Strategies for Presuming Competence

- **Examine your attitude**—practice saying, “How can this work?”, “How can this child be successful?”

- **Question your stereotypes**—how someone looks, walks, or talks does not tell you about how they think and feel.

- **Use age appropriate talk**—examine your tone of voice and topic.

- **Support communication.**

- **Listen openly**—work to shed judgments.

- **Teach peers and others** how to interpret potentially confusing behavior.

- **Do not speak in front of someone as if they were not there.**

- **In conversation, refer to the person in a way that includes them** in the conversation.

- **Ask permission to share** information with others.

- **Be humble.**

- **If possible, always let the person explain for himself or herself** and do not speak for them.

- **Assume that every student will benefit** from learning age appropriate academic curriculum.

- **Look for evidence of understanding.**

- **Support students to show understanding using their strengths.**

- **Design adaptations and accommodations** to support access to academics.

- **Be sure to acknowledge the presence of a person with a disability** in the same way you would acknowledge others.

“If you want to see competence, it helps if you look for it.”

–Douglas Biklen