



# RISE PROGRAM REPORT

# 2023-24

# 2023-24 RISE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



## MEDTRONIC GRANT

Successfully completed a generous 2-year grant with the Medtronic Foundation, allowing significant expansion.



## STEAM SUMMER EXPERIENCE

Hosted the 2nd Annual SSE for 3rd to 6th graders.



## RISE SCHOLARSHIPS

Awarded 12 college scholarships to high school seniors.



## RISE ALUMNI NETWORK

Launched the Rise Alumni Network, featuring a financial literacy workshop and a tour of JPL.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Maintained collaborations with Youth of Promise, Suva Elementary School, STEAM:Coders, STEMulate Learning, and more.



## ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Organized enrichment activities, including a Chemistry lab tour for National Chemistry Month. Celebrated heritage months and holidays with games, food, and camaraderie.



## GRADUATING SENIORS

Proudly send off 16 seniors to colleges, including UC Berkeley, UCLA, Tulane, and more.



## MENTAL HEALTH

Provided a mental health workshop and offered free one-on-one therapy sessions to all students.

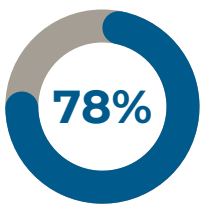


# A YEAR OF IMPACT

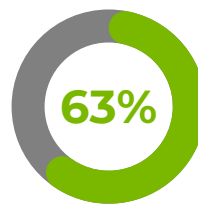


The data includes students and tutors from the Rise Program, Rise Program at Muir, Y-Tutor Program, and STEM Summer Experience

