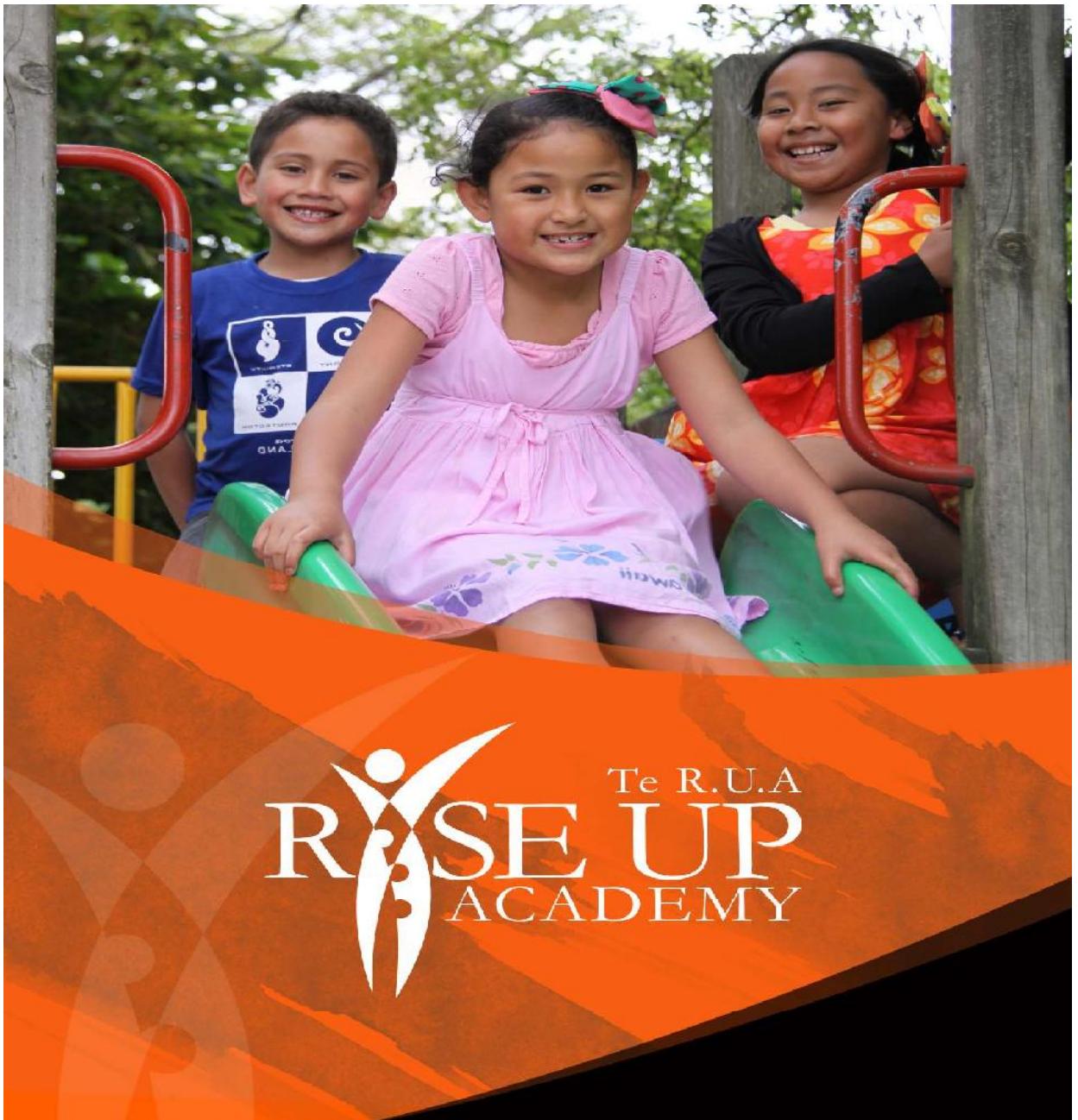


WHĀNAU EXPERIENCE of THE RISE UP ACADEMY

May 2015



Acknowledgements

Thanks are given to all of the children and whānau who gave their time and views so generously to this research.



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WEAVE LTD



The Rise UP Academy—Opening Ceremony

This school is special because... we have values and respect each other and we are the first Pacific charter school. The way we do things is different here.





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Introduction

The Rise Up Academy opened in Otahuhu, South Auckland in February 2014. It is a partnership school focused on primary school aged Pasifika and Maori children, with a mission to cultivate '*Sharp minds, strong bodies and good hearts,*' towards a vision of '*Our Best Generation Yet!*'

The views of children attending the Rise Up Academy (Te RUA), along with those of their whānau/families, were canvassed between December 2014 and April 2015. The aim was to gain their perspectives on how the Rise Up approach and 'principles of practice'¹ are being experienced, as well as what they like about Te RUA, and what could be improved, changed or developed. A session with Rise Up staff was also held to reflect on themes arising, and to capture staff perspectives on how the Rise Up principles of practice are operating.

This work is part of a wider Lotteries funded research programme² led by the Rise Up Trust, which aims to increase understanding of culturally responsive approaches to engaging Pasifika whānau in their children's learning.

