

SHELLEY MOORE



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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**.





Presuming competence is...

What Does Research Say?

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

are **PRESUMED**
competent and as
having
POTENTIAL

are **PLACED** in
and attending
inclusive
programs

are in **PROXIMITY**
to and
PARTICIPATING in
learning with
PEERS

have
PURPOSEFUL
roles and
responsibilities

are **PLANNED** for



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

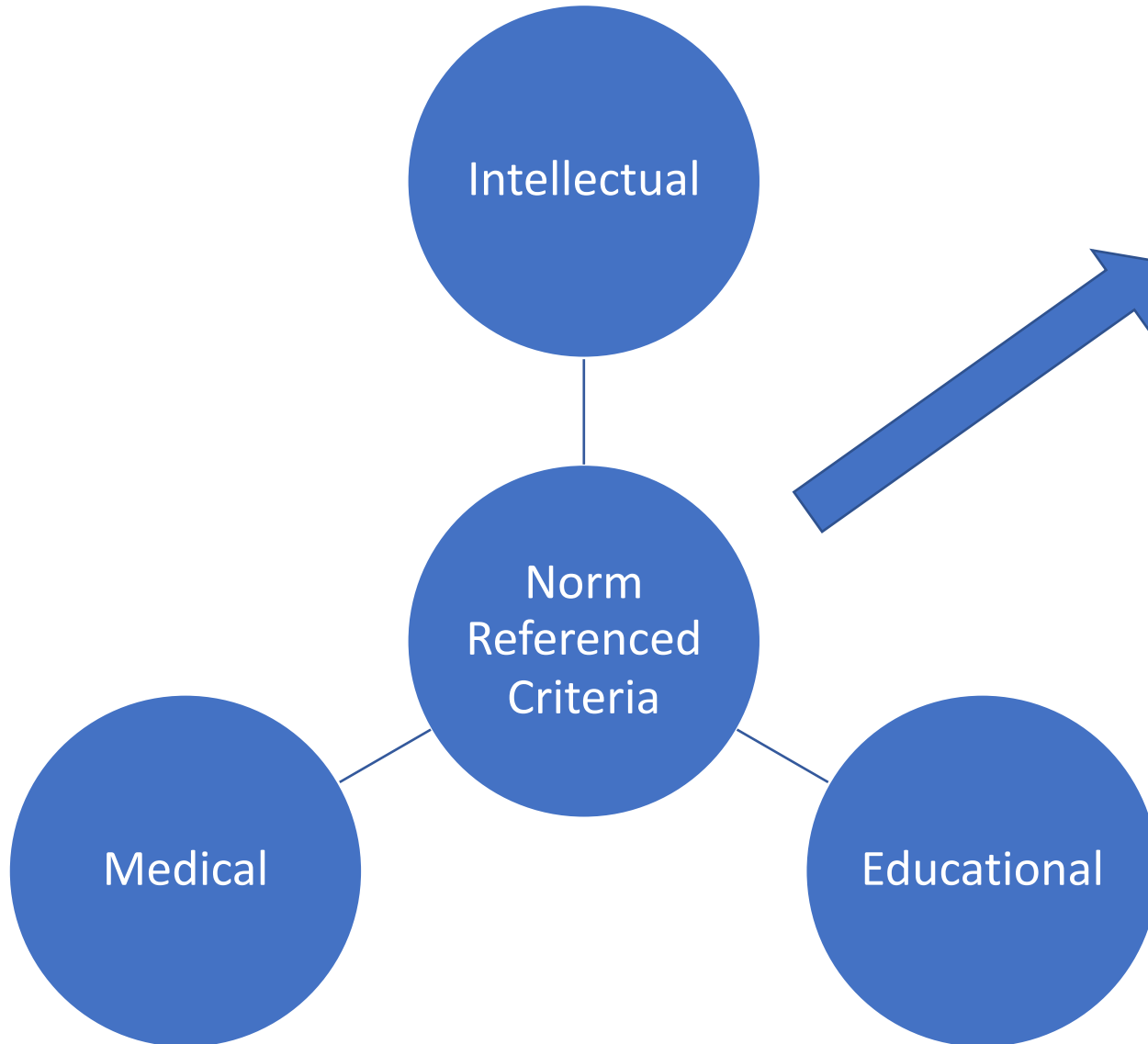
Presuming competence is nothing less than a Hippocratic oath for educators.

