

Thought Leadership



Junior
Achievement™

The Disengaged Youth Dilemma

THE CURRENT CHALLENGE

Currently, one in eight young people between the ages of 16 and 24 in the United States are [not working, in education, nor in training](#). This disconnection may be symptomatic of long-term disengagement happening in our schools, where 40 to 60 percent of high school students are considered “[chronically disengaged](#)” from the educational experience. Factors contributing to this disengagement include [traditional educational practices that fail](#) to engage today’s learners, [an inability to connect the relevance of what’s being taught in school](#) to life outside the classroom, and classroom environments [where students often feel isolated from educators and peers](#).

THE MISALIGNMENT

At Junior Achievement (JA), we believe these factors contribute to a misalignment between what is being taught in schools and societal needs and expectations. As a result, too many young people reach adulthood ill-prepared with essential life skills, such as work and career readiness, financial capability, and even an entrepreneurial mindset, to achieve their potential as adults. This misalignment presents itself as [a lack of motivation and adaptability](#), [difficulties with interpersonal communication](#), [unrealistic expectations](#), and [the struggle for meaning and purpose in the workplace](#) that employers often ascribe to Generation Z.

THE JA APPROACH

Through its proven learning experiences, Junior Achievement addresses this misalignment by promoting student engagement and growth mindsets through experiential learning delivered in collaboration with partners in the business community that helps young people understand how what they learn applies to goals as adults. JA emphasizes transferable skills and competencies, not only by helping students gain knowledge but also by influencing attitudinal changes that lead to improved behavioral outcomes. This can support improved educational and academic achievement.





CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

JA also provides young people with access to networks and opportunities such as mentors, internships, job shadowing, and peer networks. These resources help them overcome the isolation felt by many teens and young adults today, offering support and guidance as they navigate their educational and career paths.

CONCLUSION

By addressing the root causes of disengagement and providing practical, real-world learning experiences, Junior Achievement is helping to bridge the gap between education and societal needs. Our learning experiences equip young people with the skills and mindset necessary to achieve their potential, ultimately contributing to healthier communities and a more robust society.

AMPLIFYING IMPACT

We understand helping youth fulfill their potential and driving economic opportunity are complex issues, and we can't tackle them alone. That is why we collaborate and connect socially minded businesses and education partners to make an impact through our proven learning experiences. Interested in finding out how to partner with Junior Achievement in your local community? [Contact us](#) today.