

JA WORLDWIDE[®]
***JA SUCCESS SKILLS[®]* PILOT PROGRAM**
FORMATIVE EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

JA Worldwide's *JA Success Skills* program, designed for students in grades 9 through 12, provides engaging, academically enriching, experiential-based activities in work-readiness education and career perspectives. The curriculum emphasizes social studies content while providing a strong focus on business, mathematics, reading, and writing skills. Through a variety of experiential activities, students better understand the relationship between what they learn in school and their successful participation in a global economy. Following participation in the program, students will be able to identify and demonstrate the work-readiness skills needed to research, get, and keep a job as well as the opportunity to develop innovative personal strategies to achieve lifelong learning pursuits and career opportunities.

In 2006-2007, JA Worldwide conducted a pilot evaluation of the *JA Success Skills* program. In order to guide development of the program, the evaluation investigated a variety of variables including: program implementation, level of satisfaction among volunteers, instructors and participants, and the modifications necessary to enhance program effectiveness.

2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

JA Worldwide programs are designed for students of all backgrounds, and, as such, it was imperative that the pilot program was implemented in a variety of sites. Seven program sites that represented a balance of male and female participants, ethnically diverse populations of youth in ninth through twelfth grade, at-risk youth and those from the general population were included in the pilot evaluation. The evaluation methodology was designed to allow for input from all local program stakeholders with a focus on gathering information related to program implementation and satisfaction. Surveys, focus groups, and interviews were the primary methods used for gathering information from participants. Program instructors, students, and area office staff provided input through a descriptive survey of the program and structured interviews. In addition, JA Worldwide staff conducted site visits to all seven area offices. During the visits, JA Worldwide staff interviewed area office personnel and program instructors/volunteers, observed program operations, and conducted focus groups.

3. EVALUATION RESULTS

3.1 Sample

Seven sites participated in the pilot evaluation process including: Boston, MA; Worcester, MA; Portland, OR; Albuquerque, NM; Los Angeles, CA; Denver, CO; and

Monterey, CA. Approximately 224 students, ranging in age from 15-17 years old, participated in the *JA Success Skills* program with an average of 32 students per class. Approximately 14 staff, 2 teachers, and 4 volunteers participated in on-site focus groups and interviews. Additionally, 6 *JA Job Success Skills* classes were observed in action by JA Worldwide staff.

3.2 Program Implementation

Based on the instructor fidelity checklist, each program had an average of 32 participants in the *JA Success Skills* program. The program consisted of 7 classroom sessions that lasted approximately 45 minutes each. JA Area office staff and instructors completed post surveys regarding program implementation and satisfaction. In addition, students completed surveys after each classroom session (see table 1).

**From the chart you will see that the number of surveys completed dropped significantly from meeting one to meeting seven. However, this study was descriptive in nature and utilized a number of data collection methods including classroom observation, focus groups and in-depth interviews with instructors, students, and area office personnel. Results were consistent across all sources.*

| Classroom Session | Number of students who completed post survey | 9 th grade | 10 th grade | 11 th grade | 12 th grade |
|--|--|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Meeting One, “It’s My Life” | 78 | 25 (32%) | 10 (13%) | 24 (31%) | 19 (24%) |
| Meeting Two, “Listen Up” | 50 | 26 (52%) | 7 (14%) | 9 (18%) | 8 (16%) |
| Meeting Three, “Stay Connected” | 46 | 15 (33%) | 6 (13%) | 10 (22%) | 15 (33%) |
| Meeting Four, “Think Win/Win” | 41 | 4 (10%) | 6 (15%) | 13 (32%) | 17 (42%) |
| Meeting Five, “Work Smart” | 27 | 4 (15%) | 3 (11%) | 7 (26%) | 12 (44%) |
| Meeting Six, “The Marketing Spin” | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 (100%) |
| Meeting Seven, “It’s My Future” | 6 | 6 (100%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 259 completed surveys | | | | |

Overall, the majority of instructors were consistently satisfied with the program materials and felt the youth were engaged (or very engaged) during the program. Instructors felt that the program offered good preparation for future employment success. In regards to areas of improvement, instructors shared that they would have liked more detailed instructions for some of the activities.

