



COMMUNITY IMPACT OF JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT ROCKY MOUNTAIN, INC.

Research & Evaluation Report
June 2015

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Letter from our President

Our economic future is uncertain.

- Colorado will only educate 50% of the workers needed to fill the high-skill, high wage jobs it creates between 2008 and 2018.
- More than two thirds of parents feel less prepared to give financial guidance than they do talking about the “birds & bees.”
- 74% of young people identified risk and the possibility of failure as deterrents to launching their own business ventures.

What is certain is that Junior Achievement students are better prepared to succeed – and create their own futures.

We know this because, when asked if being a JA student positively affected their future, 92 percent of JA graduates responded with a resounding, "yes!" Our alumni are more than twice as confident that they can successfully compete in a business environment, compared to adults without JA experience.

To ensure that we continue to build upon this legacy, JA measures and reports the impact of our programs on students' knowledge and attitudes. This year, to further evaluate the impact of JA, we contracted a third-party evaluator to measure JA students' understanding of financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship. We learned that:

- JA programs help students gain the skills employers need to grow their businesses.
- JA students are more confident in their ability to manage and control their finances.
- JA students embody an entrepreneurial spirit and understand how to leverage resources to launch a business.

Perhaps the most important finding is that **JA students are more optimistic about achieving future success**. Optimism is the underpinning of advancement – not just material advancement – but also societal advancement and the enrichment our neighborhoods and schools, our businesses and communities.

With looming college debt, complex retirement plans, and a post-recession job market, we must continue to do everything possible to ensure that our students are prepared for the skilled jobs of tomorrow. We must also help young people, who dream of creating opportunities for themselves and others, build a foundation for success in an increasingly competitive global economy. Most of all, we must protect our country's most important assets – the spirit of enterprise and possibility.

None of this is possible without our 5,700 volunteers who bring JA's results-driven programs to life each year. We invite you to read more about the many ways that these role models lead by example, giving real-world meaning to JA's curriculum and helping students become more optimistic about school, work and life.

We are confident that, by working together, we can help every student – no matter what his or her background – feel in control of their destiny. Are you in?

Robin Wise

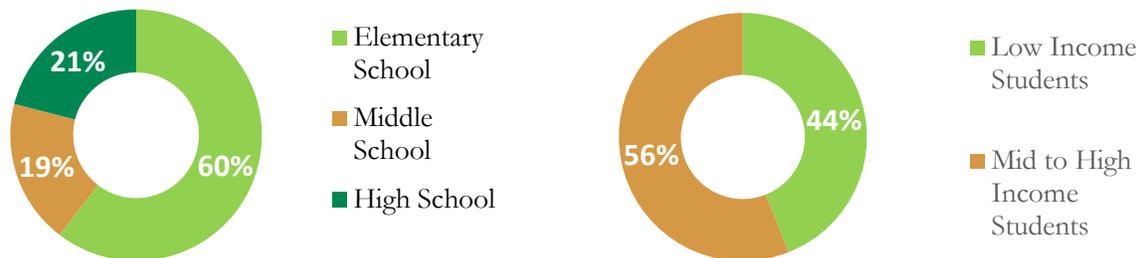
Our Mission

Our mission at Junior Achievement-Rocky Mountain, Inc. is to prepare young people to thrive in the 21st century workplace and global economy by inspiring a passion in entrepreneurship and free enterprise, and instilling an understanding of personal financial literacy and results from external evaluations prove that our programs work!

JA Rocky Mountain achieves its mission through volunteers who implement programs that teach Three Pillars – Financial Literacy, Work Readiness, and Entrepreneurship. We are pleased to report that we are achieving our mission and proving and improving our impact. This report highlights our community impact and accomplishments during the 2014/15 school year.

Student Reach

Thanks to the support from organizations, companies, foundations, and individuals, JA Rocky Mountain is projected to reach **125,295** students during 2014/15! Our programs will be delivered to more than **5,000** classes by **5,700** volunteers in **530** schools within **42** school districts in partnership with nearly **4,000** teachers.



* Schools are designated as low income when the Free or Reduced Lunch Rate (FRL) is 50% or higher. Prior year: Elementary (63%), Middle School (18%), High School (18%), Low Income Students (41%), and Mid to High Income Students (59%).

