

STUDENT SHADOWING PROJECT



IRVINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT 2024-25

Why?

In IUSD we know that student wellness is a precursor to high achievement and that a sense of belonging is predictive of whether students thrive in our schools. Shadowing helps us understand our students' needs, empathize with the challenges they face, and improve learning experiences to create a sense of belonging for all kids.

As one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse districts in the United States, we must work to find ways to understand, appreciate, and respond to our individual students' needs. Recent years have taught us the critical importance of human connection. This sense of belonging is predictive of both social/emotional wellness and academic achievement; therefore, ensuring that our students feel safe, seen, connected and valued is essential to our success.

What?

Student shadowing means spending a day looking at the world through the eyes of a student. This involves following a student through their school day to capture insights about how we can improve the educational experience for all of our students.

Student shadowing is non-evaluative. The observations recorded and insights gathered are intended to personalize and improve a sense of belonging. The information will not be used to evaluate teachers. The focus should be squarely on our students.

Our Objectives:

- Immerse ourselves in a student's experience to better understand their perspective.
- Gain perspective about why students succeed or struggle in various learning environments.
- Identify the factors that help our students feel a sense of belonging in our schools.
- Examine implementation of the guiding principles and practices of our Continuous Improvement Efforts to develop essential capacities.
- Collect data for Professional Learning Communities to further a school or department goal.

Timeline of Shadowing Experience

✓ **Identify Students for participation:** Site teams meet to consider how to identify ideal participants.

✓ **Connect with Student:** Shadower connects with student participant. Explain the process, give the permission form, set up a pre-shadowing meeting.

✓ **Pre-Shadowing Student Meeting:** Shadower will meet with the student before the shadowing date to discuss what the student would like them to observe and answer any questions.

✓ **Teacher Notification:** Shadower will contact the students' teacher(s) before the shadowing date to inform them of the visit and arrange for necessary accommodations, such as seating arrangements.

✓ **Shadow Day:** Shadower will spend the entire day with the student, including lunch, breaks, and on campus after-school activities, unless the student requests otherwise.

✓ **Data Collection:** Shadower may use one of the provided shadowing templates to collect data or create their own observation method. [Template #1](#), [Template #2](#), [Template #3](#)

✓ **Post-Shadowing Discussion:** Shadower must schedule a follow-up meeting at the end of the day or within 1-3 days with the student to discuss observations and ask "essential data questions." [Post Shadow Discussion note taking template](#)

✓ **Documentation:** Shadower will complete the Essential Data Survey. bit.ly/StudentShadow2

Timeline

Pilot program: February 2025-April 2025

- 60-75 teachers across IUSD who serve on the Continuous Improvement Council.

District-wide program: September 2025-April 2026

- All schools will participate beginning in September and be spaced out over the fall, winter and spring.
- Shadowing debriefs will occur by the end of the 2025-26 school year.

School Participation for 2025-26

Elementary School Participation

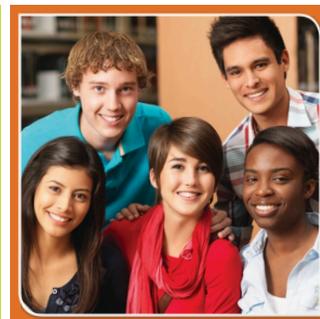
- Suggested 5 or more teachers from different grade levels

Middle School Participation

- Suggested 8 or more teachers from different departments

High School Participation

- Suggested 15 or more teachers from different departments



Identifying Students for Participation

- When identifying a student for shadowing, teachers and site leaders should consider the school's goals and how this opportunity could provide valuable insights into the learning experiences of diverse students.
- Consider students from multiple groups including English Language Learners, students with IEPs, advanced learners, students *at promise*, or students from other identified groups.
- Review protocol to ensure students selected understand and are comfortable.
- Students should have a signed parent permission slip.
- It may be appropriate for elementary teachers shadowing TK, K or 1st grade to shadow without notifying the student.
- Teachers should not shadow in their own class as there will be a substitute. Ideally the Shadower will observe a student in a different class or schedule to observe on an alternate block day.



Communicating Shadowing Initiative to Staff

For Site Leaders:

- August 2025, provide all staff & community with a letter that captures the purpose of Student Shadowing.
- Provide an opportunity for Q&A at one of the first staff meetings in August.
- Provide flyers at BTS Night.
- Utilize social media at the district and site levels to promote student shadowing.
- Information regarding the details of student shadowing should be disseminated to staff, students, and the community by the beginning of September.
- Sample letters, parent permissions, and templates are available in the google drive.

Pre-Conference with Student

Ask the student:

- What would you like me to see throughout the day?
- Are you comfortable with shadowing during break and lunch?
- When is a good time to set the post- conference?

Post-Shadow Discussion with Student

Ask the student:

- Was this a “typical” day?
- When do you feel most connected to your class(es)?
- When do you feel most connected to the school?
- What do teachers do to help you feel seen and valued?
- Do you feel there are barriers to feeling that you belong at school? If so, what are they?
- When was learning most relevant and meaningful to you today? Why?
- What motivates you to participate actively in class discussions or group work? Are there any particular subjects or activities that inspire this engagement?
- Tell me about any extracurricular activities and family/work responsibilities you have after school.
- What do you wish teachers knew about you?
- How much homework do you expect to have tonight?
- Share some compelling insights of the shadowing experience; ask the student if there is anything else to add.

Shadower Reflection

- What was the most surprising aspect of the students’ day that you observed? How has this challenged your existing assumptions of what a school day for students is like?
- What aspects of the school day effectively supported the student’s learning engagement, and overall school experience? What challenges did you observe?
- How did the student’s interaction with peers affect their sense of belonging and engagement?
- How did the student’s interaction with teachers affect their sense of belonging and engagement?
- How has the shadowing experience influenced your thoughts on the importance of teacher-student relationships?

Recommendations for School Debrief

Shadowers will participate in a debrief at their school. This may happen at the grade level or department, and with the school leadership team.

- Observations they can make about our students’ experiences in school.
- A description of how shadowing has or will inform their teaching.

Shadowing Resources Shared Folder

1. Student Shadowing Project Manual
2. Sample communication for parents
3. Pre-Shadowing Student Meeting Guide
4. Shadowing Templates #1-3
5. Post Shadow Discussion Questions & Reflection (required)
6. Post Shadow Survey bit.ly/StudentShadow2 (required)





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