

NEXWLÉLEXM (BOWEN ISLAND)

- The Islands Trust council acknowledges that the lands and waters that encompass the Islands Trust Area have been **home to Indigenous peoples** since **time immemorial** and honours the **rich history, stewardship, and cultural heritage** that embody this place we all call home.
- The Islands Trust council is committed to establishing and maintaining mutually **respectful relationships** between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Islands Trust states a **commitment to Reconciliation** with the understanding that this commitment is a **long-term relationship-building and healing process**.
- The Islands Trust council will strive to **create opportunities for knowledge-sharing** and understanding as people come together to **preserve and protect** the special nature of the islands within the **Salish Sea**.



SHELLEY MOORE



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What does the Research Say?

1. Guiding conditions of inclusion describe that all students...

are presumed competent

are enrolled in and attending curricular classes

are in proximity to and participating in learning with peers

have purposeful roles and responsibilities

are planned for

2. Teacher professional development that...

supports collaboration and the changing roles of educators & support staff

is situated, ongoing and inquiry based

3. Systems frameworks that ...

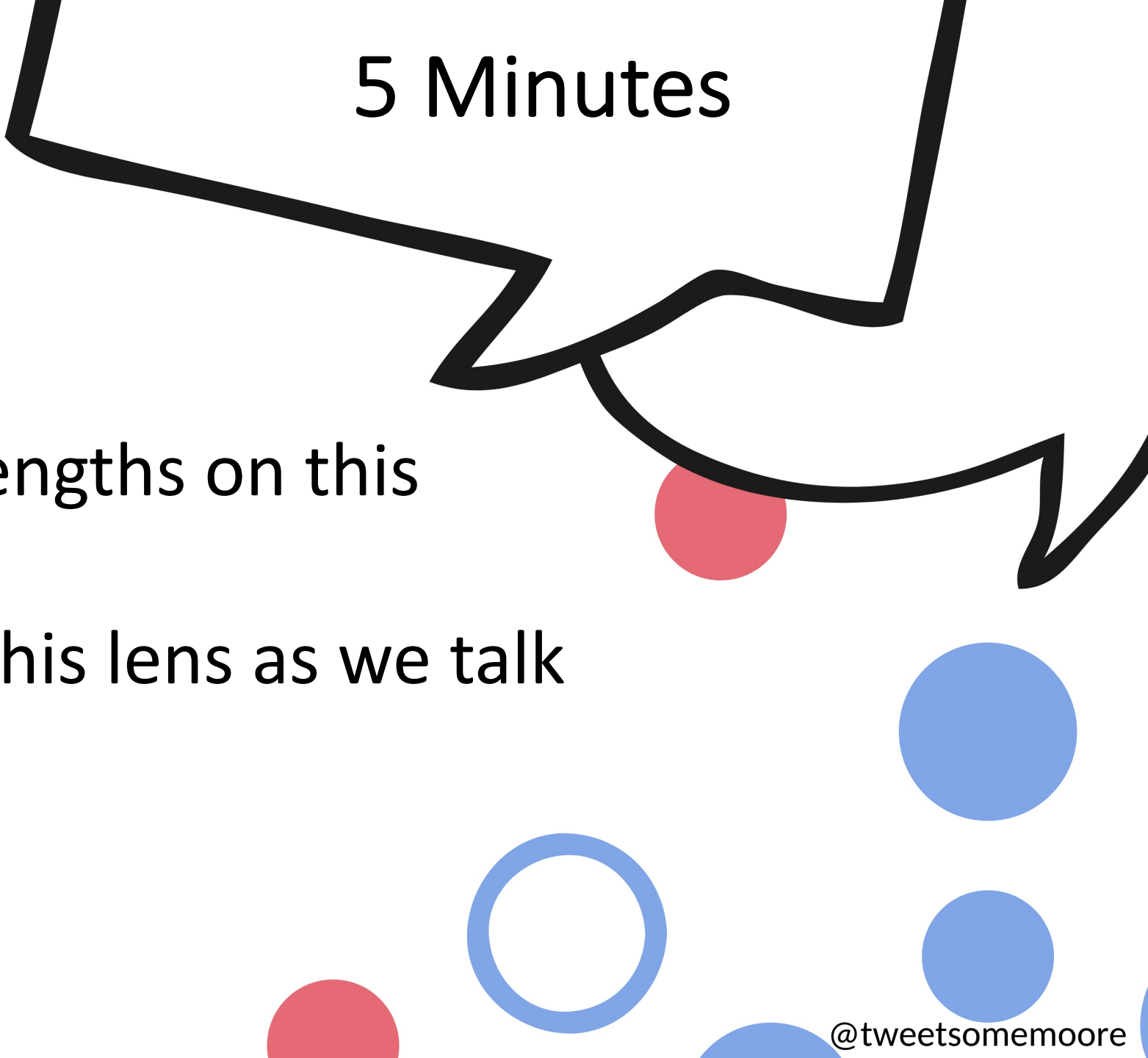
support Universal Design for Learning

move away from a medical & deficit-based model of special education (IEPS)

