

SHADOW A STUDENT CHALLENGE

Toolkit

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SHADOWING A STUDENT OVERVIEW

LEARNING GOAL

Understand your school from a student's perspective by immersing yourself in the experience of being a student for the day.

WHY?

Empathy experiences are important because they help us look beyond our assumptions by putting ourselves in the shoes of other people. An important part of immersion is observation—listening with all your senses.

REMEMBER

Approach observation with an open and curious mind. Stay away from generalizations, judgment, evaluation, assumptions, and prescriptions (should/would/could).

You aren't trying to solve anything today, just observe.

MINDSET

BE CURIOUS
SUSPEND JUDGMENT

TOOLS

Observation worksheets, notebook to take notes, pen, camera to document whenever possible.

ATTIRE

Ditch the suit and wear comfortable clothes. The less you look like "the principal", the easier it will be for you to immerse yourself.

In this guide you will find the following tools to help you through the process of shadowing a student.

- ✓ **Choosing a Student**
Give some thought to the kind of learning experience you want to have.
- ✓ **Shadowing A Student Guidance**
Helps you understand what to pay attention to as you go through your day.
- ✓ **Observation Notes**
Print this and bring it with you to help capture what you observe.
- ✓ **5 Minute Reflection**
Capture your immediate impressions at the end of the day. You may be exhausted but these are often the most powerful learnings.
- ✓ **Reflection Grid**
A framework to help organize your thoughts once you've had time to reflect.

CHOOSING A STUDENT

WHAT KIND OF EXPERIENCE DO YOU WANT TO HAVE?

You will have a different learning experience depending on which student you follow. Give some thought to what kind of experience you will learn the most from.

CONSIDER FOLLOWING...

- A student you don't know well
- A student you'd like to establish a better connection with
- A struggling student
- A new student
- An English language learner
- A learner with disabilities

MEETING YOUR STUDENT

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Remember that today you aren't just observing classes, you are shadowing one student and immersing in their experience. Part of that is getting to know each other.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Don't read from this list or interview your student, but feel free to use these questions as starting points for conversations throughout the day. Be prepared to open up and answer some of the questions yourself.

- What is your family like?
- What is a typical evening or weekend like for you?
- What are your dreams for the future?
- What teacher are you closest with?
- Who do you look up to?
- Who do you text the most?
- What's the nicest thing someone did for you recently?
- What annoyed you recently?

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

GRADE: _____

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

Towards the end of the day, you might start to ask these kinds of questions to get a sense of the day from the student's point of view.

- Who made you smile today?
- What challenged you today?
- Was today a typical day? How so?
- When did you feel most proud of yourself today?
- How would you describe the culture of our school?
- Did anyone do anything nice for you today?
- What were today's high and low points?
- What was today like for you?

SHADOWING A STUDENT GUIDANCE

As an educational leader, you help to create the context for the teaching and learning that happens in your school(s). And while you are building a culture to help students to become educated—be that in preparation for success in college, career and/or civic life given the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century—it can be easy to lose sight of the students' experiences relative to these objectives.

As you shadow a student, you will immerse yourself in their experience, and it is helpful to remind yourself that this is about empathy. When you empathize, you better understand people—who they are and that is important to them. Let go of your evaluative mind and seek instead to feel what it is like to adopt a student's point of view using all of your senses. The focus is on stepping into the student's shoes and experiencing the day as he or she does.

The questions below can guide you in your observations, and you might consider what insights you gain relative to the experience of students in general, as well as more specifically relative to how they are gaining the knowledge, skills and learning mindsets they must possess for success after they graduate.

NOTICE...

How does it feel to be a student for a day?

What is your student's favorite moment of the day, and what makes it special?

What do you notice makes your student feel uncomfortable, anxious, or bored? Why?

When is your student engaged in learning?

When/where/how does your student's learning feel connected to the real world? And when does it not?

What are the differences you experience in who engages in what learning? Are opportunities the same for all students?

As you go through your day, what opportunities do you notice for the skills of critical thinking & problem solving, collaboration, and effective communication?

OBSERVATION NOTES

Remember: Approach observations with an open and curious mind. Stay away from generalizations, judgment, evaluation, assumptions, and prescriptions (should/would/could).

Observations

Capture here what you see and hear

Thoughts

Capture what this makes you think about

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Capture what this makes you think about

5-MINUTE REFLECTION

You did it! It's probably been a very long day, but before you go to bed tonight, write down **three things that most surprised you today**. You can save deeper reflection for tomorrow.



When you look back on the day what are the moments that viscerally impacted you? When did you most feel empathy for your student?

1.

2.

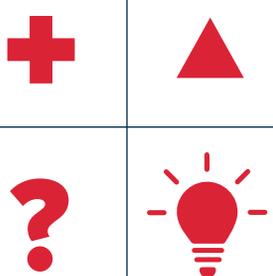
3.

REFLECTION CAPTURE GRID

Reread your notes and use this grid to organize your thoughts and reflections.

What's going well in your school, what could be better, and what questions or ideas does this spark?

<p>Likes <i>What did you see that you feel good about?</i></p>	<p>Wishes <i>What would you like to change?</i></p>
<p><i>What questions came up for you?</i> Questions</p>	<p><i>What new ideas did this experience spark?</i> Ideas</p>



WHAT'S NEXT?

APPLY WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Hack your school culture.

Choose an idea that will help you make the change you want to see in your school based on what you have learned. Run a small, scrappy experiment—a “hack”—to learn how to improve the student experience in your school.

Visit shadowastudent.org after February 29, 2016 and take a free 15-minute tutorial that will guide you through the process.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Share your reflections with your school or community.
Download our [email template](#) from the website to tell parents, teachers and students what you learned.



Discuss your experience with other principals.
Organize a local meet up with other school leaders who participated at your school or in your area.



Connect with other school leaders on social media.
Join our [Google+](#) community and [Twitter community](#).
Share reflections and pictures of your experience using the hashtag [#shadowastudent](#).