Douglas Biklen

ollibean

What is Presuming Competence?

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



- Measure deficits, not strengths
- Capture responses verbally/ written/ physically



- If children can't express in the way being captured



- It leads to the perceptions that "they can't"

Down syndrome



Has a laugh that will
make you laugh

Will make you see the
beauty in difference

Knows strength
and determination

Will always greet you like he
hasn't seen you in years

Finds his joy and doesn't
care what others think

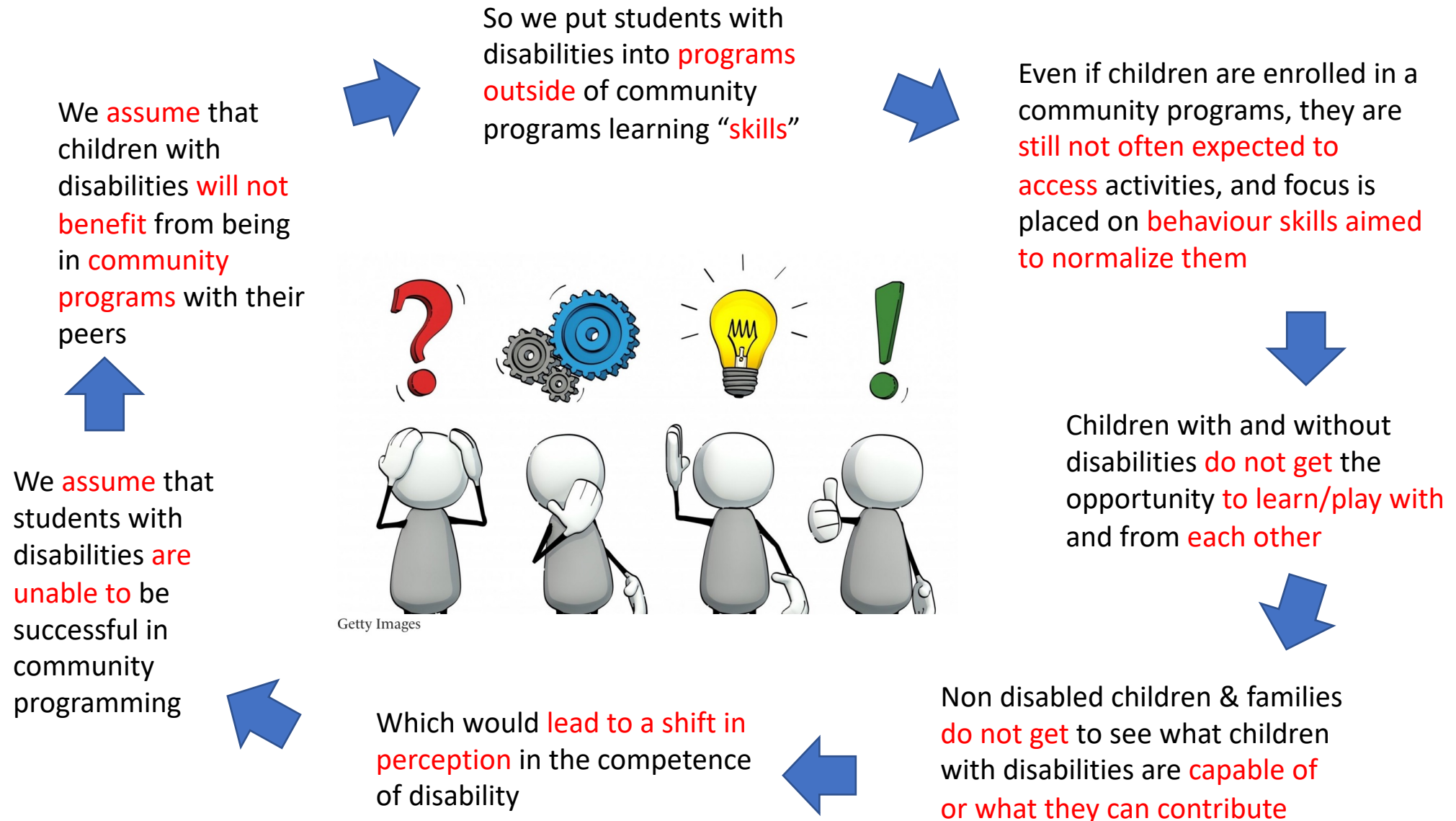
Makes you want to be
a better person

Has great rhythm with an
awesome booty shake

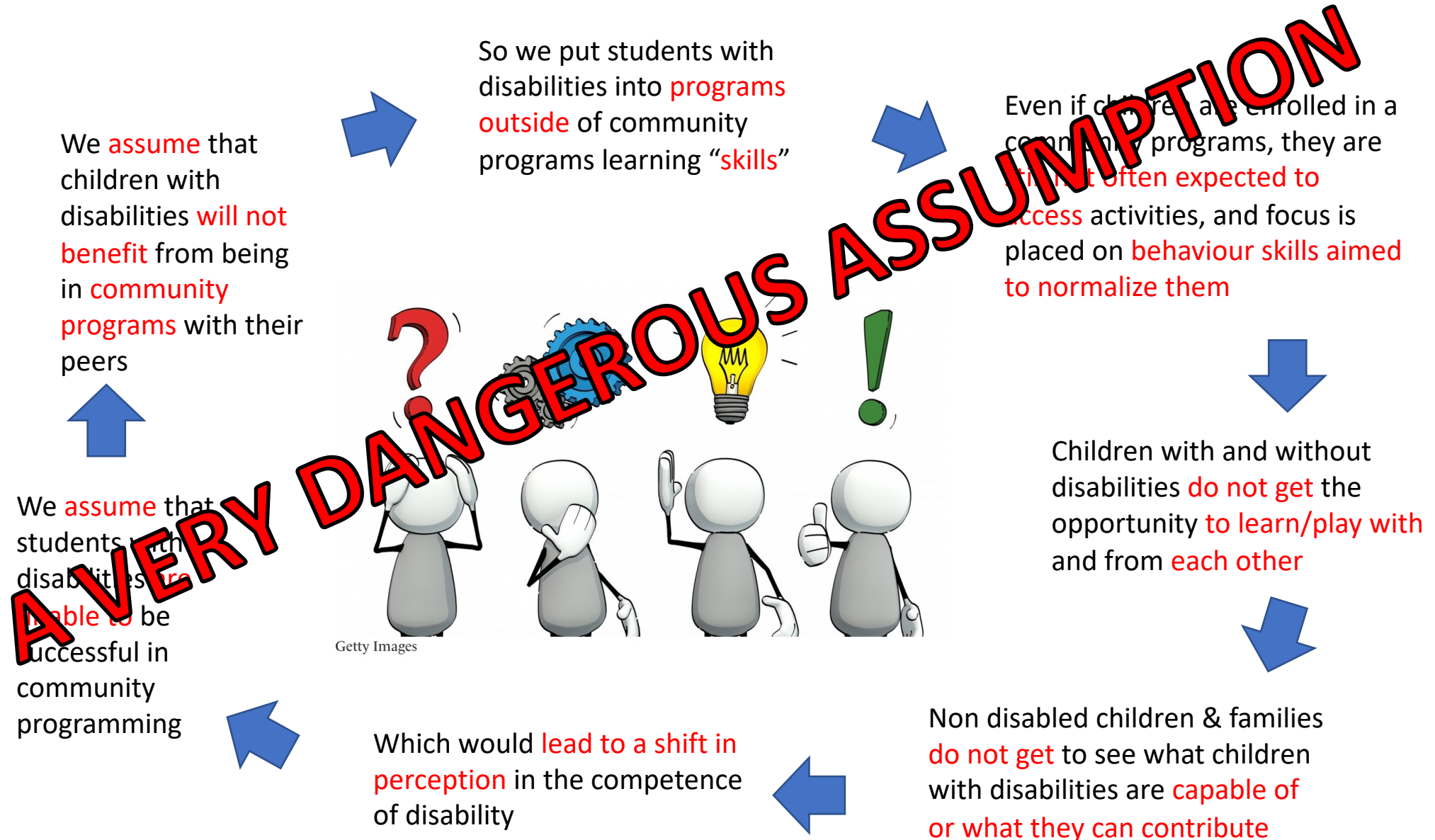
Sassy, funny, sassy, kind,
sassy, empathetic, sassy



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



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



Why is Presuming Competence Important?