This report presents the children's and whānau views and experiences of Te RUA to date. Insights from the staff are interwoven where appropriate. The report begins with an outline of the method used and a summary of major themes, followed by the detailed children's and adult whānau feedback. Quotes are shown in italics.

¹See Appendix One, which presents these principles of practice in the context of the Rise Up approach.

²This research programme is underway from 2014 to 2015 and is called Our best generation yet - engaging Pasifika whānau hearts and minds in their children's learning and education. It is a partnership between the Rise Up Trust and a range of researchers, including the Knowledge Institute.



Method

A one hour focus group discussion was held in December 2014 with six children, and a second with another ten children in March 2015. This represents around 25% of the children at Te RUA. The groups were evenly balanced in terms of gender; the children identify as Pasifika (predominantly Samoan) and/or Maori and most of the children were aged 8 to 10 years, see table on the right.

In terms of whānau, all Rise Up whānau were invited to take part. In-depth interviews were held with five parents/carers of priority learners, and three focus groups were held with another 18 parents/carers. These 23 adults were predominantly of Pasifika background, two thirds were women and many types of family composition were represented – single parents, grandparents and extended family raising children, blended families and two parent families.

In the spirit of whānau engagement, a Rise Up parent facilitated one of the children's focus groups and one of the adult focus groups.

Age	Number of children
7	1
8	3
9	5
10	6
11	1
TOTAL	16

Summary of Findings

Children's perspectives

We have the teachers and the community helping us with everything.

The children generally experience Te RUA as a warm, friendly, safe, supportive environment in which to learn and develop. The smallness of the school has great benefits in terms of people knowing each other, having quality one on one time with teachers, making friends and feeling included. A common positive theme was the family atmosphere of the school.

Children noted key differences at Te RUA from their old school/s as being the after school programmes, inquiry learning and a fun, encouraging learning environment where children know how they are doing, a focus on values and spiritual growth through daily prayers, song and scripture, and stronger involvement of their families in the school and in their learning.

Most children felt they had made significant progress in their educational achievement at Te RUA as they were getting better marks and had moved up levels, while several felt they had stayed at the same level. A common theme was having more respect for and understanding of others, through a better understanding of learning styles and personalities and a strong focus on values at the school.

As well as many doing better educationally, key changes for themselves that children noted since coming to Te Rua were:

- Growing in confidence, self-esteem and feeling important, especially through the after school programmes, teacher encouragement, knowing more about their personality and learning style, taking part in Rise Up programmes such as Beautiful Daughters and in the way that children get to be involved and have a say in many aspects of the school.
- Celebrating and learning more about their culture and those of others.
- Identifying their talents and gifts.
- Spending more time with their family, better family communication and feeling closer with their family, sleeping better, being more active and watching less TV.
- Feeling safe and not being bullied.

When asked what would make it better for them at Te RUA, the main responses related to having more space, classrooms, more children, facilities, fencing, sports and outdoor equipment and access to computers. Opinions differed on whether the school should grow much more, though most felt it should grow.

Other suggestions were to expand the Monday breakfast programme, build more partnerships, go on more school trips and focus on the children who need help academically.

Adult perspectives

Everyone is friendly – there is a good feeling at the school. It's a real mixed Pacific school, I like that cultural mix. We feel trust in the people here to do their best and educate the whole person.

The vision is really compelling.

Whānau reported being drawn to Te RUA for its small classroom sizes, its vision, small scale and village feel, its Pasifika cultural identity, faith based approach and trust in the school leadership.

Families appreciate the strong and regular communication from the school, swiftness in raising and addressing issues, the sense that their child is receiving quality teaching and close attention, the welcoming nature of the school, ease of access to staff and how parents and whānau are engaged as helpers and volunteers.

The school's Christian values are clearly practiced in the school through daily prayers and song and this is highly valued by most families. The school is perceived to be very welcoming to whānau, and families are strongly encouraged to get involved in the school and in their child's learning.

The majority of whānau noted marked improvement in their child's educational achievement at Te RUA, with kinaesthetic children in particular progressing well. Whānau like the holistic and inquiry approach to learning, the leadership opportunities provided to children and student led projects such as designing the playground.

As well as academic improvement, the greatest changes parents noticed in their children were increased confidence, emotional security and better behaviour. These were attributed to the after school programmes, daily Devotions (prayer and values teaching), a proactive approach to bullying, emphasis on safety and emotional wellbeing, and on teaching children about self-worth, how to treat others, and about their learning styles and personalities.

Whānau report being more engaged in their children's learning and staff observe strong positive links between how engaged a whānau is in their child's learning, and how well their child is achieving and developing.

Te RUA is perceived to provide wraparound support for families through its Whānau Educators, the Rise Up programmes, connecting families with social support, providing a listening ear and a supportive community. The Path tool³is seen as being very helpful for families, in terms of setting and progressing towards goals and opening lines of communication and understanding among family members.

Whānau report changes at home including spending more time together as a family, being more active together, watching less TV, having more fun and reading and doing homework together. Families like the Pasifika cultural mix, the celebration of culture and focus on cultural identity. Te RUA is perceived to be a safe place where honesty, communication and openness are encouraged.

The key perceived limitation of the school is its limited space, classrooms, facilities and resources. Clear communication with whānau on any potential site changes was desired, along with opportunities to have a say.

