
Junior Achievement of New York

Evaluation of the High School Heroes Program August 2004

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What the High School Heroes said about their experience:

The experience the Junior Achievement program provided for me was wonderful. It felt good to know that I helped someone with a long future ahead of them understand more about themselves and the world around them. I'm really looking forward to participating in this program next year.

It was an amazing experience and I would love to do it again and again.

I think we should do this every Friday and go to different schools all over New York ... even the bad schools.

Executive Summary

The High School Heroes Program operates as a program delivery strategy that effectively expands the volunteer base available to Junior Achievement and through which they expand their ability to deliver their elementary program to schools throughout New York City. The program has four levels: a kindergarten level called *Ourselves*; first grade materials called *Our Families*; *Our Community* for second grade; and *Our City* for use with third grade. In the past, the volunteers to deliver the elementary program were adults recruited from businesses in the same neighborhoods as the schools. Junior Achievement noted that the “outer boroughs” of New York City (Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx) had few businesses from which to draw volunteer recruits. Their solution was to recruit volunteers from high schools to deliver the same elementary programs.

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the High School Heroes Program operating in New York City during the 2003-2004 school year. The evaluation was designed to accommodate the late stage of the program at the time the study began by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The design included: four site visits to elementary schools, one in each of the four boroughs where the program was delivered; surveys of high school coordinators, elementary teachers with high school volunteers, elementary teachers with adult volunteers, and the High School Heroes themselves; in-depth interview of four elementary contacts; in-depth interview with High School Heroes Site Coordinator; and review of existing written records. The evaluation provides information on the students who are the High School Heroes, why they participate in the program, and what they and their building coordinator believed they gained from their participation. The evaluation also provides information on the effects of the program on the elementary students in each of the High School Heroes buildings as reported by the elementary teachers and the Heroes themselves. The evaluation also addressed questions regarding the “value added” aspect of the Junior Achievement Elementary Program. A program such as the High School Heroes functions within the existing curriculum. It is important to establish if the program offers some “value added” to the existing curriculum.

The majority of the students who participated in the High School Heroes Program were in their junior year (130 students or 65% of all participating students). As the survey shows, the program provides participating high school students with a learning experience that improves their understanding of the professional behavior and professional practices as well as of professional treatment by others and a sense of responsibility. The elementary teachers, with whom the Heroes worked reported that the Heroes were well prepared, provided a positive role model for the elementary students and worked well with the younger students in general. 99.2% of these teachers reported that having a High School Hero in their classroom had been a good experience for their students.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the elementary teachers participated in the High School Heroes Program because they had participated in the past and had had a good experience with the program. The problem solving and critical thinking attributes of the Junior Achievement Elementary Program were identified the most often by teachers as an important program characteristic.

In open-ended responses, the teachers with high school volunteers reported high levels of learning by their students which they attributed to both the quality of the materials and the fact that the high school students provided their students with good positive role models. Twenty-two of the elementary teachers with high school volunteers noted their effectiveness as role models to the elementary students. Fifteen of the same teachers noted that their students enjoyed the Junior Achievement Program and learned from it. Twelve made specific statements regarding the “hands-on” characteristics of the program materials as having a possible effect on the their students’ learning. Nine noted the high quality of the materials, although there were some statements about the time and pacing of the curriculum.

While there is some room for improvement to the program, in the most important measure of all, whether the teachers who hosted the volunteers and the volunteers themselves would participate in the program again, this program is a success, because both groups reported that, given the chance, they would take part in the High School Heroes Program again. The evaluators, therefore, recommend that the program address the issues raised in this report and continue the program with those adjustment. In addition, the evaluators recommend that the program monitor the effects of the recommended adjustments as they are implemented to ensure minimum disruptions to the other program components.