School & District Infrastructure

Teacher & Staffing Infrastructure

Student Infrastructure



5 Minutes

Q1

1. What are your strengths on this team?
2. How can you use this lens as we talk today?

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Type in the Chat Box:

Finish this statement:

Presuming Competence is...



Mr. W Commercial

pre·sume com·pe·tence

pri' zoom/ 'kämpetens/

To presume competence is to acknowledge that all individuals have the ability to learn, to communicate, to participate in their own way. It means that we provide opportunities by creating accessible & inclusive spaces.

To presume competence is to respect the value of human diversity.

Not presuming competence is to actively harm.

facebook.com/AutismWomensNetwork

PRESUMING COMPETENCE

is an attitude—one that shapes actions in the classrooms and includes a default assumption that the student is capable.



BROOKES

From *Picture Inclusion!* by Whitney H. Rapp, Katrina L. Arndt, & Susan M. Hildenbrand

Presumption of Competence by Donnie TC Denome (they/them or xe/xem)

Presuming competence means we presume people are experts on their own bodies and minds and know what they need, even if they can't express it. Or, if they don't know what they need, they are still experts and should still be consulted and assisted in making a decision, not have a decision made for them.

SCHOOLS FOR FREEDOM

@schoolsforfreedom

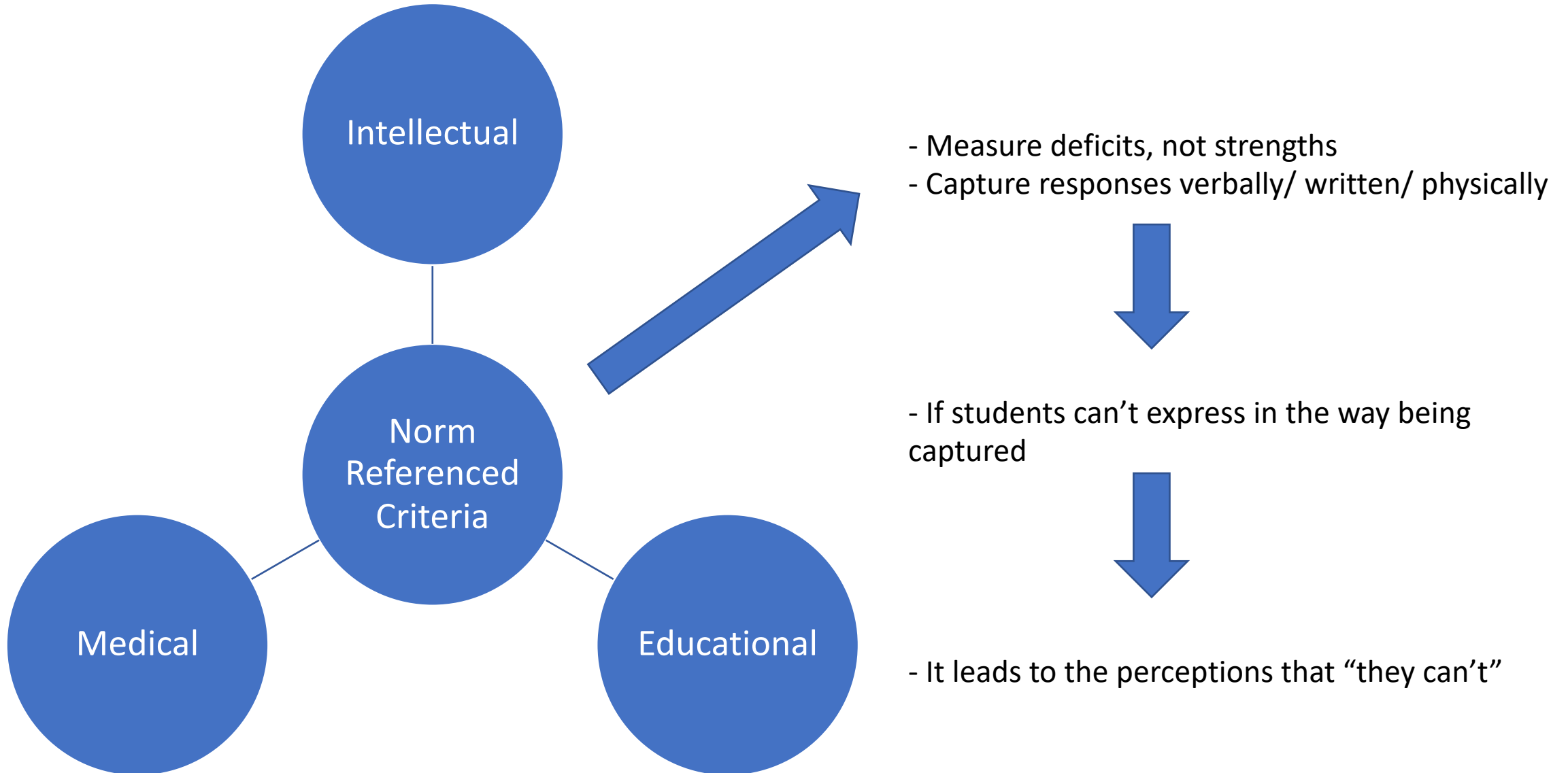
Presuming competence is nothing less than a Hippocratic oath for educators.