Whānau would like to see more teachers and more male staff, and a focus on connecting and inducting new families in order to retain the family feel and supportive school community. Some parents wanted a more structured transition to school programme for new entrants, more sports activities and more computers and technology (ICT). More focus on te reo, Maori culture and Pasifika language teaching was also sought by some parents. A range of specific needs were also expressed, such as security gates, fencing, a pedestrian crossing and more music and sports equipment.

³The Path tool supports a family to set and visually map short and long term goals for children and the whole family and monitors progress towards them.

How are the principles of practice being experienced?

The table below presents the Rise Up principles of practice and how they are being experienced by the children and their families.

Principles of practice	Whānau experience of them in action
Children's voices are heard and valued	Multiple ways for children to have a say and exercise leadership Children are encouraged to question and use their voice
All children can learn and succeed	Inquiry learning and student led projects; children are more questioning and curious
Nurture children's gifts and talents; know their learning styles, personalities and love languages	Quality teaching based on learning styles and love languages; making learning fun Children know their gifts and talents
Children need to know who they are (cultural identity, values and purpose)	Pride in culture and cultural celebration through food, language weeks, performance, singing, events, learning cultural practices, basic terms/pepeha taught in key languages Use of the 'learning hats' model
Learning/achievement come from healthy hearts, minds, bodies, souls and relationships	Faith and values based learning, starting each day with prayer and ending the week with prayer Attention to spiritual growth and linking personal, cultural, educational and spiritual development
Inquiry based teaching and learning, co-constructivist approach	Small school and class sizes mean no child is left behind and issues are picked up quickly
Relational approach grounded in faith based and cultural values	A safe school environment, proactive behaviour strategies, no tolerance for bullying Whānau report improved educational achievement and more confident, happier, better behaved children
When we lead ourselves well, we set everyone up for success (role modelling and ongoing personal development)	Teachers and after school programmes broaden children's education and actively build confidence Children reflect through Devotions and the inquiry approach to learning
Leadership is grounded in evidence based, reflective practice	Opportunities for parent input and reflection A clear and compelling vision for the school The teachers and staff model the school values



Principles of practice

Whānau experience of them in action

Whānau /community engagement in children's learning and development – it takes a village to raise a child

Whānau Educators, teachers and other staff share information and provide wraparound family support: *The Whānau Educators empower the parents*

Rise Up programmes and the expectation that all whānau will participate in them

Strong regular communication regarding children in a range of formats (text, phone, Facebook, newsletter)

Encouragement to engage and volunteer at the school

Taking time to know each family and offer support and referral, strong pastoral focus at the school

Sense of family and community – a village feel

Ease of access and approachability of staff

Providing tools for families to support children's learning at home

Communicating children's achievement and progress regularly, at individual, class and school levels.

Detailed findings - children

What do you like most about school here at Rise Up?

Small is beautiful - and feels safer

Our school has become one big family.

With only 50 students in 2014 (increasing to 70 in 2015) and a small site to operate from, the class sizes are small, with several age groups in each class. For these children, the smallness of the school means you get to know everyone, make new friends, learn their personalities and have one on one time with the teacher. Children noted a welcoming, family feeling at the school and a sense that everyone is helping them in a supportive community.

Related to the family and community feeling, a common theme was a greater sense of safety at the school for many children. Some noted that there was no fighting, swearing or bullying, which for many had been a major issue at their previous school.

Values, faith and inquiry based learning and a focus on learning styles and personalities

Inquiry – we get to create.

We learn about how to talk to and treat people, we respect one another.

The children spoke about learning about their personality and their preferred learning style, so they understand better how they learn and who they are. The children also highly valued inquiry based learning and the focus on faith and spiritual values through ‘Devotion’ – which is half an hour every morning at the start of each day, focused on learning values and virtues through Bible scripture and song.

There is also a perceived focus at Te Rua on being yourself, being honest and genuine: *The focus on being yourself and learning about yourself. You get to be yourself, you don’t have to hide anything.*

After school programmes and the diversity of learning experiences

At least half of the children mentioned the after school programme as something they really like about the school. This programme includes performing arts and drama, music, sports and cultural activities.

Another theme was the wide range of learning and fun activities offered through the school, including school trips, and the ability to try new things as a result: *Getting to try out things, such as science experiments and the school band.*

What is different about this school compared to your last school?

This school is special because... we have values and respect each other and we are the first Pacific charter school. The way we do things is different here.

This school is like my family – at my old school no-one knew me.



What is different about Te Rua compared to your last school?

Inquiry learning and catering for different learning styles - making learning fun, quality teaching

I like doing lots of projects, such as making a vege garden, we didn't do that at our old school, it was sometimes boring

My learning has gone up here because our teachers make our learning fun and educational at the same time

You learn better here, the teachers show you

Feel safer, it's friendlier, kinder

We're free from bullying here

We had a lot of bad things at my old school - bad words, bullying, fighting

Children commented that the school helps to guide the children and provides lots of varied opportunities to learn, including music, drama, sport and practical projects, outside school trips – We do more things here

Everything is free, we learn new things every day

At our old school they didn't teach us properly, they just cared about the answer, not how we got it, the strategy, the why...The teachers know what they are doing here

The teachers help us, we reflect, they help us to do better, we have fun with our teachers

Smaller, less people

We respect the rules – respect others, respect the property, keep hands and feet to yourself, take responsibility for yourself

If I'm mean and you're mean it's no good

For bullying the teachers have good strategies – count to 10, be calm, the teachers have many ways to solve problems

No fighting, children aren't scared of the teachers, the teachers respect you, they are funny

Everyone is treated the same, no-one is swearing, no fights

Having less people means you get to know people and get to know your teacher and communicate with others more

At my old school they didn't focus on the child, at Rise Up they focus on the child and the family

There are 19 kids in my class now, there was 30-35 at my old school, it was hard to interact

Children's comments



What is different about Te Rua compared to your last school?

