities and potential to succeed, and attributed RISE and Star Kids with helping them become a better person. Results for the item related to employment was somewhat mixed, though more than two-thirds of respondents affirmed that the programs helped them land a job. Collectively, these results suggest that alumni viewed the program as effective for educational success and self-confidence but slightly less so for obtaining a job.

These findings also were echoed in the open-ended survey question regarding the most impactful features of the RISE and Star Kids programs (see Table 11). The most prevalent themes centered on personal growth and academic support.

Table 11
Most Impactful Features of the RISE / Star Kids Program

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Personal growth and	45	

Theme	n	Supporting quote
development	(34%)	The RISE and Star Kids programs were noted for fostering self-confidence, personal growth, and a broader worldview through exposure to new opportunities, extracurricular activities, and faith-based learning. *A lot of kids grow up only knowing their own neighborhood. These programs take you on trips, show you college campuses and introduce you to professionals. Once you see what's actually out there, your world gets bigger. You stop thinking about just getting by and start thinking about where you want to go.* *The high school that Star Kids gave me the opportunity to attend, set me up for success academically but also throughout my faith and how carry myself in everyday life and facing challenges.*
Academic support	39 (29%)	Academic support, particularly tutoring, was consistently highlighted as the most impactful aspect, significantly improving grades, confidence, and academic performance. Specifically, alumni noted the individualized support and small class sizes. *The mentoring and tutoring support were everything. Having someone consistent who checked in on my grades and my mental health made me feel seen. It wasn't just about the money for school; it was about having a support system that didn't give up on me when things got tough at home.* *The most impactful part of the program was having adults who genuinely cared and stayed consistent. The tutoring support helped me catch up academically, but the emotional support mattered just as much.*
Community and belonging	30 (22%)	A strong sense of community and belonging often was described by alumni as feeling like family. This extended to relationships with peers, mentors, and even donors, fostering a supportive environment where individuals felt seen, cared for, and not alone. *The program gave me a safe space to talk about things I couldn't share anywhere else.* *I found the group discussions really powerful because I realized I wasn't alone.* *The love and community built out of [the] Star Kids program.*
Access to educational opportunities	29 (22%)	Many respondents highlighted that the program provided access to educational opportunities they would not have otherwise had, including better schools, smaller class sizes, and specialized education.

Theme	n	Supporting quote
		I didn't come from an educationally focused home and so I received the most support and encouragement to continue pursuing academic excellence from the adults from Star Kids and my teachers at the schools they placed me in. *Catholic upbringing was a big help. I received tutoring when I desperately needed it.* *Being able to explore theater which has allowed me to pursue it in college.*
Extracurricular and enrichment activities	25 (19%)	Many participants highlighted the significant impact of extracurricular activities. These activities were frequently cited for building confidence, improving skills, and fostering personal growth. *The accessibility of summer activities and the financial assistance for extracurricular activities was huge. I always felt like Star Kids program was rooting for me to succeed and making sure I had what I needed to be successful.* *[The RISE / Star Kids program] helped me pursue my art career because of the high school I attended.*
Mentorship	22 (16%)	Mentorship was consistently highlighted as the most impactful aspect, with many participants emphasizing the personal connections formed with their mentors. These relationships often extended beyond the program, providing long-term guidance, emotional support, and a sense of belonging. *My mentor was the most impactful. She was very present more than an average mentor would be. She helped us with schoolwork and even personal life.* *The mentor program. My mentor taught me how to be confident, brave, and that my voice mattered. Being 1 of 6 in a blended family you don't always feel heard. She changed that for me.* *The most impactful thing for me was getting a mentor, I got super lucky with one who understood me and helped me to express myself in appropriate ways. We talk still all these years later!*

Note: n = 134

The responses on these open-ended items included myriad examples of how the program pushed individuals academically, created an inclusive environment within school and within the RISE and Star Kids communities, and presented opportunities for academic and personal growth beyond high school. Perhaps the strongest evidence of

alumni's positive experiences with the RISE and Star Kids programs came from the survey item, "Would you recommend the RISE / Star Kids program to other young people with a similar background as yours?", to which 97% (*n* = 169) of respondents said they would.

Still, there were some challenges that RISE and Star Kids alumni faced. Table 12 presents emergent themes that respondents identified in their open-ended comments on the survey. While some explicitly stated that they did not encounter any challenges, others detailed the specific issues that they experienced.

