



JA History Fact Sheet

Beginnings:

- Junior Achievement, originally called the Boys' and Girls' Bureau of the Eastern States League, was started in 1919 in Springfield, Massachusetts by AT&T Chairman Theodore Vail, Strathmore Paper Company Founder Horace Moses and Massachusetts Senator Murray Crane.
- The official start date for Junior Achievement is considered December 1, 1919. That's when the first director of Junior Achievement, O.H. Benson, began working for Junior Achievement after his previous career at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and at another youth-serving organization, 4-H.
- Even though Junior Achievement started out focusing on younger participants, it soon shifted its programs to serve high school-aged kids who started student-run businesses with the guidance of Advisors from the business community.
- Early on, Junior Achievement was recognized by U.S. President Calvin Coolidge for its efforts to help young people who relocated from farms to the city adapt to the booming industrial economy.

Growth:

- Junior Achievement was not immune to the Great Depression. The organization remained concentrated primarily in the Northeastern United States during the 1930s with the support of businesses.
- Junior Achievement began to expand into the Midwest just before World War II.
- Prior to The War, Junior Achievement's leadership made the decision to become a national organization. Those plans were put on hold with the start of World War II.
- During The War, JA student companies supported the war effort through recycling drives and by supplying the armed forces with items such as clothes hangers.
- Following World War II, Junior Achievement began to expand nationally in earnest.
- In 1944, the first National Junior Achievers Conference (NAJAC) was held. NAJAC would eventually find an ongoing home at Indiana University (IU) and grew to hosting more than 2,000 JA Company students each year. NAJAC continued in various forms until the mid-1990s.
- The first international JA office opened in Canada in the 1950s.



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- In the 1960s, the first overseas Junior Achievement-affiliated organization, Young Enterprise (YE), started in the United Kingdom.
- In 1969, Junior Achievement marked its 50th Anniversary by delivering programs in all 50 U.S. States.
- By the mid-1970s, it became apparent that Junior Achievement needed to expand from being a strictly after-school program for high schoolers into offering in-school programs in other grades. JA soon launched Project Business, designed to teach middle school students business concepts during in-classroom sessions.
- In the late 1970s, Junior Achievement launched Business Basics, a program for elementary school students that utilized JA Company Program students as volunteers. Later, JA began to engage business professionals as volunteers for Business Basics.
- In the early 1980s, Junior Achievement began to offer Applied Economics, an in-depth economics program for high school students. Applied Economics was one of the first programs to use Personal Computers (PCs) in a classroom setting.
- During its peak in the early 1970s, the JA Company Program reached nearly 300,000 teens a year. By 1987 Junior Achievement, combining both after-school and in-school programs, was reaching 1 million students a year.
- With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, there was increased global interest in Junior Achievement programs.
- By 1992, Junior Achievement was offering programs in the former Soviet Union. The 1990s saw a spike in the offering of JA programs around the world, with JA expanding in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. During this time, Junior Achievement International, which would eventually become JA Worldwide, was established.
- In the 1990s, Junior Achievement in the U.S. developed a complete suite of in-school programs for all grades K-12.
- By 2000, Junior Achievement was implementing JA Finance Park, an experiential program that lets middle school students make adult financial decisions in life-like simulations. This was soon followed by the launch of JA BizTown, designed for elementary school-aged students to run a simulated town for a day. Around this time, Junior Achievement also became involved with JA Job Shadow, a program that allows high school students to “shadow” working professionals in their places of work.

Today and Beyond:



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- Today, Junior Achievement reaches nearly 5 million students a year in the United States with the support of nearly a quarter-million volunteers in over 100 communities. Globally, JA reaches 10 million students in more than 100 countries.
- JA is pushing the education envelope with the implementation of blended-learning, augmented reality and project-based programs.