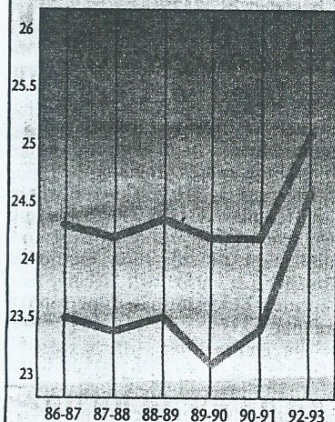


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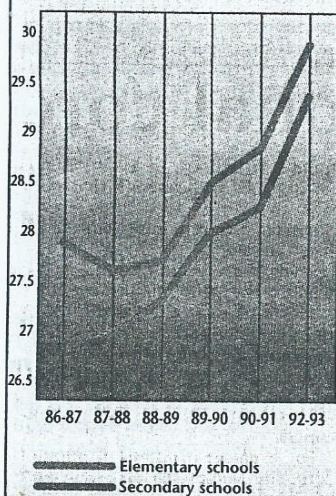
BUSINESS AND EDUCATION TOGETHER

Classroom statistics in California public schools

Pupil-teacher ratio

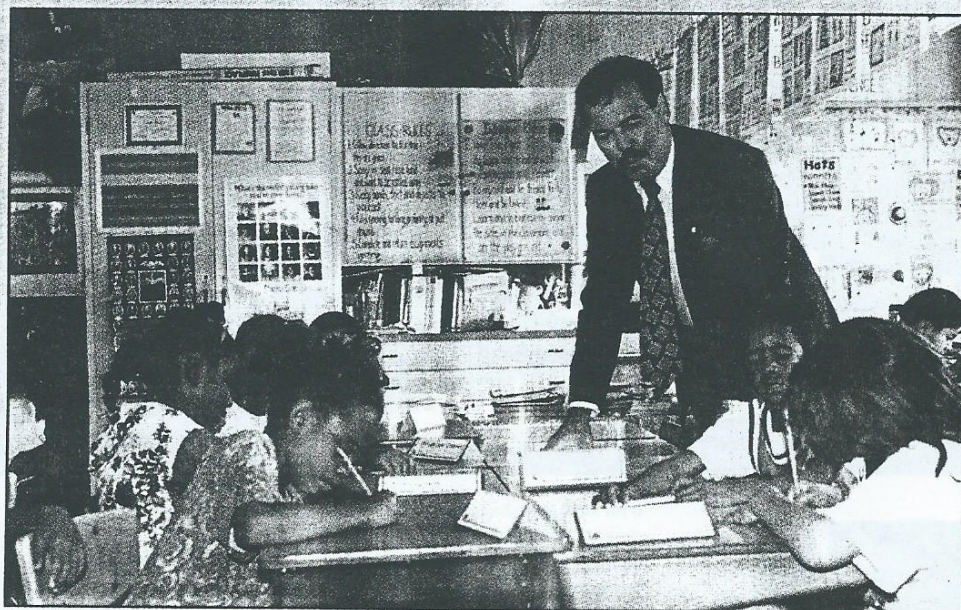


Average class size



Latest figures available

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State Department of Education



Bob Smith: "I've been doing this for five years, and the reason I do it is how big those little eyes get."

Junior Achievement starts young

Venerable service group pushes into elementary school classes

By SIGRID BATHEN

Bob Smith is a State Farm Insurance agent who has been a volunteer consultant/instructor for Junior Achievement for the past five years. He has been so effective working with elementary school students that he was named Consultant of the Year for the Sacramento area in 1993-94 by the venerable service organization, which sends business leaders into the classroom to teach kids about the business world.

Smith is an unabashed cheerleader for Junior Achievement, which this year embarks on a major push to expand its operations in the early grades.

"The reason I do it is that there is a great deal of self-satisfaction for me as a businessperson, providing instruction in free enterprise and business," he says. "Children, at least at the elementary level, honestly don't understand business and profit and entrepreneurship, and Junior Achievement really brings all that into the classroom in a visible, tangible way."

Smith, like other volunteers from the business sector, receives training from Junior Achievement, which operates at all grade levels and provides imaginative curriculum materials for all age levels.

"Junior Achievement's curriculum makes the whole process very enjoyable for the students and

easy to teach for the instructors," says Smith, who this year works with third-graders at Bear Flag Elementary School in the Sacramento City Unified School District. "There are a great deal of visual aides, worksheets and exercises that really get the kids involved hands-on. And it is geared to their level."

In the third grade, the focus is on the city. The kids create a virtual city and learn about its various components along the way. "We talk about the different kinds of jobs you would find in a typical city and the types of companies," says Smith, who has also worked with fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders and at Fruitridge Elementary School. "What do these companies do? They provide goods and services."

