

## **Junior Achievement of the Bay Area, Inc.**

### **Service-Learning Program**

During the 2000/2001 school year, Junior Achievement of the Bay Area and the Oakland Unified School District implemented a pilot program whereby 68 high school volunteers taught Junior Achievement's elementary school curriculum to 1,157 students. The high school students were identified from among the high school Academy Leadership Teams, trained, and placed in local elementary schools. The feedback from all participants was overwhelmingly positive. In addition to school credit and leadership training, the volunteers were rewarded with a trip to the national Service-Learning Conference.

With this success, we are expanding the program and developing the model into a service-learning opportunity for additional high school students in Oakland and other school districts. To do so, the preparation of the high school age students is being intensified and teachers, at both the high school and elementary school sites are involved in activities that reinforce the high school student's personal development, including economic education, career awareness, and communication skills.

The high school volunteers present Junior Achievement's Elementary School Program. Through sequential programming, elementary school students develop the building blocks of financial literacy, decision-making, and workforce readiness skills, and begin to understand their expanding roles in society as individuals, consumers, and workers. In addition, students in grades K-5 develop the skills needed to work in small and large groups, apply information learned to everyday decisions, and evaluate business and social issues. Students learn concepts and skills at each grade level that build on those taught in preceding grades. The program is comprised of five sessions at each grade level, approximately 45 minutes per session. Throughout each grade level, the volunteers stress the value of planning and reinforce the basics of excelling in our economic system.

Through this program, high schools students are developing sustainable and transferable skills. By "walking the talk" for elementary school children, the high school role models develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success, including communication skills, economic knowledge, and a positive self-image. The elementary school students benefit from a relevant "bigger than life" role model from their community. Math, English and Social Studies come to life for the elementary school students as they see the relevance of what they are learning in school to the real world. Family and friends also benefit as students, both high school and elementary school, bring home materials, ask questions, and set a new standard for volunteerism in schools. The schools benefit from volunteerism, enhanced curriculum, and increased attendance. Links between the community and the schools are strengthened and the link between schools is enhanced. It is harder for students to fall through the cracks.

During 2001/2002, we served 1,200 elementary school students in fifty-six classrooms in two of Oakland's elementary schools. These classes were taught by 110 high school students from Skyline and Castlemont High Schools.

*“The Service Learning Project, with Junior Achievement, has become one of the most successful projects in our academy. It combines academic rigor, relevance, and practical experience in the career field of the academy. Even for students who do not choose a career in education, this project helps them connect with children and understand their power as role models and mentors to younger children. The students are empowered and complete the project feeling that they have connected with the community.”*

Sydney King – Skyline High School Education Academy

The high school students all came from Education Academies, but teaching Junior Achievement was often their first practical experience managing a classroom and presenting curriculum. Azhara Osborne, Skyline Education Academy reported, *“The bell rings and the class starts. All the kids are whispering amongst themselves, ‘Is she the substitute?’ ‘Who is she?’ ‘Whose mom is that?’ I’m still not nervous and never was throughout the whole class. Everything went really smooth. Everyone participated and they all shared a few personal stories with the class.”*

The elementary school classroom teachers were also very positive about the program. One teacher wrote in an evaluation *“The academy students were better teachers than the last (college) student teacher I worked with; they are naturals.”* Another stated, *“The students gave clear and specific instructions and engaged the children in each activity. They made sure all the children participated.”*