

Preparing to Shadow - Optional

Instructions: As a part of the process of exploring this problem, you have the **option** of visiting a school for an immersive observation experience. When you immerse in another context, you can gain inspiration and insight by engaging in the same experiences as your stakeholder.

1 PREPARING TO SHADOW

A key component of the human-centered design process is developing a deep understanding of the needs and motivations of the people for whom you are solving problems.

For this exercise, you will immerse yourself in the student experience at another school to help you gather inspiration and insights into areas of you are working on at your own school.

Here's what you need to do:

Spend a full day shadowing a student. Ideally you would start from before the student arrives at school or right as they arrive. While it might be difficult to organize observing them at home (and it is okay if it doesn't work), it is important to understand how the student's full life is affected by their experiences at school. You will end the shadowing as the student leaves campus.

Your goal:

Your goal is to experience the student's day: what it feels like, when you are engaged and when you are not, when you are stressed, what transitions are like, etc. Try to get out of your own experiences at your school and walk with the student through their day.

The point of this exercise is about helping you understand what it feels like to be a student - not to observe and evaluate the student. It is okay if the student's experience is altered a bit because you are shadowing. Focus on how you feel in classes, during breaks and at the end of the day.

Approach the day with a curious, open mind. Your job during your immersion day is not to evaluate or judge what you see and experience. Rather, your goal is let go of your own agenda and your own assumptions about the student experience and immerse yourself in what it is really like to be a student at another school.

You are not trying to solve problems or intervene today. Your goal is to fully observe and participate. We have provided tools to help you take notes. Try to make specific observations and avoid generalizations.

By observing with empathy, you will increase your chances of discovering opportunities for solutions that respond to the needs of your stakeholders.



2 TIPS FOR SHADOWING

Try to blend in and allow the student's day to naturally unfold. It will be different because of your presence, of course, but work hard to not influence the experience too much. Don't wear your normal professional attire. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

Really try to experience what the student experiences. This means wandering the halls during break, eating lunch in the cafeteria, going to every class, etc.

This also means no talking to colleagues or adults, not going to the break room, not doing things that only adults in the building are allowed to do.

Take lots of notes. Capture detailed descriptions of everything you experience.

Take pictures of interesting events, experiences, etc. These pictures will help you remember key moments or interesting tensions.

3 PLANNING FOR YOUR SHADOW

1. Find a school that would be willing to have you shadow a student for the day.
2. Ask the school to help select a student to shadow. Ask them to think about selecting a student who represents a particular set of experiences you want to learn more about (high-achieving, disengaged, new to the school, a leader in the school, etc.).
3. Check in with the student before the shadow day. Explain the project and purpose of your shadow. Make sure the student's teachers know that you will be shadowing. Let the teacher know that this is not about critiquing their classroom; it is about experiencing life as a student.
4. Clear your schedule for the day. Find people to fill in for your regular duties at your own school.
5. Meet the student at the beginning of the day. Spend a little time getting to know your student and breaking the ice.
6. Take pictures, if the student is comfortable and the parents agree.
7. Take notes to capture your observations of different parts of your student's day. Include lunch, recess, breaks and transitions.
8. At the end of the day, complete the Reflection worksheet. Use the Reflection worksheet to help you identify what inspiration and insights you gained.