

Special Report:

High Quality OST Programs Help Mitigate Chronic Absenteeism Across The School Year

By Dr. Michelle Ament, Chief Academic Officer





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Executive Summary

Chronic absenteeism is a pervasive issue plaguing the K-12 educational landscape, leading to far-reaching consequences, including academic underachievement and increased dropout rates. While traditional instructional approaches grapple with this challenge, there is a compelling need for innovative, evidence-based solutions that address not just the symptom but the root of the problem. Enter ProSolve's QUEST curriculum—a comprehensive after-school and summer program to enhance students' social, emotional, and cognitive development.

This special report comprehensively analyzes the QUEST curriculum's significant role in mitigating absenteeism and promoting academic success. We explore empirical research's significant impact on student engagement, retention, and academic achievement. Our findings indicate a 80% student retention rate in after-school and summer programs where QUEST is implemented. Moreover, the curriculum's integrative approach fosters a nurturing and inclusive learning environment, significantly mitigating absenteeism and promoting a connectedness to the school community.

Utilizing a blend of pedagogical frameworks, including CASEL-aligned social-emotional learning, the curriculum transcends traditional academic enrichment, offering a holistic 'Whole Child Approach.' The effectiveness of this methodology is supported by research metrics that reveal substantial enhancements in academic performance, social-emotional competencies, and overall school engagement.

The subsequent sections of this special report provide a view into the data and affirm the vital role that ProSolve's QUEST curriculum plays in transforming the educational ecosystem and fostering an educational environment that is both engaging and academically rigorous, thereby combating chronic absenteeism in an enduring and meaningful way.

—Dr. Michelle Ament, Chief Academic Officer



Introduction

Persistent absenteeism disrupts the continuity of learning, leading to dwindling academic performance, decreased school engagement, and heightened chances of high school dropout. After-school and summer programs are increasingly recognized as effective countermeasures to chronic absenteeism when they provide a consistent learning environment that encourages active participation.

This case study provides evidence of how ProSolve's QUEST SEL curriculum resulted in a 79% student retention rate in after-school and summer programming. In addition, QUEST played a role in reducing chronic absenteeism and increasing student engagement in multiple implementation sites.

Across over 50 programs in the 22/23 year, QUEST was implemented as an afterschool and summer school curriculum. Common challenges districts were looking to solve included reducing academic loss, providing enrichment, and creating places of community and belonging that students felt valued in and returned to consistently. Administrators choose QUEST based on the program's strength to enhance academic skills while fostering social, emotional, and cognitive growth.

Engagement in quality after-school and summer programs is associated with substantial enhancements in academic achievement and the reduction of chronic absenteeism.



In a 2009 study of seventh and eighth-grade students at 10 Boys & Girls Clubs across the country found that those attending afterschool programs skipped school fewer times, increased school effort, and gained academic confidence; moreover, the first two outcomes cited above increased as the number of days attending afterschool programs increased.

(Arbreton, Bradshaw, Sheldon, & Pepper, 2009).



22-23 School Year Impact with QUEST

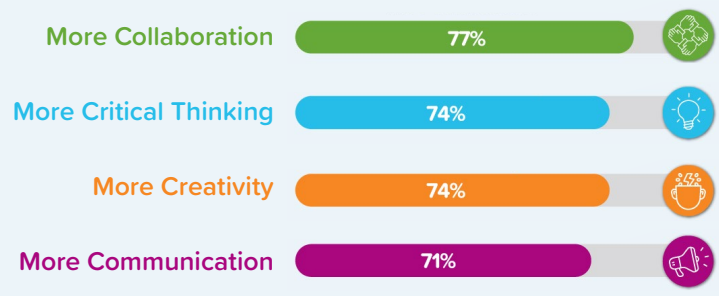
Discover the transformative impact of ProSolve’s QUEST curriculum, distilled into compelling data that highlights its efficacy in elevating daily average attendance and enriching both Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and 21st Century Skills.

	Awesome Attendance 80% of students were in attendance during their summer programs thanks to QUEST.
	Builds Teamwork 90% of students said they learned that collaborating & communicating with others is useful.
	Nurturing Problem-Solvers 80% of students believe they increased their ability to solve problems by playing QUEST.
	Develops Relationship Skills 73% of students said they developed skills in cooperation & compromise while playing QUEST.
	Fun & Engaging 86% of students rated their QUEST experience as extremely positive!
	Highly Captivating 73% of students reported a sense of curiosity, and sustained focus when playing QUEST.



