

Purpose:

To empathize with students (thus, to *not* see the school through the eyes of educators for a day). In so doing, the Shadowers will come away with insights about intended and unintended effects of school practices and policies on students, to be shared with colleagues in a constructive way.

Process:

A team of educators “shadow” individual students in their school or district for a full or half day. They go to every class of each student, stand near each student in the hall between classes, and in general perceive the school experience through the eyes and ears of a particular student.

1. Ensure that teachers and administrators at the school in question assent to and are informed about the day of shadowing. Provide this and other AE handouts describing the day.
2. Identify students who will be comfortable being shadowed. (You may need advance help from teachers or administrators at the school to find students.) As a team, try to shadow a range of students by *varying levels of achievement*. You may wish to practice the exercise before the day of the Shadowing by visiting a class and casually watching a student.
3. Meet students individually the day before (or, if necessary, before school starts on the morning of) the shadowing to explain the process and to get prepared for the students’ schedules for the day of the visit.
4. The Shadowers should position themselves so as to be able to watch the student at all times.
5. The Shadowers should try to suspend all “teacher” judgment about what is taking place in class and focus on the experience of being a student – what it feels like, physically, emotionally, intellectually.
 - a. How engaged is the student being shadowed? How active physically is the student?
 - b. How interesting *from a kid’s perspective* is the class?
 - c. How easy is it to follow where the teacher is going *from a kid’s perspective*? Is there a clear goal to the activities to students? How is the pace? The flow? (Watch their faces, not the teacher to infer this.)
6. Pay attention to the students’ affect/body language/talk as they leave class and head to the next location: Are they still processing? Are they immediately onto something else now? Etc.
7. Between classes, if possible, have a 1-minute debrief with the student about the high and low points of the class from the student’s perspective. Follow up on any of your observations in light of the questions in #5. Look at any work the student did: notes, papers, worksheets, etc.
8. As the day ends, speak with the student about the high and low points of the day and (especially) whether this day was typical or not.
9. Thank the student shadowed and the staff of the visited school!
10. As soon as possible write key detailed observations – not judgments - about what you saw, heard, and felt over the course of the day: *How would you describe this student’s day?* After you have described the day, jot down discussion questions/topics/further action research that arise from your experience, to propose to colleagues.
11. Debrief at the day’s end with other team members and with the visited teachers about what was learned, using the question: *What was it like to be a student here today?* Shadowers should describe what they saw, felt, thought. Visited teachers should then briefly supply context – how typical a class and day was this? Finally, on their own, Shadowers discuss any conclusions or recommendations that they would like to bring to the faculty, based on the experience.