

Volunteer FAQs

What is Junior Achievement?

Junior Achievement (JA) is the oldest, largest, and fastest-growing nonprofit economics education program throughout the world. JA started right here in Springfield, MA in 1919. In partnership with business professionals and educators, JA inspires and prepares young people to succeed in a global economy. JA reaches students in grades K-12 with fun, hands-on programs that teach students financial literacy and equip them with the knowledge and skills to succeed in school and beyond. JA programs align with national and local curriculum standards; therefore, educators fully enjoy the opportunity to involve their students. Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts (JAWM) is our area's local office, reaching students in Western Massachusetts and Vermont.

What will I be teaching?

You will be teaching financial literacy programs created by professional curriculum development staff at JA Worldwide. JA programs begin at the elementary school level, teaching children how they can impact the world around them as individuals, workers and consumers. JA programs continue through the middle grades and high school, focusing on the key content areas of financial literacy, college and career readiness, and entrepreneurship.

Who can volunteer for JA?

JA volunteers come from diverse backgrounds. They span all age groups and include business professionals, parents, community members, military personnel, college students, and retirees.

What are the qualifications?

No prior training is needed to be a JA volunteer. You just need enthusiasm, good communication skills and a desire to make a difference. We'll provide all the materials and training you need before you enter the classroom.

Can I volunteer if I do not have teaching experience?

Yes! Many of our volunteers have no prior teaching experience. The greatest value you bring to the classroom is sharing your life experience with the students. We provide materials, training, and ongoing support to prepare you for the classroom. You provide the enthusiasm and personality to bring concepts to life while serving as a role model for the students.

What type of training is involved?

The volunteer orientation training takes approximately one hour and is available in-person or online. We'll send you more information once you register as a volunteer and we schedule your first class.

Do I need to create the lesson plans and activities?

No. All the lesson plans and activities are detailed in an easy-to-follow guidebook, and we'll provide you with a program kit that includes all of the materials necessary to teach the programs.

What resources are available to help me prepare to volunteer?

The easy to use materials include a concise Consultant Guide with teaching scripts, activities and vocabulary words. We also have many volunteer resources available online. Be sure to read or view the following:

- General tips for working with students
- Grade level specific Vocabulary List
- JA-in-a Day – Tips and Tricks Logistics
- JA Elementary Classroom Management

- Grade level specific Volunteer Tip Sheet

Will I be alone in the classroom?

No, the teacher will always remain in the classroom to assist with any issues that may arise. The volunteer presents each activity to the students; the teacher is present to provide classroom management, offer insight into the class and to help out if the volunteer needs assistance.

How much time will it take to teach JA programs in the classroom?

The elementary school program consists of five lessons (30-45 minutes per lesson) that can be delivered weekly or all in one day ("JA-in-a-Day"). The middle and high school programs run six to twelve weeks, depending on the specific curriculum chosen.

How much time will it take to prepare for each separate learning activity?

It is best to allow at least a half hour to prepare for each 45-60 minute learning activity. This is probably more time than you need, but each program is different and requires different preparation. As you become familiar with the program format and activities, it will take you less time to prepare for each activity session.

What if my schedule changes?

If you want to volunteer but have a varying schedule, it may be best to work with a partner (colleague, family member, friend). Collective teaching will make it fun for you and your partner and s/he can always take over the class if you have a conflict. Or, consider volunteering at a JA-in-a-Day, where you'll fulfill your volunteer commitment in one day.

What age group would I teach?

We'll match you with a grade level of your choice (kindergarten through 12th grade), or you can select your volunteer assignment based on a specific school or teacher. We'll match you up with an opportunity that is rewarding and works with your specific needs.

Will I have to drive far?

When we recruit volunteers for each school, we try to match volunteers that live or work in the area. It is always the volunteer's choice which school they accept.

Can I volunteer at my child's school?

We make every effort to place you where you feel most comfortable. Sometimes there are more requests than openings. In that scenario, we'd ask that you volunteer in another school/classroom where there is a need until we can place you at the school that you prefer.

Is JA taught during the school day?