Table 12
Most Challenging Aspects of the RISE / Star Kids Programs

Theme	n	Supporting quote
Academic pressure and workload	42 (31%)	Because of the challenging academic demands, some alumni struggled to balance schoolwork, extracurriculars, and family responsibilities. Some mentioned the added expectation to perform well due to scholarship requirements. *Balancing the program schedule with regular school and family responsibilities could be challenging at times. There were days when managing homework along with program activities felt overwhelming, especially during busy school periods.* *In my household I had a lot of pressure to succeed because of my funding, and that if I didn't do well, it would be a waste.*
Social and cultural adjustment	30 (22%)	Alumni found social and cultural adjustment challenging, often stemming from differences in socioeconomic status, cultural background, or family situations compared to their peers. *At first, it made me feel different compared to the people who didn't need help.* *Lack of diversity in the school, most of school population treating people of color differently.* *The biggest challenge was the social jump. Moving from a local public school to a private one was a huge culture shock. I felt like I had to work twice as hard to fit in academically and socially with students who didn't share my family's struggles at home.*
Emotional and psychological difficulties	25 (19%)	Some mentioned their struggles with trust, particularly in opening up to new people, program staff, and in group settings. This sometimes led to feelings of social anxiety, judgment, and being misunderstood.

Theme	n	Supporting quote
		I struggled with balancing school expectations while dealing with stress from things happening outside of school. At first, I felt different from other students and worried about being judged because of my family background. *Opening up. Everybody has a story. I was so nervous to be looked at as the girl with no mom and a dad in jail especially for what it was for. But weirdly enough, I met people who are still in my life now.*
No challenges	18 (13%)	A smaller percentage of respondents indicated on the open-ended item that they did not experience any challenges in their RISE or Star Kids environment. *Nothing. They honestly supported me through and through.* *Personally, I don't think there was anything challenging about it. I am so grateful I was given the opportunity to be a part of the program and am so thankful for all the new opportunities it opened for me.*

Note: *n* = 134

RISE and Star Kids shared many of the same adversities throughout their programs. These challenges stemmed from increased expectations and academic demands, difficulty integrating into a new social environment, and dealing with emotional stress.

Program Outreach

During interviews, alumni were asked whether they would like to remain connected to the RISE and Star Kids programs and what this partnership might look like in the future. There was a widespread willingness among alumni to give back to the program by participating in volunteer opportunities such as mentoring new students, speaking at events, or assisting with social work-related tasks. Participants emphasized that their desire to contribute stemmed from a sense of gratitude for the life-shaping support they received from the RISE and Star Kids organizations. While some individuals were eager to assist in any capacity requested, others noted that their ability to engage is occasionally limited by geographic distance, professional obligations, or the need to balance personal commitments with their desire to make a meaningful, sustainable contribution. This sentiment might be summed up by one interviewee, who said, "[The program] is very much still part of my life, and, like, something that I'll never forget. I'll always want to pay it forward."

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to review the perceptions of former student participants in the RISE and Star Kids scholarship programs and the impacts of the programs on their adult lives, with specific emphasis on their educational attainment, employment and economic stability, and behavioral and socio-emotional wellbeing. These findings are discussed in more detail below.

School Comparison

The findings suggest that RISE and Star Kids alumni experienced substantive differences between their private, scholarship schools and their prior institutions and home and neighborhood cultures. RISE and Star Kids schools were described as smaller, safer, more academically rigorous, and more supportive. Alumni also perceived a greater sense of relational trust and moral community in their scholarship schools. Qualitative data from interviews found the largest differences in the areas of academic expectations, feedback and responsiveness from teachers, and a sense of community and belonging. These findings are consistent with the Effective Schools Movement, which emphasizes supportive social relationships and the organizational conditions that enable schools to function effectively.[15] Furthermore, research suggests that a supportive educational environment can serve as a protective factor that mitigates the effects of ACEs, specifically with regard to children of incarcerated parents.[16]

Interview participants described their challenges with navigating school and home lives, often resorting to code-switching between the two environments, with some feeling like they were living double lives. This change in behavior was most pronounced at the beginning of the transition to a RISE or Star Kids school and was experienced by older students only. Over time, the practice of code-switching faded away as the student became more assimilated into their scholarship school and more distanced from their neighborhoods. These disparate environments led to some feeling as though they were experiencing school in a “bubble”, and many participants noted the socioeconomic and cultural differences that persisted between the two worlds.

Although many RISE and Star Kids alumni noted significant divides between school, home, and neighborhood environments, they also credited their schooling experiences with positive personal change. Specifically, alumni reported developing a greater sense of morals and values, heightened emotional intelligence, and a widened perspective on their future career and life outlooks.

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Educational Attainment and Persistence

RISE and Star Kids alumni identified predominantly as children of incarcerated parents or as having a parent or guardian who experienced SUD, yet the vast majority of respondents graduated from high school and pursued a postsecondary degree. For those who did not pursue college, some identified this as an intentional choice, but the most common barrier was the prohibitive cost of attendance. Alumni credited the RISE and Star Kids programs as having a direct impact on their educational and career ambitions by giving them access, opportunity, and motivation to succeed. The career paths of program alumni differed extensively, though many intentionally chose the public-service sector, citing their positive experiences with RISE and Star Kids and their desire to give back to that community.