"We actually lay it out on the floor. Then we 'go to work' at a couple of our different companies. We may choose a restaurant and decide what we want to put on the menu and how much we are going to charge. We have to know about our

cost and overhead and depreciation, how much profit we're going to make. We go to work at the bank and learn about how to make a deposit — real, practical things that these kids can use."

"I've been doing this for five years, and the reason I do it is how big those little eyes get. There is so much

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"We find that, with the students we have reached in the middle schools and high schools, as we've done for years, sometimes that's too late."

Angela Spallas
Junior Achievement president

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By starting early, Junior Achievement hopes

Continued from page 1

enthusiasm. They raise their hands and ask questions. They're so happy to see Mr. Smith on Wednesdays, because they're going to do something fun and interesting."

Smith got involved in Junior Achievement through the urging of an old high school friend who is now a director of Junior Achievement in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Value of education

"I could have done fund raising or sat on their boards, but I wanted to actually get in there and work with the kids. I've been on all sorts of boards and involved in all sorts of charities. I have four children of my own. I know the value of a good education," Smith says.

"If I can teach kids something that will be of value to them down the line, I've done a tremendous service. I'd rather get down there and see some kid get enlightened. It's an ego thing for me, and I don't mind saying it. When I see those minds opening up, well, we can't get enough of that."

A strong believer in parent involvement in the schools — his four children range in age from 10 to 25, and he has been, and is, involved in all of their schools — Smith says businesspeople need to be involved as well. They need to "roll up their sleeves and get crayons under their fingernails."

And, at least at the third-grade level, "be sure not to use big words."

□ □ □

Angela Spallas is a former Junior Achievement consultant — when she worked for Wells Fargo Bank — who now is president of the program in the six-county Sacramento area. With the national push for more involvement in elementary grades, Junior Achievement has expanded the number of elementary-age students in the program during the current school year to 4,800 students in 150 elementary school classes, up from 107 schools last term.

The program also operates in 35 senior high school classes, serving 1,120 students, as well as 56 middle or junior high school classes serving 1,800 kids. Spallas says the program has not cut back at the middle- and high-school levels, but has concentrated most of its expansion — about 30 percent over last year — in the elementary schools.

"We find that, with the students we have reached in the middle schools and high schools, as we've done for years, sometimes that's too late," she says. "And we hope to reach the same child in the 12th grade that we reach in kindergarten, so it means something to them."

The premise behind Junior Achievement is that young people learn from positive role models, and that they learn about business from those who work in businesses.

"We're not under the illusion that we can reach every child," says



Third-graders at C.P. Huntington Elementary School work on a Junior Achievement project.

Top left: A. Thur, Albert Montanez, Anthony Cornejo, Breanna Brown, Brittany Anderson, Itzel Ortiz, Kyle Williams, Jonathan McNeal and Jason Huang lay out the paper.

Top right: Kamari Howard, Sununiquea Brice and Pheng Chow paste up stories and photos.

Bottom right: Michelle Marshall interviews Angelina Valdez.

Spallas. "The teacher is a wonderful role model, but there are other role models."

Sometimes the parents don't provide a positive role model, or the kids come from single-parent families in which the parent is working several jobs to make ends meet — or not working at all.

"We're trying to break the cycle where maybe mom and grandpa have been on welfare, and this is all they know," says Spallas. "It's not a matter of its being easy, it's a matter of not knowing anything else."

Junior Achievement volunteers, in addition to teaching about the business world around them, encourage kids to be realistic about their career goals — and to stay in school.

"We always tell our volunteers, never be critical of what the child wants to do," says Spallas. "We want to inspire those dreams. But you go into the junior high schools, and they all want to be in the NBA. I give them the statistics for the NFL or the NBA and how many make it, how many get drafted from high school."

Aside from sports

"I tell them you may be a wonderful basketball or football player, but what if you hurt yourself? You need that education behind you when you're 36 years old and need to retire. They'll say, 'Well, what about Joe Montana?' It's a matter of showing them. These are great dreams, but we need to be practical. And to give

them the tools — not just you need to do this, but to go in and teach them how to write a check, how to keep a checking account, how to interview for a job.

"Maybe things they're not getting from home."

There are 160 business volunteers currently carrying the Junior Achievement message into Sacramento-area schools. More are needed, especially for the recruitment push into the elementary schools.

At the elementary level, volunteers receive curriculum training and go into the classroom for 20 to 45 minutes once a week for five weeks. In the middle and high schools, they make eight to 10 weekly visits for one hour. The curriculum changes with the grade level.

In the early grades, Spallas says, "kids learn about themselves and how they are important within their school and family and community."

The horizon expands as the child grows, focusing in succeeding grades on the family, the community, the city, the region, the nation and ultimately the world.

The curriculum is integrated with the school's social studies curriculum, with an emphasis on how business works.

