

Case 6: What can your family see in your college records?

Content note

This case is about private records. No student should share their own grades, forms, records or family finances, so keep the discussion on Rafa’s situation.

This case explains general rules. It is not legal advice for your situation.

Overview

Students read about Rafa, an 18-year-old in his first year of college whose family wants to help pay tuition and asks for his login. They read an access form, a college FERPA notice and summaries of federal guidance, then sort billing access from access to grades. They then write the question Rafa could send the records office and the smallest access that would help his family.

Before this case

- Students should already be able to:
- summarize an official source accurately
 - write for two audiences at once
 - label a source as or real

Objectives

- Students will be able to:
- state that FERPA rights belong to a student at a school beyond high school
 - separate the billing authorization from the academic-records authorization

Objectives, continued

- describe the exceptions accurately without applying them to any real student
- explain how a student changes or withdraws an authorization

Materials

- This chapter, one copy per participant
- Evidence A and B, labeled as examples
- The Department of Education FAQs, the Eligible Student Guide to FERPA (March 8, 2023) and the American University guide
- A two-column organizer: billing access and records access

The task in this edition

Task: Write a plain-language explainer for first-year students and their families, suitable for an orientation program or a student government page. It separates billing access from access to academic records and explains how a student changes an authorization.

Students make: Explainer for students and families, 350—450 words, with three short questions and answers

Pacing

Opener (page 107): 4 min. Short on time: 3 min. Summarize What happened in one minute.

Pacing, continued

Key terms (pages 108 and 109): 5 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.

Look at the evidence (pages 113 and 114): 8 min. Short on time: 6 min. Participants fill in the What it shows boxes only.

Key idea (pages 115 and 116): 10 min. Short on time: 8 min. Skip In the news. Use the Department of Education pages instead.

Sort the evidence (page 117): 6 min. Short on time: skip.

Practice (page 118): 5 min. Short on time: skip.

Your task (pages 119 and 120): 12 min. Short on time: 12 min.

Your draft (page 121): 30 min. Short on time: 30 min.

Check your work (pages 122 and 123): 6 min. Short on time: 5 min. Skip the rubric. Participants answer the Check your work questions only.

Questions to discuss (pages 124 and 125): 8 min. Short on time: 8 min.

Talk about this case at home (page 126): at home.

Periods: full chapter 94 minutes; one period 75 minutes.

Case 6 plan, continued

Standards

Information Literacy VALUE Rubric AAC&U’s rubric for finding, evaluating and using information for a purpose, ethically and legally. In this case: Students cite the Department of Education pages accurately and respect the limits on sharing confidential records (Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally).

Written Communication VALUE Rubric AAC&U’s rubric for writing that fits its context and purpose, develops its content and uses sources and evidence. In this case: Students write one explainer for students and families at once (Context of and Purpose for Writing).

Information Has Value Information has value, including as a means to influence people, so credit, access and privacy matter. In this case: Students explain who controls access to education records and why an authorization can be limited or withdrawn.

Authority Is Constructed and Contextual A source’s authority depends on its creator’s expertise and on the question it is being used to answer. In this case: Students weigh a college’s form and a federal FAQ as sources for different questions.

Codes of ethics

- **AACRAO Ethics and Practice:** Standards of professional practice

Codes of ethics, continued

- **AACRAO Ethics and Practice:** Principles of professional ethics
- **Credo for Ethical Communication:** “We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings...” (one of nine unnumbered principles)

Heat map

- ■ □ **Opener (page 107):** Medium
- □ □ **Key terms (pages 108 and 109):** Low
- □ □ **Look at the evidence (pages 113 and 114):** Low
- □ □ **Key idea (pages 115 and 116):** Low
- ■ □ **Sort the evidence (page 117):** Medium
- □ □ **Practice (page 118):** Low
- □ □ **Check your work (pages 122 and 123):** Low

Try it at your school

Find your school’s records notice.

- Search your school or district website for its FERPA or “student records” notice
- Find out what counts as directory information and how families can opt out
- Write one question about who can see a record, and ask the front office or counselor
- If you’re heading to college, look up its parent-access and authorization forms early

Try it at your school, continued

Who to ask: School counselor, registrar or records office, front-office staff

Safety: Never post screenshots of grades, IDs or forms. Talk with a trusted adult about what to share and with whom.

