

# BUILDING AUTONOMY IN COMMUNICATION WITH NONSPEAKING INDIVIDUALS

from the Campus School Visitor Guidelines

**Disability is diversity!** For more than 50 years, the **Campus School at Boston College**, located on campus in the Lynch School of Education and Human Development, has educated students ages 3 to 22 with extensive support needs. The Campus School visitor guide was established to prepare visitors on optimal and respectful communication with Campus School students who live with multiple disabilities and medical complexities. **Acknowledging and appreciating communication differences should be the norm in our community and yours.**

*To be an equitable and inclusive community member, remember that communication includes*



Using head-switches to scan and select a word related to the weather



Exploring a pageset on a tablet communication device to to select a phrase in conversation



Reaching out to someone with an extended palm to say hello

## DO:

- Talk to students! Get to know them and let them get to know you!
- Ask appropriate questions to students and staff. Questions are okay!
- Say “hello (student’s name)” and tell them your name, offer your hand, or wave in their visual field
- Give the student “wait time” to respond to questions and be receptive to multiple forms of communication (activating a communication switch, selecting a choice from a communication book or auditory scanning, vocalizations, smiles, lifting head up, moving arms/legs, or eye gaze).
- Be enthusiastic, creative, positive and energetic! The more fun you have, the more fun our students will have. Match or “vibe off” the energy of students
- Be respectful! Students’ body language does not always adhere to societal norms

## DON'T:

- Use baby talk or talk down to students
- Talk to the support personale instead of the individual directly
- Ask students to smile or communicate in a certain way. (This can come across as demeaning and some students have other ways of expressing their joy and emotions)