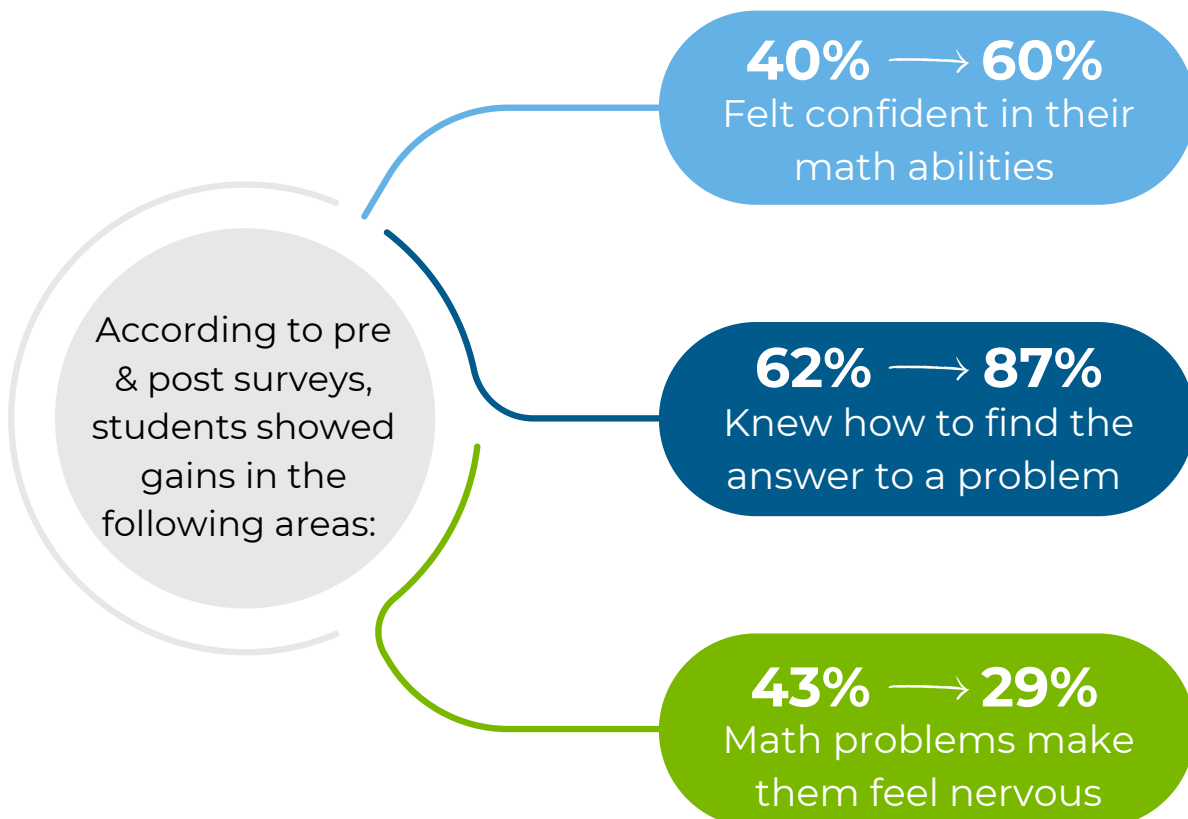
## STUDENTS RESULTS



Of students improved their grade in Math



Of students improved their grade in Science



# STUDENT AND TUTOR FEEDBACK

**“My tutor has helped me exponentially grow in my math abilities and feel way more confident than before.”**

**Benjamin Lopez, Rise Student**

**“The Rise program has been an amazing support system for me throughout my later years in the public education system. I have also learned how to learn and how to ask for help.”**

**Claire Brandon, Rise Student**

**“The Rise Program is an accessible and engaging way for Caltech students to give back to the community of Pasadena for hosting us during undergrad/grad school.”**

**Nathan Ballinger, Rise Tutor**

**“My tutor has helped me understand my coursework and not feel stressed when things don't immediately click. She's also just been supportive and has given great life advice.”**

**Marley Thach, Rise Student**

**“The Rise Program helped me so much this school year! Great program! It makes kids feel more welcome and comfortable in the courses they struggle with.”**

**Paola Carranza, Rise Student**

**“Rise has been a great experience for me. It's helped me become a better mentor, see different learning styles, test different teaching styles, and so much more. I've had a lot of people help me get to where I am today, and it feels good to pay it forward; having the opportunity to serve members of the Pasadena community is great. Watching my students become confident and successful has truly been one of the highlights of my Caltech experience.”**

**Manisha Kapasiawala, Rise Tutor**

# CREATING OPPORTUNITIES ONE MATH PROBLEM AT A TIME

Since 2020, a group of dedicated Caltech undergraduates has been instrumental in helping students from the Pasadena Unified School District navigate the challenges of remote learning, excel in math and science, and successfully apply for college. These volunteers returned year after year, balancing their growing academic and research responsibilities with their commitment to service.

Last June, these five remarkable students graduated, but their impact on young people's lives will last for years.

## Recognizing Opportunities are Unequal, and Doing Something About It.

From a young age, Suchitra Dara (BS '24) knew that access to opportunities was unequal. Growing up in Bakersfield, Calif., Dara spent her free time with her entomologist father in the laboratory. This early introduction to insects launched a passion for science. Meanwhile, many high schools in the Central Valley struggled to gather resources to offer students hands-on science experiments.

“It’s important to acknowledge our various privileges that have allowed us to excel at school and study at Caltech,” says Dara. “I had my dad as a resource and I knew a lot of people whose parents could hire private tutors. A lot of people in the Central Valley don’t have those opportunities.”



*Suchitra Dara, Rise Tutor*

As a Caltech student, Dara wanted to help level the playing field and saw Rise as a way to achieve that goal. The bioengineering major tutored several students online and helped in subjects ranging from environmental science to trigonometry. Her dedication made a difference. One of her tutees, Vincent, received a four-year, full-tuition scholarship from Posse to attend Pepperdine University. The nonprofit recognizes students from diverse backgrounds who possess leadership skills and academic potential.

“We have such a wealth of knowledge at Caltech,” says Dara who is now a

doctoral student at Gerstner Sloan Kettering Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in New York. “There’s no reason for Pasadena students to struggle.”

## The Real Reward is Not an “A” on a Test

By the time students meet with a Rise tutor, they have typically struggled with math for years. Tutees in eighth grade might stumble on multiplication or even subtraction.



*Rise Tutor Asha Rollins with her student, Sophia Covarrubias*

Lack of foundational knowledge can lower confidence and increase anxiousness. Asha Rollins (BS '24) made a point never to tell her tutees what they should already know. Instead, she acted as if the foundational work was part of the assignment and showed them how to solve the math problem.