Sources

- U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, “What is FERPA?,” No date listed
- U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, “What is an education record?,” No date listed
- U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, “Must postsecondary institutions provide a parent with access to an eligible student’s education records?,” No date listed
- U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, “Student privacy questions,” No date listed
- American University, AU Central, “FERPA and parent-access guide,” No date listed

Case 6: What can your family see in your college records?

Rafa's parents help pay his college bill, and a family-access form asks whether they should also get information about his grades.

On your own Read What happened and underline what Rafa's dad asks for in the family chat. About 4 minutes.



Rafa and Caio sit on a sofa and look at Rafa's phone. Caio explains something with an open hand.

Your role: You're the one who reads each box on the form before Rafa signs. **New skill:** Read a form section by section before you sign.

What happened

Rafa, 18, has just started college, and his parents help pay his tuition bill. He commutes from the next block and helps at his family's shop after class. At the end of August, the college mailed Rafa a family-access form, but he has not opened the envelope yet.

On Sunday night, his parents ask about the form in the family group chat. His dad wants Rafa's login so the family can handle everything. Rafa is glad to share the bill, but he wants to read the rest of the form first.

Your question: What will this form let Rafa's parents see, and what should he ask before he signs?

Caio, an older friend who rents a room on the block, reads the form with Rafa, not for him. The form has separate sections for billing and for grades. Rafa wants to check the billing box. He wants to talk with his family before he decides about grades.

Case 6 | Opener | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 4 min.

✂ Short on time: 3 min. Summarize What happened in one minute.

💬 Say this

"Rafa's dad asks for his login. What is his dad trying to help with?" — Hear two answers. Keep the talk about Rafa's family, not students' own.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students assume paying tuition gives parents full access. **Listen for:** "They pay, so they get to see it." **Then:** Write "paying" and "seeing" as two columns. Ask which document connects them.

📖 Support

- Read What happened aloud while students follow along.
- Remind students that nobody shares their own records or family rules.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** Students may compare the case with their own family's rules about grades.

Cool-down: Say: "We're working with Rafa's family." Go straight to the form.

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

FERPA FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records.

En español: FERPA (Ley de Derechos Educativos y Privacidad de la Familia)

In this case: Rafa is 18 and in college, so under the general rule the FERPA rights to his records are his, not his parents'.

Education record An education record is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps.

En español: expediente educativo

In this case: Rafa's grades and schedule are education records. Section 2 of his form asks whether his parents may receive information about his grades.

Consent Consent is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person.

En español: consentimiento

In this case: Rafa's form asks for consent in two separate sections, one for billing and one for grades. He can say yes to one and no to the other.

Who is involved



Rafa

First-year commuter with a family-access form

"My parents help with the bill. The college mailed this form, and the family chat already wants to know if I signed it. I haven't even opened it."



Caio

Reads the form with Rafa, not for him

"I can sit with Rafa while he asks. Being the older friend doesn't make this my decision."

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.

💬 Say this

"Which key term tells you whose rights these are?" — Wait for FERPA. Then ask when the rights transfer.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students think FERPA protects only children. **Listen for:** "FERPA is for kids." **Then:** Reread the key idea: the rights transfer to the student at 18 or on starting college.

📖 Support

- Pair students who share a language to explain each term in their own words.
- Show a timeline: middle school, high school, 18 or college.
- **Cognates:** consent (consentimiento), privacy (privacidad), authorization (autorización), exception (excepción), information (información), academic (académico), federal (federal), education (educación).

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

🔑 Answer key

Any first guess is fine. Students return to it on the My take page.

Your first guess

Before you look at the evidence, what do you think Rafa's parents are allowed to see?

My first guess is ___, because ___.

➡ My first guess is that paying tuition gives his parents some access, but not to his grades without his permission.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 108. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 108.

Reading passage

Records, rights and the limits of family access

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **FERPA:** FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records.
- **Education record:** An education record is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps.
- **Consent:** Consent is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

The story: The login shortcut

Rafa, 18, is a first-year commuter who helps at his family's shop after class. His parents contribute to his tuition. At the end of August, his college mailed him a parent and family access authorization. Before he opens it, his parents raise it in the family group chat. His mother offers help with the bill. His father proposes the shortcut many families would reach for: send the login, and they will handle everything.

