



# Achieving School-wide ACT Improvement in Underserved Areas

A  **Quesbook** Case Study

May 2018

## **The Challenge**

As more and more states adopt statewide administration of college entrance exams and assign accountability to high schools for those scores, schools are faced with a new challenge: how to expand their ACT/SAT approach beyond the traditional “college-track” students to generate engagement and score improvement school-wide.

This challenge is greatest in economically disadvantaged areas where students enjoy fewer opportunities for external ACT/SAT prep, and where many students may not be independently motivated to pursue higher education. The test prep industry has exacerbated this achievement gap by primarily offering high-priced comprehensive courses and one-on-one tutoring to students with the highest levels of family support and income and schools with the largest budgets.

Can schools in these areas affordably implement school-wide programs to help students of all types to succeed on these tests? Quesbook partnered with Sheffield High School in Alabama to show that schools can.

## **The School**

In 1982 the Ford plant in Sheffield closed. 2,000 jobs evaporated in a city of only 12,000 people, sending the unemployment rate soaring over 20%. In ensuing years, highways were re-routed through nearby, growing towns, and Sheffield became increasingly isolated. Its population has decreased in every census since, and its economy has never fully recovered.



Sheffield High School faces a lot of the challenges that underserved schools face today. Economic stagnation and competition from nearby communities have caused Sheffield’s rate of economically disadvantaged students to climb to an estimated 77% of the student body. It’s increasingly common for students’ parents not to have attended college themselves.

Despite facing these challenges, like many similar districts, Sheffield High has remained committed to helping their students maximize their educational and career opportunities, making them a perfect partner for Quesbook in its mission to bring better ACT/SAT scores and more educational opportunities to underserved students and schools.

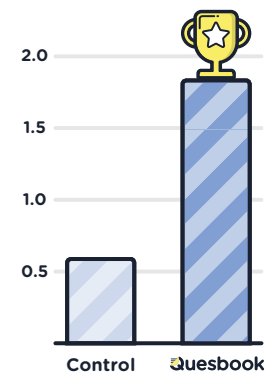
## **The Test**

Twenty-six students were chosen by Sheffield high to participate in the Quesbook pilot program. The students represent a varied cross-section of the school, designed to show the potential effect on the school as a whole. These students took the ACT and then spent an average of 20 hours on the Quesbook platform at school before taking the ACT again. Another group of 26 students took the ACT at least twice and were encouraged to prepare for the test in their preferred way, but were not provided with controlled, planned access to Quesbook resources in class.

## **The Numbers**

The students who participated in the pilot program achieved an average score improvement of 1.8 points. The students who did not participate achieved an average score improvement of .56 points. So, in the same school, with the same cross-section of students, Quesbook accounted for a 1.24 point increase compared to other methods.

“These numbers are significant for a couple of reasons,” says Gabriel Cruz, Quesbook’s CEO. “First, they come from a representative school population, not the self-selected, highly motivated group that test prep has traditionally served. Secondly, they are compared to a control group from the same school, meaning that we can account for the natural increase in scores that comes from repeat testing and independent study, and demonstrate clear improvement over that effect within a comparative population.”



## **The Results**

Students are obviously much more than their test scores, so at Quesbook we always make sure that we keep our eye on our true mission: helping real students access real opportunities. Here’s a quote from Melissa Ryan, a Guidance Counselor at Sheffield about one of the students who participated in the pilot program:

“One of our students raised his composite ACT score by five points. He had a 14 on the ACT. After working on Quesbook, he raised the score to a 19 and is now eligible to play NCAA ball. He has been walking on air! This is his ticket for himself and future generations. He is a super sweet young man. We are so excited for him.”

We’re very excited for him too, and for all the other Sheffield students who worked hard and developed the necessary skills to raise their scores.

## The Next Steps

- 1 A School-Wide Expansion.** Sheffield High School is so excited with the results of this test, that they've expanded the program and enrolled all of next year's 11th graders in an ACT prep course in which they'll use Quesbook as their primary source for preparatory content and diagnostics.
- 2 Continual Product Training & Support.** Quesbook continues to work with Sheffield High on implementing a system that earns buy-in from teachers and students and generates sustainable adoption and engagement.
- 3 Helping More Schools.** Your students could be next. Quesbook is pursuing partner schools across the country to develop and implement each one's unique path to better school-wide ACT and SAT scores. Contact Quesbook to learn more.

Learn more at: [www.quesbook.com/schools](http://www.quesbook.com/schools)

Contact us at [schools@quesbook.com](mailto:schools@quesbook.com) or [646-690-9020](tel:646-690-9020)