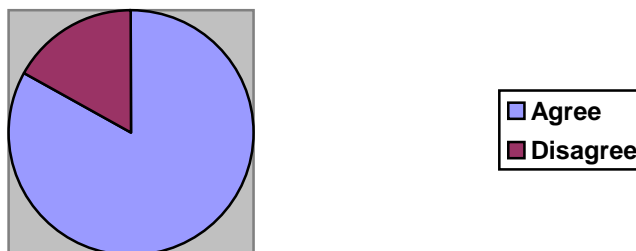
Area office personnel felt that the program filled a gap in programming needs for their area. When determining the best classroom fit for the program, area office personnel felt that the program was adaptable and that the content spoke to a variety of classroom environments and situations. Examples of classrooms that implemented the program include Marketing/Management, College Preparation Class, Careers, and English. Area office personnel reported that what they liked best about the program were the take home materials for students to use for future reference, the diversity of the videos, the content, the internet resources, and the group exercises. In regards to what they liked the least was the difficulty of getting through the material in the time that is allotted.

3.3 Participant Satisfaction

Students completed a post survey after each meeting where they could evaluate each individual activity and rate their overall satisfaction with the meeting. The summary of the results of each meeting are discussed below:

In Meeting One, “It’s My Life”, students are introduced to 16 Success Skills and by working in groups they use the skills to evaluate sample resumes. Overall, 85% of students agreed that they liked the program, 80% agreed that the meeting included ideas that they found very interesting, and 83% said that they learned new things about work-readiness skills.

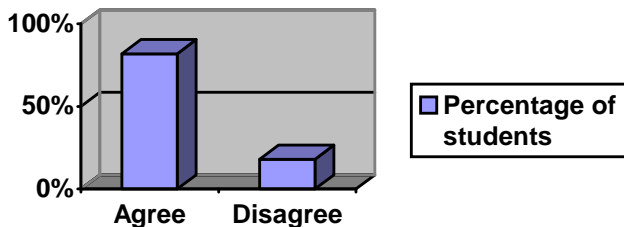
In this meeting, I learned new things about work-readiness skills



In Meeting Two, “Listen Up”, students work on developing effective speaking and listening skills. Overall, 66% of the students most enjoyed the role-play activity where they were able to practice their listening skills. Students were also asked in the post survey, “After participating in Meeting Two of JA Success Skills, do you believe you are more prepared for the world of work? Why or why not?” Overall, 83% of the students felt they were better prepared. Sample responses included, “Yes, because it showed me that I can’t always blow up when I’m mad”, “Yes, because they teach us the skills on how to get hired”, and “Yes because I have a better idea of how to deal with people.” In the post survey, students were also asked what they liked the most and what they liked the least about meeting two. Three themes emerged from the participant’s responses on what they liked best about the program – the interactive role plays and games (54%), the content (13%), and the fact that the session was fun (11%). From the responses on what they liked the least about the program – the only theme that emerged was dislike of workbook activities (4%).

In Meeting Three, “Stay Connected”, students learn about teamwork and cooperation by analyzing case studies. Of the respondents, the activities that the students enjoyed the most included the puzzle competition (92%), the brainstorming activity (75%), the case study activity (73%), and the DVD segment on *Cooperating with Other* (68%). Two themes emerged from the participant’s responses on what they liked best overall about the meeting – the interactive role plays and games (54%) and the content (13%). From the responses on what they liked the least about the program – the only theme that emerged was dislike of the DVD (14%). In the post survey for this meeting the students were also asked the following question: “After participating in Meeting Three of JA Success Skills, do you believe you are more prepared for the world of work? Why or why not?” Overall, 82% of the students felt they were better prepared. Sample responses included, “Yes, I learned to work with a team under pressure. I know now to talk to my teammates before we decide to do something”, “Yes, because it shows you how to work with people”, and “Yes, I have a better idea of how to successfully cooperate.”

After this program, I feel better prepared to enter the world of work



In Meeting Four, “Think Win/Win”, students develop solutions to workplace conflicts. According to students, what they liked most about the meeting was the scenarios (23%) and that it was fun (15%). The majority of students enjoyed the *Creating Win/Win Solutions* activity the most (93%). After completing meeting four of JA Success Skills, 84% of the students felt more prepared for the world of work.

