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TALKING TO PARENTS ABOUT DATA

“So what does that actually mean for my child?”

A guide for educators from the Independent School Student Success Playbook

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What This Guide is For

The parent conference is scheduled. The data is prepared. The data is accurate. And somehow the parent leaves more confused — and more alarmed — than when she walked in.

Data presented without a clear organizing structure opens loops. Every number the parent cannot reconcile, every term she cannot translate, every score that conflicts with another score — each one is an open loop she will carry out of the building. The more data languages we present without translation, the more loops we open. And open loops do not stay open. Parents close them at home, alone, at eleven o'clock at night, with whatever information they can find. That is the neuropsychologist search. That is posting on forums spiral. That is the story the parent tells herself about her child that is very hard to undo.

The solution is not to share less data. It is to present data in a way that does not open so many loops before the conversation begins, so the meeting itself can be spent doing the only thing a meeting is actually good for: identifying the loops worth exploring together, and closing them with a plan.

What you will find inside:

- The two-conference comparison that shows exactly where the conversation breaks down
- The three-step mechanism that leads to parent confusion
- The Translation Step and Four Questions we need to answer before a conference
- Why parents struggle with education data and the three principles that help them
- Reference tools you can use at your next conference

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Part 1: Problem | *Sharing Data*

Scene 1: The Conference Without a System

Sarah had done what every prepared parent does the night before: pulled up the portal, screenshotted the numbers, and spent forty-five minutes reading about reading scores on her phone while her husband watched television and told her she was spiraling.

She wasn't spiraling. She was preparing.

The teacher — Ms. Hennessey, warm, organized, clearly good at her job — had a folder. A printed folder. That felt serious.

She opened it and turned it toward Sarah, and Sarah looked at the page and felt the specific vertigo of someone who had studied for the wrong test.

There were three columns of numbers. A percentile. A scale score. Something called a GLE. Below that, a section labeled "Proficiency" with colored dots; green, blue, one red.

Below that, in a separate section, a letter grade. B+.

"So overall, Nora is doing really well. She's engaged, she contributes to discussion, her written work is strong. We love having her."

Sarah smiled. She wrote down "strong written work."

"The one area we're watching is here" Ms. Hennessey pointed to a number. "Her reading score came in at the 44th percentile this window. That's down from 56th in the fall."

Twelve points. Sarah had Googled this. The forums were not encouraging.

"Is that a big drop?"

"Scores can fluctuate," Ms. Hennessey said. "There's natural variability in these assessments."

Sarah wrote down "variability." She wasn't sure what to do with it.

"But she got a B+ in ELA," Sarah said. She hadn't meant it to sound like an accusation.

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“Right, so the classroom grade reflects a lot of things; participation, effort, the quality of her written work. The screener is more of a foundational skills measure. They’re looking at different things.”

Sarah looked at the B+ and the 44th percentile sitting next to each other on the page.

“So which one is right?”

“They’re both right. They just measure different things.”

Sarah wrote that down. She stared at it.

“And the red dot,” Sarah said. “The Decoding one.”

“So that’s flagging an area where her score fell below benchmark. It doesn’t necessarily mean —”

“When did that happen?”

“The red dot appeared this window.”

“So it wasn’t there in the fall?”

“It was yellow in the fall.”

“Yellow means what?”

“Watch. Monitor.”

“And you were monitoring it?”

A beat. “We note these things and track them across test windows.”

Sarah looked at her. “I didn’t know it was yellow in the fall.”

“Is she dyslexic?” Sarah asked. The word had been sitting in her throat since she opened the portal the night before.

“We don’t have any indication of that,” Ms. Hennessey said carefully.

“Then what should I read into?”

“I would read it as: we have something to watch. And we’re watching it. And we will wait and see if the spring screener shows the same pattern.”

“And if I wanted to do something now? Get an outside evaluation?”

“Would it give us more information than waiting until spring?”

Silence. Not a long one. But enough.

“It would give us more information sooner,” Ms. Hennessey said. “Yes.”

Sarah sat in her car. She didn’t start it.

She thought: someone should be able to tell me if my daughter is okay.

She opened her phone and searched for pediatric neuropsychologists. Not because she was certain Nora needed one. But because an evaluation felt like the only way to get a real answer from people who would be required to give her one.

The waitlist was eleven months.

> ***She walked in with questions. She walked out with a more sophisticated version of the same questions, dressed in language she didn’t understand.***

How the Data Creates Confusion

Ms. Hennessey was organized and prepared. She accurately and honestly explained every number in that folder. And Sarah left more confused than when she arrived.

