



# YES!

YOUR ECONOMIC SUCCESS

# 2025-2026



The educational phenomenon known as “the Middle School Slump” is a time when peer pressure and the transition out of elementary school prompt many students, who were formerly good performers academically, to begin losing interest in school. According to a study from the consulting firm the Bridgespan Group, this is a time when Junior Achievement’s programs are particularly effective at engaging students, helping to illustrate to them the benefits of staying in school, and the relevance to their futures. The Bridgespan Group study noted that the involvement of volunteers from the community in the classroom as part of the JA experience was particularly beneficial to students. The **YES!** (Your Economic Success) program provides an opportunity for students to begin discovering the choices that lie ahead. By combining career exploration and financial responsibility, Junior Achievement connects the importance of education to students’ future economic success.

" I enjoyed how the program helped me to look towards the future for a possible career path." ~student

"I really enjoyed the "games" within each session. I thought each game presented real life scenerios for students to prepare for, and I especially liked how they had a chance to explore various career/job clusters and work through a monthly budget. ~Jessica Rauhauser, teacher, Wilson Middle School

"These are topics a middle school student typically doesn't have to deal with and may only hear bits and pieces of from their parents. YES! gives students a chance to get accurate and important information that is age-appropriate and broken down into manageable chunks. Surely this knowledge helps them get ahead when they face these topics in the "real" world." ~Sara Weiser, JA Volunteer

## Overview of YES!

**YES!** (Your Economic Success) is a morning program held at the middle school level. It consists of a series of activities intended to help students gain an appreciation for the importance that career and financial decisions will play in their lives as young adults. The program is coordinated by Junior Achievement and involves volunteers who work with the students during the morning. Each volunteer is able to share their background with the students as the program proceeds.

### **What grade level is the YES! program designed for?**

This program is intended to include all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in a building. The synergy of making the program where every student participates creates a level of energy in the building that adds to the overall impact.

### **Which students should participate in the YES! program?**

**YES!** is designed to give every student an opportunity to realize the importance that career and financial decisions will play in their lives as young adults. As a result, we require that the program be provided to all students at grade level.

### **What is the charge to schools for the YES! program?**

Junior Achievement provides this program to schools for **free**. There is some work required by the school to run the event such as preparing student schedules, providing breakfast for volunteers, and planning for the utilization of a gathering space for the opening.

### **When during the day does the YES! program run?**

Volunteers typically arrive at the school around 7:45 AM. Students gather for an opening and then go to classrooms for four thirty minute activities. The event concludes around 11:00AM

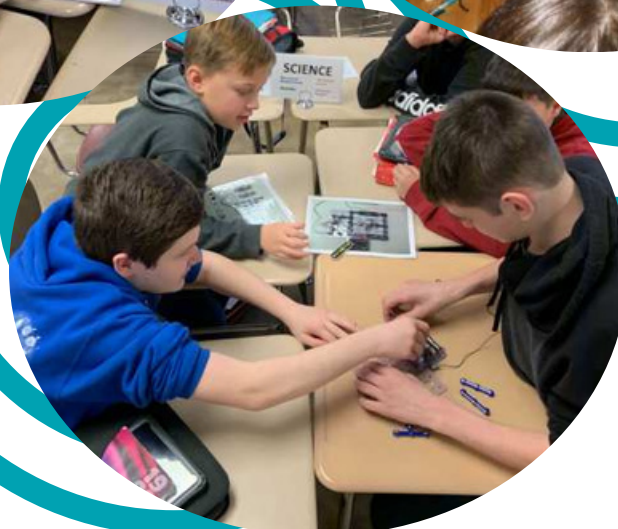
# What a YES! Day Looks Like

At the start of the day, all students gather for the opening.

The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade programs each consist of four activities. Each activity is designed to be approximately 30 minutes.

The volunteer remains in a classroom to do the same activity four times to four different groups of students. We recommend that teachers rotate with their students.

The students rotate through the four activities during the morning.



## 6th Grade Curriculum

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The 6th grade program provides valuable information about entrepreneurship, careers, and the skills needed to fit into the work place. Each student will work through four, thirty minute activities.

### Problem Solving

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Students will participate in a problem solving activity. As they participate in teams, they will learn to work through failures and brainstorm solutions.

### Business Plan

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Students will explore business planning by developing a business to solve a community problem. A full business plan will be completed by each team of students.

### Entrepreneur

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Students will discover different entrepreneurial character traits through a discussion and activity surrounding Milton Hershey's career.

### Teamwork

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Students will work together to build structures and uncover hidden optical illusions through teamwork and communication. These skills have been identified as critical to all careers but especially to STEM careers.

# 7th Grade Curriculum

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The 7th grade program provides practical information about preparing for the working world while still in middle school. Each student will work through four, thirty minute activities.

## Manufacturing

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Through an activity involving Starbucks roasted coffee beans, students will experience hands-on the processes of manufacturing involving receiving, picking, counting, packing, quality control, and shipping.

## Career Paths

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Students will complete a career interest survey to explore career possibilities. Student scores will point them to a career cluster in which they will uncover possible career options. STEM careers are play a major role in this conversation.

## Am I Qualified?

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Students will discuss different levels of education and relate educational levels to different career opportunities through an interactive, team matching game. From jobs that require advanced degrees to jobs that require technical certifications students will have an opportunity to better understand the education requirements for various jobs. STEM jobs play an important role in this activity.

## The Trades

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Students will learn about trade jobs and their importance in our community and their daily life through an interactive game. Students will also gain an understanding of the levels of education required for trade careers.

YES! – 7th Grade

## 8th Grade Curriculum

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The 8th grade program provides practical information about personal finance and the importance of identifying education and career goals. Each student will work through four, thirty minute activities.

### Interviewing Tips

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Students will discover interview strategies during a fun and informative game based on Pictionary and Charades. Each tip will be expanded upon during the game. The lesson will wrap up with a do's and don'ts interviewing video.

### Keeping Your Balance

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Students will understand the basics of making and keeping a budget. They will analyze their budget and focus on gross and net pay, savings, taxes, and expenses.

### STEM Skills

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Students will complete STEM activities while demonstrating conflict resolution skills such as constructive criticism, group dynamics, leadership and problem solving. STEM activities include a relay and an engineering block activity.

### Resume Building

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Students will explore the importance of a resume and how to build their own by looking at their activities, strengths and skills during a fun, interactive game. Emphasizing soft skills is an important part of building a resume that doesn't have a lot of work history. This is especially important in STEM career job opportunities.

# **Importance of Career and Financial Education**

## **Students need a chance to discover career opportunities**

As students transition into young adulthood, it is critical for them to see and understand the opportunities that will be available to them; further, to understand that the choices they make and the education they receive are connected to their future economic success. JA presents these concepts in hands-on, experiential programs. This, reinforced with positive affirmation from business volunteers leading the programs, helps solidify the lessons in the minds of students and inspires them to succeed.

Career choice is more about understanding opportunities than it is making the actual decision. The concept of career clusters and the importance of finding things you enjoy doing are challenges that middle grade students need to begin contemplating. Career clusters provide students with a context for studying traditional academics and learning the skills specific to a career category.

## **YES! – and CEW Artifacts**

To help ensure that all students are on track for meaningful postsecondary engagement and success, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has included a measure of students' career exploration, through the Future Ready PA Index and under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Junior Achievement, in working with local school districts, has developed a series of templates for student evidence (artifacts) from Kindergarten thru 11th grade tied to students participating in JA programs. The YES! program has artifacts for each activity. A total of four per grade level.

If your school has an interest in getting involved, please contact  
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