Scholarly research on the link between ACEs and educational attainment is grim, particularly for individuals who have incarcerated parents or who have a parent or guardian experiencing SUD. There is some evidence to suggest that individuals with exposure to ACEs exhibit lower school engagement and academic performance.[17] As such, each additional ACE increases the odds of dropping out of high school by roughly 9%.[18] Children of incarcerated parents are even more vulnerable, as they are more than four times less likely to graduate from high school.[19,20] Regarding postsecondary degree attainment, research shows a causal link between exposure to ACEs and timely degree attainment; one such study found that each additional ACE yields a 29% decrease in the odds of a timely graduation from college.[21] RISE and Star Kids alumni mostly overcame these statistics on the relationship between ACEs and educational attainment in the broader U.S. population.

Intergenerational Outcomes

The connection between parental incarceration and/or substance use disorder and their children repeating these same outcomes has been well-documented in the research literature. There is clear association between the number of ACEs experienced and the

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[21] Otero, C. (2021). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and timely bachelor's degree attainment. *Social Sciences, 10*(2), 44. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10020044

increased likelihood of becoming incarcerated in adulthood,[22,23] as well as for substance use disorder.[2425] In other words, the cycle of incarceration and substance use is difficult to interrupt but not insurmountable.

A central objective of the RISE and Star Kids programs is to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, incarceration, and/or SUD through schooling and supportive relationships. Although this study design did not allow us to determine the extent to which this outcome was attributed to program participation, the findings provide encouraging evidence that most alumni did not perpetuate negative outcomes such as incarceration or SUD. For the relatively few alumni who reported experiencing incarceration (*n* =11) or being admitted to a rehabilitation center for SUD (*n* = 10), most also had a parent or guardian who experienced that same outcome. Moreover, seven individuals experienced both sets of conditions, further suggesting a compound effect where one outcome may increase the likelihood of occurrence for other adverse outcomes. This complex finding deserves further exploration and study.

Individual Wellbeing and Program Impact

Research suggests a strong association between exposure to ACEs and wellbeing in adulthood, including a risk of depression, health-compromising behaviors, and even a decreased likelihood to hold skilled jobs.[26,27] Given the prevalence of ACEs among RISE and Star Kids alumni, this bleak outlook appeared to be mitigated through the protective factors afforded by the school environment and by program leaders, mentors, and sponsors.

The findings suggest that RISE and Star Kids participation was associated with positive educational, career, and personal outcomes that extended into adulthood. The majority of alumni reported being gainfully employed and roughly two-thirds reported that they regularly contribute to a retirement or savings account, suggesting longer-term financial stability. Relationship status, home ownership, and parenthood all were less common in

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[22] Testa, A., Jackson, D. B., Ganson, K. T., & Nagata, J. M. (2022). Adverse Childhood Experiences and criminal justice contact in adulthood. *Academic Pediatrics*, *22*(6), 972–980. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2021.10.011

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younger age groups but were experienced by most survey respondents later in life. Interviewees cited a number of factors that contributed to their overall wellbeing, but mentorship and communal belonging seemed to be particularly important for establishing relationships and support networks that continue to this day.

ACEs and Life Outcomes

Our findings of the positive relationship between ACEs and both positive and negative outcomes could reflect an interruption of the complicated relationship between adverse childhood experiences and more negative life outcomes.[28] Potentially, these results could indicate how RISE and Star Kids programs served as a buffer and protective factor against the negative impacts of the ACEs as risk factors. Research suggests that experiences that foster belongingness – called "Positive Childhood Experiences" or PCEs – may mitigate risk and override adverse childhood experiences.[29,30,31,32] Specifically, PCEs include domain measures of healthy school climate, nurturing adult relationships, and neighborhood safety and support, all of which are pillars of the RISE and Star Kids programs. However, we caution over-interpretation of these findings, given that the sample was self-selected and perhaps not entirely representative of all program alumni, and their responses were self-reported on a perception survey, which again, might have been limited by homogeneity in respondents' backgrounds and experiences.

Research on the effects of adverse childhood experiences on life outcomes is nuanced. Although some studies have shown associations between ACEs and various negative outcomes in adulthood, it is not accurate to conclude that the prevalence of ACEs determines or even directly influences these poorer outcomes.[33] In other words, a high cumulative ACE score should not be interpreted as a probabilistic determinant that the individual will experience these poorer outcomes in adulthood. Conversely, it also would be inaccurate to say that exposure to ACEs has no bearing whatsoever on an individual's life choices and future outcomes. Interpreting ACEs should not be overly

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[31] Meng, X., Fleury, M. J., Xiang, Y. T., Li, M., & D'arcy, C. (2018). Resilience and protective factors among people with a history of child maltreatment: A systematic review. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *53*(5), 453-475.

[32] Hannan, K., et al. (2026). Positive and adverse childhood experiences and adult health and economic outcomes. *Pediatrics, 157*(6), e2025074543.

