

# Our Families<sup>®</sup>

## Overview

- *Our Families* is one of eight Junior Achievement USA™ distributed programs for elementary schools. Designed for first grade students, it consists of five, volunteer-led sessions with activities emphasizing the roles people play in the local economy and engages students with activities about needs, wants, tools and skills, and interdependence.
- 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: 78 teachers and 94 volunteers.
- Participating Cities: Phoenix, AZ; Charlotte, NC; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; Chattanooga, TN; Colorado Springs, CO; Dallas, TX; Philadelphia, PA; Birmingham, AL; Lincoln, NE; Kansas City, 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

- Sixty-six percent of teachers rated their volunteer's overall effectiveness as "very effective," and 59% "strongly agreed" that their volunteer provided value to the program.

*I think the students really enjoyed having someone new come into their class. It is a great way to show them that their community supports them, and encourage them to be successful. – Teacher*

*It allows them to see other people come in and reinforce what they have been taught by respected adults in their lives (i.e. church leader, parents, teacher, etc.). – Teacher*

### Program's Alignment with Learning Objectives

- Overall, teachers and volunteers reported that the majority of program objectives were thoroughly addressed.
  - Volunteers most highly rated the objective, *students will be able to explain the differences between a needs and a want*, with 95% reporting that it was "thoroughly addressed."
  - Teachers, on the other hand, most highly rated the objective, *students will identify jobs people do*, with 82% reporting that it was also "thoroughly addressed."



## JA Curriculum

- The majority of teachers who received the *Our Families* program in their classroom “strongly agreed” that the JA curriculum aligned with their regular course curriculum (94%), reflected the state’s educational standards (91%), and was age appropriate (94%).
- Teachers and volunteers stated that the JA curriculum connects what students learn to the outside world and their future, reinforces the value of an education, and helps prepare them to be successful in the future with between 92% and 97% of teachers and volunteers “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” with these statements.

*[The program] provides practical real world examples of what education can do for you provided by someone who works in the community. – Volunteer*

*Helps them understand real world experiences and how schooling plays an important role in that. – Volunteer*

## Student Engagement

- For the *Our Families* program, the majority of volunteers (95% 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 (93% or more) “strongly agreeing” or “agreeing” with these same statements.

## Student Skills

- Seventy-five percent of teachers and 74% of volunteers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students increased their interpersonal skills.
- Teachers and volunteers reported the most improvement in problem-solving (72% of volunteers and 67% of teachers agreed) and decision-making skills (83% of volunteers and 71% of teachers agreed).

## Overall Impressions

- An overwhelming majority of teachers (87%) and volunteers (90%) rated the program’s instructional materials as “excellent” or “above average.”
- All of the teachers (100%) and all volunteers reported that the program had a positive impact on participating 1st grade students.

*The JA program has a positive impact on the students by bringing the area's business professionals into the classroom and bringing with them their knowledge and expertise. - Teacher*



*I think JA is an amazing organization that teaches children about life, business and financial growth in their future lives.  
- 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.