



TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT BEING HELD BACK A GRADE



Your support and words can help your child feel safe, understood, and confident about the future.

TIPS FOR PARENTS BEFORE AND DURING THE CONVERSATION

- 1 PREPARE YOURSELF**
Take time to calm your own feelings first. Kids pick up on our emotions.
- 2 CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME**
Find a quiet, relaxed time when you won't be interrupted.
- 3 LEAD WITH LOVE**
Start by reminding your child they are loved, capable, and important—no matter what.
- 4 KEEP IT SIMPLE & HONEST**
Use words your child can understand. Be honest, but keep it age-appropriate and positive.
- 5 FOCUS ON GROWTH, NOT FAILURE**
Explain that this decision is about giving their brain more time, support, and the best chance to succeed.
- 6 LISTEN & VALIDATE FEELINGS**
Your child might feel sad, angry, embarrassed, or scared. All feelings are okay. Listen without fixing.
- 7 REASSURE THEIR WORTH**
Remind them that being held back a grade doesn't change who they are or how much you believe in them.
- 8 TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE**
Share the good things ahead—new opportunities, stronger skills, and how you'll navigate it together.

UNDERSTAND THEIR FEARS, WORRIES & STIGMAS

Many kids worry that being held back means something is wrong with them. Talking about these feelings helps reduce shame and builds trust.

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| WORRY ABOUT BEING "DUMB"

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Something is wrong with me." • "I'm not as smart as others." • "I'll never catch up." | FEAR OF LOSING FRIENDS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'll be left behind." • "We won't be in the same class." • "No one will want to be my friend." | FEELINGS OF SHAME & EMBARRASSMENT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "People will laugh at me." • "Everyone will know." • "I'll feel so embarrassed." | FEAR ADULTS HAVE GIVEN UP ON THEM

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Do my teachers not like me?" • "Am I disappointing everyone?" • "Why can't I do what others can?" | WORRY ABOUT COMPARISONS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My siblings or friends will be ahead of me." • "I'm the only one being held back." • "Everyone else keeps moving forward." |
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Let your child know these feelings are normal and it's okay to talk about them. Validate their feelings first, then help them build a story of hope and support.

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| WHAT YOU CAN SAY

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ "School is supposed to help your brain grow." ♥ "Everyone learns in their own way and at their own pace." ♥ "This is about helping school fit your needs better." ♥ "We are your team, and we'll figure this out together." ♥ "It's okay to feel upset. I'm here to listen." | WHAT TO AVOID

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Saying it's because they aren't "smart" ✗ Comparing them to siblings or peers ✗ Focusing on shame, embarrassment, or negative labels ✗ Making it sound like a punishment ✗ Saying "It's no big deal" if they're upset |
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REMEMBER: This is one part of your child's story, not the whole story. With love, support, and the right tools, your child can thrive. **YOU ARE THEIR BIGGEST SUPPORT.**

Every child's journey is unique. Patience, connection, and encouragement make all the difference.