Douglas Biklen

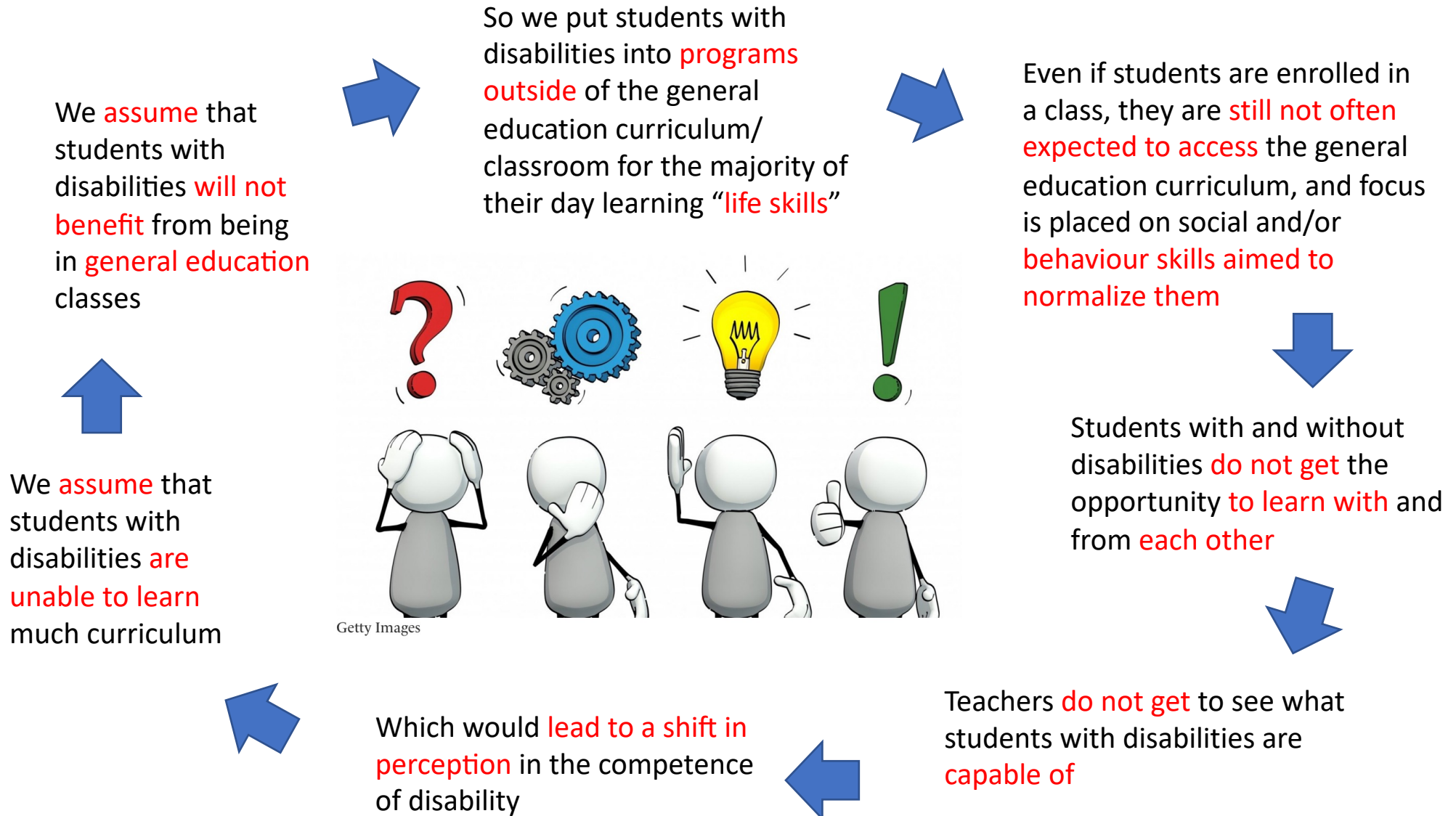
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What is Presuming Competence?