Sample Size

Students were randomly selected to participate in our evaluation. As JA volunteers and schools had no prior knowledge of their being chosen as evaluation participants, our findings were an accurate reflection of how programming was delivered in all classrooms by all volunteers.

The population represented in our evaluation included more than 60,000 students from 50 schools in the Rocky Mountain Region. The classrooms selected for our evaluation included a sampling strategy of students in public, private, and charter schools from Fort Collins to Denver.

While JA's mission centers on teaching financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship to as many students as possible, there is a concentrated effort to reach low income students in our communities. Our methodology, including learning objectives and assessment questions, are described in more detail on the following pages. To bridge our student evaluation results with our other stakeholders, we received feedback from more than 570 teachers and 760 volunteers. You will find their survey results and feedback toward the end of this report.

Methodology

Learning objectives of our programs were matched to construct definitions, which are listed in the chart below. The assessment tools were developed with key staff members' input and were designed for students at each grade segment (elementary, middle, and high school) and developmental level.

	Financial Literacy	Work Readiness	Entrepreneurship
Elementary School	A working knowledge of basic financial transactions, institutions, and personal money management.	Knowledge that a set of personal behaviors and skills are necessary to maintain employment/earnings.	The capacity to both understand and apply existing resources to perceived opportunities.
Middle School	Knowledge of the inter-connectivity between the economics of the household and the transactions between nations.	Understanding the connection between formal education, personal characteristics and the need for skills in the workplace.	Understanding the ability to obtain, innovate, and apply resources (capital) to a perceived opportunity.
High School	Knowledge of economic concepts and terms for local and global enterprises, and personal money-management.	Knowledge of and ability to organize personal characteristics and goals to match needs presented in the workplace.	Ability to identify business opportunities, and apply effort and resources necessary to create new business endeavors.

The Three Pillars of Junior Achievement were complemented by secondary constructs to serve as predictor variables for individual success as well as attitudes about school and life in general. Those included the students increased knowledge in banking, business, and budgeting for financial literacy. They also included academic preparation, potential growth in the community, and the student's initiative for work readiness. Lastly, entrepreneurship indicators included student achievement and college and career planning.

Assessment questions were centered on the student's understanding of key financial concepts as well as their opinions regarding business, business practices, intentions of getting a complete education and viable career options. To determine whether taking the pre-assessment impacted the scores on the post-assessment, not all students took the pre- and post-assessments. The evaluation tools were also designed to reflect the student's developmental capacity and vocabulary. Further, the assessments measured student's understanding of business ethics and levels of entitlement.

Test Instruments

Our test instruments include assessments, opinion surveys, and observation reports. These tools allow us to measure student knowledge gains, attitudinal shifts, and in some cases, behavior changes. The data collected is aggregated, coded, and analyzed through software to reach statistically significant results and conclusions.

Results & Findings

For the second year in a row, there remained strong, positive and statistically significant correlation between each of the three JA Pillars and improved attitudes toward life among students. In general, students in JA programs improve their attitudes towards school and show decreased levels of entitlement as they move from middle to high school and discover ways to be self-reliant.

Students who participate in JA understand the need to get good grades and develop long-term education goals linked to their career goals. They demonstrated statistically significant gains in knowledge of financial literacy, entrepreneurship and work readiness concepts. Students even showed an increased understanding of business ethics.

Further, students who participate in JA in high school reveal differences in their optimism about achieving future success. They now understand how to control their finances, are better prepared for the workforce, and feel they are personally in control of their destiny. These attributes all contribute to higher optimism and hope.

Student Knowledge & Skill Acquisition

Financial Literacy

Students who participate in JA are more confident in their abilities to manage and control their finances. At every grade level, students demonstrate a gain in knowing how to:

- ❖ Make ends meet
- ❖ Plan ahead for future expenses
- ❖ Keep track of assets and debts
- ❖ Stay informed of financial events
- ❖ Choose financial products

Work Readiness

Students in both low and higher income school respond well to the work readiness programs that JA offers. The trajectory for all students showed steady gains, not only over the course of the program, but also as the students progress in age. Overall, students are better prepared to enter the work force. At most grade levels in middle and high school, they demonstrate an increase in awareness of work force skills including:

- ❖ Critical thinking
- ❖ Teamwork
- ❖ Oral communication
- ❖ Ethics and integrity
- ❖ Professionalism and work ethic

Entrepreneurship

Students who participate in JA embody an entrepreneurial spirit and understand how to leverage resources to start a new a business. JA students exhibit a strong understanding of key entrepreneurial characteristics including:

- ❖ Personal discipline
- ❖ Planning and time-management
- ❖ Independence and self-reliance
- ❖ Optimism, persistence and belief in economic values
- ❖ Targeting Customers

The results presented in this report are based on both an external evaluation conducted by QREM, LLC. and internal analysis. The data was gathered during the 2014/15 school year from 50 randomly selected schools with a total population of nearly 60,000 students in Denver and Northern Colorado. The results and findings presented in this report are statistically significant.

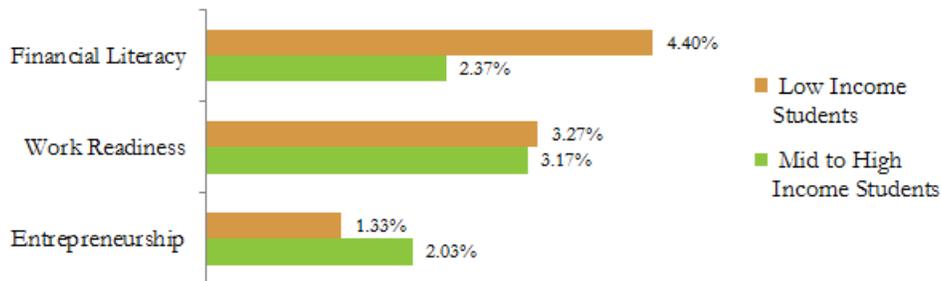
JA Impact for Low Income Students

Through our evaluation efforts, we found that low income students benefit greatly from JA! Even though our volunteers are in the classroom a short amount of time, relative to the entire school year, results show that our impact is valuable for these students.

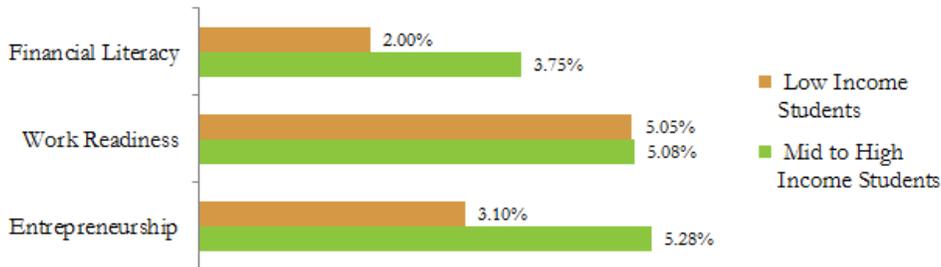
Low income students showed substantial knowledge gains after experiencing JA. In some cases, low income students surpassed their higher income peers in learning, closing or eliminating the knowledge gap. We found the highest gains among low income students in 1) elementary financial literacy, 2) middle and high school work readiness, and 3) high school entrepreneurship.

We found that low income students have fewer opportunities to learn the concepts taught through JA through the normal course of their lives, so the overall impact for these students surpasses gains made by their higher income peers. The “leaps in learning” among our JA students during 2014/15 are shown below.