The case turns on the difference between those two offers. Helping pay a bill requires access to billing. A login grants access to everything the account holds, including grades and schedules, and it bypasses any record of what was shared and why. Rafa answers that he can share the bill and wants to read the rest first.

Caio, 24, sits with him as he reads. He models the stance of a good advisor. He will help Rafa ask questions, but the decision is Rafa's. He also resists vague reassurance. If the law has an exception, they should find out which one and whether it applies, because "privacy law" is not an answer Rafa's father can act on.

Your role is to read each box on the form before Rafa signs.

- Stop and think.** Why is a shared login a weaker form of trust than a signed, specific authorization?

⌚ Pacing

Reading: about 5 min (734 words). Short on time: read it aloud together, pausing at each Stop and think.

❓ Stop and think

1. **After “The story: The login shortcut”:** Why is a shared login a weaker form of trust than a signed, specific authorization?
2. **After “Granular consent in practice”:** The exceptions are permitted, not required. How should that change what Rafa asks the records office?
3. **After “FERPA’s structure and the question of trust”:** The NCA credo values both sharing and privacy. How could Rafa honor both in one conversation with his parents?

Granular consent in practice

The form is built for separate decisions. Section 1 authorizes a named person to view account statements and make payments. Section 2 authorizes that person to receive information about grades, enrollment and academic standing. Section 3 makes the authorization durable until Rafa changes or withdraws it in writing. Each of the first two sections has its own yes-or-no box.

The college's annual FERPA notice sets the background rule. Students may inspect their records, request corrections and consent to disclosures, except where the law permits disclosure without consent. Together, the documents show what Rafa controls and what he still needs to learn: which exceptions this college applies and where a written change goes.

This case extends two earlier skills. Case 5 asked you to read a statement line by line. Here you read a form section by section and decide each part independently. Case 4 introduced the **decision-maker**, the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. Rafa holds that role, and the form's structure lets him exercise it with precision. **Consent** is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person. For college records, it is written and identifies the record, the recipient and the purpose. A shared password is the opposite of that kind of consent.

 **Stop and think.** The exceptions are permitted, not required. How should that change what Rafa asks the records office?

FERPA's structure and the question of trust

FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records. An **education record** is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps, on paper or stored digitally. Under the general rule, the rights transfer from parents to the student at 18 or upon entering college at any age, and the student becomes an "eligible student" (U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, no date listed). The Department's guide for eligible students explains consent, access and the exceptions in plain language (U.S. Department of Education, March 8, 2023).

The exceptions matter for families like Rafa's. A college may disclose records to parents when the student is a dependent for federal tax purposes, or in a health or safety emergency. The Department describes these disclosures as permitted, not required, so practice varies by institution. American University's parent-access guide illustrates one institution's process, not a national rule (American University, June 30, 2025).

Records governance now reaches beyond the registrar. A breach at PowerSchool exposed millions of student records (Education Week, January 9, 2025). Classroom AI tools raise new questions about who can see student information (Chalkbeat, December 13, 2024).

This page continues page 110. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 110.

FERPA's structure and the question of trust, continued

The Markup has reported on where FERPA's protections run out when software companies handle student data (The Markup, January 15, 2022).

Professional codes describe both duties the registrar holds. AACRAO asks members to “protect the legitimate privacy interests of all individuals” and to “dispense complete, accurate, understandable, and truthful information and advice at all times” (AACRAO Ethics and Practice, 2010). The National Communication Association's credo speaks to Rafa's side: “We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant decisions, while also respecting privacy and confidentiality” (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication, 2024). The case asks students to hold both values at once. Family support and privacy can be negotiated one box at a time.

? **Stop and think.** The NCA credo values both sharing and privacy. How could Rafa honor both in one conversation with his parents?

Sources

Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | No date listed

What is FERPA?

Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | March 8, 2023

An Eligible Student Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | No date listed

Must postsecondary institutions provide a parent with access to an eligible student's education records?