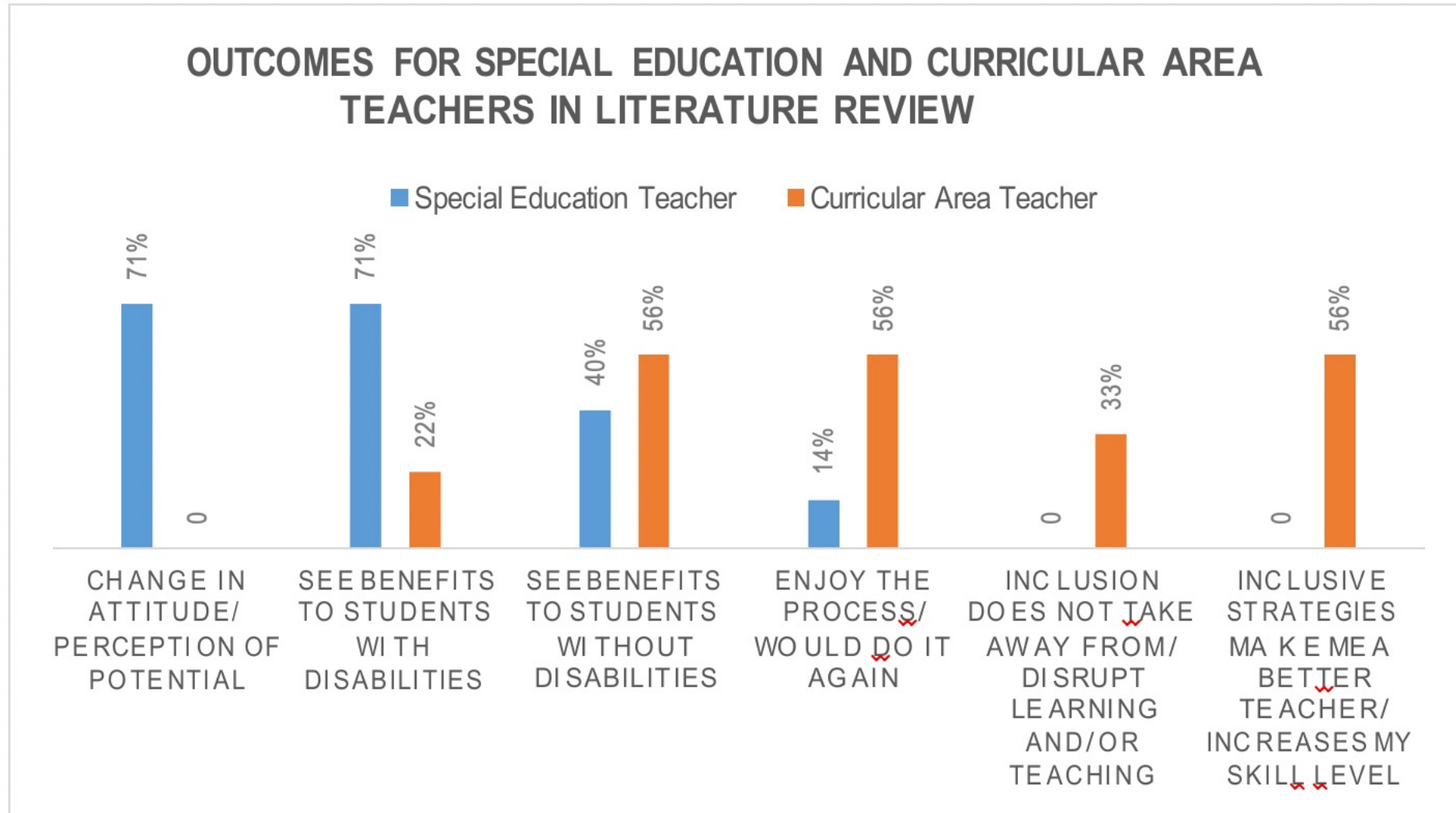
What do we think when we think of someone with a disability?



