

High School JROTC Policy Implementation in Arkansas



Non Profit Team

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PADM 7373 Nonprofit Certificate Capstone
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Executive Summary

The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) allows students opportunities to gain leadership, discipline, self-confidence, and community service skills, in proper preparation for a future after high school. JROTC has become an important component of enhancing the relationships between students, schools and communities. JROTC is essential for fostering student growth, awareness, and accountability. In response to social stratification, and to enhance student learning outcomes, JROTC programs have become implemented in Arkansas school districts. However, implementing JROTC has not been without challenges. Therefore, the capstone team used this project to examine the implementation of JROTC through the National Defense Act of 1916 and Title 10 United States Code, Section 2031. This allows high school students the opportunity to earn physical education and elective credit towards graduation. Specifically, the team seeks to examine the internal processes guiding policy implementation; assess if the policies are properly understood and managed by internal stakeholders - specifically principals, instructors, and students.

For this project the team focused on analyzing interview and survey data to assess how JROTC was implemented in grades 9-12. The team also reviewed literature and policy documents regarding JROTC and program implementation. Methods used to compare, code, and analyze surveys and interviews with principals and instructors included the following six main aspects:

- Curriculum & Activities
- Discipline & Behavior
- Citizenship & School leadership
- Benefits & Impacts
- Teacher Preparation & Resource Accessibility
- Representation & Program Evaluation

Our findings suggest many variances in Arkansas high school principal and instructor perceptions toward the JROTC program as they held alternating opinions on specific aspects of the program and its overall intended and actual impact on students. This included impact on student skills and outcomes; class materials, space, time, equipment, and/or activities; the lack of communication with ADE; and appropriate training and knowledge of evaluation to carry out the program. Equitable transportation and economic barriers for students to complete activities and competitions due to teacher and organizational scheduling, was also a challenge for students to complete activities on and off-campus.

Between October and November of 2021, surveys and interviews revealed some Arkansas high schools were not operating at the highest level of implementation with the following identified gaps:

- Distinctions in the definition of citizenship toward the JROTC mission
- Levels of equitable access e.g., barriers to transportation, scheduling constraints, and overall budget for program costs
- Major lack in minority representation in principals and instructors
- Unprepared instructor teaching as they transition from adult military students to high school students
- Uncertainty of program evaluation processes and criteria

Based on the responses from the surveys and interviews, review of the JROTC program perspectives and implementation literature, the team suggests the following recommendations:

- Increase awareness of JROTC mission and definitions
- Provide formal instructor transitional teacher training
- Provide an equitable distribution of resource support
- Expand Diversity in JROTC instructors
- Provide adequate knowledge of evaluation standards

After reviewing literature and administering surveys and interviews, the nonprofit capstone team concludes that although JROTC is one of the most impactful youth programs through military and high school support, there are gaps in perception on the various aspects of the program between high school administrators and JROTC instructors. JROTC should not be used solely as a military recruitment tool but more so a way to ensure the value of the program as an enhancement to academic experience. Administrators and instructors who participated in this study agree that JROTC participation positively impacts students and the community. In efforts to close this gap all entities will have to come together and align their knowledge, values, resources, and evaluations to promote quality JROTC program implementation in Arkansas high schools.