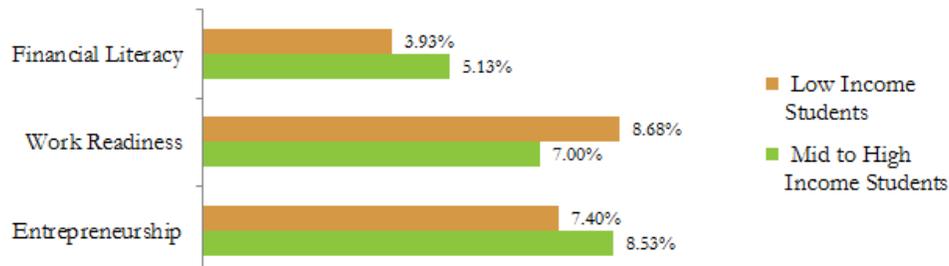
Elementary School



Middle School



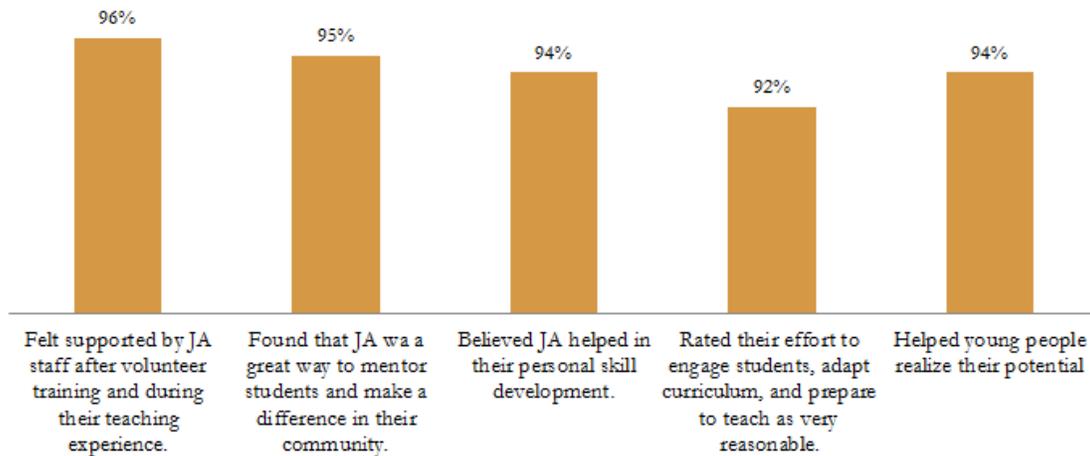
High School



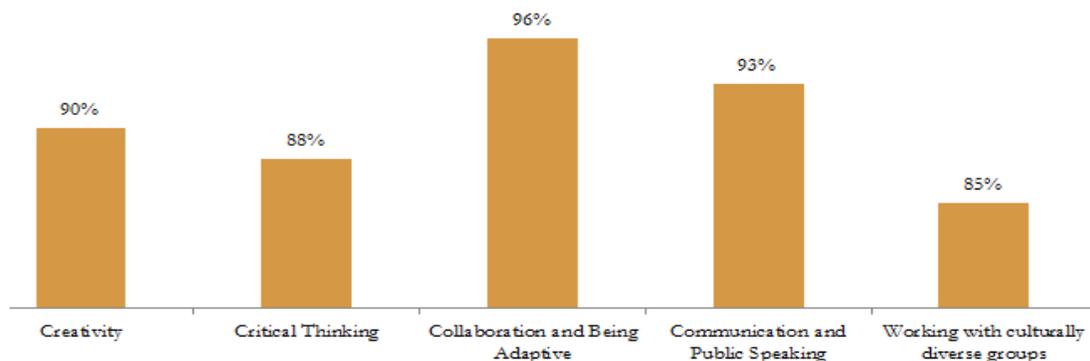
Volunteer Feedback

Throughout the year, volunteers provide valuable feedback to help us improve the implementation of our programs and determine how to increase volunteer retention. Our volunteers come from several different sources, backgrounds, and experiences. During this past school year, JA worked with over 5,600 volunteers who helped JA reach over 127,000 students. More than 760 volunteers provide their feedback through various surveys.

Our volunteers had this to share about their JA experience ...



Further, JA volunteers expressed that they developed the following professional and job-related skills through their teaching experience.