Real source | American University, AU Central | June 30, 2025

FERPA and parent-access guide

Real source | Education Week | January 9, 2025

What Schools Should Know About the PowerSchool Data Breach

Real source | Chalkbeat | December 13, 2024

AI presents explosive risks to student data privacy. These educators want to defuse them.

Real source | The Markup | January 15, 2022

The Big Business of Tracking and Profiling Students

Real source | American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) | 2010

AACRAO Ethics and Practice

Real source | National Communication Association (NCA) | 2024

Credo for Ethical Communication

This page continues page 110. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 110.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read the form and the notice, and fill in both boxes for each one. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | College form

Parent and family access authorization, mailed to Rafa on August 28

Section 1, Billing and payments: allow the person named below to view account statements and make payments. Yes or No. Section 2, Academic records: allow the person named below to receive information about grades, enrollment and academic standing. Yes or No. Section 3: this authorization stays in effect until the student changes or withdraws it in writing.

Look closely: Which section covers billing, and which covers grades? Circle each yes-or-no box.

What it shows

➤ Billing and grades need separate consents, and Section 3 allows a written change.

What it leaves out

➤ The exceptions that allow sharing without consent, and where a change goes.

Evidence B | College notice

Annual FERPA notice on the registrar's page

Students have the right to inspect their education records, to request corrections and to consent to disclosures, except where the law allows disclosure without consent. Questions go to the Office of the Registrar.

Look closely: Which phrase tells you the law has exceptions? Underline it.

What it shows

➤ The rights sit with the student. "Except where the law allows" signals exceptions.

What it leaves out

➤ Which exceptions this college uses, and whether any could apply to Rafa.

Case 6 | Look at the evidence | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 6 min. Participants fill in the What it shows boxes only.

💬 Say this

"Put one finger on the billing section and one on the grades section. Could Rafa say yes to one and no to the other?" — Wait for "yes, they are separate."

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students read the notice as a promise of total privacy. **Listen for:** "So nobody can ever see his grades." **Then:** Point to "except where the law allows disclosure without consent."

📖 Support

- Give each document on its own half-page with the section headings enlarged.
- Read the notice aloud and pause at "except."
- **Cognates:** consent (consentimiento), privacy (privacidad), authorization (autorización), exception (excepción), information (información), academic (académico), federal (federal), education (educación).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask what Section 3 lets Rafa do later, and why that matters for the choice he makes today.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Look at the evidence, continued

What is still missing from the evidence?

☛ Which exceptions the college uses and whether any fit Rafa, including tax dependency; what help his family wants; and where a written change goes.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 113. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 113.

Key idea: education records

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 10 minutes.

FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, is a federal law about who can see student education records. It gives parents, and later students, rights over those records. An **education record** is a record directly about a student that a school or college keeps. Grades, transcripts and schedules can be education records, on paper or stored digitally. Under the general rule, the rights transfer to the student at age 18 or when the student starts college, at any age. The law calls that student an “eligible student.”

Helping pay tuition does not, by itself, give those rights back to a parent. **Consent** is permission a person gives for something specific, such as sharing a record with a named person. For college records, consent is written and says which record, to whom and for what purpose. Rafa’s form asks about billing and about grades in separate sections. He can say yes to one section and no to the other. He can also change his choice later in writing.

FERPA also has exceptions, which are situations in which a college may share records without the student’s consent. A college may share records with parents if the student is a dependent for federal tax purposes. It may also share them in a health or safety emergency. The U.S. Department of Education says this sharing is allowed, not required, so Rafa should ask his records office what his college does.

Professional standards

Real source | American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

AACRAO Ethics and Practice: Standards of professional practice

“Protect the legitimate privacy interests of all individuals and maintain appropriate confidentiality of institutional and student education records”

In plain words: College registrars who belong to AACRAO agree to protect students’ privacy and keep education records confidential.

Question: Rafa’s form separates billing from grades. What would the registrar need before sharing his grades with his parents?

Case 6 | Key idea | College educator edition

Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

 Short on time: 8 min. Skip In the news. Use the Department of Education pages instead.

Say this

“The AACRAO code asks registrars to protect privacy. What would a registrar need before sharing Rafa’s grades?” — Wait for “his consent in Section 2.”