[33] Narayan, A. J., Rivera, L. M., Bernstein, R. E., Harris, W. W., & Lieberman, A. F. (2023*).* A systematic review of positive childhood experiences and adult outcomes: Promotive and protective processes for resilience in the context of childhood adversity. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 144***,** 106346.

simplified by correlating adversity with negative life outcomes; rather, it is the presence of this risk combined with protective factors that shape the developmental context. Because ACEs and PCEs are independent of one another[34], characterizing an individual's background by only looking at adversity tells only half the story. The vast majority of participants in the RISE and Star Kids programs identified with at least some adversity in childhood, which may have increased their vulnerability to poorer life outcomes but did not guarantee them. Based on their perceptive data, program alumni largely saw their experiences with RISE and Star Kids as positive, which contributed to their resiliency in childhood and extended into adulthood.

Program Attitudes

RISE and Star Kids alumni felt strongly that their program helped them in many ways, and there was overwhelming support for recommending it to others with similar backgrounds. A vast majority credited the programs with helping them to succeed educationally, increasing their personal confidence and leading to them becoming a better person, overall. Collectively, findings from the survey and interviews suggest that the RISE and Star Kids programs provided individuals with more than just financial support to attend a private school; they cultivated relational, academic, and socio-emotional wraparound support for young people who come from a background of adversity. Although some challenges were identified with the programs, such as difficulty adjusting to a new environment and the increased pressure of academic demand, these did not prove to be insurmountable. In fact, many alumni expressed an interest in pursuing similar careers in public service because of their RISE and Star Kids experiences. Overall, the programs combined access to academic opportunity with supportive relationships and mentorships that were essential for program participants to feel a sense of belonging, and ultimately, to be successful.

[34] Han, D., Dieujuste, N., Doom, J. R., & Narayan, A. J. (2023). A systematic review of positive childhood experiences and adult outcomes: Promotive and protective processes for resilience in the context of childhood adversity. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 144*, 106346. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106346

APPENDIX A: ALUMNI SURVEY

The Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University is conducting a qualitative evaluation that examines the implementation and impact of the RISE and Star Kids programs on various outcomes. Your responses are anonymous and confidential. All results are stored in secure databases maintained by the research team. By completing this survey, you are consenting to be included in this research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time.

Procedures: Participation in this study will involve completing data collection activities, including this online survey, which will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Upon completion, you will be provided with the option to participate in an additional virtual interview.

Questions: If you have questions, please email Dr. Alan Reid (areid19@jh.edu)

SECTION ONE (Background)

1. What year were you born?

2. Please provide your gender identity.
   - Male
   - Female
   - Non-binary
   - Prefer not to answer

3. Which of the following best describes your race?
   - Black or African American
   - American Indian or Alaska Native
   - White
   - Asian
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - Multiracial
   - Other (Please specify)
   - I prefer not to answer

4. Have either of your parents or guardians ever been to jail or prison?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t know
   - I prefer not to answer

5. Have either of your parents or guardians ever been admitted to a substance abuse or alcohol rehabilitation program?
   - Yes
   - No



- I don't know
- I prefer not to answer

6. Indicate the program in which you participated:
   - RISE
   - New Bedford Star Kids
   - Newport / Fall River Star Kids

Now we would like to ask a few questions about what it was like to grow up in your home. Please think back to when you were under 18 and answer these questions to the best of your recollection. We understand that some of these items are sensitive questions and may be uncomfortable to answer. The purpose of these questions is to help improve the RISE / Star Kids programs for future generations.

Please remember that all of your answers are confidential, so be honest as possible. You may decline to answer any questions.

Respond to each of the following questions:

7. Did you live with a parent or caregiver who had a problem with alcohol or drugs?	Yes / No / Decline
8. Did you live with a parent or caregiver who was very sad, depressed, mentally ill, or tried to hurt themselves?	Yes / No / Decline
9. Did a parent or caregiver ever go to jail or prison?	Yes / No / Decline
10. Were your parents or caregivers ever separated, divorced, or did one leave for a long time?	Yes / No / Decline
11. Did you often not have enough food, clean clothes, or a safe place to live?	Yes / No / Decline
12. Were you ever scared at home because adults were fighting or hurting each other?	Yes / No / Decline
13. Did a parent or caregiver often yell at you, insult you, or put you down?	Yes / No / Decline
14. Did a parent or caregiver ever hit, push, grab, or physically hurt you?	Yes / No / Decline

15. What is the most difficult thing about having an incarcerated parent or a parent with substance abuse issues? (If you did not experience this, skip this question)

SECTION TWO (School Characteristics and Comparison)

16. Name of the RISE / Star Kids school you graduated from: _____
    - I did not graduate from high school.

17. Did you attend a school prior to your RISE / Star Kids school?

- Yes (Name of the school you attended before starting: _____)
- No, ***or*** I don't remember my previous school (respondent skips the remainder of this section)

Compare your RISE / Star Kids school to your previous school:

18. Compared to your previous school, the RISE / Star Kids school population was...	Bigger / Smaller	Not Applicable
19. Compared to your previous school, the RISE / Star Kids class size was...	Bigger / Smaller	Not Applicable
20. Compared to your previous school, school safety at RISE / Star Kids was...	Safer / Less Safe	Not Applicable
21. Compared to your previous school, the RISE / Star Kids school had _____ options to participate in extra-curricular activities such as sports, clubs, and organizations.	More / Fewer	Not Applicable

Compare your RISE/ Star Kids school to your previous school using the following rating scale: *Much Better at RISE / Star Kids, Somewhat Better at RISE / Star Kids, No Difference, Worse at RISE / Star Kids, Much Worse at RISE / Star Kids / Not Applicable*

High Expectations

22. Teachers expected all students to do challenging academic work.
23. Teachers wanted all students to learn the material, not just the highest-performing students.

