

# SHADOWING

**S**hadowing is the process of following a student or educator through one day, part of a day, or longer, experiencing what that person experiences for the purpose of professional learning. Educators, including building and district administrators, can shadow in their own or other schools, individually or in a group. Noneducators can also benefit from shadowing. Parents, community members, business leaders, and policymakers can learn through shadowing how school works from a student or educator perspective.

Those being shadowed benefit, too. School staff members have said one advantage to having a shadow is that they have to be prepared. They have said they learn a lot through visitors' questions and comments. "It's almost like having a mirror held up to what I'm doing," said one staff member.

Students also benefit from having shadows. They practice presenting themselves, polish listening skills, and learn others' viewpoints. They learn how to relate to different kinds of people. Students also say they understand better what they are sharing with adults as they try to explain it.

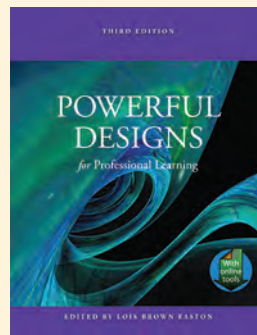
Use this tool to guide your school in planning a shadowing experience.

**Source: Soguero, M., Condon, D., Packard, C., & Easton, L.B. (2015).** Shadowing. In L.B. Easton (Ed.), *Powerful designs for professional learning* (3rd ed.). Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.



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*Edited by Lois Brown Easton*

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# Steps in shadowing FOR THE SCHOOL HOSTING SHADOWS

Step 1	<b>Prepare the host school.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine reasons for hosting shadows.</li> <li>• Find a contact person to schedule and conduct visits.</li> <li>• Decide what shadows will do (and not do).</li> <li>• Decide if visitors can shadow teachers and administrators.</li> <li>• Involve students in the decisions, especially about logistics.</li> <li>• Decide how to select students who will be shadowed.</li> <li>• Determine whether students will need an orientation in order to host a shadow.</li> </ul>
Step 2	<b>Prepare for the visit.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with educators who wish to shadow to clarify purposes.</li> <li>• Send materials that can be read and discussed before the visit.</li> <li>• Custom design the visit as needed.</li> <li>• Alert the school's staff and students about the visit.</li> <li>• Select students who will host shadows.</li> </ul>
Step 3	<b>The shadowing experience.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orient the visitors as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Give the visitors some opening questions to ask students.</li> <li>• Pair up shadows and students/staff.</li> </ul>
Step 4	<b>Debrief.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debrief midday and at the end of the day for one-day visits.</li> <li>• Debrief at the end of the day for multiday visits.</li> <li>• Have visitors process their experiences by asking for the following:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptions;</li> <li>• What they were struck by; what had import;</li> <li>• How the important elements relate to visitors' own schools;</li> <li>• What they might want to do about the important elements (next steps).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Modify for work with individuals instead of groups.</li> <li>• Ask how the school can help with next steps.</li> </ul>
Step 5	<b>Debrief with the school community.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share highlights by phone or email.</li> <li>• Share reflections with students. Include visitors' questions and comments when considering continuous improvement.</li> </ul>

Source: Easton, L.B. (Ed.). (2015). *Powerful designs for professional learning* (3rd ed.). Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

## Steps FOR EDUCATORS WHO ARE SHADOWING

Step 1	<b>Prepare.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine purposes for shadowing.</li> <li>• Study materials sent by the school; visit the website.</li> <li>• Note demographics, differences and similarities to own school.</li> <li>• Decide who will make the visit (including an administrator who sponsors the visit and ensuing initiatives).</li> </ul>
Step 2	<b>Shadow.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider mindset.</li> <li>• Clarify purposes for shadowing.</li> <li>• Clarify differences and similarities between own and host school.</li> <li>• Determine protocol for shadowing (participation vs. observation, ability to record the experience).</li> <li>• Get started with students.</li> <li>• Use an observation form.</li> <li>• Make the experience valuable for everyone.</li> <li>• Check in with colleagues and share preliminary experiences, questions, comments.</li> </ul>
Step 3	<b>Debrief.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the school's formal debriefing process.</li> <li>• Continue the informal process with colleagues.</li> <li>• Think about next steps.</li> </ul>
Step 4	<b>Implement.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider rollout to the rest of the staff at your school.</li> <li>• Consider adaptations that will need to be made for innovations observed at the host school.</li> <li>• Begin the process of implementation.</li> </ul>

## Preparing to shadow

1. What is the purpose of the shadowing? What do those who shadow hope to learn?
2. What special conditions will be needed for the shadowing to be effective?
3. What critical elements affect the environment (school or district) within which the shadowing will be done? Describe the demographics and environment:
  - Student demographics.
  - Teacher and administrator demographics.
  - Facts, such as:
    - Number of students;
    - Number of staff;
    - Grade levels served;
    - Length of day and organization of day;
    - Feeder school information; and
    - District information.
  - Culture.
  - School's mission, vision, and goals.
  - Program parameters ("We always have a schoolwide gathering at the beginning of the day," for example, or, "We don't have interscholastic sports, but we do have very exciting intramurals.").
  - Curriculum expectations (standards, instructional methods, assessment techniques, etc.).
4. How do these critical elements affect the purpose of the shadowing?
5. What do you hope to do with what you learn from shadowing?

**Source:** Easton, L.B. (Ed.). (2015). *Powerful designs for professional learning* (3rd ed.). Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

# Observation form

What was the main goal of the class? What do you think the students were trying to accomplish?  
What were they intended to know or be able to do?

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In what ways was it clear to you that what students were learning and/or doing was important in some way?

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What was the design of the lesson? What were the students doing? What was the teacher doing? What do you imagine the teacher did before this class to help students learn and/or be able to meet the goal of the class?

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What was the logic of the lesson? How did things connect — from yesterday to today, from today to tomorrow, from point to point, or part to part? What were the transitions?

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Was there any point during your observation when a student (or more than one) became disengaged?  
What happened to disengage students? What happened to re-engage them?

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**Source: Easton, L.B. (Ed.). (2015). *Powerful designs for professional learning* (3rd ed.). Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.**

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**Observation form, continued**

What did you think about the pace of the class? How did the energy feel? How well did the pace work?  
Was the energy appropriate? How were pace and energy established?

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In what instances were students asked to use their minds well, push their thinking deeper, or use higher-level thinking skills? How did the teacher and/or students stimulate thinking?

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How did the teacher and/or students deal with disruptions, instances that might otherwise have taken the class severely off course?

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How were learning styles or modalities addressed in this class?

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What else did you notice? What struck you? Why?

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