Watch for

Misconception: Students treat the AACRAO code as the law. **Listen for:** “The registrar would go to jail.” **Then:** Say: “The code binds AACRAO members. FERPA is the federal law on education records.”

Support

- Read the quotation aloud. Point out the label: a real source, quoted word for word.

Stretch

- Use the second AACRAO row. Ask what a clear, complete answer to each of Rafa’s three questions would include.

Heat check

 Low.

Professional standards, continued**Your answer**

The registrar would need ____, unless ____.

→ The registrar would need Rafa's consent in Section 2, unless an exception applies, such as a tax-dependent student or a health or safety emergency.

In the news

Real source | U.S. Department of Education (YouTube) | November 7, 2013

Student Privacy 101: FERPA for Parents and Students

The Education Department's own short explainer of FERPA rights and when they move from parents to students.



Real source | U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office | No date listed

Must postsecondary institutions provide a parent with access to an eligible student's education records?

Answers the case question directly, including the exception for students claimed as tax dependents.

Notes

This page continues page 115. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 115.

Sort the evidence

On your own Fill in the diagram to show who decides each question, which rule applies and who can ask. About 6 minutes.

Who actually decides each question: Rafa, the rule or the college? Mark where paying the bill and seeing grades split into two separate decisions.

Who may see Rafa's grades?

Who decides

Rafa, the eligible student, through written consent

Under which rule

FERPA: rights transfer to the student at 18 or on entering college

Who lives with it

Rafa's family, who help pay tuition

Your way in

➡ The registrar or records office explains which form and which exceptions apply

Who may see and pay the tuition bill?

Who decides

Rafa, the eligible student, through written consent

Under which rule

Who lives with it

Rafa's family, who help pay tuition

Your way in

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

➡ The records office's view is missing. I would ask which exceptions this college uses, where a written change to the form goes and when it starts to count.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 6 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

💬 Say this

"For each question on the diagram, who decides: Rafa, the rule or the college?" — Model the grades question together.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students name the parents as the deciders. **Listen for:** "His parents decide because they pay." **Then:** Point to the diagram: his family can ask, and Rafa decides through written consent.

📄 Support

- Let students label each box Rafa, rule or college before they write sentences.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** The missing-perspective question can turn to students' own families.

Cool-down: Keep answers about the characters. No student describes their own family arrangements.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose who holds Rafa's rights and explain why, then fix the two marked lines. About 5 minutes.

Rafa is 18 and in college, and his parents help pay his tuition. Under the general FERPA rule, who holds the rights to his education records?

☒ A Rafa does.

☐ B His parents do, because they help pay the bill.

☐ C His parents do, until Rafa signs a form that says otherwise.

Why I chose it

→ A. The rights are Rafa's because he is 18 and in college. B treats payment as permission, and C makes the form the source of his rights instead of a way to share them.

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Rafa, ① your parents are paying so they can probably see everything, that's how it works at most schools. My parents could always see my grades on the portal in high school. FERPA is a privacy law but it's mostly for kids. ② Once you're 18 it doesn't really matter anymore. If you want to keep your grades private you should just not give them your password. Honestly just ask your parents what they want to see. They're helping you a lot so it's probably fair for them to know how you're doing.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

→ Paying tuition doesn't unlock grades. Grades need a separate consent on the form.

Rewrite phrase 2

→ At 18 or on starting college, the rights become yours, with some exceptions.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

💬 Say this

"Rafa is 18 and in college. Who holds the rights to his records?" — Vote before any discussion.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students pick the paying-parents option. **Listen for:** "They're paying, so it's theirs." **Then:** Ask what the form would be for if his parents already held the rights.

📄 Support

- Read the options aloud before students choose.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

→ Answer key

A revised version: Rafa, under the general FERPA rule, the rights to your education records are yours now, because you're 18 and in college. Paying tuition doesn't automatically give your family access to your grades. At schools like the one in the guide, parent access for paying the bill is separate from permission to see academic records. You can decide what to share. Talk with your family about what help you actually want, then ask the records office which form covers that, what it allows and how to change it later. There are exceptions, so ask them which ones your college uses.

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a plain-language explainer for first-year students and their families, suitable for an orientation program or a student government page. It separates billing access from access to academic records and explains how a student changes an authorization.

