



→ 'Shadow A Teacher Day' by Dr. Karen Gaborick, Superintendent of Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

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This year, our district implemented a new initiative called “Shadow a Teacher” to build connections and enhance communication among district staff. It took place the week of October 1st and was a smashing success. Staff who work behind the scenes to support district functions spent an entire day shadowing teachers who volunteered to host guests in their classrooms. Visitors included staff from facilities maintenance, network services, business administration, human resources, teaching and learning, federal programs, special education, communications, and the superintendent’s office. Even school board members participated!





I spent my day at Joy Elementary School with an amazing teacher who is an absolute master at integrating technology across the content areas. The teacher I shadowed, Allison Curry, is a Google for Education certified teacher who also provides certification workshops for colleagues. I loved seeing her students use FlipGrid, Passport to Computer Science, and many other tools as part of their learning experience. What is truly impressive about Allison is that she understands the power of technology to personalize the learning experience for every single student. She has embraced the role of teacher as facilitator and has organized a classroom experience that allows her to constantly take deep dives with individual students as she targets instruction to their specific needs. She leverages flexible content and student voice and choice to engage students at very high levels. It was truly a pleasure to watch her in action. Allison's students are incredibly lucky to have her as their teacher. And I am so grateful that she is so generous with her time to share her skills not only with me, but with educators across the district.

Joy's principal, Lalaunie Whisenant, implemented a House system at Joy this year, creating a warm, welcoming culture of family and team among staff and students. The House system supports multi-grade level teaming opportunities so teachers can focus on specific content areas, rather than trying to provide instruction in all subjects. One of the highlights of the day was a whole-school House meeting in the gymnasium where students were recognized by staff for positive contributions to their respective Houses. I was struck by a particularly heartwarming moment when 3 students new to Joy were cheered by their fellow classmates and staff as they were welcomed with unbridled enthusiasm to their new House teams.



Another highlight of my Shadow A Teacher experience was the opportunity to participate in the school's evacuation drill. I think it might have been the quietest, most organized evacuation drill I've experienced. Students knew exactly what to do and where to go. It went like clockwork.

I am so appreciative of the work staff across our district are doing to create warm, welcoming places where students feel loved and cared for and families feel connected to their children's education. It was moving to spend an entire day in a classroom and a school with such outstanding Fairbanks educators. I intend to make Shadow A Teacher an annual event and encourage other districts to consider implementing it.

Have a story to share from your own school/district? You can either fill out this [Google form](#), or simply send [Sam Jordan](#) content directly to work up a post. We are looking for posts of no more than 500 words, accompanied by 1-2 pictures if available. If you need ideas, check out this doc <https://bit.ly/2HDqyGx>

