Several years ago, if you said the word “data” at Bryant Elementary School many parents and teachers would have considered it a bad word. Despite efforts to improve academic outcomes, many students continued to perform poorly on standardized tests. Years of looking at red and orange charts showing low student performance had created a negative association with assessment and data.

**Understanding the context of the work**

The administrative team at Bryant knew that in order to support struggling students, they needed to better coordinate their efforts with teachers and families.

To do this, they would have to break down barriers to talking about student performance and find a common language to share effective practices. They knew assessment data could be a powerful tool to focus their conversations, but weren’t sure how to approach this process in a meaningful way.

Claudia DeLarios, a Parent Liaison at Bryant explained, “Many parents struggle with literacy. Showing them graphs and charts of data can be alienating”.

Sarah VanVelsor, who serves as Instructional Reform Facilitator, echoed a similar sentiment from teachers, explaining many teachers “hated data” or at a minimum, felt confused about how to read or utilize it effectively. This made using online tools like DataDirector more of a challenge than a resource. Site leadership recognized that in order to be successful they would have to find a unique approach.

**Using a low-tech approach yields great rewards**

Bryant leadership removed the technology barrier and made the process tangible. They created a huge Data Wall, including charts for Math and ELA. On the wall, individual student performance was represented by colored cards based on students’ latest CST scores.

After the first Common Learning Assessment (CLA), Sarah gave teachers student performance reports. As student proficiency moved up (or down), teachers physically moved student cards to the right or left on the wall to show progress. This process of physically interacting with student data helped make it tangible. The process of moving students on the chart became a metaphor for their hard work in the classroom. Instead of sitting helplessly on the side-line while data was presented *at* them,
they were actively engaging with it. When they made changes in instruction, they could see the impact of their efforts. It became something real and meaningful. In this way, the Data Wall became a place for Bryant staff to share challenges, problem-solve, align resources and celebrate success.

This year, Bryant teachers are tracking reading performance. All students were assessed using Fountas & Pinnell Assessments (F&P) and placed on the Data Wall in relation to grade-level expectations. As students’ reading ability improves their cards move to the right on the chart.

Teachers meet regularly to analyze student progress and share instructional strategies. They are also designing their own assessments to track mastery of specific concepts along the way. All this hard work is paying off. This year, Sarah states, is the first that all Bryant kindergarteners are on track to graduate from kindergarten reading at grade level.

**Bryant families get involved**

Bryant families also regularly engage with data. Parents ask questions and give feedback during Principal Chats using sticky notes posted on the wall. Principal Christina Velasco, responds with relevant data. The notes are also used as qualitative data to inform the school’s family involvement efforts.

Parents have also begun to work directly with data; for example ELAC members create posters with graphs of student performance. Instead of “talking at” parents during community meetings, Bryant uses a workshop approach where parents participate in hands-on activities with their children. Claudia explains that when families actively engage with data, they are better equipped to have conversations with educators about school improvement efforts.