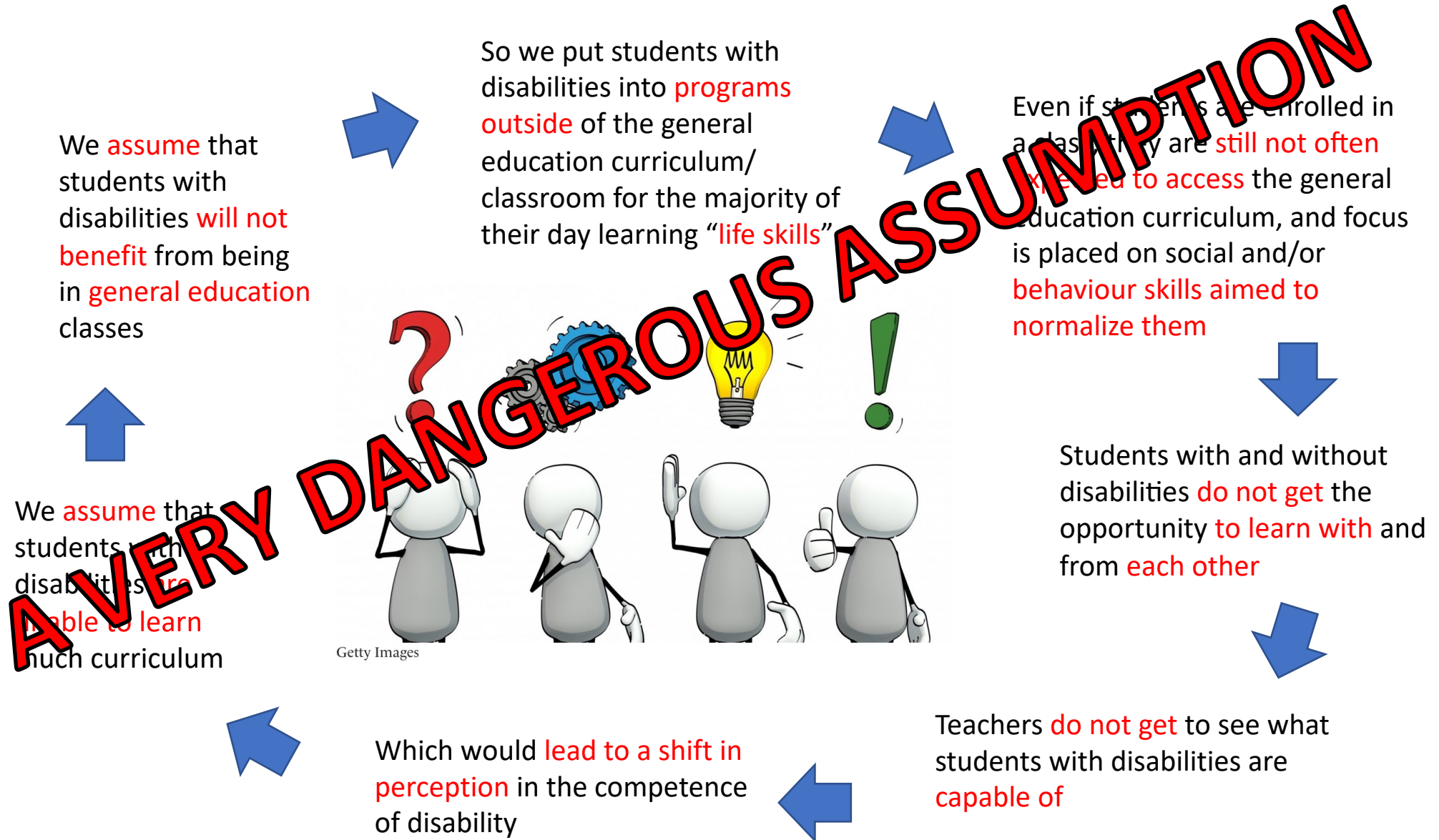
What happens when there is a perception that students “can’t”



The Power of Perception (Moore, Butler & Schnellert 2018)



What happens when there is a perception that students “can’t”



Why is Presuming Competence Important?