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

Access to inclusive community programs, promotes learning, inclusion, achievement and quality of life after schooling, for both children with and without disabilities.

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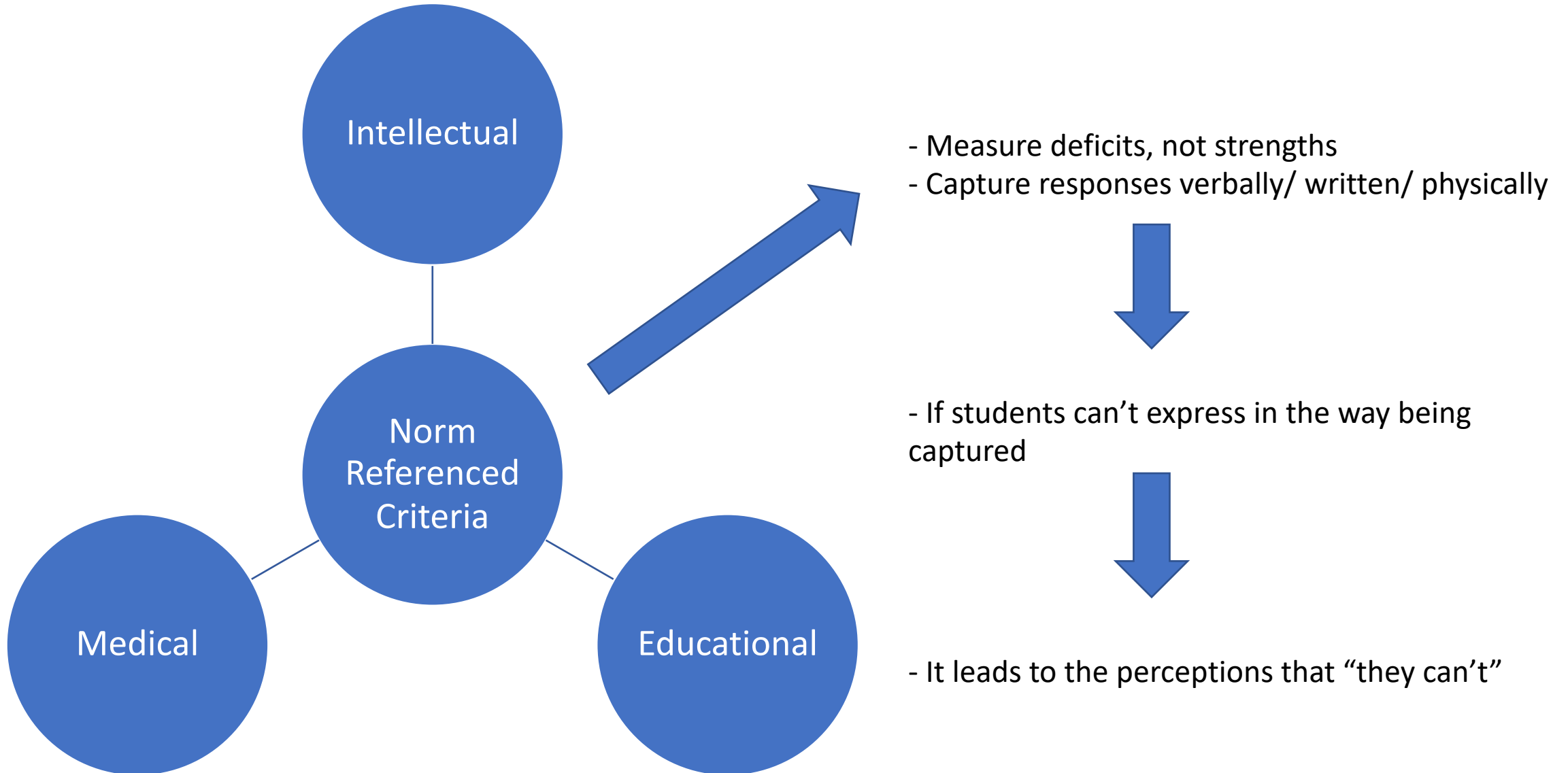
