Accelerating Achievement for Students with Disabilities

The Shadow Project exists to make school more accessible and engaging for children with disabilities so they can achieve their full potential.

The unique Portland-based nonprofit has partnered with teachers to strengthen well-being and academic success for more than 12,000 capable but underserved children whose learning barriers include dyslexia, ADHD and autism. Students in grades K-8 develop strong academic habits and social-emotional skills, supported by programs that set high expectations and celebrate the inherent worth of every child.

Disparities for Students in Special Education:
21% meet 3rd grade reading benchmarks
27% are chronically absent
42% graduate with a standard diploma v.s. 82% of their peers
Oregon Department of Education 2020

The ability to regulate behavior is a key skill for school and life success.
Reading proficiency is a strong predictor of high school graduation.
Educator effectiveness has a strong impact on student achievement.

73% of students improve self-management
71% of students increase 1-2 grade levels in reading
93% of teachers report increased instruction time

The Harvard Business School Association of Oregon found that every $1 invested in The Shadow Project returns $26 in benefits to students and the community.

"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, veteran principal, Portland Public Schools
Autonomy, Belonging and Healthy Growth in School

Focused on equity, Shadow Project prioritizes serving low-income schools. All programs include trauma informed, culturally responsive training for educators, empowering children with disabilities to recognize themselves as capable, courageous learners.

Reading Mentors

Featured at the 2019 International Dyslexia Association conference, the Reading Mentors program brings together 1) assistive reading technology and 2) trained mentors to set reading goals and celebrate progress for students who are up to 3 years behind their peers.

- 71% of students increase at least 1 grade level, including 14% who gain 2 years in reading ability
- 90% of special education teachers report the majority of students become more independent readers
- Mentored students spend twice as much time reading compared to a national sample of students using the same assistive technology

Goal Setting

Special education teachers are equipped with a structured system that sets high expectations and builds confidence by engaging students in setting and meeting academic and social goals.

- 93% of special education teachers increase their instructional time, with 56% reporting a “significant” gain
- 89% of students report they keep trying when school is difficult
- 85% of students say they are confident in their ability to succeed

SuperSensory Spaces

SuperSensory Space program is a structured social-emotional skills program that empowers chronically stressed students to master life-long skills of self-management, so they can access the core curriculum.

- 73% of students increase self-regulation skills, a key predictor of school and life success
- 52% of students demonstrate a stronger sense of belonging in school
- 90% of teachers report less time spent on managing student behavior

The Shadow Project’s evaluation is led by external assessment partner Drill Consulting. Additional data provided by Learning Ally, the world’s largest provider of assistive reading technology.