Program Description

Junior Achievement New York (JANY) provides programs to grades K-12 in schools in New York City and on Long Island, NY. The traditional volunteer base for JANY has been a private sector business professional who volunteer to be trained in one of the organization's prepared programs. The High School Heroes Program operates as a program delivery strategy that effectively expands the volunteer base available to Junior Achievement and through which they expand their ability to deliver their elementary program to schools throughout New York City. The program has four levels: a kindergarten level called *Ourselves*; first grade materials called *Our Families*; *Our Community* for second grade; and, *Our City* for use with third grade. These materials were designed to be used in a program delivery model that assumes one hour per week of instruction over five or six weeks. In the past, the volunteers to deliver the elementary program were adults recruited from businesses in the same neighborhoods as the schools. Junior Achievement noted that the 'outer boroughs' of New York City (Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx) had few businesses from which to draw volunteer recruits. Their solution was to recruit volunteers from high schools to deliver the same elementary program.

In order to make this program work with high school student volunteers some changes had to be made and some processes had to be established. Instead of the volunteers visiting the classrooms one hour each week for five or six weeks, the High School Heroes deliver the entire five-week curriculum (or as much of it as they can manage) in one day. While adult volunteers often work with classes alone, the Heroes program attempts to place two Heroes in each classroom in each elementary school. Adult volunteers attend a training session at the Junior Achievement offices in Manhattan; the Heroes are trained by a Junior Achievement staff member at their own high school. Recruitment of high school volunteers is done through a faculty contact at each high school, which person also establishes any criteria for participation. While at the elementary building high school students are supervised by a Junior Achievement staff member.

The Evaluation Study

Evaluation Design

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the High School Heroes Program operating in New York City during the 2003-2004 school year. The evaluation was designed to accommodate the late stage of the program at the time the study began by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The design included: four site visits to elementary schools, one in each of the four boroughs where the program was delivered; surveys of high school

coordinators, elementary teachers with high school volunteers, elementary teachers with adult volunteers, and the High School Heroes themselves; in-depth interview of four elementary contacts; in-depth interview with High School Heroes Site Coordinator; and review of existing written records.

The evaluation was started late in the school year so that there was no chance to increase initial survey response rates using generally accepted means (reminder mailings or telephone follow-up). For this reason, a two-stage cluster sample was used where one period of the program identified the cluster unit within which a saturation sample of all participating volunteers and program delivery classrooms was drawn. During the three months of the cluster, eighteen high schools sent 745 students into the classrooms of 362 teachers in nineteen elementary schools, representative of the twenty-nine high schools, thirty-six elementary schools and six hundred and twenty-five classes of the entire academic year. Useable surveys were received from 198 students (approximately 26%) and 126 teachers (approximately 35%). A small comparison sample of elementary teachers whose classes received the same program materials from an adult volunteer (the 'traditional' Junior Achievement elementary program) was sent the same elementary teacher survey, with a response rate of 44%.

Data collected has been analyzed using accepted qualitative and quantitative techniques and are reported here without manipulation. Most quantitative data is descriptive, with qualitative data used to verify that information. Based on the results reported here a group of recommendations are provided at the end of this report.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation provides information on the students who are the High School Heroes, why they participate in the program, and what they and their building coordinator believe they gain from their participation. The evaluation also provides information on the effects of the program on the elementary students in each of the High School Heroes buildings as reported by the elementary teachers and the Heroes themselves.

The evaluation also addressed questions regarding the 'value added' aspect of the Junior Achievement Elementary Program. A program such as the High School Heroes functions within the existing curriculum. It is important to establish if the program offers some 'value added' to the existing curriculum.

The evaluation asked for ways that the program could be strengthened, either by modifying the materials or by using different delivery timetables. High School Heroes were asked if changes to their training would have been beneficial, including adding a second pre-teaching training session. All survey respondents were asked if they would participate in the program again.

Findings: The High School Heroes

The majority of the students who participated in the High School Heroes program were in their junior year (130 students or 65.7% of all participating students). Of the remaining sixty-eight students, sixty-three (31.8%) were seniors and five were sophomores. Their reasons for participating are provided on the following table. Many of the students were ‘repeats’. As one student noted, “This is my fourth time working with JA and each time gets better and better for me learning new stuff.”