Use: Case documents: the authorization form, the FERPA notice, Rafa's family chat and Caio's statement. Real sources: two Department of Education FAQs, the Eligible Student Guide to FERPA (March 8, 2023) and the American University parent-access guide.

You'll make: Explainer for students and families, 350—450 words, with three short questions and answers

Time: 75 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A and B, and label each one as an example.
- 2 Fill in the organizer: what billing access covers and what records access covers.
- 3 Note two exceptions from the Department of Education pages without deciding that either one applies to Rafa.
- 4 Draft the opening and the exceptions paragraph in the Your draft boxes.
- 5 Write three short questions and answers for families in the last box.
- 6 Finish the explainer on lined paper, 350 to 450 words.
- 7 Check your explainer with the questions on the Check your work page.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Billing access covers

➤ Viewing account statements and making payments

Records access covers

➤ Information about grades, enrollment and academic standing

Case 6 | Your task | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 12 min.

✂ Short on time: 12 min.

💬 Say this

“Your readers are a student and a parent reading the same page. What does each need first?” — List both audiences’ questions on the board.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Explainers apply an exception to Rafa.

Listen for: “His parents can see his grades because he’s a dependent.” **Then:** Ask which document says Rafa is a tax dependent. None does.

📄 Support

- Two-column organizer: billing access and records access
- Paraphrase of each Department of Education FAQ with its link
- Sentence frame for exceptions: “In some situations, a college may share records with parents without the student’s consent, such as ...”
- Label line: “Example” above any detail from Rafa’s form.

🔗 Stretch

- Explain the exceptions accurately, such as a tax-dependent student or a health or safety emergency. Do not suggest that either applies to Rafa.

Two exceptions, stated generally

☞ A college may share records with parents of a tax-dependent student, or in a health or safety emergency.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Standards

The Case plan sheet gives each code in plain words.

A strong response:

- States that FERPA rights belong to the student at a school beyond high school
- Separates the billing authorization from the academic-records authorization
- Describes the exceptions accurately and applies none of them to a real student
- Explains that the authorization stays in effect until the student changes or withdraws it in writing, as the form says
- Cites the Department of Education pages as real sources

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

Opening: who holds the rights

🔗 Who can see your college records? Under FERPA, a federal law, the rights to your education records belong to you once you attend a school beyond high school. Paying tuition does not change that. In the form we studied, Section 1 covers account statements and payments. Section 2 covers grades, enrollment and academic standing. A student can say yes to one and no to the other.

The exceptions

In some situations, a college may share records without the student's consent, such as ____.

🔗 In some situations, a college may share records without the student's consent, such as with parents of a tax dependent. It may also share them in a health or safety emergency. That sharing is allowed, not required, so ask your records office what your college does.

Three questions and answers

🔗 Can my parents pay the bill without seeing my grades? At some colleges, yes. American University's guide says parent billing access does not include viewing grades. Can I change my mind later? In the form, the authorization stays in effect until the student changes or withdraws it in writing. Where do I ask? Your college's registrar or records office.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 30 min.

✂ Short on time: 30 min.

💬 Say this

"Read your three questions as a parent at orientation. Would the answers be clear?" — Partners play the parent and ask one follow-up.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Explainers ask readers to share real records. **Listen for:** "Send us a screenshot of your portal." **Then:** Point to the success criteria: no one shares real records.

🔗 Answer key

What to notice in the sample:

1. States the legal baseline for this audience.
2. Labels the example as fictional.
3. Describes the exceptions without applying them to anyone.
4. Explains how to change an authorization, as the form says.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 6 minutes.

Does your explainer say FERPA rights belong to the student at a school beyond high school? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does it keep billing and records permissions separate? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does it describe the exceptions accurately without saying that one applies to Rafa? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does it label the form and notice as and the federal pages as real? ☒ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No source cited.	☐ Refers to “privacy law” generally.	☐ Cites the transfer rule and the separate-access guide.	☐ Cites both and notes that exceptions exist.
Reasoning	☐ States the rule backwards.	☐ Gets the transfer right but merges billing and grades.	☐ Separates paying from permission correctly.	☐ Explains why least access is a reasonable choice.
Audience & purpose	☐ Tells Rafa what to do.	☐ Gives advice without a next step.	☐ Leaves the decision with Rafa and names the records office.	☐ Respects Rafa’s family relationship while protecting his choice.

