

Junior Achievement

JA Careers with a Purpose Summative Evaluation

Executive Summary
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I. Introduction

Junior Achievement (JA) Worldwide is a not-for-profit organization financed by businesses, foundations, government, and individuals. Dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy, JA's programs are developed with a primary emphasis on social studies content, while providing a strong secondary emphasis on mathematics, reading, and writing skills.

JA Careers with a Purpose is part of JA Worldwide's integrated curricula for grades K-12, designed to help high school students understand the world of economics and prepare them for lifelong learning and achievement. In 2007, JA contracted with the Evaluation and Training Institute (ETI) to conduct a summative evaluation of *JA Careers with a Purpose*. The evaluation was designed to assess the impact of the program on student learning, as well as address student, teacher, and JA Member staff's attitudes toward the program curriculum and materials.

II. Methodology

ETI relied on surveys in online and paper formats as the principal method of data collection for the evaluation of *JA Careers with a Purpose*. Using a quasi-experimental design, students who received the program were compared to a control group using a pre-/post-survey assessing students' content knowledge and attitudes. Teachers, volunteers, and JA Member staff were asked to complete post-program surveys online. To supplement the surveys, ETI made site visits to two domestic locations where the program was being implemented. ETI researchers gathered qualitative data about *JA Careers with a Purpose* by observing JA volunteers as they presented the material in the classroom and conducted focus groups with students, volunteers, teachers, and staff.

III. Findings

Student Content Knowledge

To determine the impacts of the program on student content knowledge, program and comparison (control) group students were compared using a pre-/post-test quasi-experimental design.

- After the program, the program group's mean post-test score was significantly higher than the comparison group's mean score ($p < .05$), a gain that can be attributed to program students' participation in *JA Careers with a Purpose*.
- The results of a t-test performed on the program and comparison group post-test means suggest that *JA Careers with a Purpose* increased participating students'

knowledge and understanding of pre-/post-survey content compared to control group students.

- The results of a gain score analysis showed that from pre- to post-test, program students outperformed their comparison counterparts by an average of one point. The difference produced a statistically significant t-test result at the .05 level.
- Students demonstrated a five percentage point increase in the percentage of content items answered correctly overall, a statistically significant increase at the .05 level.
- An analysis of effect size using Cohen's d produced an effect size of .33, indicating that the program influenced students' knowledge in the areas addressed by the pre-/post-test.

Student Behaviors and Attitudes

- Upon completion of the program, students were more confident in their scholastic abilities and more likely to indicate that they were able to learn new concepts quickly and understood how to succeed in school.
- The program students' post-survey mean score addressing scholastic confidence was significantly more positive than that of the control group.
- Program students were significantly more likely to agree that entrepreneurs are highly respected by others and that they play an important role in solving society's problems.

Student Satisfaction

- The majority of students felt that the length of the program sessions and the content difficulty were "just right."
- Students preferred working in groups and playing games to class discussions and Student Workbook activities.
- Students rated the JA volunteers highly in all domains.
- Students identified the program as interesting, relevant to the real world, and a great learning experience.
- Ninety percent of students agreed that they would recommend *JA Careers with a Purpose* to a friend.

Adult Interactions

- JA Staff found it easy to recruit and train volunteers, and that teachers were interested in having the program in their classrooms.
- Teachers rated the JA volunteers highly across all domains, including punctuality, appearance, comfort with the material, and student rapport.

Program Materials

- Volunteers, teachers, and JA staff reported that the program materials were practical, user-friendly, attractive, high-quality, and held the students' attention.
- Volunteers reported that the materials facilitated easy preparation for the program sessions.

Program Curriculum

- The majority of volunteers and teachers agreed that the curriculum:
 - Encouraged students' creativity and imagination;
 - Conveyed the program's concepts to students;
 - Held the students' attention;
 - Resulted in a high level of student participation; and,
 - Was applicable to the real world.
- Most teachers also indicated that the curriculum met the standards required by the state, district, and school.

Student Reactions

- Over 80 percent of teachers and volunteers reported that students were interested in the program's topics, actively participated in the sessions, and enjoyed the program.

Overall Impressions

- When asked to rate the quality of the program overall, the majority of teachers, volunteers, and JA staff rated *JA Careers with a Purpose* as very good to excellent.
- Every volunteer and teacher surveyed indicated that he/she "would like to volunteer for/participate in Junior Achievement again."

V. Conclusions

As is evidenced by the evaluation results, *JA Careers with a Purpose* successfully contributed to student knowledge. Participating students also became more confident in their scholastic abilities and reported that they better understood how to succeed in school.

Adult respondents were also pleased with the program, reporting satisfaction with the materials, curriculum, and students' responses to the lessons. Most importantly, teachers and volunteers reported a willingness to recommend the program to others, as well as to participate in future JA programming. It is our recommendation that JA continue to offer *JA Careers with a Purpose* as it seeks to inspire and prepare young people to succeed in a global economy.