# LADDER OF INFERENCE

The ladder of inference is a useful tool when having difficult conversations. Originating from the field of anthropology, it allows us to help make sense of any situation, such as a challenging talk with colleagues, a tricky interaction with a parent, or a confrontational school board. The ladder helps us become more aware of how quickly we move from what actually happens to our own interpretations and conclusions. By increasing our awareness, we can prevent ourselves from being driven by our own conclusions. The ladder has three steps, starting with the bottom rung.

Check out each step and an example:

**Climbing the Ladder of Inference**

**Draw Conclusions:** Key takeaways based on your interpretations

**Immediate Interpretation:** Culturally and context-dependent meaning-making based on your observations

**Collect "Data":** Here, data is a directly observable phenomena

This admin doesn't care about me or my situation. I'll never be able to get her on board.

What?! She's not paying attention to me.

*You are talking with an administrator about an issue you have, when she pulls out her phone and checks it as you're talking.*

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