

15 Ways for Job Coaches to Presume Competence in Students

Presuming competence in students is an important step in helping them to become independent. Below are ways to help you keep this in mind as you are on-the-job with students.

1. Be patient with your students. Clock how long it takes for students to start a task, take the next step, or switch to a new task. What's a few more seconds in the grander scheme?
2. Let the workplace personnel be who the students go to with questions or needs. The workplace personnel will decide to (a) respond to the student's request, (b) ask other co-workers (or you) to assist, or (c) ask the student to work it out independently.
3. Plan a brief task or time period when you commit to allowing the student to work independently, without your intervention. See what happens. Reintroduce assistance only as needed (unless safety is compromised).
4. Let students make mistakes. It's part of the human experience! Catch yourself before you correct your students' work. Don't cover for them. This is about their skills...not yours.
5. Sit farther away. If you've been within arm's reach, sit just within earshot. If you've been sitting just within earshot, sit across the room.
6. Pat yourself on the back every time you allow the student to think. Your job is to provide information.
7. Pause before answering or assisting. Even though helping can feel right, be aware that too much assistance is short-sighted. Sometimes less is more, less is better.



8. Commit to no intervention for a whole activity. Take data instead. Your students may surprise you!
9. Teach students to decline assistance by saying, "Thanks, but please let me try it by myself." Praise independence.
10. Whenever you add prompts, include a plan to phase them out.
11. Let the supervisors and co-workers know that you need to step back so that your students can be more independent. You're not shirking your responsibilities.
12. Try helping only when co-workers or supervisors give you a signal. They may prefer to respond directly to students or to give students longer to work it out independently.
13. Acknowledge your own needs. There's a reason you chose the helping profession. Collaborate with other adults to break your habits of helping too much. Agree to remind each other to presume competence in students.
14. Post a sign, "Are there any other ways I can presume competence?"
15. Visualize your student(s) working independently in the future and move toward that!



Reminder

An adaptation from *Classroom Collaboration* by
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