Reason for Participation in High School Heroes	Number	Percent
It makes a good resume line for college applications.	121	61.1%
I heard about it from a teacher or friend and volunteered to participate.	121	61.1%
I did it for community service credit.	91	46%
I did it before and enjoyed it.	71	35.9%
I might want to be a teacher so wanted the experience.	66	33.3%
I participated because it was a requirement for a class.	34	17.2%
I participated because it was a requirement for an organization I belong to.	10	5.1%

Table 1: Number and Percent of 198 Student Respondents Reporting Reason for Participation in High School Heroes 2003-2004 – Could Choose More Than One

As the table shows, the nearly two thirds of the student participate because it provides good material for college applications and because they were made aware of the program by someone they knew, a teacher or a friend. Those that participated for credit more often did so for community service credit than as a class or organizational requirement. Just over one third of the respondents participated because they had had a positive experience with the program before and one third of them participated because they are interested in a career in teaching.

The high school students were asked on their survey to indicate what things they felt had had the most effect on them as they participated in the program. The question was presented in two parts. First, the students were asked to identify which of a set of six likely experiences they had had while participating. For those experiences that they chose, they were asked to identify if they felt if each of them was very important, important or not at all important to them.

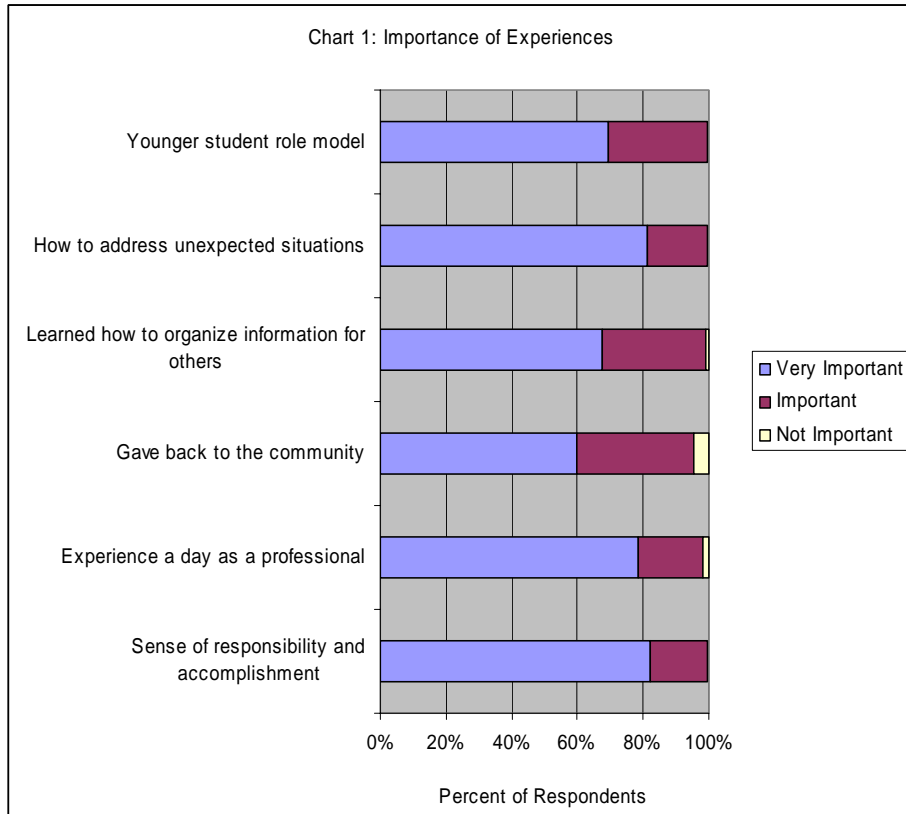
The data presented on the following table gives the extent of the experience effect as the percent of all respondents choosing each statement as part of their experience.

