

Lesson 2

The Past and Purpose of Army JROTC



Key Terms

conflict resolution
culturally diverse
leadership
National Defense Act

What You Will Learn to Do

- Analyze the purpose of the Army JROTC program

Linked Core Abilities

- Apply Critical Thinking Techniques

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Describe the U.S. congressional act that created JROTC
- Identify the JROTC program outcomes
- Explain significant historical events that combined military training and education
- Evaluate how the organization supports the operation of the Army
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

The JROTC program is designed to teach high school students the value of citizenship, leadership, service to the community, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment, while instilling in them self-esteem, teamwork, and self-discipline. This lesson reviews the birth of the JROTC program as well as its purpose of enabling students to meet their goals for success.

Military and Education: Historical Connections

The tradition of combining formal education with military studies goes back as far as the ancient Greeks. Centuries before JROTC existed, the Greeks, Romans, feudal Europeans, and Japanese had their own versions. In the United States, JROTC had its beginnings in Norwich, Vermont.

In 1819, Captain Alden Partridge, a former superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, founded the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy in Norwich, Vermont. This academy is now known as Norwich University. Military studies were a major part of the academy's course work. Captain Partridge felt that if his cadets were not prepared to defend their country's rights, their education was incomplete.

In addition to extensive drill practice and physical training (including marches of up to 50 miles per day), the cadets studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, English, 10 types of mathematics, five types of law, and military history dating back to biblical times.

Captain Partridge's academy was so successful that the idea of combining military studies with regular classes spread to other schools in the United States.

The U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) formally came into being with the passage of the **National Defense Act** of 1916. Under the provisions of the act, high schools were authorized the loan of federal military equipment and the assignment of active duty military personnel as instructors. There was a condition that the instructors follow a prescribed course of training and maintain a minimum enrollment of 100 students over the age of 14 years who were U.S. citizens. Figure 1.2.1 shows an ROTC class from 1919.

The mission of the JROTC program, "To motivate young people to be better citizens," has changed very little since its inception in 1916 (see Figure 1.2.2); however, the JROTC program has changed greatly. Once looked upon primarily as a source of enlisted recruits and officer candidates, it became a citizenship program devoted to the moral, physical and educational uplift of American youth. Although the program retained its military structure and the resultant ability to infuse in its student cadets a sense of discipline and order, it shed most of its early military content.

The study of ethics, citizenship, communications, leadership, life skills, and other subjects designed to prepare young men and woman to take their place in adult

Key Note Term

National Defense Act – Enacted in 1916, this act officially created the Reserve Officers' Training Corps of which Junior ROTC is a part.

Figure 1.2.1: An ROTC drill team in 1919

Courtesy of the US Army.



society, evolved as the core of the program. More recently, an improved student-centered curriculum focusing on character building and civic responsibility is being presented in every JROTC classroom.

JROTC is a continuing success story. From a modest beginning of six units in 1916, JROTC has expanded to 1,555 schools today and to every state in the nation and American schools overseas. Cadet enrollment has grown to 273,000 cadets with 3,900 professional instructors in the classrooms. Comprised solely of active duty Army retirees, the JROTC instructors serve as mentors developing the outstanding young citizens of our country.

Figure 1.2.2: The original JROTC mission statement

Courtesy of the US Army.



Note

Title 10 of the U.S. Code declares that “the purpose of Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps is to instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment.”

Where you will find Army JROTC

As of the 2005/2006 school year, the Army JROTC program is active in 1,645 high schools worldwide: in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, and other locations where the United States has an extended presence.

Purpose of JROTC

The U.S. Army’s Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps is designed to teach high school students the value of citizenship, leadership, service to the community, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment, while instilling in them self-esteem, teamwork, and self-discipline. Its focus is reflected in its mission statement: “To motivate young people to be better citizens.” It prepares high school students for responsible leadership roles while making them aware of their rights, responsibilities, and privileges as American citizens. The program is a stimulus for promoting graduation from high school, and it provides instruction and rewarding opportunities that will benefit the student, community, and nation.

