

Executive Summary
An Evaluation of the
Student Excellence and Readiness
Through Volunteers in Education Project

Conducted by

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About Junior Achievement

Founded in 1919, Junior Achievement is a worldwide organization with the mission of inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy. Last year, JA reached 9.3 million students in 123 countries. In the US, there were 3,130,525 students served with JA programs in the 2008-09 school year, nearly 370,000 of those in Texas.

The Three Pillars of Junior Achievement programs are Entrepreneurship, Work Readiness and Financial Literacy. JA curricula are delivered to students by trained volunteers, primarily from the private sector. JA programs are mainly delivered in a regular school classroom as part of the host teacher's standard course work.

The Junior Achievement curriculum satisfies the "Three R's" that research shows are necessary to impact student learning: rigor, relevance, and relationships. The curriculum is aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills across multiple content areas including mathematics, language arts, science, economics, geography, history, government, and other social studies. The curriculum uses hands-on activities to help students connect lessons to the real world and understand how school, and their current school lessons, are tied to their future success. JA also allows students to develop a relationship with their volunteer – a successful adult working in a career that is likely unfamiliar to them. Understanding various careers and how to be successful in them gives students a chance to chart their own paths toward success.

The JA curriculum is sequential, starting in kindergarten and progressing through high school. Concepts presented in one curriculum and reinforced in later ones. The alignment of JA curricula to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) make it valuable to educators and students.

This evaluation uses multiple approaches to evaluate the effect of student participation in Junior Achievement programs at the high school level. Students were given pre-tests prior to starting JA lessons and post-tests following completion of the program. The answers of only specific students who completed both pre- and post-tests were included in the study. (Students were identified by a code and not by name.) Because of this, the results are more accurate than if general groups of students were used. Analysis of the post-surveys also reflects positive overall student attitudes about JA programs and the effect of the programs on their future.

The evaluation report for SERVE Evaluation 2009, conducted by Dr. Lee Holcombe, provides a summary of statistical and qualitative findings from pre- and post-test surveys administered to Junior Achievement program participants.

The analysis includes six programs: JA Banks in Action (BIA), JA Economics (ECON), JA Careers with a Purpose (CWAP), JA Titan, JA Financial Literacy (FL)¹, and JA Success Skills (SS). Statewide, 2,620 pre-surveys were collected across all JA programs from 155 classrooms in 51 schools. For post-surveys, a total of 1,573 were collected from 90 classrooms in 42 schools.

The demographics of JA students mirror those of high school students in the state. Hispanic students represent the largest student population identified by TEA at 44% compared to white students at 40% and African American at 12%. In the JA program, Hispanic students comprise 41%, white students 42%, and African American 14%.

Several basic questions were answered by the study.

Is student participation in JA related to increased knowledge of the content knowledge of the program?

Content knowledge showed significant increases given the relative short time volunteers are with students – from 5 to 8 sessions of approximately an hour each. The positive increases in content knowledge ranged from 4.3 percentage points for the JA Financial Literacy to 12.7 for JA Success Skills to almost 14 for JA Banks in Action, with an overall increase of 5 percentage points across all JA programs. Since the content of each program is aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, these increases are associated with improved college readiness, workforce readiness, and financial literacy, depending upon the curriculum of the particular program in which the students participated.

Is student participation in JA related to increased understanding of - and regard for - the JA volunteers and curriculum?

Students across programs indicated an improved understanding of the purpose of JA as well showing that they would recommend JA to their friends. Post-tests show that across all programs students considered the JA volunteer as a positive role model and thought highly of the JA curriculum.

Is student participation in JA related to increased awareness of career options and how school relates to them? In the program JA Careers with a Purpose, responses demonstrated an improved knowledge of postsecondary career options along with an increased appreciation for how school relates to those options and the real world, and that that students learned about the importance of money management. In the program JA Success Skills, students gained knowledge of the 21st Century skills communication, listening, and building rapport.

Is student participation in JA related to increased engagement in school? Analysis of post-tests showed that students across all programs had an improved attitude towards school and an increased level of engagement.

For more information on JA programs, or a copy of the entire survey, please contact

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¹ The official name of this program is "JA Presents the NEFE High School Financial Planning Program", hereafter referred to as "JA Financial Literacy" or "FL".