We do offer after-school programs, but our core programs are taught during school hours. The days and times for elementary school programs are agreed upon between the volunteer and teacher; for middle and high school programs the days and periods may be predetermined.

How do I get JA into my child's school?

We are always looking for "ambassadors" to help us expand into more schools. If there is not a JA program in your child's school, please call 413-747-7670 to see how you can help.

What does JA cost?

There is no charge directly to students or their families. The funding for JA programs comes from corporations, private grants, individuals and special events. Private and/or schools other than Title I schools are usually supported by parent clubs or grants from specific benefactors.

How should the students address me as a volunteer?

School protocol dictates that students refer to you by your last name preceded by Mr., Ms., or Mrs. You should refer to teachers in the same manner.

What are the benefits of being a JA volunteer?

Volunteering with JA not only helps to inspire and prepare local students, it also can strengthen your skills in the areas of communication, self-confidence, coaching talents, leadership, presentation skills, facilitation skills, and supervisory skills. Companies who encourage employees to volunteer with JA enhance their image by demonstrating their commitment to educating today's youth.

What will be expected of me as a volunteer?

You will be expected to show interest in the students and their progress, encourage responsible behavior, give constructive feedback, and have fun. By doing so, you will provide positive reinforcement and motivate the students to practice new skills. As you share your life experiences, you'll help students understand realities about transitioning from school to the workplace.

What should I expect from the teacher?

Your partnership with the teacher is fundamental. The teacher serves as a second consultant and should remain in the classroom throughout each session (law requires that a certified person be in the room at all times). You should also expect the teacher to share any information with you that will make the program run more smoothly (student names, potential leaders and other information on classroom dynamics, etc.). The teacher is available to assist with presentations, and should reinforce the concepts between sessions, integrate the JA experience with the content material, and manage student behavior.

What should I expect from the students?

For the most part, elementary students should be highly enthusiastic. Review with the teacher all classroom procedures and rules, and alert students that you will maintain the same standards. Older students are teenagers, and will act accordingly. Therefore, it is important that you articulate your expectations to the students, for example, come to class on time, complete the required task, be cooperative, and show respect for yourself and others. Model the behavior you expect from students.

What should I wear?

Wear professional business attire consistent with the faculty dress code or with your line of work. Dress in layers to adjust for temperature variations during the class period. When in doubt about what to wear, ask the teacher.

What should I do if the teacher is absent?

The teacher may or may not want you to conduct a session with a substitute teacher. When you meet with your teacher for the first time, you should discuss how to deal with absences. It is good practice to contact the teacher the day before your visit to confirm. If you arrive and there is a substitute, quickly give her/him an overview of the JA program, what your lesson for the day will cover and what you will require of her/him. Remind the substitute that s/he is to stay in the classroom throughout the class.

Who is responsible for maintaining order and discipline in the class?

Refer all discipline problems to the teacher. Work together with the teacher, and allow the teacher to enforce class rules and deal with behavior issues. Remember, you are the classroom guest, not the disciplinarian.

How do I reward and recognize students?

Be creative, but discuss ideas with the teacher in advance. Treat students with respect and recognize their participation – like most of us, they appreciate verbal praise. The best way to determine what motivates the students is to ask them during the first session. Be sure to clear any arrangements with the teacher, especially those involving food and drink. Always provide each student with a Certificate of Achievement at the end of the program.

How do I sign up to volunteer?

Complete the [online volunteer registration form](#) or contact JA of Western MA at 413-747-7670

What do I need to do prior to volunteering?

Follow these steps to make your volunteer experience rewarding for both you and the students:

- Register as a volunteer
- Schedule your time in the classroom
- Pick up your JA Program kit
- Participate in volunteer training (in person or online)
- Contact your classroom teacher
- Review each lesson in the JA Program, taking notes as needed
- Review grade level specific vocabulary list
- Separate each activity into its own packet
- Pre-assemble specific activity pieces as needed
- Confirm with teacher arrival time, parking location, school sign-in requirements, and any other details.

Have a question not listed here? Call us at 413-747-7670. Thanks for your interest in becoming a JA volunteer!