Here is the mechanism.

1 **The parent arrives with one open loop.**

Is my daughter okay?

That is the whole question underneath every conference, every portal login, every carefully worded email. The parent does not arrive just wanting data. She arrives wanting that loop closed.

2 **The presentation of student data opens loops faster than the meeting can close them.**

B+. 44th percentile. Lexile 780. Red dot. Variability. Monitoring. Each one is a different language. None of them translates into the others. None of them lead to a closed loop..

3 **The parent cannot close the open loops. So she carries them. She tries to close the loops elsewhere.**

She did not leave with conclusions. She left with a forest of questions she has no way to navigate. A below-level reading score with no context becomes: is she dyslexic? Which becomes: should we get an outside evaluation? Which becomes: will she ever read independently? Which becomes: what does this mean for high school? One open loop becomes five before she reaches the parking lot.

The B+ and the 44th percentile sitting side by side — that is a loop. The gap between national average and what this school's curriculum actually expects — another loop. Yellow in the fall, no one told her — a loop that had been open for months before she knew it existed. "Scores can fluctuate" without an explanation of what normal fluctuation looks like — a loop dressed as reassurance. "We'll act if the spring screener shows the same pattern" — a loop with a five-month fuse.

Sarah walked in with one open loop. She leaves with eight.

The anxiety she feels on the drive home is not an overreaction. It is the sensation of carrying eight open loops with no closing moves. The forum spiral is not irrational.

The neuropsychologist search is not catastrophizing. They are a parent trying to find someone who will give her what the conference did not: a loop that closes.

This is not a communication problem. It is a system problem. System problems require system solutions.

Our job is not just to share data. It is to close the open loops the data generates. Every open loop has a closing move. Context closes it — we look for patterns across time and across subjects, not conclusions from a single score. A next step closes it — a diagnostic assessment, a change in classroom strategy, a new intervention. Another data source closes it — the grammar score was low, but here is her latest writing sample and it is strong. Before the conference ends, ask: what questions does this parent still have? Where are the open loops? The ones you don't close will multiply on the drive home.

Part 2: Solution | *The Framework*

Translation

Most parent confusion does not come from bad data. It comes from multiple data languages being presented side by side without translation.

Letter Grade	Standardized Scores	Teacher Comments
Reflects classroom performance: effort, participation, progress.	Reflects national comparison against all students.	Reflects teacher observation and perspective on learning.

Before the conference, translate data into a plain measurement scale: Is this student **above level, on level, or below level** relative to what our curriculum expects right now?

> ***Translation means converting each data point into plain language a parent can grasp immediately, so the meeting is spent on the child instead of on how the scores were constructed.***

Educators read these numbers against the backdrop of every other student in the class. That context makes the data instantly meaningful. The parent has no such backdrop. She is reading the same numbers in a vacuum.

A 44th percentile score means something very different depending on where the rest of the class sits. If the class clusters around the 50th percentile, this student is on level. If the next closest student is at the 62nd percentile and the class average is the 71st, she is meaningfully behind the class. The parent cannot know which situation her child is in.

Four Questions

Before the conference, prepare answers to these four questions for any area likely to concern the parent. Most areas won't require this level of detail. The ones that do will be the difference between a parent who leaves with clarity and one who leaves with more questions.

Q1	**Where is she relative to what the curriculum expects?**
Q2	**How do I know that?**
Q3	**What am I doing about it?**
Q4	**How will I know if it is working?**

A parent sees "below level" in math and asks what's going on. With proper preparation, the we can answer directly: "He is below level in math. His screener score and classroom quizzes and tests are below where our curriculum expects him to be right now. I've identified the specific gap — place value — and he's working on it in a small group during flex block for the next eight weeks. I'll be following his progress through his classroom work and homework, and he'll take the screener again in three months. That will tell us whether he's catching up."

⚠ **If we cannot answer all four questions for an area of concern, the parent will leave the conference with more questions than answers.**

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Scene 2: The Conference with a System

Same parent. Same student. Same data. Different system.

Ms. Hennessey had a single sheet on the table. She turned it toward Sarah as she sat down.

“This is how we see Nora’s progress. Each row is a different area of her learning. The level tells you where she is relative to what our curriculum expects.”

Sarah looked at the page. Eight rows. One label next to each. Most of them said on level. One said above level. One said below level.

She understood it immediately.

“So on level means she’s where she should be?”

