

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