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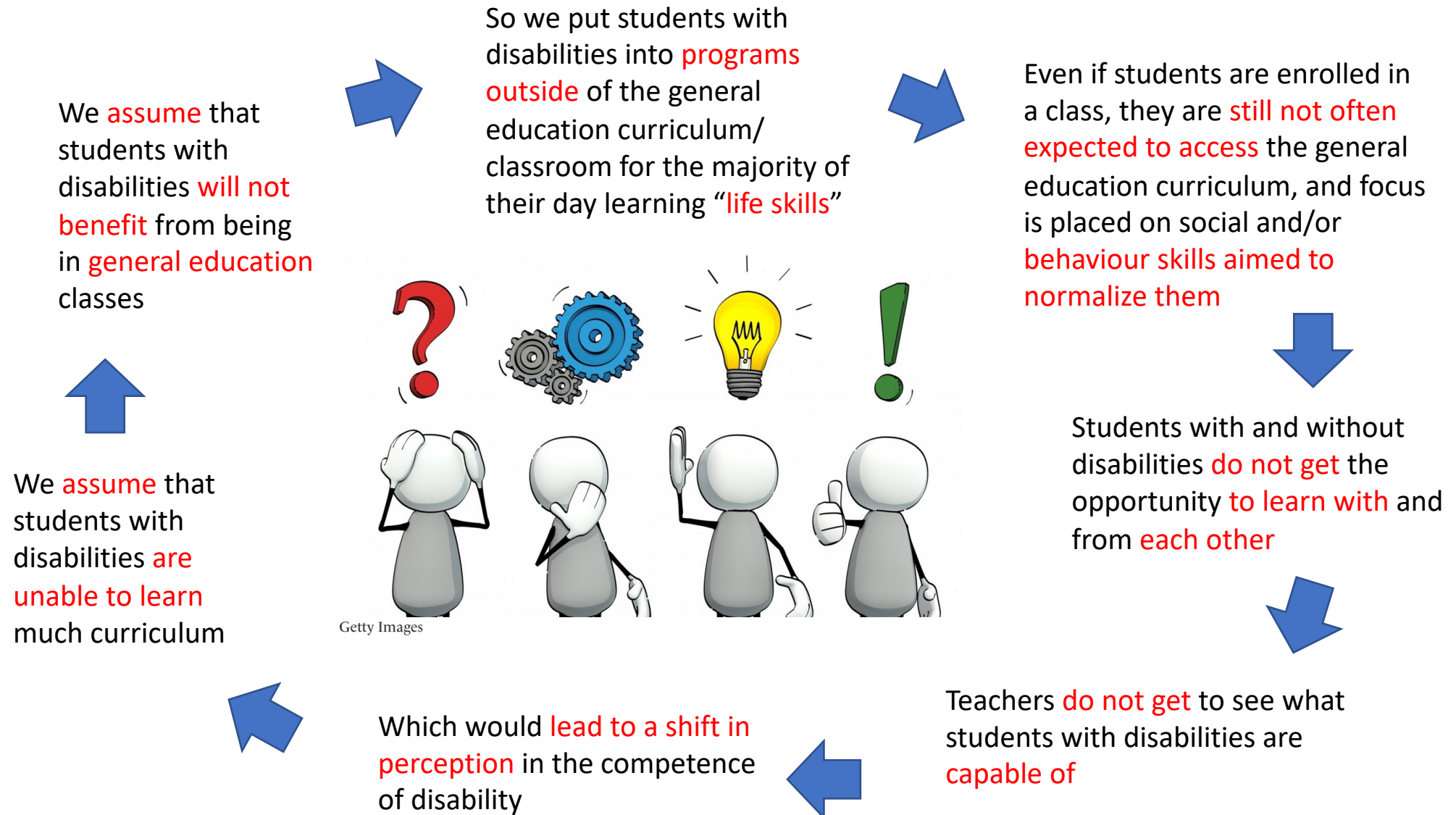
Even if **we are wrong** about a child's **capability** to have access inclusive community programs with their peers, **the consequences** of that presumption **being wrong** are **not as dangerous** as the **alternative**.

