
MINNESOTA BEST PRACTICES: Junior Achievement and Workforce System Collaboration

Agency: Junior Achievement of the Upper Midwest (Duluth District Office), Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training and Duluth WorkForce Center

Service area: The counties of Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis.

Overview of Program: Junior Achievement (JA) connects youth with business people, so they get hands-on, real-world experience in how to work and manage money in a global economy. JA uniquely teaches entrepreneurship, work readiness and financial literacy by connecting businesses directly to schools. JA connects local business people with youth. These volunteers add real-world experience to classroom education.

Purpose of Partnership: Partnering with JA allows for greater success of each of the partnering organizations. With the use of hands-on and tested materials as well as caring adult role models, area youth will be given multiple opportunities for success in life. These partnerships ensure JA is able to reach more youth with its programs on business, economics, and financial literacy. Additionally, it ensures community volunteers (typically from the business community) are available to deliver K-12 (age-appropriate) activities and engage with our future workers, consumers and producers.

Current Scope of Partnerships:

1. In Duluth, JA staff represents youth serving agencies as a member of the local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB), Executive Committee, and chair of the Youth Committee. In addition, the JA staff is a member of the LWIB's Education Committee.
2. Duluth WorkForce Center staff, JA staff and other agencies have collaborated on a Job Shadow Day experience for hundreds of eighth graders. Planners survey student interests and match them with business hosts for ½ day job site experience.
3. The LWIB and WorkForce Center collaborate with JA on a Career Expo within the JA High School Rocks event. This event is a region-wide music competition that also focuses on career exploration.
4. Junior Achievement has collaborated region-wide on the promotion of a workforce development website, www.thenorthlandworks.org. Partners include:
 - Duluth WorkForce Center
 - Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training
 - Wisconsin CEP

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- Junior Achievement
5. Through the Northeast MN Office of Job Training, JA programs benefited from the assistance of an Adult Training program worker (500 hours of service was provided to JA at no cost). JA provided a positive work environment, opportunities for staff personal development and networking opportunities.
 6. Finally, both organizations are strategizing ways to engage their employees, who are Career Counselors (who are already spending time in high schools), as JA volunteers. All JA programs must be taught by a volunteer. However, through this opportunity the Career Counselors will have an established curriculum to implement with area high school students to ensure the resources of both organizations are not duplicated and efficiently utilized.

Impact on Youth/Job Seekers: JA's impact on student achievement is consistent and significant. JA students, as compared to students in general, are significantly more likely to believe that they will graduate from high school, pursue postsecondary education and graduate from college.

Additionally, JA students are:

More likely than non-JA students to attend college immediately after high school.

- More likely than non-JA students to declare a major during their first year of college.

Impact on Community: Partnering with JA allows for greater success. JA teachers nationwide strongly agree that JA programs are: Engaging, easy to use, appealing to students, age-appropriate, and of high quality. Ninety-four percent (94%) of teachers would recommend JA to a colleague.

High School graduation rates with two JA experiences is 93 percent; and with three plus JA experiences, 100 percent.

Identification of Partners:

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Collaboration**

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Ability to Replicate the Program: JA covers all corners of Minnesota with staff in the Metro Area and six outstate offices. JA staff seeks opportunities to collaborate with workforce development groups and agencies.