In Meeting Five, “Work Smart”, students practice solving workplace problems and making decisions with a game show activity. Overall, 71% of the students enjoyed the personal reflection activity, 66% enjoyed the problem-solving game, and 60% enjoyed the JA Success Skills DVD segment on *Solving Problems and Making Decisions*. Students reported that what they liked most overall about meeting five was the game (35%) and the information regarding the interviewing process (19%). From the responses on what they liked the least about the program – the only theme that emerged was the response that they liked everything (36%).

In Meeting Six, “The Marketing Spin”, students learn the connection between promoting themselves and advertising a product. Overall, the majority of students enjoyed all the activities (79%). After participating in meeting six, 67% of the respondents felt more prepared to enter the world of work.

In Meeting Seven, “It’s My Future”, students use the information that they have learned in the program to participate in a mock job interview. In the post survey, students shared what they liked most about the meeting. Sample responses included, “I like asking each other questions”, “Everything was so fun”, and “It was a great way for preparing for future work interviews”.

Overall, participants enjoyed the program. They felt the program was interactive and that it exposed them to new information and skills that they can utilize in future. The majority of students also felt better prepared to enter the world of work after participating in this program (80%). Participants’ opinions about *JA Success Skills* demonstrate the potential of the program to increase self-confidence, develop work readiness skills, and to promote career planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the pilot/formative evaluation, area office personnel, instructors, and youth participants had multiple opportunities to provide input about how to improve the *JA Success Skills* program. Overall, the recommendations were not extensive as the pilot curriculum was well received by most students and instructors. These recommendations have been divided based upon their relevance for the curriculum/materials and program delivery/implementation.

Curriculum and Materials

- **Maintain the video assessment tool.** This tool was available with the old version of the *JA Success Skills* program. Some of the area offices enjoyed using this resource. Maintain the video assessment tool on the JA website for those offices that want to supplement it with the program
- **Provide More Detail.** Instructors felt that more detail needed to be provided for several of the activities. Revise the activities to include a more detailed section on preparation and instructions.
- **Student CD-ROM.**
 - Under *Networking Tips* add a 5th bullet for dressing appropriately and give examples of how one should dress for a networking event.
 - Under the section for *Other Job Considerations* add a couple of additional bullet points – *Hours* and *Training*. Under the *Hours* bullet point talk about the importance of considering the hours required by a job and how this impacts personal and family obligations. Provide examples. In regards to *Training*, have students consider whether the job offers additional training opportunities and whether these opportunities can prepare them for the job that they ultimately desire.
 - Under *First Impressions* add another bullet point for *Dress Appropriately*. Provide examples of dos and don'ts.

Program Delivery/Implementation

Time constraints were the primary challenge that impacted program delivery.

- **Time Constraints.** This was a recurring theme. Instructors and students reported not having enough time to complete all the activities. Provide volunteers with an outline of key concepts to cover and suggested times in the columns of the Guide for Teachers and Volunteers. If volunteers can see the suggested times they might be able to adjust their presentation to cover all of the activities.

Conclusion

The formative evaluation of the *JA Success Skills* pilot program illustrates that youth are enjoying the program, learning about skills necessary for success in the workplace, exploring future career goals, and are being provided with an experiential learning activities. Some key findings include:

- Overall, the majority of instructors were consistently satisfied with the program materials and felt the youth were engaged (or very engaged) during the program. Instructors felt that the program offered good preparation for future employment success.
- Area office personnel felt that the program was adaptable and that the content spoke to a variety of classroom environments and situations.
- The majority of students felt better prepared to enter the world of work after participating in the program (80%)
- 83% of students reported that through the program they learned new things about work-readiness skills.
- Participants' opinions about *JA Success Skills* demonstrate the potential of the program to increase self-confidence, develop work readiness skills, and to promote career planning.
- Time constraints and lack of detail for the facilitation of some activities were reported as the least likable aspects of the program

Overall, the program was well received by participants and was seen as highly engaging to students. While these findings from the pilot evaluation are promising, implementing some of the recommendations will enhance the ability of the program to achieve its objectives. The information from the evaluation will assist in refining materials and will provide the groundwork for further evaluation on the impact of the program.