



Is the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps Program Effective?

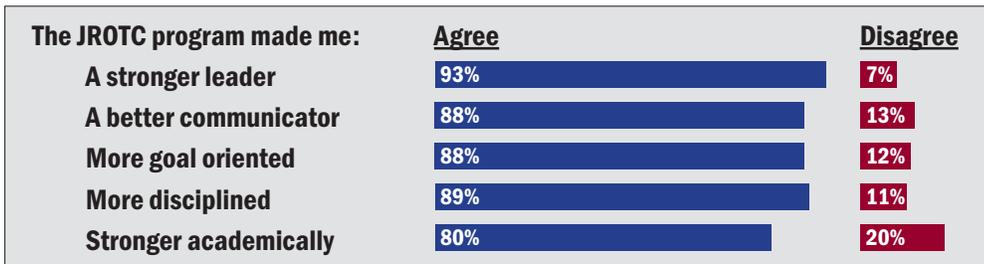
The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is a U.S. Armed Forces–sponsored program to help prepare high school students for future civil service careers. The program provides JROTC cadets with classroom instruction, one-on-one counseling, and team-building experiences aimed at developing soft skills such as self-management, relationship-building, effective communication, and leadership.

The JROTC program's purpose is to provide public high school students with a sense of accomplishment and to instill in them the values of citizenship, service to the United States, and personal responsibility. A review of the literature dating back to the early 1990s found that the program improved self-esteem, reduced discipline problems, and increased high school graduation rates. Participation in the JROTC also helped prepare high school students for future success, particularly non-college-bound students who may not be well served by high schools focused on college attendance. Essays by and interviews with Florida public high school students indicated that JROTC participation helped those who were not on track to do well in college. Although increasing military recruitment is not a goal of the JROTC, the program was associated with increased enlistment and retention in the military. It was not, however, associated with increased college attendance.

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About three-quarters of JROTC units were hosted in disadvantaged high schools. A study of the high school class of 1992 found that higher proportions of JROTC participants had parents who did not go to college, were raised by single mothers, were in the lowest income group, were members of a minority, were from the south, and were living in urban environments. Further, participants were more likely than non-JROTC participants to have had disciplinary problems in 10th grade.

A 1996 survey of 411 JROTC cadets in Denver, CO, public schools indicated success in the program’s goal of teaching soft skills.



In addition, 85% of survey respondents agreed that the program helped them develop a plan for their future after graduation.

Drawing from the literature, IDA found that JROTC career academies saw more improvement in cadets’ high school performance than regular JROTC units.

	Career Academies	Public School Units
Increased GPA	.26	.10
Reduced absenteeism	10%	5%
Increased graduation	24%	5%

For students with low GPAs, career-oriented programs lead to higher completion rates than academic programs and, later, to higher earnings.

For those who join the military, the relationship of JROTC to military retention is substantial.

	Women	Men
Reduced turnover	8%	9%
Increased reenlistment	14%	13%

It has been more than 20 years since many of the studies yielding these results were conducted, and questions still remain. We could learn more through analyses of recent cohorts and the effect of the program on future earnings.



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