After school programmes

I love the after school programme, we get to do fun stuff

Children's comments

The after school programmes are fun, varied and it's good for working parents to have longer school days⁴

In the beginning lots of people were shy – in the after school programme everyone gained confidence

Devotions and values

In Devotions we practice things we need to practice, we pray and we sing a lot of songs

Devotions involves half an hour each morning and a specific programme on Wednesdays (in 2014) in which children 'sing and talk about God', read stories from Bible scriptures and discuss values arising

You get to learn about God, you learn about making good choices

We learn about values, it's easy for us to know what to do

We like the school's vision [Sharp minds, strong bodies, good hearts] and that no-one is left out

We reflect on our actions – we use 'stop, think, act'

Involving whānau/families

The teachers help the parents and the kids too

All families are involved in the school

Enrol your child, enrol your whānau

Children liked the Whānau Educators and the way that the school encourages the parents to help the kids

The Beautiful Daughters [programme] had a sleepover in the Chapel – the Dads made us a big breakfast

Mum has not been angry due to costs, especially of outings [as they are free]

Family is more involved at home, they know my personality

I have gotten to know my family better, their personalities and love languages and how they learn

We talk to each other differently, we have changed how we talk to each other

We have more quality time



⁴In 2014 the after school programmes ran from 3.00pm to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday. The long days proved too tiring for many children and difficult for families to accommodate, so in 2015 the programme has been shortened to 3.00pm to 4.30pm, Monday to Wednesday.

What changes have you noticed?

Children were asked any changes they had noticed in themselves since being at Te Rua in terms of a range of factors, which reflect the Rise Up principles of practice.

Key factor	Rise Up principle/s of practice	Children's feedback	
Confidence and feeling important	<p>Children's voices are heard and valued</p> <p>All children can learn and succeed</p> <p>Relational approach grounded in faith based and cultural values</p>	<p>The after school programmes help to build confidence, as some involve a performance aspect and there is something for everyone to shine at</p> <p>A common theme was that teachers encourage the children and actively build their confidence: <i>I was nervous at the SUPA performance on the guitar and my teacher encouraged me and said 'You can do this'</i></p> <p>Children noted that what the children think and feel is valued and that there are many ways for children to have a say: <i>We always get a say, have student votes and can give feedback on our teacher. I feel like we are important because we get to have our say, we are involved</i></p> <p>Some children knew they were more confident as they speak up more, take more risks and feel ok to share ideas and thoughts</p> <p>Knowing more about their personality and learning style also supports confidence and understanding strengths and how people learn</p> <p>Some children mentioned that the Rise Up programmes such as Beautiful Daughters helped them to feel more confident</p>	
How well you are doing at school	<p>Learning/achievement come from healthy hearts, minds, bodies, souls and relationships</p> <p>Inquiry based teaching and learning, co-constructivist approach</p>	<p>Most children spoke of moving up levels in reading, writing and maths and getting better marks since coming to Te Rua, also of having more respect for and understanding of others, through understanding learning styles and personalities</p> <p>Having leadership opportunities was mentioned by several children as a sign of progress, such as helping out when one of the office staff are away – <i>Helping out with adult things</i></p> <p>A common theme was regular communication from teachers to students and whānau about how each individual and the school is doing in terms of educational achievement</p>	 <p>No-one leaves us out.</p>

Key factor	Rise Up principle/s of practice	Children's feedback
		The children noted that at report time the whole assembly is informed about how the school is faring overall with national standards and levels across core subjects, so everyone knows how they are doing personally and how the school is going academically
Knowing who you are <i>In this school we celebrate each other's culture</i>	Children need to know who they are (cultural identity, values and purpose)	We have different food in different language weeks (Samoan, Cook Islands etc.), we had chop suey in Samoan language week and a pig for Tongan language week, and the parents decorated the hall We learn the national anthems and have a fashion show for every culture We learn about our family background, about our personality and we learn manners and values: <i>At my old school I didn't know my personality</i> We learn rules, how to do things and how to treat other people
Knowing your gifts <i>I like this school because our teachers see our talents that are hidden, for example we heard our boys sing and they had a nice voice</i>	Nurture children's gifts and talents, know their learning styles, personalities and love languages	<i>Each week we have a value and one time it was gifts and talents</i> (the children could all share at least one of their gifts and talents) The girls have a Beautiful Daughters programme, there is a boys programme too: <i>We do boys stuff, went to laser tag, our goal was to behave, the boys don't fight any more, don't argue, in Devotions we talk about our actions – our vision is sharp minds, strong bodies, good hearts</i>
Family involvement and dynamics <i>The after school programme makes you tired, before we would watch TV and not be tired and stay up late</i> <i>My family asks me all the time how things are going</i>	Whānau/community engagement in children's learning and development – it takes a village to raise a child	Change at home children noted were getting to see their family more and being closer with them, watching a lot less TV (<i>Mum said if I want education I don't need a distraction</i>), getting more sleep from being more tired from the range of activities and the after school programme, doing homework on time Doing a Path Plan in which each family sets goals was noted by children: <i>We have a big PATH Plan for our family on the wall</i>



What has been the biggest change for you since coming to Te Rua?