Changing our mindset about disability will change how we respond and make decisions about educational programming.

Access to general education curriculum, general education peers and general education classrooms promote student learning, inclusion, achievement and quality of life after school.

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THE LEAST DANGEROUS ASSUMPTION

Why is Presuming Competence Important?

“Even if **we are wrong** about a students’ **capabilities** to learn general education curriculum with their peers, **the consequences** of that presumption **being wrong** are **not as dangerous** as the **alternative**.”

Cheryl Jorgenson



Why is Presuming Competence Important?

Shelley Moore, 2021

5 reasons to PRESUME THE COMPETENCE of all learners

- ➔ Intelligence is multifaceted. Using a test as a sole measure of intelligence doesn't really capture the full picture of a student's capacity for learning.
- ➔ For students who have complex communication needs and movement challenges, it's difficult to accurately assess IQ scores.
- ➔ When people with intellectual disability have high-quality instruction and an effective way to communicate, many demonstrate that they're much more capable than originally presumed.
- ➔ Presuming incompetence could result in harm to students if we wrongly assume they aren't capable.
- ➔ If it turns out a student doesn't have the ability to learn the same content their peers are learning—it's okay, because we haven't harmed the student by presuming competence (that's why it's called "the least dangerous assumption"). The potential consequences of NOT presuming competence are much more dangerous to the student.

www.brookesinclusionlab.com

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Adapted from *The Beyond Access Model*,
by Cheryl Jorgensen, Michael McSheehan, & Rae M. Sonnenmeier

re



How can we Presuming Competence?

- Students with disabilities so often **need** to “**prove**” that they can learn **before given access** to general education
- Biklen & Burke suggest:
 - Rather than proving their ability, presuming competence is **assuming that all** students have **ability** in any and **all places**

How can we Presuming Competence?

What the literature says:

- Focus more on **strengths, interests, abilities** and **need** and less on deficits
- Provide students with a **means to communicate** other than words (visuals, gestures, voice)
- Include **academic curricular goals** on student IEPs that reflect their enrolled courses and subjects areas **similar to their peers**

How can we Presuming Competence?

What Self Advocates say:

- **Talk to me**, not my support dog, or my support staff, or my parents
- **Do not** call me “**low functioning**” or refer to me as a developmental age, E.g., “**like a 2-year-old**”
- Use **age-appropriate** tone of voice, inflection, vocabulary, and conversation topics when **interacting** with me
- **Respect my privacy** when talking about my personal care, medical needs and/or personal and sensitive information