Instructional Leadership

24. School leaders, such as the principal, often interacted with students and teachers.
25. The principal had high expectations for teachers to maintain a high quality of teaching.

Safe and Orderly Learning Environment

26. The school felt physically and emotionally safe.
27. Classrooms were orderly enough for learning most of the time.

Opportunity to Learn & Academic Support

28. Teachers were focused and did not waste time in class.
29. I had access to academic help when I struggled.

Monitoring, Responsiveness & Feedback

30. Adults noticed quickly when I was falling behind academically.
31. I received feedback that helped me understand how to improve my work.

Relational Trust & Moral Community

32. Teachers and adults cared about me as a person, not just as a student.
33. Teachers and other adults believed it was part of their role to help students develop as people, not just academically.
34. The school felt like a community where people looked out for one another.

SECTION THREE (Outcomes)

Educational Attainment

35. Did you graduate from high school?
    - Yes
    - No

36. Did you pursue a postsecondary degree?
    - Yes
    - No (Explain.)

37. Did you obtain a postsecondary degree or certification?
    - I am currently pursuing this degree.
    - No, I did not graduate college or complete a postsecondary credential
    - Some college, but no degree or credential completed
    - Associate degree (AA, AS, AAS)
    - Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, BFA, etc.)
    - Master's degree (MA, MS, MBA, MEd, etc.)
    - Doctoral degree (PhD, EdD, etc.)
    - Professional degree (JD, MD, DDS, PharmD, etc.)
    - Trade or vocational school certificate (e.g., electrician, HVAC, cosmetology, welding, etc.)
    - Professional or industry certification (e.g., IT certification, medical assistant, CNA, project management, etc.)
    - Other education, training, or credential (please specify)

38. If you did not complete your postsecondary degree, please explain why.

Economic Outcomes

39. How long have you been employed in your current position?
    - Less than 1 year
    - 2-4 years
    - 5-7 years
    - 8+ years
    - I am not employed currently

40. Do you own a home?
41. Do you regularly contribute to a retirement or savings account?



Behavioral Outcomes

42. Please indicate whether you are currently:
    - Married
    - Divorced
    - Widowed
    - Single

43. Are you a parent or guardian of a child/children? (Yes, No, Decline to Answer)
44. Have you been arrested? (If comfortable doing so, provide the specific charge here.) (Yes, No, Decline to Answer)
45. Have you been incarcerated? (Yes, No, Decline to Answer)
46. Have you been admitted to a rehabilitation center for substance abuse? (Yes, No, Decline to Answer)

SECTION FOUR (Perceived Impacts)

47. I probably would not have graduated from high school, if it wasn't for RISE / Star Kids.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Somewhat Agree
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

Participation in the RISE / Star Kids program has given me greater life satisfaction by:

48. helping me to succeed educationally (Yes/No)
49. helping me to get a job (Yes/No)
50. helping me to be a better person (Yes/No)
51. giving me more confidence in my abilities and my potential to succeed (Yes/No)

SECTION FIVE (Program Attitudes)

52. What was the most challenging aspect of attending a RISE / Star Kids program?
53. What is the most impactful thing about the RISE / Star Kids program? (e.g., faith-based learning, tutoring support, summer programs, extracurricular activities, etc.).
54. Would you recommend the RISE / Star Kids program to other young people with a similar background as yours? (Yes / No)

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SECTION 1: Program Background

1. In which program did you participate?
    - RISE
    - New Bedford Star Kids
    - Newport / Fall River Star Kids

SECTION 2: Family, Childhood, and Neighborhood Context

2. Thinking back to the neighborhood where you grew up, how would you describe it?
   Prompt:
    - Was it safe?
    - Were there informal rules young people felt they had to follow to fit in, earn respect, or stay safe?

3. In that neighborhood, what behaviors or qualities tended to earn young people respect or status?
   ***Prompt*:**
    - Toughness, money, appearance, athletic ability, helping others, doing well in school.

4. How did young people in your neighborhood generally react to someone who studied hard, attended a private school, or talked about going to college?

5. Was there a price to pay in the neighborhood for going to your school?

SECTION 3: School Comparison

6. Are you able to recall the school that you attended before attending your RISE or Star Kids school and what that was like? (*If not, skip to the next section.)*

7. Did attending the school change you?
   Prompts:
    - How you handled conflict — for example, an insult or a threat
    - How you chose your friends
    - How you thought about your future and made plans
    - How you behaved day to day — at school, at home, in the neighborhood

8. How would you compare the culture of your RISE / Star Kids school with the culture of your neighborhood, and with your previous school?

