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