Reported Experience	Percent (Number)
Experienced a sense of responsibility and accomplishment.	98.98% (196)
I got to experience a day as a professional adult: experiencing professional courtesy, respect, trust and commitment.	98.5% (195)
I gave back to the community in a service format.	96.96% (192)
I learned how to organize information for others.	95.95% (190)
I practiced how to address unexpected situations in a professional environment.	94.4% (187)
I was someone the younger students looked up to as a young adult.	92.9% (184)

Table 2: Percent and (Number) of 198 Student Respondents Reporting Experience in High School Heroes Program

The possible experiences identified by program developers were widely experienced by the participating students, with the lowest frequency of experience reported by 92.9% of respondents. The program provides participating high school students with a learning experience that improves their understanding of professional behavior and professional practices as well as of professional treatment by others and responsibility.

In order to ascertain the quality of the experience as a function of its worth to the students, they were also asked if these experiences were important or not important to them.



While all of the program experiences were considered important by the students, it is interesting to note that the two with the highest percent ‘very important’ were their experiencing a sense of responsibility and accomplishment and learning how to address unexpected situations in a professional environment. Only two were rated as unimportant by any of the students, albeit very few, experiencing the day as a professional and giving back to the community. Please note that the choices presented on the survey were derived from information given to the evaluators by the program staff and by participating students interviewed during site visits to the program. In open ended responses, students also reported that the program helped them with their public speaking skills, developed their leadership skills, and made them aware of appropriate business attire. They also made numerous open-ended comments such as: I learned how hard it is for teachers to do their job.

In general, the Heroes felt they had done well in their work in the elementary schools: 62% indicated that they had done as well as they expected and 33% reported that they had done better than they expected.

Findings: The Elementary Program

Although the evaluation concentrates on the delivery of the JA elementary program using high school volunteers, the study collected information from a small sample of elementary teachers who have had adult volunteers in their classrooms. This section of the report uses this comparison data set to clarify findings about the High School Heroes program. Where appropriate, for example when discussing the quality and appropriateness of the program materials, information from both groups of teachers are combined into a teacher information dataset.

It was also important for the evaluation to collect information regarding the perceived quality of the high school volunteers by the teachers from the program delivery classrooms. Here the information is also positive. The elementary teachers reported that their high school volunteers were:

- ⇒ Well prepared – 77.78% (98);
- ⇒ Worked well with the students – 75.4% (95); and
- ⇒ Provided a positive role model for the elementary students – 60.3% (76).

This compares favorably with the report of elementary teachers who had adult volunteers in their classrooms who reported that those volunteers were well prepared – 87.09% (27); worked well with the children – 74.2% (23); and provided the students with a positive role model – 74.2% (23).

Overall, both sets of elementary teachers reported that having the Junior Achievement Program in their classroom was a good experience for their students – 99.2% (121/122) for the High School Heroes and 100% (30) for the adult volunteers.

The Heroes certainly enjoyed the elementary students. “The kids were wonderful and I felt that I helped them. I’d like to do it again,” is a typical comment.

Findings: The Elementary Program

Elementary teacher participants in the High School Heroes Program and those with adult volunteers took part in the program most often because they participated in the past and enjoyed it. The decision seems to be supported by the belief that this is a good thing to do with their students and because the materials match the curriculum that they teach.

I brought the Junior Achievement Program into my classroom because:	Percent (100)	Number (157)
I participated in the past and liked the program.	65.6%	103
It seemed like a good thing for my students.	36.9%	58
The materials match the curriculum that I teach.	35.03%	55

Value Added

The elementary teachers who answered this survey teach grades kindergarten through grade three. Thirteen teach special education. Teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the Junior Achievement Program regardless of whether it was delivered by an adult or high school volunteer. Findings about the Junior Achievement curriculum are combined here as which program delivery model is used to deliver the curriculum is not an the focus of this section of the report. Here we are looking at the ‘value-added’ aspects of the program, whether it is seen to support enrichment of the core curriculum or expansion of the established instructional strategies to include more critical thinking, problem solving or supporting content materials.

One hundred and fifty-seven teachers returned surveys on which they responded to questions about the value-added aspects of the Junior Achievement Program with the following results.

