

Our Community[®]

Overview

- *Our Community* is one of eight Junior Achievement USA™ distributed programs for elementary schools. Designed for second grade students, it consists of five, volunteer-led sessions with activities exploring the interdependent roles of workers in a community, the work they perform, and how communities work.
- In fall 2010, a program evaluation was conducted to assess program quality and effectiveness. Data collection consisted of post-program surveys for teachers and volunteers.
- The evaluation was conducted by Junior Achievement USA, but the analysis and reporting was conducted by an outside evaluation firm, the Evaluation and Training Institute (ETI).
- Sample: 80 teachers and 104 volunteers.
- Participating Cities: Phoenix, AZ; Charlotte, NC; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; Chattanooga, TN; Colorado Springs, CO; Philadelphia, PA; Canton, OH; Birmingham, AL; Lincoln, NE; Kansas City, MO; Saint Louis, MO; New Jersey; Toledo, OH; Tulsa, OK; Portland, OR; Providence, RI; Rochester, NY; San Diego, CA; Bowling Green, KY; York, PA; South Dakota; Houston, TX; Las Vegas, NV; Hartford, CT; Evansville, IN; Moline, IL; Grand Rapids, MI; Utah; and Wisconsin.

Evaluation Results

Volunteer Effectiveness

- 70 percent of teachers rated their volunteers' overall effectiveness as "very effective" and 65% "strongly agreed" that their volunteer provided value to the program.

Provides students with an outside perspective about real life other than what their teachers tell them. – Teacher

It allows the students to meet volunteers from the business field in a positive environment who are outside of their typical family, friends and teachers who might be able to connect with them for the day and have a positive impact. – Teacher

Program's Alignment with Learning Objectives

- Overall, teachers and volunteers reported that the majority of program objectives were thoroughly addressed.
 - Both teachers and volunteers most highly rated the objective, *students will identify a variety of jobs in the community*, with 85% and 79%, respectively, rating it as "thoroughly addressed." Over 70% of teachers and volunteers also felt the objective, *students will recognize how people live and work in a community*, was "thoroughly addressed."



JA Curriculum

- The majority of teachers who received the *Our Community* program in their classroom "strongly agreed" that the JA curriculum aligned with their regular course curriculum (89%), reflected the state's



educational standards (91%), and was age appropriate (96%).

- Most teachers and volunteers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that that the JA curriculum helps prepare students to be successful in the future, encourages students’ creativity, exposes students to new career possibilities, and to make good decisions about money.
- A majority of teachers also “strongly agreed” that the JA curriculum connects what students learn in the classroom with the outside world and their future (66%) and reinforces the value of an education (58%).

It may be the first or only chance students learn about economics and their role within it. They seemed to understand basic concepts at the end that they hadn't ever heard of before. – Volunteer

The JA Program engages my student in vital aspects of the community from a real world perspective. – Teacher

Student Engagement

- For the *Our Community* program, the majority of volunteers (90% or more) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that students appeared interested in the curriculum, were engaged during the activities and discussion, and appeared to understand the concepts presented.
- Teachers reported similar opinions, with (86% or more) “strongly agreeing” or “agreeing” with these same statements.

It is amazing how my students will relate what JA taught them, in our curriculum discussions, throughout the rest of the year. I am always so impressed with how they remember what was taught. – Teacher

Student Skills

- Ninety-three percent of teachers and 91% of volunteers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students increased their teamwork skills.
- Teachers and volunteers also reported skill improvement in decision-making (84% of volunteers and 83% of teachers) and problem-solving (77% of volunteers and 81% of teachers).

Overall Impressions

- Over 85% of teachers and volunteers rated the program’s instructional materials as “excellent” or “above average.”
- An overwhelming majority of teachers (99%) and all volunteers (100%) said that the *Our Community* program had a positive impact on participating 2nd grade students.

I think JA has done a great job of organizing the materials for the teacher. The booklet is detailed and the activities are educational and fun. – Volunteer



I am 36 and still remember doing JA when I was in Elementary School. It is a great program and I am glad I can give back to such a meaningful program. – Volunteer

Future Participation

- As additional evidence of the largely positive experience that teachers and volunteers had, 100% of teachers and 100% of volunteers reported that they would participate in a JA program again.