“Exactly. On level means she is where our curriculum expects her at this point in the year, and she’s developing the foundation for next year.”

“And this one —” She pointed to the below level. “ELA.”

“Right. She’s below expected in ELA. That’s the one area I want to make sure we talk about today.”

“How do you know that?”

"Her screener score is below where our curriculum expects at this point in the year, and I'm seeing the same pattern in the classroom — she's not yet where I'd like her to be with oral fluency, and her written work shows consistent spelling errors that point in the same direction. Multiple indicators telling the same story.”

“So what are we going to do about it?”

"A few things. During reading instruction I've moved her into a smaller group where I can work more closely with her on phonics patterns — the specific skills her spelling errors are pointing to. I'm building more oral reading practice into our daily routine so I can hear where her fluency is challenged and correct it in the moment. I've also started giving her decodable texts that are matched to her current phonics level rather than asking her to push through material that's above where she is right now. We'll assess again in the spring, and I'll be tracking her spelling and fluency in the classroom every week between now and then so I'm not waiting three months to know if she's moving."

Sarah sat back slightly. “So let me make sure I understand. Everything is on level — where it needs to be — except ELA, which is lower and you’re already working on that. And math, which is above level, she’s getting extra challenge there.”

“That’s right.”

“So she’s doing well.”

“She’s doing well. Yes. And we are working on that one area of need.”

She thought about Nora — on level in six things, above level in math, below level in ELA that someone was already watching and already addressing.

“What can I do to help Nora?”

"The most important thing you can do is read with her every night. The books she brings home are leveled to where she is. Let her do the reading, not you. When she gets stuck on a word, give her a moment to work through it before you help. You're not trying to teach her phonics — that's my job. You're giving her practice and building her confidence. That time with you matters more than you might think."

Sarah thought: I know exactly how my daughter is doing.

> ***Sarah grasped the full picture immediately. The rest of the time was a real conversation. She left energized and clear.***

The Difference

The second conference does not represent a better educator. **She has a system.**

First, she translated each data point into one plain scale before Sarah sat down. Above level, on level, or below level. Sarah didn't have to hold a percentile, a scale score, a letter grade, a benchmark rating and teacher comments in her head simultaneously and figure out what they added up to. Sarah picked up the sheet and understood it immediately.

Second, for every area of concern she had answers to four questions before the conference began: where is Nora relative to what the curriculum expects, how do I know, what am I doing about it, and how will I know if it's working. Every question Sarah asked landed on an answer that was already there. No searching.

The first conference failed for the same reason most conferences fail. She did not have a system that translated various data points into a coherent presentation. When Sarah asked her questions, the answers had to be constructed in real time, under social pressure, in front of a worried parent. Each data point needed its own explanation just to derive its meaning.

Part 3: The Challenge | *Parent Reality*

The Two Questions Every Parent Is Actually Asking

Underneath every conference, every portal login, every carefully worded email from a parent, there are two questions.

Where is my child right now?

Is she moving in the right direction?

The first question is about the level of learning. Is she above level, on level, or below level relative to what the curriculum expects at this point in the year?

The second question is about progress. If she is below the level the curriculum expects, is the gap growing, holding, or closing? A student can be below level and catching up. A student can be above level and falling behind. The score at any single point in time does not answer this question.

If the parent conference simply presents the raw data, it is not easy for the parent to triangulate the rate of progress. And so she leaves with the raw data and none of the conclusions she needed. This means she draws her own conclusions in the car on the way home.

Our job is to answer both questions before she has to ask either one. Level first — above, on, or below level, stated plainly. Progress second — falling behind, making expected progress, or catching up.

Why Parents Struggle With Student Data

When a parent leaves a conference confused, frustrated, or anxious, it is often because the system she is navigating was not designed for her. The table below identifies the most common sources of parent confusion and what's driving each one. This helps us to understand the cause of the confusion and frustration.

What Parents Experience	Why It Happens
A wide variety of different data formats and conventions.	Percentiles, scale scores, proficiency levels, benchmark designations, classroom grades, teacher comments. Educators work with these every day. Parents do not. Parents are asked to synthesize data presented in a variety of languages.

