The Shadow Story

Founded by a Portland mom whose dyslexic son was ready to give up on school in second grade, The Shadow Project’s mission is to make learning more accessible and engaging for children with learning challenges so they can achieve their full potential. The only nonprofit of its kind in the country, Shadow has helped foster success for nearly 11,000 children in grades pre K-8 whose special education needs include dyslexia, ADHD, and autism.

With the conviction that all students can graduate from high school given access to the right supports, The Shadow Project provides innovative tools and techniques tailored to diverse learners and supports teachers in integrating those tools into their classrooms.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The Shadow Project is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, working to remove longstanding barriers that block the path to educational success for students with learning challenges who are diverse in race, culture, and socio-economic status.

As part of its Strategic Plan, Shadow began serving children more inclusively throughout their school day, including in their general education classrooms where kids in special education now spend 80% of their time. Our model is central to equity because it addresses the whole child, not just the disability. Working to reduce barriers that prevent children from feeling valued—such as shame over reading, or limited English proficiency—the organization is a valued community partner in strengthening student and family connections to school, and normalizing what it means to learn differently.
Shadow Demographics

1,630 Total Students

- 59% Girls
- 61% Boys
- 26 Languages Spoken
- 23% Immigrant/Refugee
- 49% White
- 16% Black
- 7% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 6% Other
- 2% American Indian

Note: 80% of schools are Title 1.

"Reading is easy now." – Trenton

Trenton struggled to read but ended the year with a schoolwide award for perseverance in reading.

"Shadow makes me work harder." – Antonia

Antonia often lost homework or forgot to turn it in. The Shadow Project gave her the courage to make mistakes and keep trying, and she is on track to be the first in her family to graduate from high school.

"I wear headphones to block out noise and focus." – Tay

Tay used to say, “I’m not smart,” and was grades behind in reading, but he built confidence and even increased his time spent reading using sensory tools provided by The Shadow Project.
Evaluation Highlights

In 2017, The Shadow Project began coaching students who were one to three-years below grade level in reading, using audio-visual books designed for children with disabilities. Half of coached students were from communities of color.

An assessment found that students:

- Increased, on average, **1.3 grade levels** in reading at a pilot elementary school;
- Gained, on average, **23 words per minute** in oral reading proficiency.

*Shadow also conducted its first child-level assessment on self-efficacy, with results mirroring teacher responses:*  
- **72% of students** strongly believe mistakes help them learn; **94% of teachers** report Shadow empowers students to learn from their mistakes;
- **78% of students** describe themselves as readers; **90% of teachers** say Shadow empowers students to become independent readers.

“*Our students with disabilities are seeing themselves as readers. I see them perform at higher rates, and take part in extra reading activities. They’re so excited when they meet their goal. They feel like they belong in the school community.*”

– Katherine Polizos, Principal Woodmere Elementary

Financial Summary

*July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017*

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Scary Stories

As a child, did ghost stories make your heart pound and your pulse race? Scary stories are fun to read, but what if reading itself was scary? Imagine letters creeping mysteriously around the page. No sooner would you get to know a word when...poof! It reappears as a total stranger.

For children with learning challenges, reading can be a fearful experience, leading to lingering anxiety, exacting an emotional toll that keeps them from thriving in school. In Oregon, only 19 percent meet the milestone of third grade reading proficiency that predicts high school graduation. Our capable kids deserve better.

That’s why I’m excited about Shadow’s new Reading Coaching pilot, which pairs an audio-visual library designed for children with disabilities with 1:1 support. Participants who were up to three years behind advanced as much as two grade levels in their reading ability. As books came alive for them, they proudly set goals to read at home.

Thank you for helping our children discover their courage.

Christy Scattarella, M.A.,
Founder & Executive Director

Program Highlights

- Provided goal-setting program to 35 K-8 schools.
- Piloted “High-Tech, High-Touch” reading coaching using assistive technology for children one- to three-years behind in reading.
- Equipped five high-needs schools with wraparound support for 243 students as part of Portland Public Schools Read Together initiative.
- Delivered first universal access training for general education teachers, with sensory toolkits for every classroom. Outcome: 71% of teachers reported reduced student anxiety.
- Installed first SuperSensory Literacy Space in an Oregon Head Start.
"The Shadow Project is a vital partner. Our kids have the TOOLS to access learning, and our teachers have the TRAINING to help them. That's how you EMPOWER children."

– Tamala Newsome, Principal
Rosa Parks Elementary

On the Cover

Portland special education teacher LaShell Holton, M.S. (center), uses Shadow’s signature goal setting program to motivate her struggling readers. Eric (left) and Haraa (right) persevered to become students who always raise their hands to read out loud.

The Shadow Project’s mission is to make school more accessible and engaging for children with learning challenges, so they can achieve their full potential.

For more information, or to make a gift visit

shadow-project.org

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Major Donors

Thank you to our major donors for empowering children with learning challenges, during fiscal years 2016-2017.

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I CAN

The Shadow Project