JROTC prepares high school students for responsible **leadership** roles while making them aware of the benefits of citizenship. Classroom and outside activities, including service learning projects, become opportunities to acquire the knowledge, discipline, and sense of responsibility that are necessary to take charge of one’s future. The result is responsible cadets who are sure of themselves, can think on their own, and can express their ideas and opinions clearly and concisely.

Key Note Term

leadership – the ability to influence, lead, or guide others so as to accomplish a mission in the manner desired.

The JROTC program teaches cadets to

- Appreciate the ethical values and principles that underlie good citizenship.
- Develop leadership potential while living and working cooperatively with others.
- Be able to think logically and to communicate effectively with others, both orally and in writing.
- Appreciate the importance of physical fitness in maintaining good health.
- Understand the importance of high school graduation for a successful future and learn about college and other advanced educations and employment opportunities.
- Develop mental management abilities.
- Become familiar with military history as it relates to America’s culture and understand the history, purpose, and structure of the military services.
- Develop the skills necessary to work effectively as a member of a team.

Desired Goals

The JROTC program is a cooperative effort on the part of the Army and the host institution to provide secondary school students with opportunities for total development. The flexibility of the program allows it to bear the scrutiny of professional educators and to meet the needs of the community. Satisfactory completion of the program can lead to advanced placement credit in the Senior ROTC program or advanced rank in the armed forces. Some of the course has been reviewed, and college credit is awarded to cadets after completion of the specified requirements.

The JROTC program is one of the Army's contributions to assisting America's youth to become better citizens. The program produces successful students and productive adults, while fostering in each school a more constructive and disciplined learning environment. This program makes substantial contributions to many communities and ultimately to the nation's future. It is the centerpiece of the Department of Defense's commitment to America's Promise for Youth through its emphasis on community service and teen antidrug efforts.

Leadership education and training goals for cadets are as follows:

- **Graduate from high school.**
- **Be good citizens by knowing and exercising the rights, responsibilities, privileges, and freedoms of good citizenship.**
- **Gain leadership potential and the ability to live and work cooperatively with others; demonstrate leadership in situations involving **conflict resolution**.**
- **Achieve positive self-esteem and winning behavioral concepts in a **culturally diverse** society.**
- **Learn the ability to think logically and to communicate effectively, with emphasis on effective oral communication.**
- **Learn the importance of diet and of physical fitness in maintaining good health and appearance.**
- **Gain an understanding of the history, purpose, and structure of Army JROTC.**
- **Acquire proficiency in basic military skills (such as drill and ceremonies, first aid, and map reading) that are necessary for working effectively as a member of a team.**
- **Learn the importance of citizenship through American history as it relates to America's culture and future from the Revolutionary War period to the present.**
- **Learn about the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of mental management, including goal setting and positive self-talk.**

Key Note Terms

conflict resolution – the solutions utilized by a society to settle disputes in a cohesive manner.

culturally diverse – the presence of multiple and different cultural groups and their behaviors within an organization or institution.

Conclusion

JROTC cadets are part of a proud tradition. Similar to their predecessors at Captain Partridge's American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy, today's cadets are learning to lead and to motivate others while preparing to take part in today's competitive world. The program is a stimulus for promoting graduation from high school, and it provides instruction and rewarding opportunities that will benefit the cadet, community, and ultimately the nation's future. The program produces successful students and productive adults while fostering in each school a more constructive and disciplined learning environment. It is the centerpiece of the Department of Defense's commitment to America's Promise for Youth through its emphasis on community service and teen antidrug efforts. The JROTC program is one of the Army's contributions to assisting America's youth to become better citizens.

In the next lesson will learn about the rank and structure of JROTC, and how you can move up and advance within the program. You will also learn about the benefits of advancing your rank and doing your best.

Lesson Review

1. Where is Army JROTC active?
2. What is the purpose of JROTC? Choose one purpose and discuss how it pertains to you.
3. Name two desired goals from leadership education and training.
4. Discuss the National Defense Act.