Everyone loves each other and I learnt how special I am.

When asked about the biggest change for them since coming to Te Rua, the children's answers reflected the themes above. No theme in particular stood out. Big positive changes experienced by the children related to the after school programmes (especially in building skills and confidence), meeting new people, learning about their own and others' personalities, not being bullied/feeling safe and part of a caring community, knowing more about their religion, God and doing Devotions each day, feeling more confident, kind and high quality teachers, having mixed ages in classrooms and the inquiry learning process.

What would make it even better for you at school?

The children made a range of suggestions for improving Te Rua and their experience with Rise Up, which are grouped under key themes below.

Space and growth

It's a bit squishy here space wise.

Take little steps; don't grow too fast, small amounts at a time.

The most frequently mentioned area for improvement at the school is to have more space and more classrooms. Children want more room to play and run and some want more children at the school: *I would like to have more kids, and more boys* [this from a boy]. Some mentioned the school possibly moving to another site eventually as it grows.

After a discussion on ideal school size in terms of numbers of children attending, in the second focus group two children felt the numbers were about right as they are now, four thought there were too many children now and five wanted more children, in order to make more friends and generally expand the Rise Up approach.

There was recognition that the school was new and finding its way in terms of optimum size, that things were improving in terms of space and facilities and that students were strongly involved in this:

At the beginning I thought this school was stink because it didn't have a playground, but Room 2 had an inquiry and are building a playground [this was a comment from the first focus group in December 2014 – a small playground had been built by March 2015].



Better facilities and equipment

Suggestions in terms of facilities were for a bigger playground and space to play (several children mentioned a neighbour having issues with stray balls ending up on their property), a bigger soccer goal and a bigger field, a water fountain, more fitness activities and equipment and to play netball, volleyball and basketball. Other suggestions were for a school library and to make the fence taller around the school.

Access to ICT

At my old school we used a computer but not any more.

Children want to see more use of ICT in the school and to have access to different technologies. They considered that ICT helps with inquiry learning, with research, and to access educational programmes such as Reading Eggs, Mathletics and Study Ladder.

Other ideas for improvement were:

- promote breakfast and nutrition - expand the Monday breakfast to more days
- increase partnerships such as the current one with Kids Can, who provide clothes, breakfast and food vouchers
- more trips and experiences – need to get out of the small school environment, for culture related, fun and educational trips
- focus on kids who need help to move levels.



Detailed findings – whānau

The sessions with whānau explored how things were going for their children and themselves at Te RUA, what they liked and what could be changed or improved.

What led you to send your child/ren to Te RUA?

The key factors drawing whānau to Te RUA were its small classroom sizes, small scale and village feel, its Pasifika cultural identity and faith based values, and trust in the school leadership and staff through previous church and family connections, and/or through having taken part in Rise Up programmes⁵.

The smallness of the school is considered to bring many benefits – the children get a lot of attention, no-one slips through the net, the children feel special, everyone knows each other, there is a family, village feeling and the school is a supportive community. Rise Up staff note that small classroom sizes mean that children who need help stand out and are caught quickly.

What are you noticing that is different about the Rise Up approach?

Key factors mentioned here were strong and regular communication from the school, faith based values and practices being the foundation for the school, the welcoming nature of the school and ease of access to staff, and how parents and whānau are engaged as helpers and supporters.

Te RUA uses a wide range of ways to communicate with parents and carers and does this frequently - by text, email, phone, Facebook, newsletters and face to face. Parents like the constant feedback and swiftness in raising and addressing issues: *You are the first one to know.*



⁵Since 2009 and before starting Te RUA, Rise Up has been offering programmes for Pasifika children and whānau designed to support educational achievement and engage families in their children's learning.

Many parents commented favourably on how Rise Up visibly lives Christian values and makes these the foundation for how the school operates. This was perceived in every facet of the school but most clearly in the daily morning student Devotions: *Daily Devotions bring peace to the child; it helps them feel loved.* Staff note that the Christian basis ensures that children know what is expected of them, issues are dealt with quickly and the children feel safe.

The school is perceived to be wide open and welcoming to families, with a clear open door policy, approachable teachers and ease of access to the school leadership. The school policy of 'enrol a child, enrol their whānau' was clearly experienced by families, who mentioned there being many options for families to connect with and help out at the school, along with encouragement for families to get involved in the school and their child's learning.

The school encourages every parent/carer to volunteer for a minimum of 40 hours per year at the school, in whichever way they can. The level of communication and engagement was occasionally experienced as a pressure for several parents, especially single parents or if they were already feeling stretched. However many commented on the stark contrast between Te RUA and their former experience of minimal engagement with mainstream schools.

What changes are you noticing for your child/ren in terms of education and learning?