What Parents Experience	Why It Happens
They may not appreciate that human learning is variable.	A drop in scale score looks catastrophic. A move from the 62nd to the 50th percentile looks like lost ground. What is an expected fluctuation to an educator may be a signal of alarm to a parent. Year after year we see scores for hundreds of students move up and down. The overall trend usually is up. Parents don't have this reference.
It is hard to reconcile conflicting data.	A B+ in ELA and a 40th percentile reading score side by side creates confusion, not clarity. When data tells two different stories, parents often default to the more concerning interpretation. Educators have learned to look for overall patterns of data and not let one score from one moment dominate the conclusion.
They don't know if a score reflects skill or effort.	A student who rushed or had a difficult morning produces a score that looks identical to a student who tried and couldn't. Educators have this context because we were often there in the classroom and have a larger context.
They hear reassurance as dismissal.	"We're monitoring it" and "scores fluctuate" are true. But a string of reasonable-sounding reassurances without specific evidence or a concrete next step does not build trust. It erodes it. The more specific we are about what we are seeing, how we know it, and what we are doing next, the more confidence the parent leaves with.
Concerning data without a plan doesn't reassure a parent.	A concerning score with no next step, no timeline, and no explanation of what would change the picture provokes an open loop for the parent. Our job is to close the open loops.
They make the identity leap faster than you expect.	A lower math score becomes: math is not who my child is. A reading dip becomes: she's not a reader. The leap from score change to life trajectory happens in seconds. Once the story forms it is very difficult to undo.
They feel blindsided when patterns emerge late.	Each individual shift may have been small. We may have been watching carefully. But if parents are not updated transparently along the way they might get

What Parents Experience	Why It Happens
	surprised down the road. "Why am I only hearing about this now?"
They arrive to the conference wanting one answer.	Most parents have one question underneath everything else: is my child okay? For most students the answer is yes — everything is progressing as expected. We say that clearly and move on. If something needs attention, the parent's follow-up question is equally simple: is someone taking care of it? Answers to those questions are what parents need first.

The confusion parents experience interpreting educational data is a predictable outcome of a reporting system that was designed for educators.

Three Principles

These are three principles that guide how we communicate student data so parents can quickly grasp the full picture and spend conference time discussing their child and not the metrics. When we internalize these principles and use them consistently in parent interactions, parents leave conferences with clarity, calm, and confidence. When they are absent — even unintentionally — the result is confusion, frustration, and a loss of trust that is difficult to rebuild.

1 **We Have a System.**

Parents benefit from knowing that we follow each student carefully throughout the year through multiple measures and ongoing observation, and that when the data signals something important, there is a system that responds. An email home. A team meeting. An intervention.

Say it plainly: *"We follow every student carefully throughout the year. When the data tells us something needs to be addressed, we address it."*

2 **Human Learning Is Variable.**

The curriculum is written in a straight line. Human learning is sometimes two steps forward, one step back. Parents may not expect this. When they see a score drop, they see a problem. It is our job to give them the context.

Say it plainly: *"A single low score is not the whole story."*

3 **Patterns Are What Matter.**

We are not just sharing individual scores. We are sharing a pattern — across time and across subjects. A single dip is information. Three consecutive dips in the same area is a pattern that requires attention. In most reporting periods, the pattern is straightforward.

Say it plainly: *"We look at data as indicators. What one score tells us is limited. What a pattern of scores tells us over time is more meaningful."*

Parents already understand these principles from their own lives.

A Doctor

When you come in for a checkup, your doctor does not hand you a folder of raw numbers and ask you to draw your own conclusions. She has a system. Blood work. Blood pressure. Weight. A conversation about how you have been feeling and what concerns you. Multiple sources, collected over time, assembled into a picture before she speaks.

If your blood pressure reads high, she does not tell you that you have hypertension. She says: your pressure is elevated today, but your history looks fine — let's keep an eye on it and see if this holds at your next visit. She knows that one reading is just one indicator.

And when the appointment ends, she tells you exactly where you stand: continue what you are doing, watch your sleep, come back in six months. You leave knowing. You do not leave carrying open loops.

A Financial Advisor

A financial advisor does not evaluate your portfolio by looking at a single fund on a single day. She looks at the whole picture — multiple funds, across time, measured against what the market has been doing. Context is key.

If one fund is down, she does not tell you to panic. She tells you: the overall portfolio is performing in line with the market. This one fund is underperforming. I am watching it. If it does not correct by our next meeting, we should talk about whether to move it.

She has already synthesized the data before you sit down. She knows the difference between a dip and a trend. She tells you what it means, what she is doing about it, and when she will follow up. You leave with a clear picture and a plan, not a stack of numbers and a set of questions you will spend the weekend answering yourself.

