

# Reading Mentors Program



The Shadow Project

## High Expectations Drive Student Success

In Oregon, 4 in 5 children with disabilities do not read proficiently, quadrupling their risk of school drop-out. **With the right support, these promising students can become confident, independent readers who graduate with their peers.**

The Shadow Project partners with schools to advance opportunity for students whose challenges include dyslexia, ADHD, and autism. We currently serve schools in the Portland, Centennial, McMinnville, Parkrose, Reynolds, and Willamette ESD districts. The Portland-based nonprofit has empowered teachers to unleash the potential of over 12,500 children in grades K-8, accelerating learning and fostering well-being.

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

## BECOMING JOYFUL READERS

Presented at the 2019 International Dyslexia Association conference, our Reading Mentors program pairs volunteer mentors with discouraged readers to set goals and celebrate progress. This program also equips schools with assistive reading technology designed for children who do not learn to read the traditional way. The results: **improved reading proficiency, deeper connection to school, and kids bursting with confidence.**

## NATIONAL READING CHAMPIONS!

In 2019, Shadow's mentored students ranked as high as the **top 5% of students from nearly 1,000 elementary schools** in a national contest for nontraditional readers.



*Avid readers Esnoy (left) and Eric are honored at their school's Family Reading Celebration.*

Mentored students gain up to 2 years in their reading ability

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# Autonomy, Belonging, & Healthy Growth in School

## Program outcomes include:

- 82% of students who were up to three years behind gained at least one grade level in reading proficiency. This includes 13% who increased two grade levels
- Mentored students ***spent twice as much time reading*** compared to national expectations for children using the same assistive technology (*Learning Ally, 2018*)
- 95% of teachers report their students ***spend more time on task*** during reading and have ***fewer behaviors that interfere with learning***

“The Shadow project helps my students have greater access to grade level text. By ‘reading with their ears,’ my struggling readers have been able to participate in class projects and book club groups.” -- Special education teacher, Portland Public

## Mentors Empower Students

“I’ve seen a transformation from reluctant readers who thought they ‘couldn’t read’ to kids who now look forward to their reading times.”

—Autumn, Reading Mentor and 4<sup>th</sup> grade parent



“Helping these kids realize their potential is a very special experience.”  
—Timber Joey, Reading Mentor

## Program Components

- **80,000-title Learning Ally audio-visual library**, majority of books narrated by professional actors; includes titles in Spanish. The library is available to ***all students reading below grade level*** and can also be accessed at home
- **Mentoring for up to 25 students** grades 3-5. Trained by Shadow staff in trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices, mentors motivate students to set reading goals and celebrate progress
- **Educational and sensory items** that reward students’ progress and perseverance
- **School-wide educator training** to integrate assistive technology into your school’s literacy curriculum
- **Family Reading Celebration** for all students who participate in a national reading competition for non-traditional readers
- **Independent program evaluation** to show accountability and demonstrate impact
- **Virtual program** adapted for distance and hybrid learning.