Cheryl Jorgenson

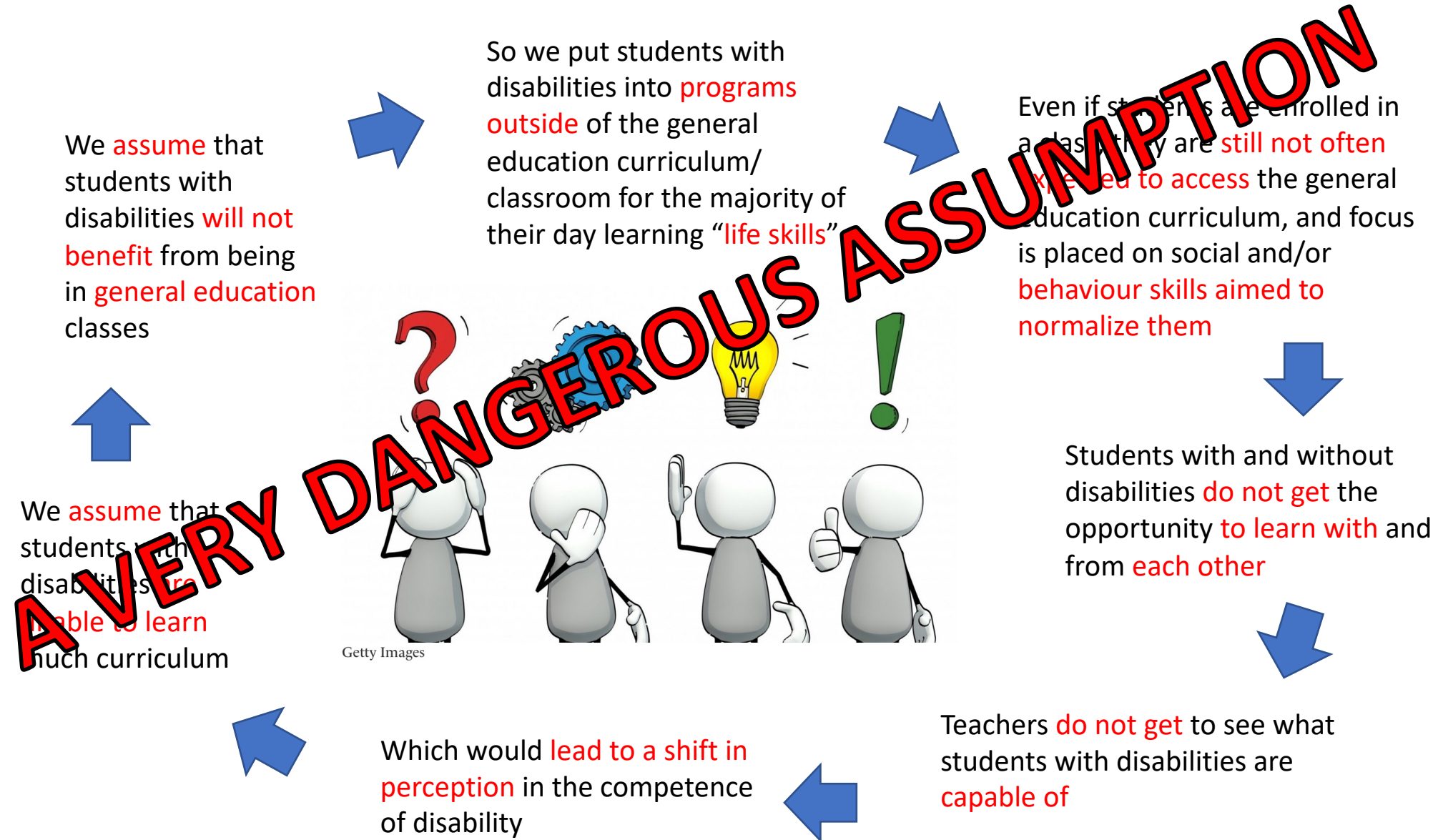
What do we think when we think of someone with a disability?