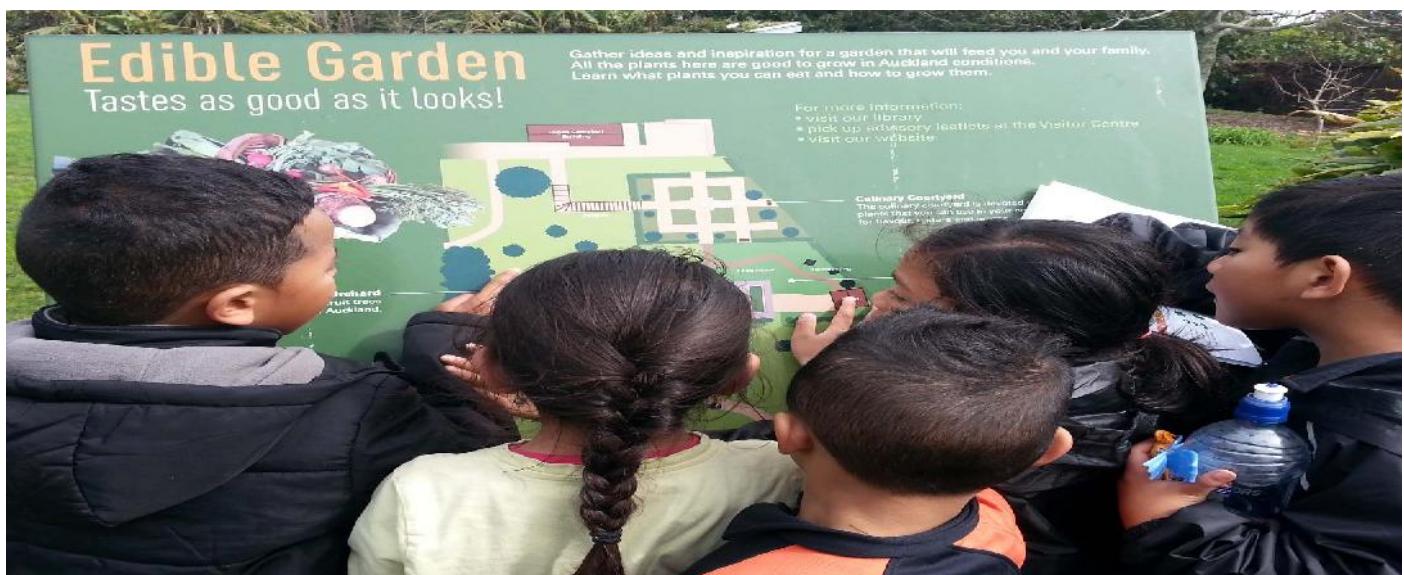
I wouldn't be able to engage with my kids so well without Rise Up, I can fill my child's love tank, I know their love language.

My child is kinaesthetic and didn't fit the normal school model. Reading was a struggle, we forced her – at Rise UP her love for reading has done a 360. She went from below to above standard and now has a love for reading.

The majority of parents/carers noted significant improvements in their children's educational achievement and attitude to learning since attending Te RUA. This included children who could not formerly read or write well now doing so and marked improvements in attitudes to reading and learning. Kinaesthetic children in particular were perceived to be doing better at Te RUA (ie those who learn by doing), alongside growth in children's confidence when they better understand their learning style and their strengths.

Parents liked the inquiry approach to learning, noting that their children were more critical and curious, asking more questions and 'why' a lot more. Parents also like the wide range of leadership opportunities provided by the school for children and the student led learning approach. An example is the children designing their own playground and building a food garden. Children learn how to problem solve and address challenges by themselves.

Those few children who had not improved notably tended to be capable learners already and had stayed at a similar level as the previous year. No-one considered their child's achievement or learning to have deteriorated at Te RUA.



What changes are you noticing for your child/ren generally (behaviour, health, attitudes)?

Kids feel emotionally secure at Te Rua.

Emotional strengthening has happened, my kids are learning spiritual values and are being noticed in smaller classrooms.

Along with educational progress, the greatest changes parents were noticing in their children since attending Te RUA were increased confidence and better behaviour, both at school and at home. The school is considered to be very good at dealing with behavioural issues, with a range of effective strategies to calm and support children. Parents noted that they received fewer or no calls from the school relating to behavioural issues, when they had previously.

Children's bullying or being bullied were also perceived to have dropped to a minimum at Te RUA. This was attributed to the small class sizes where teachers can pick up on bullying behaviour, a focus on treating others well and living Christian values and a strong focus on physical and emotional safety at the school.

Children's confidence levels were considered to have improved markedly, through taking part in the after school programmes, understanding their learning style, gifts, talents and personality better, the focus on cultural identity, emphasis on values and the family feel of the school. Children were considered to be more active, calmer, focused and better at listening since attending Te RUA.

Rise Up staff note that the faith based approach and Rise Up programmes address bullying issues effectively. They focus on teaching children about self-worth, how to treat others, how to build healthy relationships and how to understand their own and others personalities and styles of learning.

Student Council Meeting—2014



Kids feel emotionally secure at Te Rua.

What changes are you noticing for you and your whānau since coming to Te RUA?

Rise Up teaches me as well as my kids.

