

## Endless Possibilities Conference 2025

### PRESENTERS

**Chelsea Budde** raised and was taught by her two, now adult neurodivergent children, both of whom were diagnosed with autism in early childhood. Each child went on to receive several other diagnoses into their adolescence, some connected to their neurology and some not. What she learned through their shared and distinct experiences both inspired the co-founding of a nonprofit organization that taught autism acceptance and empathy, as well as her latest venture, Chelsea's Vocation. Chelsea believes she has been called to help parents better understand their autistic children's neurology, so they can make neuro-affirming choices in their parenting and education.

**Laura Edwards**, a Special Education Teacher in the Waukesha School District, holds a bachelor's degree in special education and a master's in education. With 28 years of experience, she was honored as the WCASS Special Education Teacher of the Year. As an educator and mother of a child with a disability, she values strong partnerships with families, schools, and communities. Laura has led professional development on IEP best practices, collaboration, autism support, and classroom environments. She believes learning is a lifelong journey, not just for students but for educators, and remains committed to continuous growth and improvement.

**Clyde Fruits** is a teenage self-advocate who is a junior at McFarland High School. He's involved in multiple choirs including Blue Notes, Kitten's Mittens, and was involved in the 100th anniversary of the Capitol Pageant. He participates in Special Olympics softball and track, plays the piano, and has two jobs working for both SUBWAY® and the Madison Mallards organization. He has also attended Lions Camp for several years. Clyde hopes to work in the music industry after graduation.

**Michael Hipple** is a young man who has cerebral palsy and uses assistive technology tools to live his best life. He presents workshops on Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)/assistive technology, inclusion, behaviors, how to get involved in the community, and his own journey. Mike founded [Wisconsin Augmentative Alternative Communication AAC Network](#). The network's mission is to bring Wisconsin stakeholders for AAC together to have one voice and to share the knowledge that we have. He wrote a children's book about starting school. When he isn't working, it is likely that you can find him watching baseball or cop shows. He is a member of a Kiwanis club. He has a membership in Wisconsin Autism Society, Wisconsin CEC, the United States Society of AAC, and the International Society of AAC).

**Hunter Markle** is an Autistic Young Adult living in Stoughton. He works at Pick and Save in the Deli Department. He loves speaking on autism, mental health, and self-advocacy. Hunter has had a wide range of schooling experience. He also enjoys Role Playing Games and heavy metal music. He has spoken at numerous conferences.

**Dawn Merth-Johnson** is an Education Consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction with a focus on speech-language and assistive technology. In this role, she provides leadership, consultation and technical assistance for local education agencies, providers and families. She manages IDEA discretionary grants related to assistive technology and comprehensive special education evaluation in the area of speech and language. Merth-Johnson serves as a member of the Assistive Technology Advisory Council (ATAC) through the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. She has 29 years of clinical and supervisory experience in the schools, long-term rehabilitation, state level and at the university level. Merth-Johnson presents at the state and national level on topics related to leadership, advocacy, and clinical practice.

**Barbara Novak** has more than 20 years of experience supporting reading and literacy development in Wisconsin, including as a reading teacher, a literacy coach, and more than a decade working at the DPI focused on literacy. She is a believer in building systems to support student learning, maintaining asset-based approaches to each student, and developing educator expertise. Dr. Novak will lead the DPI's work on implementing the requirements of [2023 Wisconsin Act 20](#), which reimagines the way Wisconsin students are taught to read.

**Michelle Silverman** is an Education Consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction with a focus on occupational therapy, physical therapy and assistive technology. In this role, she provides leadership, consultation and technical assistance for local education agencies, providers and families. She has 30 years of experience in schools, pediatric clinics, and instruction at the university level. She serves on the national board for rehabilitation and assistive technology education. presents at the state and national level on topics related to interdisciplinary practice, advocacy, clinical practice for occupational therapy, physical therapy and assistive technology in schools.