Weather Forecast

A meteorologist does not look at Friday night's low temperature and tell you what the weekend will be like. Temperature. Humidity. Cloud cover. Barometric pressure. Wind direction. Each one is a data point. None of them is the forecast. The forecast is what you get when someone who understands how those sources interact synthesizes them into a single coherent picture.

The professional's job is to hold all the sources together, interpret what they mean in combination, and tell you what to expect — so you can make a decision. Bring a jacket. Leave the umbrella home. Plan the outdoor event for Saturday, not Sunday.

You do not leave the weather report carrying twelve open questions about atmospheric pressure. You leave knowing what to wear.

The three principles in this document are not a new philosophy. They are the standard of practice in every field where a professional is trusted to interpret complex information for someone who needs a clear answer. Parents are already accustomed to hearing complex data interpreted for them along these principles.

Data Sharing Guidelines | *Create Clarity*

What Not to Say

For the parent who is looking for reassurance and clear next steps some often used phrases lack precision and create confusion rather than clarity.

Avoid This	How it Causes Problems	Say This Instead
"Don't worry about it."	Dismisses the concern before the parent has been heard. Even when a drop is within normal variation, the parent needs to understand why this is not a concern.	*"I understand why that caught your attention. It is the only score that is lower than in the Fall. I don't see a pattern that is concerning. Everything else looks good."*
"It's just one test."	Lands as defensive. Raises questions as to why to give tests if the results are going to be dismissed.	*"This is one data point. Here's what it tells me, here's what it doesn't tell me, and here's what I'm looking at alongside it."*
"He just rushed through it. We'll have him retake it."	Retesting addresses the score. It doesn't address the student. The rushing is information about engagement, motivation, and relationship to the work.	*"The way he approached the assessment tells me something about his engagement, not just his skill. Here's how we are helping with engagement"*
"These numbers aren't that accurate."	Undermines your own assessment program and replaces one confusion with another.	*"All indicators have a range of precision, which is why we look at multiple sources of evidence together."*
"She's doing fine in class." (without specifics)	Does not add clarity. Fine is vague without evidence.	*"In class, I'm seeing [specific observation]. She thrives with [specific example]. That's what tells me this score isn't the whole story."*

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Avoid This	How it Causes Problems	Say This Instead
"She is a struggling reader."	Locates the problem in the student's identity, not a specific addressable skill. The parent hears a label.	*"Her reading data shows a specific gap in [skill] that we can address. Here's what we're doing about it."*
"This is what we'd expect given his profile."	Communicates a ceiling. The parent hears: we have already decided what he is capable of.	*"Here's what I'm going to try next, and here's how I will know if it is working."*
"We'll keep monitoring." (as the only response)	Monitoring without a defined action, threshold, and timeline is not a plan. The parent wants to know what will change.	*"Here's specifically what I'm watching for, here's what would change my approach, and here's when I'll follow up with you."*

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Score Change Decision Guide

A score change is the moment parents are most likely to panic and least likely to have context. This guide helps us walk into the conference prepared with the larger picture, the supporting data points, and a clear sense of which changes are part of a concerning pattern and which are too early to know.

What You See	Most Likely Cause	Your Next Step
Small score dip, classroom work strong	Natural human variation	Reassure with specific classroom evidence. Name what we are watching for at the next window. Tell the parent what would change our assessment.
Drop follows unusually high previous score	Previous score was the outlier, not this one	Explain the earlier score was likely higher than the student's typical range. Point to classroom work as confirmation.
Percentile score declines while scale scores advance	Student is progressing but not at the pace the curriculum requires	Decide whether we act now or watch one more window.
Student rushed or disengaged during assessment	Engagement gap signal, not a skill gap signal	Explain how you are addressing the engagement need.
Score flat under intervention	Intervention may need adjustment or may need more time.	Explain we will discuss this as a team. We will review the intervention focus, intensity, approach. Give parent a revised plan with specific timeline.
Score dropped and classroom performance	A real skill gap or emerging need may be developing.	Discuss student at team meeting and we will develop

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What You See	Most Likely Cause	Your Next Step
also concerning		plan we will share with parent by a given date.
Two consecutive windows of decline	A pattern, not a variation	Team review required. We move from watching to acting. We give the parent a specific plan and a specific follow-up date.
Parent reports home concerns that match the data	Multiple signals pointing in the same direction	We treat this as a stronger signal than either source alone.
Score dropped but classroom performance is strong	The assessment may reflect a single-day variation	We tell the parent what you are watching for and what would change your assessment.

When in doubt, bring it to the team. A pattern that is hard to read alone is often clear when multiple educators who know the student and the curriculum look at it together.