More engaged in children's learning

At first I didn't get the Rise Up approach because I was old school. Before Rise Up my kids went to many schools - I didn't go to their schools unless there was a crisis. Enrolling the whole family teaches us how to educate our children.

Families report much higher engagement in their child/ren's learning, through a greater understanding of their children's talents, personalities and learning styles and the training provided by Rise Up on how they can help their children's learning and development at home. *I was given lists of things to do with my daughter for homework and learning at home.*

Rise Up staff report big changes for some families in their understanding of their role as a parent in their child's education. *Some parents came to the school thinking they had no role in their child's education and now see they have a big role.* Staff note that the families have *Rised Up* as they are more vocal at the school – this is seen as a sign of good engagement: *Parents want everything now – before school care, holiday programme, breakfast club every day.*

The Path tool is also making a difference as parents will now approach teachers about their children's goals and where to develop next. For most whānau this is a new experience and opens lines of communication and understanding among family members.

Being taught how to plan was amazing.

Family support

The school helps families sort their issues.

Rise Up are my adopted whānau.

Rise Up brought value into our lives, being part of our children's education - the family workshops had a huge impact. All schools deserve what they are doing.

Te RUA is perceived to provide a lot of support for families, such as connecting families with health and social support agencies, taking the time to understand what is happening for each family, providing a listening ear and a supportive community. The school is seen as operating a family wraparound model and as being very good at accessing tailored support for families.

Some parents have found a new community at the school, through volunteering at the school and making new friends: *I mostly spend my time at Rise Up. I am connecting with other women here, it fills you up – friendships are open and close here.*

It's better at home

For my family the bar has been raised through education, spiritually and emotionally.

My kids at Rise Up are modelling behaviour to my other kids.

I learnt other ways to handle things than hitting my child.

The skills and values being learnt at school are being brought home by the children and are making a difference to families.

Many of the parents noted that they are connecting more and spending more time together as a family, they are having more fun and being more active together. Less TV is being watched, more time is spent outdoors and outside the home and children and their families are learning together more, through reading, doing homework and developing family goals.

Parents report knowing how to fill their child's love tank and engaging more positively with their children. Some stated that they were now 'pulled up' by their children for talking or behaving in ways that were not positive. Others noted that they were paying more attention to their spiritual life now through their children bringing home practices of prayer and devotion.

What for you are the core elements of the Rise Up approach and what do they look like in action?

Parents were asked what they consider the main elements of the Rise Up approach to be and how these work in action. These are summarised below and linked to relevant principles of practice for the school.

Core element	What this looks like in action	Associated principle/s of practice
Whole child, strengths based approach	Inquiry and student led learning Leadership opportunities for children Focus on understanding gifts, talents, learning styles, personalities, cultural identity Regular communication on children's progress and development Small class room sizes Opportunities for children to have a say and feel valued	Children's voices are heard and valued All children can learn and succeed Nurture children's gifts and talents; know their learning styles, personalities and love languages Learning/achievement come from healthy hearts, minds, bodies, souls and relationships Inquiry based teaching and learning, co-constructivist approach When we lead ourselves well, we set everyone up for success (role modelling and ongoing personal development)
Faith based approach	Daily Devotions Linking school values with scripture and Christian faith Attention to spiritual growth and linking personal, educational and spiritual development	Relational approach grounded in faith based and cultural values
Family engagement and support	Strong regular communication regarding children in a range of formats Encouragement to engage and volunteer at the school Taking time to know each family and offer support and referral Ease of access and approachability of staff	Whānau/community engagement in children's learning and development – it takes a village to raise a child When we lead ourselves well, we set everyone up for success (role modelling and ongoing personal development)
Pasifika cultural identity and village model	Focus for children on 'knowing who I am' Family and village feel at the school, a welcoming, supportive environment Celebration of all cultures and focus on cultural identity	Children need to know who they are (cultural identity, values and purpose)

When we lead ourselves well, we set everyone up for success.

What are the most important or best things about the Rise Up approach?

The school wants to work with the whole family.

The most loved aspects of the school for whānau were as follows.

- The holistic approach and vision, including the way it brings spiritual and academic growth together (soul, body and spirit) inquiry learning and child led action such as designing the playground and a food garden.
- The Pasifika cultural mix, celebration of culture and emphasis on the importance of cultural identity for learning and development.
- A focus on family and the creation of a village atmosphere in the school.
- The school notices children's and parents strengths and utilises them.
- Good leadership and development opportunities for the children.
- Te RUA is perceived to be a safe place where honesty, communication and openness are encouraged. *We never leave until the last child has gone, there is a huge safety focus at the school* (staff member).

Staff note that a wraparound approach with families is taken as teaching staff and the Whānau Educator can share information and discuss issues arising for children or individual whānau. In this way no child falls through the cracks and any issues can be dealt with swiftly. *There is nowhere to hide in this school.*

Staff also see a direct link between the strength of a family's engagement in their child's learning and the educational achievement and wellbeing of their children. The more engaged a family is, the better children tend to do at school – educationally and socially. The Path Programme is also seen as a fantastic tool for families to make their goals visible and make them accountable for their progress.

Finally, staff see a strength of the school as being needs based and responsive professional development for staff. Thus staff are empowered to work at their best, utilise their strengths and gain support where they need it. The staff embrace reflective practice and apply their school's performance framework, with a lot of appraisal and constructive feedback.