Each volunteer receives a teaching kit. The teacher is also trained in the curriculum. A strong effort is made to focus on schools most in need — those with the highest dropout rate, lowest grades, high crime and lack of



family/parental involvement.

"We take a whole-school approach," says Spallas. "We go into a school and say we want to reach every child in every class in every grade. If a child needs it in second grade, they'll need it in the fifth grade. We have a thousand-mile journey, but we need to take the first step."

Spallas and others who work with at-risk kids at earlier and earlier grade levels are sometimes shocked by the increasingly dismal statistics about public education in the United States. "Someone once said a child decides by third grade whether they're going to graduate from high

COVER STORY

keep students going



school," says Spallas. "I find that amazing. That is so young and so sad, but it's a reality, and the system may have decided it for them."

"It's not going to get better unless the business community partners with the education community, which is where Junior Achievement comes in," Spallas says. "We're the liaison. We give them the tools and the curriculum, which is why a lot of companies work with us. With all this down-sizing or right-sizing or whatever you want to call it, we have a limited amount of time."



A nationwide, nonprofit organiza-

tion, Junior Achievement provides economic and business education to more than 2 million students in the United States, as well as 600,000 young people in more than 85 countries around the world. The president and chief executive officer is James Hayes, former publisher of Fortune magazine, who also served as chairman of Junior Achievement's national board of directors from 1991 through 1993.

Getting focused

In Sacramento in February to honor area volunteers and speak to the Sacramento Rotary Club, Hayes said the status of children in America

The bottom line: It's fun

By SIGRID BATHEN

The fourth-graders in teacher Melissa Stepanick's class at John Cabrillo Elementary School in South Land Park are not likely to forget their time with Junior Achievement this school year.

There was a poster contest on the role of business in the American economy.

"They were really jazzed about it," says Stepanick, who has been working with the volunteer business organization for the past decade, "and I've got some real nice posters."

Several members of the class even got to have breakfast with national Junior Achievement President James Hayes, the former Fortune Magazine publisher who was in Sacramento in February.

"They thought that was pretty cool," says Stepanick. The students also designed a mock Fortune magazine, complete with illustrations, articles and ads, and sent it to Hayes.

He promptly wrote back to thank them.

"They thoroughly enjoy it," says Stepanick of the Junior Achievement curriculum. "Kids need to see other faces and other people, so they know what's out there. They're learning more about what goes on and what's available, and they're learning it directly from someone in an industry. It gives them a more rounded picture, and it's fun."

The volunteer consultant in Stepanick's class this year is Shirley Stassi, a computer expert and former manager for NCR Corp. and AT&T who now teaches computer science at American River College and Sacramento City College. Stassi has been a volunteer for Junior Achievement for 10 years, starting at the junior high level and now focusing on the elementary grades.

She started working in the schools as an independent consultant to an instructor who taught a consumer education and business class at James Rutter Junior High School in the Elk Grove Unified School District in 1986.

"One of my cohorts was working for a company that was involved in a volunteer program and was interested in bringing more businesspeople into the classroom," she recalls. "The objective was to educate and inspire young people about the value of the free enterprise system."

The volunteer program was Junior Achievement.

"The curriculum is age-sensitive," says Stassi, who this school year has worked with both third- and fourth-grade classes at John Cabrillo. "The third-grade class primarily learns about the city — practical learning about businesses and occupations found in the city and the county. We learn about building buildings, and the objective is to allow students to understand the construction business and its importance to a city's economy."

"Students would have to recognize the skills, for example, that a carpenter needs, be able to look at a simplified set of blueprint worksheets, how to measure and use rulers. They learn about every type of job in construction, from the plumber to the carpet installer to the accountant."

Like other Junior Achievement volunteers (their title is "consultant"), Stassi gets deep personal satisfaction from her classes. "They can't wait for me to come. There is a surge of energy from the students. They are eager to find out what the next session is about."

Stassi has been a consultant to several junior high and elementary schools, and she remembers individual students at each. At James Rutter in South Sacramento, she recalls, one student who was unusually quiet and withdrawn for most of the year — until he did a unit in which the class wrote and videotaped one-minute "commercials" about a product or service.

"That kind of brought him out of his shell," Stassi recalls, "and allowed him to show his creativity." ☺

today is dire. Citing statistics on child crime, teen pregnancy, dropout rates, illiteracy and other measures, Hayes said children "are in a state of crisis. It's time to panic."

At the same time, he said national attention is focusing more on children. He urged greater business involvement in the 76-year-old Junior Achievement program as a proven method of positively influencing young people.

"As our nation becomes more focused on the needs of our children," Hayes said in prepared remarks, "I would strongly suggest that Junior Achievement will increasingly loom as a powerful and effective

way to reconnect hundreds of thousands of kids to the reality — and the opportunities — of the American dream." ☺

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