QUEST a Whole Child Approach to Learning

Teachers reported significantly more learning across the 4 C’s as compared to their classes during the school year.





Districts Behind The Data

Promote Academic Achievement

A robust body of empirical research indicates the profound effect of structured after-school and summer programs on academic achievement. According to Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan's seminal meta-analysis (2010), students who participate in such programs significantly improve their self-esteem, academic performance, and prosocial behaviors.

These programs, designed to supplement the core curriculum, play a vital role in reinforcing academic content and skills, fostering a deeper understanding of different subjects. Empirical findings suggest comprehensive after-school and summer programs increase student engagement, reducing absenteeism rates. Such programs offer diverse activities that appeal to different interests, promoting a sense of belonging and commitment to learning (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

Through its immersive and experiential learning-based curriculum with varied modalities for learning, QUEST has been shown to significantly boost student appeal, captivation, and involvement across multiple grade levels and varying district profiles.





Anaheim Elementary School District, CA



Schools in District: 24



Economically Disadvantaged: 73.9%



Students Served: 14,882



High School College Readiness: n/a

Focus: Fostering the 4 Cs and Immersive Learning

Outcome:

Anaheim Elementary School District implemented QUEST in summer of 2023 across its fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade classrooms with an aim to gamify instruction and develop the 4 Cs—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. The district has seen a marked increase in student engagement, leading to reduced absenteeism.

In addition to bolstering these core skills, QUEST also tapped into the specific needs of the district's emergent bilingual population, allowing these students to practice and develop language skills in an authentic and immersive learning environment. Teachers report that QUEST has been instrumental in getting students excited about learning, increasing academic performance and setting them up for future success in junior high and high school.

By the Numbers:

- 80% of teachers saw collaboration being displayed more than in the traditional school setting
- 83% in critical thinking skills built more than in the traditional school setting
- 78% creativity used than in the traditional school setting
- 78% communication being displayed more than in the traditional school setting
- 91% of students were highly captivated and engaged during their QUEST gameplay experience
- 92% of students felt their problem-solving skills were enhanced through their gamified experience

[View District Results](#)

Cultivate Social and Emotional Learning

Programs that extend beyond academic reinforcement often cultivate critical social and emotional skills. A study by Hurd and Deutsch (2017) reported increased

social-emotional competencies, including improved engagement, positive behavior, and fewer conduct problems among children who regularly attended out-of-school time programs. These findings underscore the importance of such programs as crucial platforms for imparting and developing essential life skills.

ProSolve's QUEST curriculum, with its CASEL-aligned framework, allows students to learn and grow in a socially interactive environment. The QUEST curriculum offers a unique avenue for nurturing social-emotional skills. The program uses immersive and interactive learning to target specific soft skills and pairs them with interactive teachable moments. The QUEST experience mirrors the effectiveness and adaptability of contemporary research-informed pedagogy by harnessing real-world problem-solving, cooperation, effective communication, perseverance, and empathy.

An essential aspect of reducing chronic absenteeism is creating a nurturing and supportive environment where students feel savored, connected, and engaged (Klem & Connell, 2004). This supportive environment is nurtured through the meaningful relationships adults build with students as part of the QUEST curriculum's unique approach to positioning the educator as a facilitator, not a "keeper of knowledge or answers."

By incorporating problem-solving challenges, team collaboration, and real-world simulated experiences, ProSolve's QUEST curriculum fosters an environment that enhances students' attachment and involvement with school life and promotes strong school attendance.





Fresno Unified School District, CA



Schools in District: 101



Economically Disadvantaged: 64.8%



Students Served: 69,873



High School College Readiness: 33.1

Focus: Cultivating Social and Emotional Skills Through Experiential Learning

Outcome:

Within just three weeks of implementing the QUEST curriculum, educators reported a noticeable transformation in students' social and emotional skills. Students who were initially reserved or unsure about participating in group activities displayed a newfound confidence and eagerness to engage. Additionally, 77% of students said they improved their communication skills and also exhibited greater emotional intelligence in managing conflicts and advocating for their perspectives while building teamwork.

The QUEST experience provided a nurturing and psychologically safe space, allowing students to explore, make mistakes, and grow—ultimately building a stronger sense of community and attachment to school life.

“QUEST has helped retain students because they enjoy QUEST and they enjoy working together.”

- Julie Goorabian-Ellis

[View District Results](#)

Foster The Whole Child

Crucial to peak academic performance is the holistic development of each child, an objective effectively realized through after-school and summer programs. Grounded in extensive research, such as the work by Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce (2007), this whole-child approach invigorates learner growth across multiple dimensions—problem-solving, creativity, leadership, and physical health—beyond merely academic metrics.