“Math especially is one of those subjects that if students have difficulties and get behind, it's sometimes really hard to recover,”

Rollins says. “It's special that the Caltech Y and Rise give them personalized attention so they can get back on track.”

***“Students need to know that they can face challenges and succeed, understanding they are smart and capable will encourage them to reach new levels, of school and life.”***

**Asha Rollins, Rise Tutor**

Rollins credits the Caltech Y staff and her fellow tutors for creating a positive environment for herself and the students. Everyone who volunteered wanted to make young learner’s lives better and, over time, Rollins realized that her primary mission was not to help students earn As, although their grades often improved.

“Students need to know that they can face challenges and succeed,” Rollins says. “Understanding they are smart and capable will encourage them to reach new levels, in school and life.”

## There is No Cookie-cutter Approach to Teaching

Rupa Kurinchi-Vendhan (BS '24) tutored Mya weekly but spent many more days thinking about how to help the Pasadena public school student with her studies.

The computer science major searched for fun facts relevant to Mya's science classes and would share insights into her own research. Rupa hoped to draw connections between what Mya was studying in class and what was happening in the real world. Rupa's work paid off.

"She was genuinely very excited about the facts I shared with her," Rupa says. "I could see her excitement for learning growing, too."

***"We truly want to help students learn, and ultimately get them to where they want to go in life. To be part of that effort is really beautiful."***

**Rupa Kurinchi-Vendhan,  
Rise Tutor**

Rupa credits Rise's training program for providing her with the tools and strategies to be an effective tutor. The initial training she received on the science of learning and various instruction methods gave her a new understanding of different learning styles and that she would need to tailor her approach to meet Mya's needs. First, Rupa fostered a strong foundation of trust and friendship with Mya. Then, she incorporated the Socratic teaching method and drew upon real-world examples to make learning more

relatable. Rupa's dedication boosted Mya's grades and her confidence.

Rise tutors do more than just walk students through their homework," Rupa says. "We truly want to help students learn, and ultimately get them to where they want to go in life. To be part of that effort is really beautiful."

## **The Tutor and Student Learn Together**

Ann Zhu (BS '24) initially volunteered for the Rise program to give students extra academic assistance during the pandemic. She never expected that they would support her, too.

Her first student, Nia, had unreliable wi-fi and encountered technical issues with her laptop. Yet, she logged onto Zoom optimistic and ready to learn. "It was pretty tough for me to spend my first year of college online," Zhu says. "Nia's positivity was a sanity check for me."



*Rise Tutor Ann Zhu and her student, Olivia Barrios*

When in-person tutoring resumed, Zhu worked with Olivia. The high school student was motivated but shy. She was also eager to become a better student but hesitant to show her mistakes. To help build Olivia's confidence and intellectual curiosity, the chemical engineering major realized she had to be more than a tutor, she had to grow and develop as a mentor.

***“Rise is a growth-oriented experience for both the tutor and the student, to be part of such a positive environment dedicated to uplifting lives is so meaningful to me.”***

**Ann Zhu, Rise Tutor**

Rise was the first time I had a distinct mentoring role, and it was an informative experience for me,” Zhu says.

The mentoring skills she refined through Rise will help Zhu in her new career as a process engineer for Proctor and Gamble. Zhu will oversee a team of technicians as they find new ways to improve manufacturing processes for one of P&G's hair conditioners.

“Rise is a growth-oriented experience for both the tutor and the student,” Zhu says. “To be part of such a positive environment dedicated to uplifting lives is so meaningful to me.”



*Rise Tutor Ann Zhu and her student, Olivia Barrios*

## **Calculus, College, and (Some) Chatting**

For three years, Alexis Wang (BS '24) tutored two students at the same time. In one 90-minute session, Wang pivoted between calculus, environmental science, and statistics, but she happily accepted the challenge. Her students, Claire and Marley, were best friends who brought their bestie energy with them, including laughter and tales of high school life.

“My world focused on computer science and finding the right internships and jobs,” Wang says. “It was refreshing to forget those pressures twice a week.”