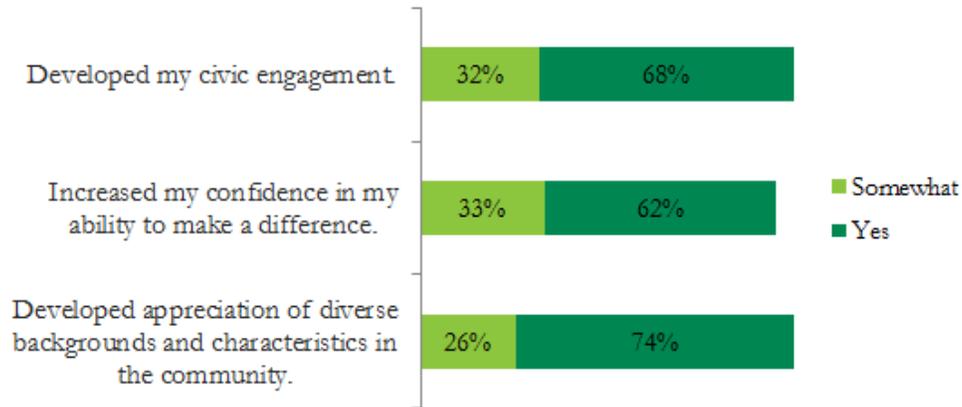


College Student Volunteers

A segment of volunteers are currently attending universities, including Johnson & Wales University (JWU), University of Colorado at Denver (UCD), and University of Denver (DU). Most of our college student volunteers partner with JA through their service learning course or business-related organizations. They provide us with feedback separate from our other volunteer population.

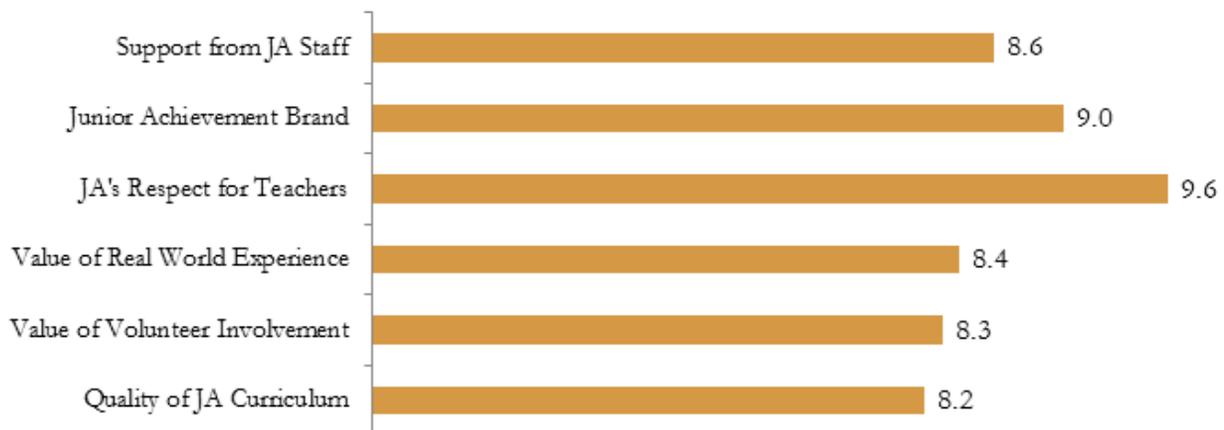
Regarding volunteering and social responsibility, millennials thrive on instant gratification and want to see their impact in the community immediately. “Nonprofit organizations are starting to focus their research and strategies around millennials because they realize this generation is driving true community impact” (Philanthropic Endeavors, Kitson, 2014). That is what makes our partnership with these universities so powerful.

Our college student volunteers said the following about their JA experience...



Teacher Feedback

Throughout the year, teachers provide their feedback to help us improve the implementation of our programs. Overwhelmingly, we found that teachers enjoy having JA programs in their classroom. They rated the quality of our programs and their partnership with JA on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being a fantastic experience. Below are the average scores we received from more than 570 teachers:



Overall, 97% of teachers said JA is worth it and are likely to request the program for their students again. Teachers also shared the following comments about their experience:

“I thoroughly enjoyed having the JA volunteers in my classroom. I feel that the activities were very engaging and beneficial to my students. I would definitely have JA be a part of my students' learning again. Thank you for the fantastic experience!” ~ Teacher, Campbell Elementary School

“I was very impressed with the JA Start It Up program. I had previously used some business curriculum in my classroom to help with math instruction and this program worked well with the information I had already taught. It went well in providing a ‘real-world’ approach to teaching.”
~ Teacher, Omar D. Blair K-8 School

“As always, I think your program is amazing and I hope that you continue with all of the amazing things that I can use as valuable resources!” ~ Teacher, Centaurus High School

For more information about Junior Achievement-Rocky Mountain, Inc. and our evaluation process, please contact Jeff Wise at jwise@jacolorado.org.