ProSolve's QUEST curriculum is a prime example of this approach, intertwining experiential learning and constructivist theory to nurture skill sets that extend past the traditional academic realm. The curriculum recognizes the unique potential of each learner, aiming to develop these various strengths. This results in well-rounded learners who can seamlessly transfer these skills and abilities across their academic life.

Furthermore, the QUEST curriculum encourages hands-on, relatable experiences for learners. This boosts self-efficacy and resilience, which is particularly beneficial for students facing challenges in their day-to-day academic rigors. By balancing cognitive abilities with critical soft skills, the QUEST curriculum paves the way for heightened academic achievements during the regular school day.





Northwest Independent School District



Schools in District: 32



Economically Disadvantaged: 17%



Students Served: 27,583



High School College Readiness: 39.3

Focus: Holistic Student Development

Outcome:

Northwest Independent School District implemented ProSolve's QUEST curriculum within their specialized summer camp program, targeting the multi-dimensional growth of each participating student. Emphasizing problem-solving, creativity, leadership, and collaboration, QUEST provided a robust framework beyond traditional academics to foster holistic development. As a result, 93% of students reported heightened engagement and ownership over their own learning processes.

Students who participated in the QUEST-based summer camp demonstrated improved academic performance and increased self-efficacy and resilience, skills they carried into the regular school year. This engagement resulted in a more balanced development of cognitive and soft skills, thereby fulfilling the district's objective of nurturing well-rounded individuals capable of succeeding in day-to-day academic challenges.

“I love the multisensory experience of the game format and the plethora of opportunities the game provides for students. For example, SEL, problem-solving, productive struggle, and teamwork.”

- Facilitator

[View District Results →](#)

Create a Supportive Environment

Connectedness and a sense of belonging in the school environment have been linked to reduced student absenteeism. A nurturing climate, characterized by acceptance, warmth, and support, is especially beneficial (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). ProSolve's QUEST curriculum excels in fostering such an environment. Integrating collaborative, team-based activities, these modules involve all students equally, regardless of their learning styles or capabilities. This creates a shared sense of responsibility and achievement and fosters mutual respect among peers (Slavin, 2015).

Furthermore, the program's unique pedagogy, where mistakes are seen as steps towards mastery, encourages students to fully engage with the learning process without fear of mockery or criticism. This fosters self-confidence, promotes risk-taking, and empowers students, contributing to a positive classroom environment that makes students feel valued, connected, and ultimately more willing to attend (Dweck, 2006).





Beaumont Unified School District



Schools in District: 14



Economically Disadvantaged: 37.5%



Students Served: 11,214



High School College Readiness: 23.2

Focus: Fostering a Supportive Learning Environment

Outcome:

Beaumont USD integrated ProSolve's QUEST curriculum to reimagine their summer learning program, aiming to foster a more nurturing, collaborative, and student-led environment. Teachers reported an increase in student attendance rates and overall engagement.

The QUEST curriculum allowed students to experience shared responsibility and mutual respect and provided a safe space where mistakes were seen as valuable steps toward mastery. As a result, students developed self-confidence, improved their communication skills, and showed heightened eagerness to participate, corroborating the research that a supportive environment positively influences student attendance and overall well-being. Additionally, 87% of students indicated they increased their problem-solving ability due to participating in the summer program.

By the Numbers:

- 100% of students recognized improved art, writing, or presentation skills
- 92% of facilitators said they would play QUEST again
- 90% of students rated an extremely positive QUEST experience
- 80% increase in attendance thanks to QUEST

[View District Results →](#)



Conclusion

Grounded in evidence-based methods and aligned with holistic child development models, after-school and summer programs nationwide are turning to QUEST from ProSolve to help transform their OST ecosystem. By fostering an environment that intertwines academic enrichment with social-emotional growth and life skills development, QUEST lays a foundation for the career-ready learner. In alignment with these findings, ProSolve's SEL curriculum provides an engaging and supportive environment crucial for engaging students and combating absenteeism.

Its innovative blending of curriculum with game mechanics addresses a wide range of student interests, amplifies school engagement, and, in turn, reduces chronic absenteeism.



About ProSolve



At ProSolve, our mission is to ensure all K-12 students have the skills/abilities needed to prepare for the future workforce. We do this by providing experiential learning that is highly engaging and relevant to the world today. Our vision is to create a generation of career-ready problem solvers by leading education's transition from a knowledge-based to an experiential-based system.



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