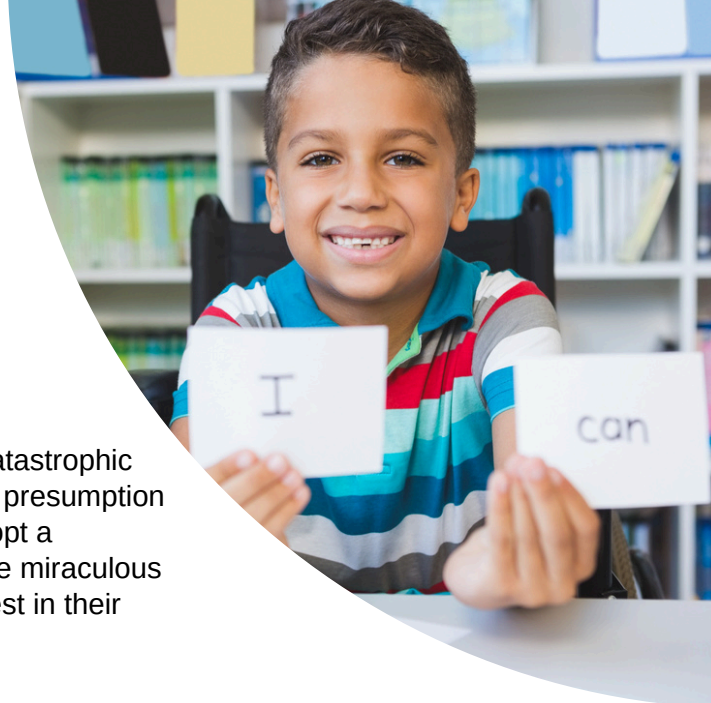


PRESUMING COMPETENCE



WHAT IS PRESUMING COMPETENCE?

By assuming that all students are capable of learning, we avoid the catastrophic results of assuming an inability or incapability of learning. We call this presumption of ability “Presumed Competence.” We strongly encourage you to adopt a philosophy of presumed competence with your students and watch the miraculous results. Presuming competence of ALL students is to believe and invest in their potentials.

WITH PRESUMED COMPETENCE, WE...

View	Presuming competence looks like teachers taking a strengths-based approach, focusing on the person’s abilities, building support needs from there, rather than focusing on their disabilities and weaknesses. We no longer say, “My student can’t do that.” Operating under presumed competence, we now say, “Let’s look at what supports are needed to be put in place for this student to meet this goal.”
See	See the <i>person</i> first and use language that is respectful and is in accordance with how they identify themselves.
Focus On	When describing an individual, focus on their abilities and needs. Avoid language that classifies a student based on functioning or developmental level.
Set	When a teacher presumes competence, they set goals that are aligned with the curriculum standards, regardless of current levels. These teachers build bridges, not barricades. There are many resources to help connect your students from where they are, to discover their true potential.
Expression	People speak directly to students rather than speaking through a buffer of a paraeducator or others. Sometimes it’s in our nature to just respond for the individual because we know they may not have a form of communication or know the words to appropriately respond. That’s why it’s critical that all individuals have a way to express themselves.
Privacy	Privacy is respected. Staff members discuss personal care, medical needs, and other sensitive issues regarding students out of earshot of others and only with those who genuinely need the information. A diverse learner is still a person who is entitled to the same dignity, consideration, respect and rights you expect for yourself.

Jorgensen, McSheehan, Sonnenmeier, Mirenda (2010)