Pacing

Full chapter: 6 min.

 Short on time: 5 min. Skip the rubric. Participants answer the Check your work questions only.

Say this

“Mark your level honestly. Then make one change and say why.” — Ask for one corrected rule or one added question for the records office.

Watch for

Misconception: Students leave an absolute claim in place. **Listen for:** “Parents can never see grades.” **Then:** Point to the Evidence row. Ask them to add that exceptions exist.

Heat check

 Low.

Answer key

How to assess: Score with the case rubric. Add checks that the legal baseline and exceptions match the Department of Education pages and that the explainer asks no one to share real records.

Proficient looks like:

- **Evidence:** Cites the transfer rule and the separate-access guide.
- **Reasoning:** Separates paying from permission correctly.
- **Audience & purpose:** Leaves the decision with Rafa and names the records office.
- **Revision:** Fixes the rule and adds a next step.

How your work is scored, continued

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Fixes one fact.	☐ Fixes the rule and adds a next step.	☐ Explains why each correction matters for Rafa's decision.

One change I made after feedback

I changed ___ because ___.

✎

I cut a sentence that said Rafa's parents can see his grades because he is a dependent, because no document says he is one.

Notes

This page continues page 122. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 122.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames below. About 8 minutes.

- 1 What is the smallest amount of access that would give Rafa the help he wants from his family?

➤ Billing access alone. It covers the help his family asked for, and Section 3 lets him change his choice later in writing.

- 2 Why might Rafa want to talk with his family before he checks the box for grades?

➤ His parents asked about the bill, not about grades. Talking first lets him explain the two permissions before they see a box marked no.

- 3 Someone says, “Parents can never see college records.” How would you revise that claim after reading this case?

➤ Parents generally need an eligible student’s consent. A college may still share records with parents of a tax dependent or in a health or safety emergency, but it is not required to.

My take

My claim: ____.

➤ My claim: Rafa should approve billing now and leave grades for a talk with his family.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

➤ The best evidence is the form, because billing and grades are separate yes-or-no choices.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 8 min.

💬 Say this

“Answer with a detail from the form or the notice, not from your own family.” — Post the question numbers and hear one answer per question.

➤ Stretch

- Ask what Rafa could share with his family in a conversation, without signing any form.
- Going further: Compare FERPA’s general rule with American University’s parent-access process. Which parts come from the federal law, and which come from one university’s forms?
- Going further: What might a student and a family member who pays the bill each misunderstand about access? Write wording that makes the separate permissions clear without promising total secrecy.
- Going further: Draw two permission guides for a sample student: a flowchart and a short conversation. Test both with a reader who does not know this case.
- Going further: Search your school or district website for its FERPA or “student records” notice. Then write one question about who can see a record, and ask the front office or a counselor. If you are heading to college, look up its parent-access and authorization forms early.
- Find your own school’s FERPA notice and summarize what it says about directory information and opting out
- Compare FERPA with your state’s student-privacy law, if it has one

My take, continued

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

Someone who disagrees might say a family paying tuition has a fair claim to see grades.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

- The limit of the evidence is that we don't know which exceptions Rafa's college uses.

I would change my mind if ____.

☛ I would change my mind if Rafa's family needed help that billing access cannot give.

Notes

[illegible]

This page continues page 124.

Heat check

■ ■ □ Question 2: Medium. Students may describe their own family's rules about grades or money.

Cool-down: Say: “We’re talking about Rafa’s family, not ours.” Return to what the chat shows his family asked for.

Talk about this case at home

Case 6: What can your family see in your college records?

In this case, Rafa's parents help pay his college bill, and a form asks if they should also see his grades. Your student read the form and a federal privacy rule, then explained how paying the bill differs from seeing grades.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Under the general rule, when do students start to control who sees their school records?
- 2 Why might a college form keep paying a bill separate from seeing grades?
- 3 Who at a college could answer a question about records?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 6 | Talk about this case at home | College educator edition

🕒 Pacing

At home: this page takes no class time.

💬 Say this

“Bring this page home, or read it with someone you trust.” — Nobody needs to share their own records or family arrangements.