Jorgenson, McSheehan & Sonnenmeier
@tweetsomemoore

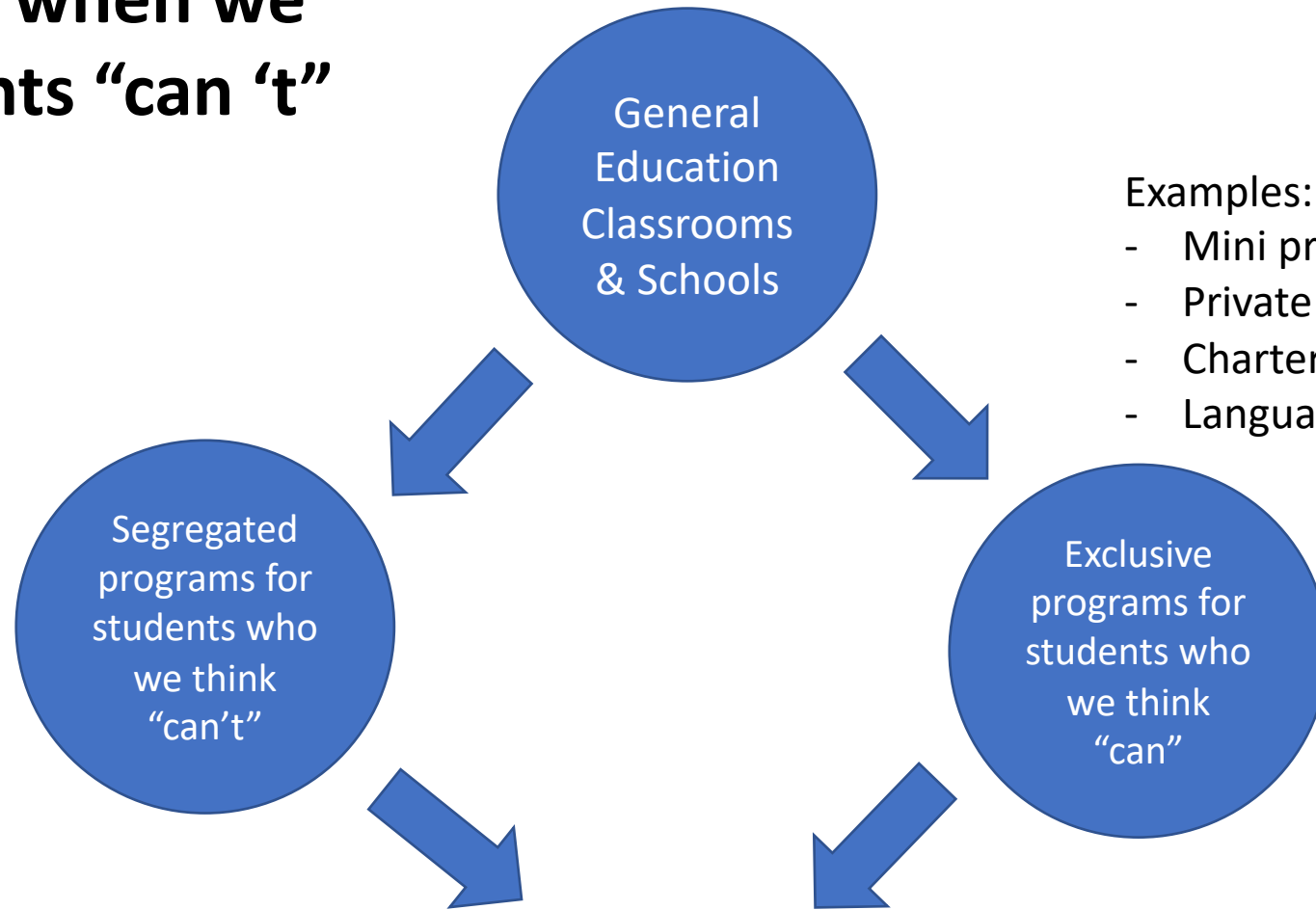
Presuming Protentional

“I thought I would explain that I will be using the term **presume potential** instead of presume competence. I will quote AAC specialist Kate Ahern as she does an amazing job of explaining that this small wording difference can change the outcome for many students. When we say presume competence people might give someone an AAC system and expect them to magically use it, without any real teaching. But when we say **presume potential** we don't give a pass to others, we are saying, like all people, this person has the capacity to learn and grow, they aren't static and they won't magically know how to do things they haven't learned or been taught. **Presume potential** puts the onus of teaching/learning on the teachers, therapists and caregivers instead of expecting the disabled individual to already know how to do things without education. **Presume potential** is inclusion in the expectation of learning we place on ALL people. **Presume potential** means we don't dismiss anyone because we think their diagnosis means they can't learn or because we think they are low. Instead we believe that just like all children and adults their brains are plastic and they have boundless potential with the right teaching, supports and high expectations.”

Two things happen when we perceive that students “can ‘t”

Examples:

- Ability groupings
- Streaming
- Specialized programs (behaviour, anxiety, English Language Learning etc.)
- Life Skills classes
- Special schools



Examples:

- Mini programs/schools
- Private schools
- Charter schools
- Language/ Religious programs

- As a result, the population in general education classrooms does not represent the community
- Lacks the diversity of the community
- Shelters students from learning from each other
- Cannot disrupt assumptions that there are those who “can’t”

Q2

8 Minutes

What does Presuming Competence & Potential look like from:

- A language perspective
- A behaviour perspective
- A curricular perspective
- A transition perspective
- A social perspective
- An IEP perspective
- A safety perspective

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14Pq2COoLwCrmzQ06Wt-0Alr60Kd4kgQ83ZX-YjaKHbk/edit?usp=sharing>



Is Presuming Competence Enough?

- Nope!
- Now we need to **focus** on the **decisions** that we make that are **based on our perceptions** and assumptions about students



Next Steps

- How do we start to make more inclusive decisions about the **places** where students learn?

BUT FIRST...