Questions Parents Ask

“His math score was above level in the fall and on level now. Is he going backwards?”

It is too soon to draw a conclusion from one change. It is possible the fall score was unusually high and this score is more representative of where he is learning. I have been following his classroom work closely and I am seeing consistent challenge and progress. There is no pattern here that concerns me. I will keep watching and let you know if that changes.

“If a score is just a signal and we cannot draw conclusions from it, why do we bother with these assessments?”

Each individual score tells us where to look more closely. On its own a score prompts investigation which brings in other sources of data. Over time, as the pattern builds across multiple scores, the data becomes increasingly meaningful and actionable. That combination — a signal that prompts investigation and a pattern that confirms it — is what makes these assessments worth our time.

“When I look at the data I see scores all over the place — on level here, above level there, below level somewhere else. And the last time we met the scores were above and below in different areas than today. How do you make sense of that?”

What you are seeing is actually the pattern. The variability itself is telling us something. She has real strengths and is capable of high level work — the scores above level show that. The challenge is consistency across subjects and across time. This is not a situation where we are intervening on a specific skill gap. What the data is revealing is that her learning is sensitive to conditions in her environment. That is what we are paying attention to and working on. And it is what the data will show us as we make progress.

“My child's scale score went up but the level went down from on level to below level. How is that possible?”

The level the curriculum expects increases throughout the year as the material becomes more demanding. So it is possible for a scale score to go up — indicating your child is learning and making progress — while the level category shifts from on level to below level. What that tells us is that she is moving forward, but the curriculum is advancing faster than she is right now. Our job is to help her close that gap. Here are our next steps.

Last year you were giving diagnostic and inventory assessments. How come you haven't done that this year?

Last year he was below level in math and we needed additional assessments to identify exactly where the gap was and what needed attention. This year the screener scores are on level and the classroom work is strong. Everything is indicating that expected progress is being made. There is no signal indicating we need to look more closely right now.

“He’s been getting help. Why isn’t the score moving?”

His data has been flat since we started the intervention, which tells me we need to take a closer look at what we are doing. Before we draw any conclusions I want to look at the full picture — his screener scores, his classroom work, and the progress data from the intervention itself. I am going to bring all of that to the team so we can decide together what needs to change. I will follow up with you once we have a plan.

“So what are you going to do about it?”

I am going to give her a diagnostic assessment to confirm the screener score and to see what exactly the skill gaps are. We will meet as a team to design the optimal intervention to address the specific need. We will let that run for eight weeks and then re-evaluate.

"How does she compare to other kids in the class?"

We measure every student against what our curriculum expects at this point in the year, not against other students in the class. When a student is at the level the curriculum expects, our experience is that she progresses well through the year and arrives at the next grade ready. When she is below that level, we take steps to help her catch up. When she is above it, we look for ways to offer more challenge.

"Why didn't anyone tell me sooner?"

Gaps like this are sometimes invisible until the curriculum demands something the foundational skill can't yet support. It's not that it was missed — it's that it wasn't yet visible. What matters now is that we can see it clearly and we have a plan to address it.

"I see her reading is below level. What can we do at home?"

A regular evening schedule of shared reading would be great. Try books she is genuinely excited about, and make sure they are at a level where she can read most of the words without getting stuck. The books she brings home from class meet both of those criteria.

Data Sharing Reference Card |

Talking to Parents About Data

Four Questions answered. One conclusion per area. A plan for everything else.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE	DURING THE CONFERENCE
☐ **Answer the Four Questions** for each area of concern.	☐ **Reference three principles:** system — variability — patterns.
☐ **Q1:** Where is she relative to what the curriculum expects?	☐ **"We follow your child carefully throughout the year.** What we are sharing today is a picture of what we've been seeing."
☐ **Q2:** How do we know that?	
☐ **Q3:** What are we doing next?	☐ **"We don't look at any single score as a conclusion.** We look at data as indicators."
☐ **Q4:** How will we know if it is working?	
☐ **Translate relevant data** to above level / on level / below level.	☐ **"Patterns over time and across subjects** are what we use to see progress."
☐ **Name a specific next step** for each area of concern.	☐ **Converse with the translation** (e.g., on level), not the raw score.
☐ **Review work samples** alongside the scores to confirm what the score is indicating.	☐ **For a below level area:** provide the action, the rationale, the timeline.
☐ **Know the follow-up date** (if necessary) before the conference begins.	☐ **End with a specific belief statement.** Not generic reassurance. Something you've observed.

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