Rise wants students to thrive in math and science, but also confidently take





*Rise Tutor Alexis Wang and her student, Claire Brandon*

their next steps in life. As such, tutors are encouraged to offer assistance in the college admissions process. Wang reviewed Claire’s scholarship essays and

listened to the teen as she contemplated which university to attend.

“Claire felt comfortable talking about other challenges in her life because she knew Rise was a safe space for her,” Wang says.

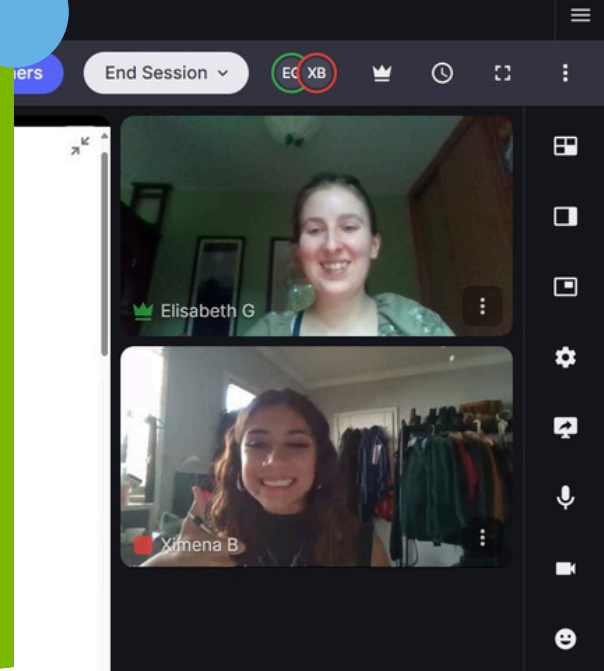
Today, Marley is completing her senior year of high school, Claire is at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and Wang is a software engineer at SeatGeek in New York City. Despite their different journeys, the trio still keeps in touch. The day before Wang’s first day of work, Claire sent a text message wishing her luck.

“It means a lot to me that we can have different life experiences and still form meaningful relationships,” Wang says. “I’m happy to call them my friends.”



# Y-TUTOR PROGRAM

Over the past two years, the Y-Tutor program has evolved from supporting PUSD students during the pandemic to focusing on college students. Since its relaunch, Y-Tutor has gradually grown, welcoming more students and volunteer tutors for online, drop-in tutoring. Currently, the program is open to Rise Alumni, and we're proud to continue our partnership with Pasadena City College's MESA program, which supports low-income, first-generation STEM students.



Tammy is a double major in Computer Science and Linguistics at UCLA with a passion for reading novels and discovering new boba spots. During her time at PCC, she took on leadership roles as president of the She.Codes club and Vice President of the Engineering Competition Society. She's now looking forward to giving back to the Y-Tutor program as a tutor.

## ● How did you hear about the Y-Tutor Program, and why did you decide to join?

I heard about Y-Tutor through the MESA program at PCC and joined because I was struggling with Linear Algebra class at the time but couldn't afford private tutoring.

## ● How did the Y-Tutor Program help you in school?

The Y-Tutor Program helped me get support in areas where I was struggling. The tutors simplify and break down complicated concepts, making me enjoy learning math again. Thanks to their help, I went from a C to an A in my linear algebra class.

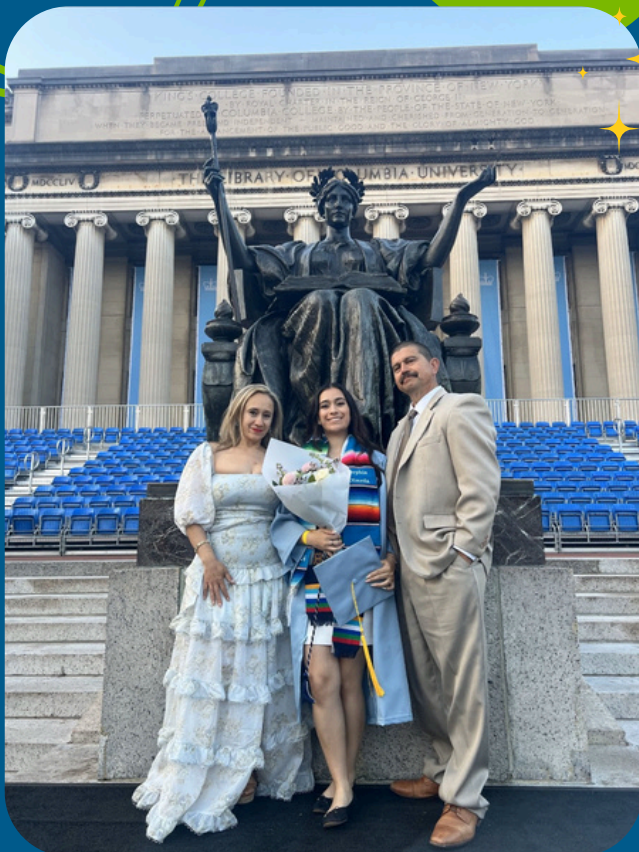
## ● Any advice for future Y-Tutor students or anyone interested in the program?

