



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

**JROTC: Perspectives from the
Literature: Research Roundtable on
Recruiting (Conference Presentation)**

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Executive Summary

JROTC is a program to help high school students be better prepared for careers. It is meant to help students see connections between school and careers through classroom instruction, one-on-one counseling, and team building experiences. This paper reviews the literature on the effectiveness of JROTC. The assessments find that JROTC helps high school performance in several ways: increasing self-esteem, reducing discipline problems, and increasing graduation rates. It also increases military enlistments and increases retention in the military. It is not associated with increased college attendance.

JROTC: Perspectives from the Literature

Research Roundtable on Recruiting

Stanley Horowitz

22 March 2018

JROTC is meant to help high school students be better prepared for future success

Mission is to instill

Value of citizenship and service to country

Personal responsibility

Sense of accomplishment

Three-quarters of units are in disadvantaged schools

Enhancing recruiting is not a goal – that's why oversight was moved out of the Office of Accession Policy

Now overseen by Youth Programs/Civil Military Programs in OASD (M&RA) (Reserve Integration)

JROTC is a widespread program

3400 schools, all four Services (886 USAF), 550K students

Number of schools between 3000 and 3800 by law

Waiting list of nearly 800 schools

50 states, 5 US territories, 8 countries with DODEA schools

DoD annual cost of \$375 million, \$225M from school districts

Source of 3.8% of enlistees between 1990 and 2001; 7% of black enlistees

Non-college-bound students are often not well served by high schools

Focus is on academic preparation for college

Fine for students interested in college and performing at grade level

Not fine for others (perhaps two-thirds), especially if 2 years behind

Non-college-ready students become disengaged

Poor information about how to achieve goals

Low confidence

Poor motivation

Little relevant guidance

Need help

Developing skills needed for careers or college

Seeing connections between school and viable careers

Recent Florida interviews and essays indicated value of JROTC for students not on track to do well in college

Students and teachers said

JROTC helps students see connections between school and careers through use of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and one-on-one career counseling.

JROTC often provides the only mentoring students receive
Builds confidence that they can enter fulfilling careers

JROTC offers opportunities that are attractive to about 25% of high school students

JROTC participants are mostly disadvantaged

Characteristics of JROTC Cadets and Other Students, HS Class of 1992		
	JROTC	Non-JROTC
Single mother family	29%	15%
Bottom income group	18%	7%
Top income group	10%	22%
Parents college	13%	27%
Urban	49%	28%
% minority	53%	27%
10th grade disciplinary problems	22%	17%
Female	43%	53%
Parent in military	11%	2%
South	65%	34%

JROTC seeks to develop soft skills needed for success

Self-management

Relationship-building

Teamwork

Effective communication

Leadership

45-50 minute class daily: civic values, responsibility, citizenship, discipline, and leadership

Extracurricular activities, including drill team exercises, social events, and field trips

Summer camp for some

Put students in charge under challenging circumstances

A survey of Denver cadets was very positive

Responses from 411 Denver Public School ROTC Cadets, 1996				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The JROTC program has made me:				
A stronger leader	56%	37%	5%	2%
More disciplined	52%	37%	8%	3%
A better communicator	48%	40%	9%	4%
More goal oriented	46%	42%	9%	3%
Stronger academically	34%	46%	15%	5%
JROTC helped me develop a plan for my future after graduation	50%	35%	13%	2%

What have statistically controlled follow-up studies found?

Self-esteem

High school graduation

College attendance

Enlistment in the military

Retention in the military

I'll draw on a modest evaluative literature that largely addresses JROTC participants over 20 years ago

Pema and Mehay, NPS – 3 papers, 1982 and 1992 grads

Data from two national surveys and Navy administrative data

Elliott, Hanser, Gilroy, RAND – mid-1990s grads

Emphasis was on JROTC in “career academies”

Normal JROTC participants also included

Walls, NPS – enlistments between 1990 and 2001

Empirical analysis of enlistment and retention in military

Jacobson, GWIPP; Mokher, CNA; Davis, Chicago – 1996 9th graders in Florida; also 2014 site visits and student papers

Evaluated performance of “below B” students, not JROTC

Elicited information from students and teachers about JROTC

JROTC helps a bit in high school; helps DoD a good deal

Study	Self-Esteem	Discipline/ Attendance Problems	Grades	Graduation	College	Enlist in Military	Attrition/ Retention in Military
Pema-Mehay (2009)	for girls	for blacks		for blacks			
Pema-Mehay (2010)							
Elliott-Hanser-Gilroy (2002) regular JROTC							
JROTC career academies							
Walls (2003)						especially blacks	attrition
Pema-Mehay (2017)	for girls						both

Participants did better
 Participants did worse
 Weak positive evidence

Most studies address self-selection problems; some issues remain

There were some particularly striking results

JROTC career academies had much greater school impact than regular JROTC

Occupational focus, business involvement

.26 GPA increase vs. .10; 10% cut in absenteeism vs. 5%

24% increase in graduation rate vs. 5%

Relationship to retention of JROTC is substantial

8% less first-term turnover for women, 9% for men

14% greater reenlistment rate for women, 13% for men

Jacobson, Mokher, Davis work provides context

Career-oriented programs lead to higher earnings and higher completion than academic programs for low-GPA students

We could know more about the impact of JROTC

Analysis of more recent cohorts

Analysis of effect on future earnings

JROTC appears to be a success from three perspectives

DoD

Good source of successful recruits, both women and men

More programs → more good recruits, regardless of self-selection

The students

Better prepared for life after school

Society

JROTC addresses a central failing of our educational system

Serious consideration should be
given to expanding JROTC,
including JROTC career academies

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