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



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

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

re



How can we Presuming Competence?

- Children with disabilities so often **need** to “**prove**” that they can behave **before** **given access** to community programming
- Biklen & Burke suggest:
 - Rather than proving their ability, presuming competence is **assuming that all** children 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 children with a **means to communicate** other than words (visuals, gestures, voice)

Jorgenson, McSheehan & Sonnenmeier

How can we Presuming Competence?

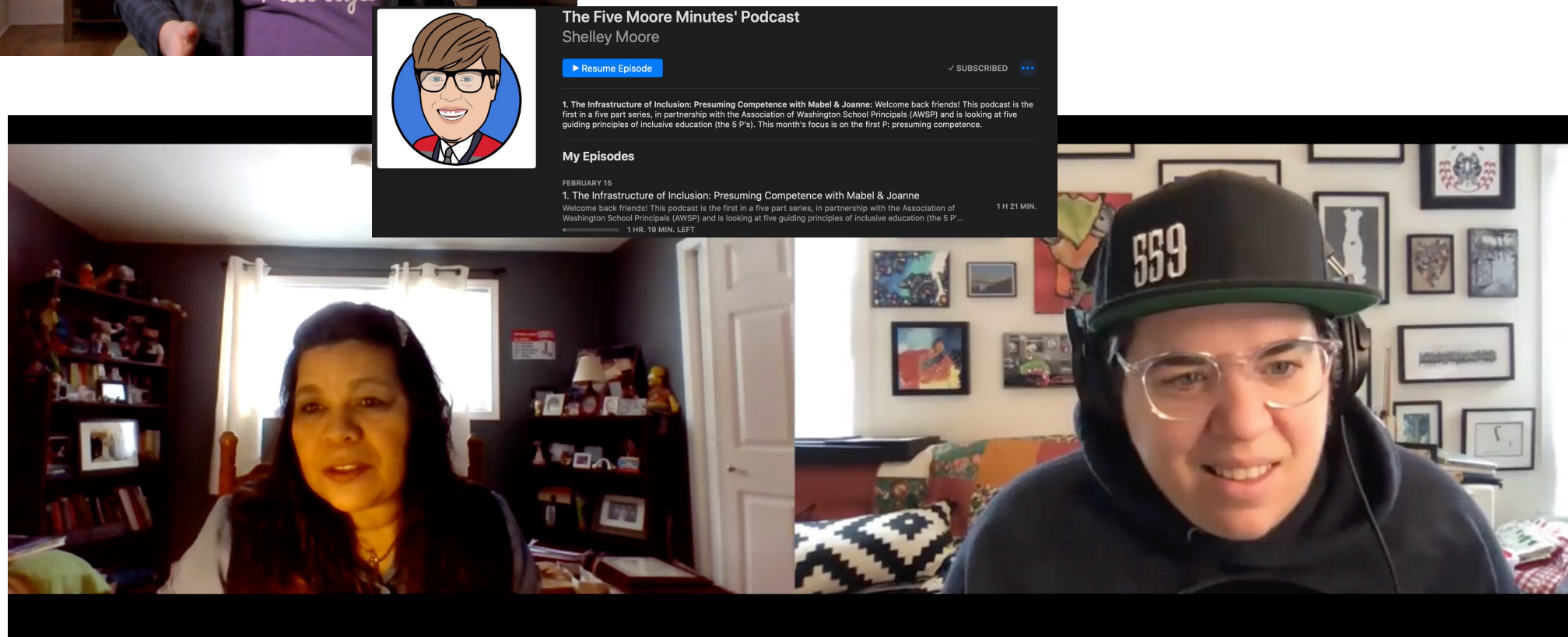
What Self Advocates say:

- **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
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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.”



Shelley Moore, 2021



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.
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- 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.



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

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