Take full advantage of the program and make the most out of each tutoring session. Ask lots of questions and engage with the tutors so they know where you're at and how they can best help you. If you're deciding whether or not to join the program, just know your future self will thank you a million times for saying yes!

# RISE COMMUNITY SUCCESS CORNER 2023-24

## DOUBLE HONORS FOR ELOHEEM MAHONE: INAUGURAL KENNEDY SCHOLARSHIP & 2024 ROSE SCHOLAR

Congratulations to Eloheem Mahone, Rise Program alumnus, for receiving two prestigious scholarships! Eloheem was named a 2024 Rose Scholar by the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, receiving part of a \$20,000 scholarship for his creative goals. He also earned the inaugural Leola Sudduth and Thomas Foster Kennedy Scholarship from the Pasadena Community Foundation, awarding him \$20,000 over four years. An outstanding STEM student and left-handed Varsity pitcher for the mighty Muir Mustangs, Eloheem recently committed to UCLA, where he'll continue his remarkable journey as a Bruin.



## SOPHIA OLMEDA GRADUATES FROM COLUMBIA

Congratulations to Rise Alumna, Sophia Olmeda, who graduated from Columbia University last summer with a degree in Civil Engineering. She was also awarded the American Society of Civil Engineers Younger Member Forum Award. We are so proud of your accomplishments and keep reaching for the stars!



### THREE RISE ALUMNI AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS POSSE SCHOLARSHIPS

At the beginning of 2024, three Rise alumni were selected as recipients of the prestigious Posse Scholarship! Congratulations to **Vincent Velasco, Mphatso Johnson, and Zoe Sanchez**, who, along with two other students from Pasadena Unified School District, have earned full four-year scholarships through the Posse Los Angeles Foundation. This award is a testament to their hard work, leadership, and commitment to academic excellence. We couldn't be prouder!



### RISE TUTORS RECOGNIZED WITH SERVICE AWARD

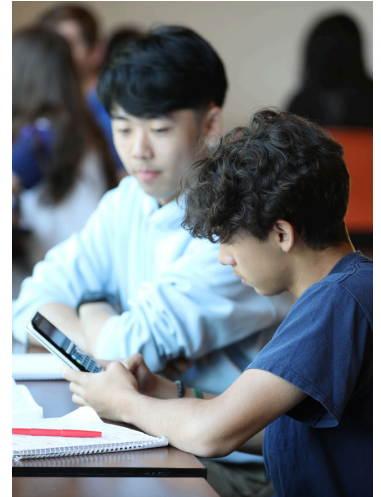


Last summer, we proudly honored two exceptional Rise tutors, **Bertha Mireles and Jimmy Ragan**, with the Rise Service Award for their outstanding commitment and dedication to the Rise Program. This award recognizes individuals who exemplify the Caltech Y's commitment to service, highlighting their remarkable contributions to our community.



# THANK YOU

to all of the amazing tutors,  
students, community partners,  
and supporters who make the  
Rise Program possible!



## The Caltech Y Rise Tutoring Program is supported by:

- The Roethke Funds
- The Tom Apostol Endowment Fund for Math and Science Outreach
- Medtronic Foundation
- Tournament of Roses Foundation
- PUSD's African-American Parent Council (AAPC)
- The Harris-Bacor Family Foundation
- The Caltech Employees Federal Credit Union

