



## Work Readiness and the Skills Gap

### The Challenge

According to staffing provider **Adecco USA**,<sup>1</sup> 92 percent of senior executives in the U.S. believe Americans aren't as skilled as they need to be, and 44 percent say they lack necessary soft skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. A 2013 study by **ACT**<sup>2</sup> found that such skills are "foundational" to predicting success in the workplace and are critical to the effective application of technical or "hard" skills.

### The Role of JA

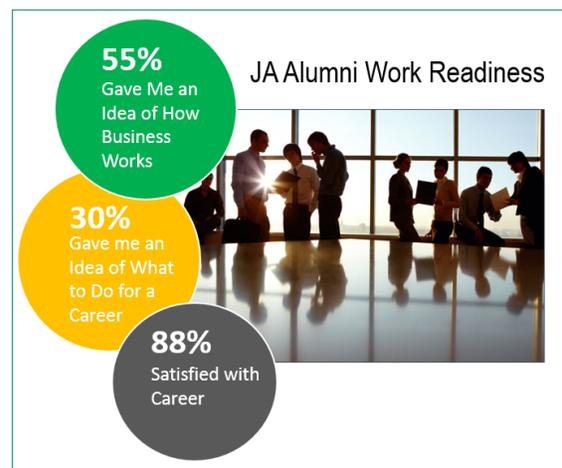
Work readiness is a key area of focus for Junior Achievement's proven programs. By bringing volunteer role models from the community into the classroom to share their career experiences with students, JA introduces many young people to professions and career paths that they may not have been aware of otherwise. The JA experience is shown to heighten students' understanding of the role education plays in their future success in the workforce. JA programs promote 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication, while helping students understand the importance of acquiring technical skills in math, science, coding, and composition. JA also helps students appreciate the need for higher education, whether it's a four-year degree or a technical certification for a skilled trade.

JA programs align with work readiness standards, including National Career Development Guidelines, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student Outcomes from the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards – C3 Framework, Association for Career and Technical Education, and Common Core State Standards.

### Proof of Impact

Research indicates that more than half (55%) of JA alumni say that their Junior Achievement experience gave them an idea of how business works, and nearly one-in-three (30%) said it gave them an idea of what to do for a career. One-in-five JA alums say that they have worked in a field similar to that of their JA volunteer. Furthermore, nearly all (88%) JA Alumni express career satisfaction.

JA programs help students understand the world of work, what skills are necessary to succeed, and how to continue growing professionally.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.adeccousa.com/employers/resources/Pages/skills-gap-in-the-american-workforce.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Work-Readiness-Standards-and-Benchmarks.pdf>