9. Some people describe acting one way at school and another way in the neighborhood in order to stay safe or fit in. Was that true for you? How did you manage it?

10. Many of these schools were faith-based. Did the religious or moral side of the school matter to you? If so, how? (are you still religious?)

SECTION 4: Educational Attainment and Career Pathways

11. How did RISE / Star Kids impact your educational journey and subsequent career ambitions since leaving school?

SECTION 5: Life Outcomes and Wellbeing

12. How did the RISE / Star Kids program improve your overall life and wellbeing?

SECTION 6: Program Impact

13. Can you share a specific experience or story that illustrates the impact of the program on your life?

14. Did you have a RISE mentor or a Star Kids sponsor? *(If no, skip to next section)*
    Prompt:
    - Describe the impact your RISE mentor had on your life.
    - Can you recall any specific lessons that you learned from him/her?
    - How did your relationship with your RISE mentor impact:
    - Education
    - Career pathway
    - Confidence and personal growth

15. What are some ways that RISE or Star Kids can continue to stay in touch with you over the long term?
    Prompt:
    - Volunteer and other partnership opportunities
    - Annual surveys and interviews like this one
    - Social media engagement

APPENDIX C: SURVEY RESPONSES FOR DEMOGRAPHICS

Please provide your gender identity.

	Male %	*Female %*	*Prefer not to answer %*	*N*
All	59	41	1	181
RISE	62	38	0	60
Star Kids: New Bedford	74	26	0	74
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	28	70	2	46

Which of the following best describes your race?

	Black or African American %	*American Indian or Alaska Native %*	*White %*	*Asian %*	*Multiracial %*	*Other %*	*Prefer not to answer %*	*N*
All	45	1	37	1	13	2	1	181
RISE	58	3	25	2	7	5	0	60
Star Kids: New Bedford	49	0	42	1	7	1	0	74
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	22	0	43	0	33	0	2	46

Have either of your parents or guardians ever been to jail or prison?

	Yes %	*No %*	*I don't know %*	*Prefer not to answer %*	*N*
All	59	37	2	2	180
RISE	70	30	0	0	60
Star Kids: New Bedford	40	58	1	1	73

	Yes %	*No %*	*I don't know %*	*Prefer not to answer %*	*N*
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	76	13	4	7	46

Have either of your parents or guardians ever been admitted to a substance abuse or alcohol rehabilitation program?

	Yes %	*No %*	*I don't know %*	*Prefer not to answer %*	*N*
All	52	38	9	1	181
RISE	40	52	8	0	60
Star Kids: New Bedford	64	32	4	0	74
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	50	26	20	4	46

APPENDIX D: SURVEY RESPONSES FOR MODIFIED ACE-8

TOTAL (RISE, Stark Kids: New Bedford, Star Kids: Newport / Fall River)	*Yes %*	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who had a problem with alcohol or drugs?	60	38	3	181
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who was very sad, depressed, mentally ill, or tried to hurt themselves?	46	52	2	181
Did a parent or caregiver ever go to jail or prison?	52	40	7	181
Were your parents or caregivers ever separated, divorced, or did one leave for a long time?	65	33	2	181
Did you often not have enough food, clean clothes, or a safe place to live?	38	59	3	181
Were you ever scared at home because adults were fighting or hurting each other?	48	50	2	181
Did a parent or caregiver often yell at you, insult you, or put you down?	57	39	4	181
Did a parent or caregiver ever hit, push, grab, or physically hurt you?	45	51	4	181

RISE	*Yes %*	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who had a problem with alcohol or drugs?	43	57	0	60
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who was very sad, depressed, mentally ill, or tried to hurt themselves?	42	58	0	60
Did a parent or caregiver ever go to jail or prison?	67	30	3	60
Were your parents or caregivers ever separated, divorced, or did one leave for a long time?	72	28	0	60
Did you often not have enough food, clean clothes, or a safe place to live?	42	57	2	60
Were you ever scared at home because adults were fighting or hurting each other?	38	60	2	60
Did a parent or caregiver often yell at you, insult you, or put you down?	52	48	0	60
Did a parent or caregiver ever hit, push, grab, or physically hurt you?	42	58	0	60

Stark Kids: New Bedford	*Yes %*	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who had a problem with alcohol or drugs?	80	16	4	74
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who was very sad, depressed, mentally ill, or tried to hurt themselves?	49	50	1	74
Did a parent or caregiver ever go to jail or prison?	32	61	7	74
Were your parents or caregivers ever separated, divorced, or did one leave for a long time?	51	47	1	74
Did you often not have enough food, clean clothes, or a safe place to live?	35	62	3	74
Were you ever scared at home because adults were fighting or hurting each other?	57	42	1	74
Did a parent or caregiver often yell at you, insult you, or put you down?	72	26	3	74
Did a parent or caregiver ever hit, push, grab, or physically hurt you?	55	41	3	74

