

Evaluation Results 2003-04

JA Really Works Over Time!

Junior Achievement (JA) has a strong commitment to program evaluation to support program improvement and accountability. The Worldwide Institute for Research and Evaluation (WIRE), in collaboration with the JA Headquarters Education Group, has conducted nationwide evaluation studies over the course of several years in order to assess the cumulative and long-term impact on students who participated in JA programs. By utilizing consistent methods and reporting practices, WIRE was able to aggregate the findings from these evaluations and conclude that **JA programs are successful in teaching free enterprise and entrepreneurial skills, raising students' aspirations, providing a positive business role model, and teaching students to create opportunities to achieve their goals.**

In a 2001-2002 study, WIRE surveyed 750 JA students when they were in the 6th, 9th, or 12th grade. These students had participated in JA during the 5th, 8th, or 11th grade and many had participated in JA programs in previous grades as well. **When asked to explain the free enterprise system, students who had participated in JA demonstrated a much broader understanding and provided more sophisticated responses than did students who had not participated in JA. When the JA students were asked about their school and work attitudes, 86 percent of 6th graders, 73 percent of 9th graders, and 40 percent of 12th graders indicated that JA had positively influenced their attitudes toward school. In addition, 79 percent of the 9th grade JA students suggested that JA had increased their positive attitudes toward working.**

In a 2002-2003 study, WIRE surveyed the same 750 students when they were in the 7th grade, 10th grade, or first year post-high school. At this time these students had all completed JA programs two years previously (with some having completed additional programs during the interim). This study compared the JA students to students in general, as represented by data from a nationwide survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), U.S. Dept of Education.

JA 7th and 10th graders and post-high school students responded to questions about their attitudes and aspirations regarding education. **The 7th and 10th grade JA students, as compared to students in general, were significantly more likely to believe that they would graduate from high school, pursue postsecondary education, and graduate college.** Ninety-seven percent of those having more than three JA experiences were very sure that they would graduate from high school, compared to 81 percent of students who had participated in only one JA program. JA students were also much more confident about their ability to complete college (86 percent were very confident), compared to 12 percent of a comparison group. **The post-high school students also benefited from JA, stating that JA had affected the decisions they were currently making and better prepared them to make future decisions. JA post-high school students also indicated that JA had made the transition to college easier, by encouraging them to work hard at school and on the job.**

Notable findings from the 2002-2003 longitudinal study include the following:

- ▶ JA middle school students were significantly more likely to aspire toward a college prep program of study when they reached high school and they were more likely to hold higher aspirations for their careers.
- ▶ A greater percentage of middle grade and high school JA students volunteered for unpaid community service projects as compared to students in general.
- ▶ Most of the JA high school students worked at least part-time during the school year, whereas only about one-quarter of students in general worked during the academic year.
- ▶ JA students were more likely to enter college immediately after high school.
- ▶ The more JA programs students participated in while in elementary and secondary school, the more likely they were to select a business-related major in college, to rate their computer skills highly, and to participate in entrepreneurial activities after leaving high school.