What could be done differently or improved?

School site and resources

The parents understand there are limitations given the newness of the school. But having a lack of facilities creates something else – you appreciate the little things.

The physical limitations of the current school site and limited resources were most commonly mentioned as areas for improvement. This relates to the issue of school roll growth and how long the current site can sustain the school population. Some parents want the school to extend to high school age. Clear communication on roll and site changes and parent input on decisions to do with these was sought.

Staff are empowered to work at their best, utilise their strengths and gain support where they need it.

Some parents noted that a lack of space and facilities made the children use their imagination. Specific needs were expressed for more music and sports equipment, security gates, fencing and a pedestrian crossing. Some would like to see provision for food technology, sewing and technical classes for the older children.

Other key needs were as follows.

Improvement or change wanted	Comments
More ICT	Parents want to see more ICT (information and communications technology) at the school, including computers and notebooks. Parents want to see a plan for ICT use and for their children to not be 'left behind' in this area, especially the older children. Staff note that chrome books have been ordered and that ICT is coming to the school.
More teachers and male staff	Parents would like to see one or more male teachers employed and other male staff over time. Rise Up staff would like to see more teacher aide support in classrooms and greater access to external support for the children and families.
Ways to connect with and induct new families	Parents want to see new families inducted well into the school and for 'old and new' families to be well connected, to maintain the family feel and supportive school community. Some mentioned wanting to connect with older parents and with those for whom there are language barriers. Staff also note that time is needed to build relationships with new families and integrate them into the school.
Transition to school	Parents want a clear transition to school programme for new entrants involving class visits, a structure for transition and a proactive approach.
More sports activities	More sport activities, connect with other charter schools, joint sports/athletics days, sports competitions, sports development, develop a forum for parents to come forward with who they know in terms of sport contacts.
Strengthen te reo and Maori cultural development, also Pasifika language teaching	Like the school to have more te reo Maori teaching, to see Maori culture nourished and watered, in particular to reflect the children who come from a Maori and bilingual background. Some parents have asked for Pasifika language immersion classes.



Several parents noted the stigma associated with partnerships schools and wanted Rise Up to challenge mainstream negative perceptions by telling its story (for example all teachers are qualified, curriculum follows national curriculum and communicating its successes). A few families said that their extended family challenged their decision to send their child to Te RUA given its newness and the lack of space and facilities at the school.

A few parents used to mainstream schools and not engaging with their children's schools took a while to understand the Rise Up emphasis on family engagement. Several initially felt overloaded by the expectation of engagement and contribution to the school and one initially felt shame that Rise Up staff knew what was happening in the family and got involved: *Why are they up on my business?*

One parent suggested the school also sources outside volunteers, feeling that there was lot of dependence currently on parent contribution.

Other suggestions or changes sought by one or several parents were:

- For the school to start at 9am - it can be hard for some families to get there earlier (the school starts at 8.30am).
- Look into developing a PTA, especially for fundraising.
- Change the timing of the Rise Up programmes to suit family availability.
- In blended or separated families make sure both parents are fully informed.
- Develop a stronger relationship with the South Auckland Middle School.
- Provide reasons for national standards statistics and changes with these.
- Bring drumming to the school through the after school programme and bring the Kedgley music programme back.
- Increase awareness and support around bullying and youth suicide.
- Get a social worker attached to the school working culturally with the families.

Staff noted that some parents have asked for coaching around behaviour strategies. Peer learning and support for parents in this area is planned.



Appendix One: Rise Up model and theory of change

Vision - Our best generation yet! **Mission** - Connecting hearts and minds through whānau and communities learning together - growing sharp minds, strong bodies and good hearts

What Rise Up Provides	The Approach	The Purpose
The Rise Up Academy – Te RUA Junior school for 100 Pasifika and Maori children aged 5 to 10 years Compulsory after school programmes three days a week Monday to Wednesday from 3.00 to 4.30pm Whānau educators and teachers engage with whānau Partnering with community, health and support services	Principles of practice Children's voices are heard and valued All children can learn and succeed Nurture children's gifts and talents; know their learning styles, personalities and love languages Children need to know who they are (cultural identity, values and purpose) Learning/achievement come from healthy hearts, minds, bodies, souls and relationships Inquiry based teaching and learning, co-constructivist approach Whānau/community engagement in children's learning and development – it takes a village to raise a child Relational approach grounded in faith based and cultural values When we lead ourselves well, we set everyone up for success (role modelling and ongoing personal development) Leadership is grounded in evidence based, reflective practice	Applied through 7 'E's' Engage with whānau/ community in a culturally responsive way Empower whānau Establish healthy relationships Equity, fairness and respect Equip children and whānau with keys for learning and great relationships Effective governance and leadership Excellent teachers, whānau educators and delivery
Rise Up 'Building Learning Communities' Programmes Hearts & Minds (for parents/carers) Synergy (for whānau) The PATH Tool (for whānau) Beautiful Daughters (for women and girls) All Te RUA children/ whānau are encouraged to experience the Building Learning Communities programmes		Three strategic goals Children excelling in learning and in life – growing leaders one child at a time Fully engaged, empowered and flourishing whānau An innovative, thriving Rise Up organisation



The Rise UP Academy

Foundation Year 2014