



# EDUCATION FOR **WHAT'S NEXT™**

THE CASE FOR  
JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT



# WHAT'S NEXT?

That's the question on everyone's mind. Technologies we've never seen before are changing the world in ways we've never known. Automation, AI, and our rapidly changing economy are affecting the workforce and making a significant impact on the employment prospects of this and future generations.

As a society, we've been on this road for a while. Once, a high school education was enough for a good job that could provide for the essentials of life. But over the years, advances in technology and global competition have brought us to a point where even a college degree might not be enough. In fact, economic mobility, the ability of each new generation to do as well or better than past generations, has declined 45 percent in recent decades, notes the [Brookings Institution](#).

**ECONOMIC MOBILITY  
HAS DECLINED**  
IN RECENT DECADES

**45%**

Source: Brookings Institution

Today, more than one-third of college graduates are "underemployed," meaning they work jobs that don't require a college degree and may pay less than a living wage, according to data from the [Federal Reserve Bank of New York](#). At the same time, a [World Economic Forum report](#) explored how advances in AI are threatening to negatively impact access to entry-level and even mid-level jobs for millions of Americans.

Looking ahead, [research by Georgetown University](#) indicates that by 2031, 70 percent of jobs will require education or training beyond high school. However, data from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) indicate that only one-third of high school graduates go on to complete a college degree, with many of those being in fields that are not in high-earning, high-growth professions. All this while [The World Economic Forum](#) predicts 39 percent of current skillsets will be outdated in five years due to advances in AI.

These data points all lead to the same conclusion:  
**The promise we once made that each generation would do better than the last somehow became a question we can't answer.**

# JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT IS COMMITTED TO FINDING ANSWERS.

At Junior Achievement, we are committed to finding answers. As a strategic partner working in collaboration with educators, employers, investors, leaders, and the communities they serve, we are dedicated to helping students achieve academically today and economically tomorrow.

According to the Camber Collective, the top four life experiences expected to positively affect lifetime earnings, and promote economic mobility, are:

## TOP 4 LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT PROMOTE ECONOMIC MOBILITY

1. Completing secondary education.
2. Graduating with a degree in a high-paying field of study.
3. Receiving mentorship during adolescence.
4. Obtaining a first full-time job with opportunity for advancement.

Job skills training and business ownership can also be beneficial. These experiences can contribute to gaining transferable skills and competencies, such as creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and continuous learning, needed to succeed in our rapidly changing economy.

We believe every student deserves a future filled with choices and opportunities. That's why we focus on what drives real economic mobility by helping students become confident, capable, competent, and connected.



## BUILDING BLOCKS OF ECONOMIC MOBILITY

At Junior Achievement, our learning experiences are demonstrated to promote the skills and competencies needed to promote economic mobility.

# REPORTED LIFE EXPERIENCES

In December 2025, global research firm Ipsos conducted a survey of 1,005 Gen Z and Millennial-aged Junior Achievement Alumni (former students) on behalf of Junior Achievement (JA). Using the Camber Collective economic mobility-linked life experiences as a point of reference, the Ipsos research found that more than four in five JA alumni say that they continued in education after high school (87%), engaged in jobs or skills training during or after high school (87%), or chose a college degree program in high demand (82%) because of their experience with Junior Achievement.



**82%** of Gen Y & Z JA Alumni who attended college say they chose a **HIGH DEMAND DEGREE** program because of JA.

Source: Ipsos

Three in five JA alumni say they started or owned a business, another lever for economic mobility, because of their JA experience (59%). Over half of alumni say their career choices (58%) or work ethic (54%) were positively influenced by their JA experience. Nearly half also say their education choices (49%), how they manage money (47%), or interest and participation in their school or education (47%) were positively influenced.

Additionally, a broad majority (92%) agree with the statement, "As technologies like automation and AI change jobs and the economy, students who participate in Junior Achievement are going to be better prepared for the future."



## REPORTS OF ECONOMIC STANDING

Three in four JA Alumni say they are doing better than average from an economic or financial standpoint (77%). More than four in five say they are able to make ends meet (87%) or are able to save for retirement (82%), while 75 percent say they are a current homeowner. Millennial alumni are much more likely to own a home than Gen Z alumni (80% vs. 63%). Eighty-eight percent of alumni say they are hopeful for the future.

As the leader in experiential learning operating on a national scale with over a century of experience, we are driving toward lasting change. This means ensuring a generation of students has the transferable skills and competencies needed to navigate a rapidly changing world.

Junior Achievement is doing this now. Through career-connected learning, we are invested in accelerating economic mobility through education. By helping students become confident, capable, and connected today, we can ensure they have choice-filled futures tomorrow.

## JOIN US.

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT ISN'T A CASE STUDY, A BEST PRACTICE, OR A WHITE PAPER. WE ARE EDUCATION FOR WHAT'S NEXT.



Junior  
Achievement™

# JOIN US.

Let's equip students for  
what's next, together.