Taking Action: Choose your Challenge

- Your team:

Everyone

- **Needs** watch the 5MM video (Feb 1.) and have a conversation with your team about your reflections
- **Must:** choose an article or a video from the resource list. As a team eat lunch together one day and have a discussion about what you are learning

Choose your challenge

- **Can:** choose another resource and talk to someone not on your team about what you are learning
- **Could:** to share a summary of what your team learned with your staff at a staff meeting or a professional development session
- **Can try** go and visit a specialized program or site and reflect on what you notice about what students can do
- **Have another idea?** Let me know in your google form



How to Create an Inquiry Statement

How can we _____ by _____,
(goal) (actions)

And we will try to capture our learning by _____.
(evidence)

Example

How can we **move forward in our inclusive journey** by **reviewing our current school structures** and we will try to capture our learning by **making a list of the strengths and stretches of our context?**

Goal

Action

Evidence

Example

How can we **build capacity in our school** by **sharing** our learning with **others** and we will try to capture our learning by **taking a picture of us** meeting with a new teacher or group of teachers?

Goal

Action

Evidence

Example

How can we **challenge our biases and assumptions** by **visiting a specialized classroom or program** and **noticing what students can do** and **reading an article about presuming competence** and we will try to capture our learning by **writing a reflection about what I noticed?**

Goal

Action

Evidence



Resources

- Articles:

- Abbott, A. C. (2020). Presuming competence and capability. In A. C. Abbott, A. Bourdeau, R. Seidman & E. Cruz-Torres (Eds.), (1st ed., pp. 14-31) Routledge.
- Douglas Biklen & Jamie Burke (2006) Presuming Competence, Equity & Excellence in Education, 39:2,166-175.
- Biklen, D. Presuming competence, belonging, and the promise of inclusion: The US experience. *Prospects* **49**, 233–247 (2020).



Resources

- Website Commentaries
 - Presuming Competence: What it is, and what it looks like
 - <https://blog.brookespublishing.com/presuming-competence-what-it-is-what-it-looks-like/>
 - 21 Tips for Presuming Competence
 - <https://the-art-of-autism.com/21-tips-for-presuming-competence/>
- Videos:
 - **Under the Table - Shelley Moore**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGptAXTV7m0>
 - **Disabling Segregation – Dan Habib**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izkN5vLbnw8>
 - **Presume Competence! – Nate Trainor & Jean Trainor**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qMdNsYVpVI>
 - **In my language**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnylM1hl2jc>

Research & Literature that Supports this Session:

- Biklen, D., & Burke, J. (2006). Presuming competence. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39, 166–175.
- Carter, E. W., Sisco, L. G., Melekoglu, M. A., & Kurkowski, C. (2007). Peer supports as an alternative to individually assigned paraprofessionals in inclusive high school classrooms. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 32(4), 213-227.
- Donnellan A. The criterion of the least dangerous assumption. *Behavioral Disorders* 1984; 9: 141–150
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- Harrower, J. K. (1999). Educational inclusion of children with severe disabilities. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 1(4), 215-230.
- Halvorson, A. T., & Sailor, W. (1990). Integration with students with severe and profound disabilities: A review of research. Julkaisussa Gaylor-Ross, R.(toim.) Issues and research in special education.
- Jorgensen, C., Michael McSheehan & Rae M. Sonnenmeier (2007) Presumed competence reflected in the educational programs of students with IDD before and after the Beyond Access professional development intervention, *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 32:4, 248-262
- Jorgensen, C. M., McSheehan, M., Sonnenmeier, R. M., & Mirenda, P. (2010). *The Beyond Access model: Promoting membership, participation, and learning for students with disabilities in the general education classroom*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Pub.
- Kliewer C., Biklen D., Kasa-Hendrickson C. Who may be literate? Disability and resistance to the cultural denial of competence. *American Educational Research Journal* 2006; 43(2)163–192
- Kunc, N. (1992). The need to belong: Rediscovering Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools*, 25-39.
- Maras, P., & Brown, R. (1996). Effects of contact on children's attitudes toward disability: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 26, 2113- 2134.
- Thousand, J. S., & Villa, R. A. (1995). Managing complex change toward inclusive schooling. *Creating an inclusive school*, 51-79. Thousand, J., Rosenberg, R. L., Bishop, K. D., & Villa, R. A. (1997). The evolution of secondary inclusion. *Journal for Special Educators*, 18(5), 270-284.

Next Session

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