Teachers = 157 (126 HSH + 31 Traditional Program)	Percent (100)	Number (157)
The program fits with the core curriculum.	56.7%	89
The program really functions as an enrichment experience.	54.8%	86
The program provides learning experiences that involve critical thinking and problem solving.	68.8%	108

Report of fit with the core curriculum was identified as primarily with social studies. Some teachers see a fit with mathematics and a few noted the applicability to reading and language arts. Interestingly, the elementary teachers with High School Heroes in their classrooms provided a greater number of comments than teachers with adult volunteers. The teachers with high school volunteers reported high levels of learning by their students which they attributed

to both the quality of the materials and the fact that the high school students provided their students with good, positive role models. The evaluation cannot identify the source of this program effect. It might be because the Heroes stay at the school for an entire day, going to lunch with the students and having ample chance to interact with them both within the program structure and outside of it. It might also be because the high school volunteers are nearer the ages of the students. Twenty-two of the elementary teachers with high school volunteers noted their effectiveness as role models to the elementary students. Fifteen of the same teachers noted that their students enjoyed the Junior Achievement Program and learned from it. Twelve made specific statements regarding the 'hands-on' characteristics of the program materials as having a positive effect on their students' learning. Nine noted the high quality of the materials, although there were some statements about the time and pacing of the curriculum. These were specifically regarding the high school students not being given the materials for review prior to the day of program delivery, and were made by only three teachers. This raises one of the issues of the program.

The Materials

The High School Heroes Program delivers materials that were designed to be used for one hour per week over a period of four to six weeks. The single day duration of the Heroes program means that the high school volunteers have to make decisions to tailor the materials to the time they have. In addition, the volunteers do not have ready access to the program materials prior to the program delivery date directly, having to access them via the program coordinator at their high school. While it seems from this study that the majority of coordinators do provide time for the high school volunteers to access the materials, it also seems that a few do not. Indeed, in answer to a survey sent to them by the evaluators, one coordinator stated that their only complaint about the program is the fact that they have to store the program materials between the volunteer training and the program delivery date and requested that Junior Achievement just bring the materials with them on the program delivery date.

Both the High School Heroes and both groups of elementary teachers were asked about the appropriateness of the level of the program materials and the delivery timeframe for the program. Both issues were raised by both program staff and high school volunteers interviewed by the evaluators prior to developing the surveys. Findings from these questions are presented in the following table.

Books and materials are:	Students	Teachers with High School Volunteers.	Teachers with Adult Volunteers
On the right level	82.8%	85.95%	94%
Too difficult	5.6%	5.8%	0
Not difficult enough	11.6%	8.3%	3.2%
A good schedule for the delivery of this program would be:			
One hour/week	17%	27%	81%
Two half days	11.1%	12%	7%
One full day	72%	45%	10%

As can be seen, the materials are generally considered to be at the correct level for use with the students in kindergarten, first, second and third grades. When asked about the schedule for the delivery of the program, teachers were also given the opportunity to state they had no preference, which 17% of the teachers with high school heroes and 3% of the teachers with adult volunteers choose.

Findings: Continuation

Finally, the evaluation was interested in the potential for an expansion to the participation in the program or to the continuation of participation for the teachers. In discussion with two high school coordinators and with the JA Program Coordinator the question of having High School Heroes deliver the program to more than one school was identified as of interest. For that reason a question regarding this was included on the student survey. When asked if they would have considered teaching the program in at least one school in addition to the one they taught at, 65% of the students indicated that they would have liked to do that and 25% said that they might have considered it. Indeed, in open ended comments two students asked if there was any way they could continue to participate in this program while in college.

Intention to participate in the program again was expressed in the comments by both groups of teachers and by the high school students. The survey asked specifically if respondents would participate in the program again if they were given a chance to do so, with the following result:

- ⇒ 94.4% of high school volunteers said they would.
- ⇒ 97.5% of the elementary teachers with a high school volunteer said they would.
- ⇒ 93.6% of the elementary teachers with an adult volunteer said they would.