Star Kids: Newport / Fall River)	*Yes %*	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who had a problem with alcohol or drugs?	48	48	4	46
Did you live with a parent or caregiver who was very sad, depressed, mentally ill, or tried to hurt themselves?	48	46	7	46
Did a parent or caregiver ever go to jail or prison?	67	20	13	46
Were your parents or caregivers ever separated, divorced, or did one leave for a long time?	78	17	4	46
Did you often not have enough food, clean clothes, or a safe place to live?	39	54	7	46
Were you ever scared at home because adults were fighting or hurting each other?	48	48	4	46
Did a parent or caregiver often yell at you, insult you, or put you down?	41	48	11	46
Did a parent or caregiver ever hit, push, grab, or physically hurt you?	33	57	11	46

APPENDIX E: SURVEY RESPONSES FOR SCHOOL COMPARISON

TOTAL (RISE, Stark Kids: New Bedford, Star Kids: Newport / Fall River)	Much better %	Somewhat better %	No difference %	Worse %	Much worse %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
High Expectations								
Teachers expected all students to do challenging academic work.	53	25	16	3	2	161	1.70	1.05
Teachers wanted all students to learn the material, not just the highest-performing students.	59	23	10	6	1	161	1.68	1.03
Instructional Leadership								
The principal had high expectations for teachers to maintain a high quality of teaching.	54	22	18	3	1	159	1.70	0.98
School leaders, such as the principal, often interacted with students and teachers	54	21	19	3	0	156	1.66	0.93
Safe and Orderly Learning Environment								
The school felt physically and emotionally safe.	53	16	21	3	2	155	1.64	1.03
Classrooms were orderly enough for learning most of the time.	60	15	9	12	2	160	1.62	1.05
Opportunity to Learn & Academic Support								
Teachers were focused and did not waste time in class.	52	24	15	2	1	155	1.64	0.94
I had access to academic help when I struggled.	51	26	12	6	1	155	1.58	0.92
Monitoring, Responsiveness, and Feedback								
I received feedback that helped me understand how to improve my work.	56	23	12	4	1	158	1.61	0.96
Adults noticed quickly when I was falling behind academically.	46	25	20	4	2	156	1.77	1.04
Relational Trust and Moral Community								
Teachers and adults cared about me as a person, not just as a student.	51	21	17	4	3	156	1.83	1.20
Teachers and other adults believed it was part of their role to help students develop as people, not just academically.	52	20	15	6	2	156	1.81	1.17
The school felt like a community where people looked out for one another.	56	22	14	4	2	158	1.80	1.08



RISE	Much better %	Somewhat better %	No difference %	Worse %	Much Worse %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
High Expectations								
Teachers expected all students to do challenging academic work.	65	15	17	0	2	53	1.57	0.90
Teachers wanted all students to learn the material, not just the highest-performing students.	67	15	11	4	2	53	1.57	0.96
Instructional Leadership								
The principal had high expectations for teachers to maintain a high quality of teaching.	59	26	11	2	0	53	1.55	0.77
School leaders, such as the principal, often interacted with students and teachers	56	24	15	2	0	52	1.62	0.81
Safe and Orderly Learning Environment								
The school felt physically and emotionally safe.	69	9	13	2	2	51	1.51	0.94
Classrooms were orderly enough for learning most of the time.	69	13	11	6	2	54	1.59	1.01
Opportunity to Learn & Academic Support								
Teachers were focused and did not waste time in class.	65	17	9	4	2	52	1.56	0.95
I had access to academic help when I struggled.	65	17	9	2	4	52	1.58	1.01
Monitoring, Responsiveness, and Feedback								
I received feedback that helped me understand how to improve my work.	67	24	6	2	0	53	1.42	0.68
Adults noticed quickly when I was falling behind academically.	56	20	15	4	2	52	1.71	0.99
Relational Trust and Moral Community								
Teachers and adults cared about me as a person, not just as a student.	63	9	13	4	4	50	1.66	1.11
Teachers and other adults believed it was part of their role to help students develop as people, not just academically.	63	15	9	6	4	52	1.67	1.10
The school felt like a community where people looked out for one another.	61	19	15	2	2	53	1.62	0.94



Stark Kids: New Bedford	Much better %	Somewhat better %	No difference %	Worse %	Much Worse %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
High Expectations								
Teachers expected all students to do challenging academic work.	41	33	17	7	1	69	1.96	1.00
Teachers wanted all students to learn the material, not just the highest-performing students.	48	33	7	10	1	69	1.84	1.03
Instructional Leadership								
The principal had high expectations for teachers to maintain a high quality of teaching.	43	23	23	6	3	68	2.00	1.08
School leaders, such as the principal, often interacted with students and teachers	43	20	28	6	0	67	1.96	0.98
Safe and Orderly Learning Environment								
The school felt physically and emotionally safe.	42	19	29	4	3	67	2.04	1.08
Classrooms were orderly enough for learning most of the time.	46	17	9	23	3	68	2.18	1.32
Opportunity to Learn & Academic Support								
Teachers were focused and did not waste time in class.	38	29	23	3	1	65	1.95	0.95
I had access to academic help when I struggled.	35	35	16	9	0	65	1.98	0.95
Monitoring, Responsiveness, and Feedback								
I received feedback that helped me understand how to improve my work.	48	22	17	7	3	67	1.93	1.11
Adults noticed quickly when I was falling behind academically.	33	30	26	6	3	68	2.13	1.04
Relational Trust and Moral Community								
Teachers and adults cared about me as a person, not just as a student.	43	29	19	6	3	69	1.96	1.06
Teachers and other adults believed it was part of their role to help students develop as people, not just academically.	42	25	17	10	3	67	2.04	1.14
The school felt like a community where people looked out for one another.	51	26	13	6	3	68	1.82	1.06



Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	Much better %	Somewhat better %	No difference %	Worse %	Much Worse %	*N*	*M*	*SD*
High Expectations								
Teachers expected all students to do challenging academic work.	61	22	14	0	3	36	1.61	0.92
Teachers wanted all students to learn the material, not just the highest-performing students.	69	19	11	0	0	36	1.42	0.68
Instructional Leadership								
The principal had high expectations for teachers to maintain a high quality of teaching.	67	14	17	0	0	35	1.49	0.77
School leaders, such as the principal, often interacted with students and teachers	72	14	8	0	0	34	1.32	0.63
Safe and Orderly Learning Environment								
The school felt physically and emotionally safe.	50	22	17	3	3	34	1.79	1.02
Classrooms were orderly enough for learning most of the time.	75	11	8	3	0	35	1.37	0.76
Opportunity to Learn & Academic Support								
Teachers were focused and did not waste time in class.	61	25	11	0	0	35	1.49	0.69
I had access to academic help when I struggled.	61	22	8	6	0	35	1.57	0.87
Monitoring, Responsiveness, and Feedback								
I received feedback that helped me understand how to improve my work.	58	25	11	3	0	35	1.57	0.80
Adults noticed quickly when I was falling behind academically.	56	19	17	0	0	33	1.58	0.78
Relational Trust and Moral Community								
Teachers and adults cared about me as a person, not just as a student.	47	22	19	3	3	34	1.85	1.03
Teachers and other adults believed it was part of their role to help students develop as people, not just academically.	58	17	19	0	0	34	1.59	0.81
The school felt like a community where people looked out for one another.	56	19	14	6	0	34	1.68	0.93

APPENDIX F: SURVEY RESPONSES FOR LIFE OUTCOMES

Did you graduate from high school?

	Yes %	*No %*	*N*
All	92	8	178
RISE	88	12	60
Star Kids: New Bedford	90	10	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	100	0	45

Did you pursue a postsecondary degree?

	Yes %	*No %*	*N*
All	86	14	177
RISE	88	12	59
Star Kids: New Bedford	89	11	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	84	16	45

Did you obtain a postsecondary degree or certification?

	Currently pursuing %	*No %*	*Some college, but no degree %*	*Associate Degree %*	*Bachelor's Degree %*	*Master's Degree %*	*Professional Degree %*	*N*
All	32	8	7	16	28	3	1	177
RISE	44	12	5	7	22	5	3	59
Star Kids: New Bedford	23	6	3	32	30	3	1	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	33	4	16	2	33	4	7	45

How long have you been employed in your current position?

	Less than one year %	*2-4 years %*	*5-7 years %*	*8+ years %*	*I am not employed %*	*N*
All	22	38	23	3	14	175
RISE	28	34	12	3	22	58
Star Kids: New Bedford	15	35	38	1	10	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	27	43	14	5	11	44

Do you own a home?

	Yes %	*No %*	*N*
All	30	70	174
RISE	19	81	57
Star Kids: New Bedford	49	51	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	14	86	44

Do you regularly contribute to a retirement or savings account?

	Yes %	*No %*	*N*
All	67	33	175
RISE	59	41	58
Star Kids: New Bedford	76	24	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	64	36	44



Please indicate whether you are currently:

	Married %	*Divorced %*	*Single %*	*N*
All	31	2	67	175
RISE	21	0	79	58
Star Kids: New Bedford	51	4	45	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	14	0	86	44

Are you a parent or a guardian of a child / children?

	Yes %	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
All	36	63	1	175
RISE	29	69	2	58
Star Kids: New Bedford	55	45	0	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	16	84	0	44

Have you been arrested?

	Yes %	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
All	3	94	2	175
RISE	5	93	2	58
Star Kids: New Bedford	3	96	1	70
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	2	93	4	45

Have you been incarcerated?

	Yes %	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
All	6	91	2	175
RISE	5	90	5	58
Star Kids: New Bedford	11	87	1	70
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	0	100	0	45

Have you been admitted to a rehabilitation center for substance abuse?

	Yes %	*No %*	*Decline to answer %*	*N*
All	6	94	0	176
RISE	3	97	0	58
Star Kids: New Bedford	11	89	0	71
Star Kids: Newport / Fall River	0	100	0	45