2018 GaPMP Kickoff Keynote Presenters

Opening Keynote: Eddie Slowikowski

**3 minutes and 58 seconds**. That is the amount of time it took Eddie Slowikowski to run the mile. Whether it’s as a Gold Medal winner for the USA Track & Field Team, a 3-time NCAA All-American, or the world’s most dynamic professional speaker, Eddie knows a thing or two about peak performance. Through years of training as an athlete and running his own speaking business, he knows what it takes to be elite. Eddie has always had the can-do spirit of an entrepreneur, in all walks of life. Best of all, Eddie can channel that sense of accomplishment through interactive storytelling to audiences everywhere. He can make you laugh, cry, dance and learn… all in one presentation. It’s a rollercoaster journey like no other, and Eddie’s been doing it for over 24 years.

Thursday Keynote: Kimberleigh Beard is a Licensed Master Social Worker(LMSW) in Georgia.  Kimberleigh’s personal experience with disability as a person born with Cerebral Palsy led her to pursue a career in social work in hopes of supporting others affected by disability and serious illnesses.  Kimberleigh’s passion for supporting and advocating for people with disabilities & their families is also reflected in her volunteer work. For the past 3 years, Kimberleigh has served on  the  Georgia State Advisory Panel for Special Education as an individual representative  with her most recent role being chairperson.  In reflection of her time on the  panel,  Kimberleigh states, “Serving on the panel has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I am truly grateful for being able to see and take part in the positive changes that are being made to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities in Georgia.  When I was much younger , I believed that no one really cared about students with disabilities; I felt pretty invisible. I am so glad that I have  been proven wrong.”

Closing Keynote: Jamie Scheidt is passionate about helping students with severe and profound intellectual disabilities break through the limits people have placed on them. She says, “Working with my students and their families brings me profound joy, and there is a deep need for people who are passionate about loving, believing in, and teaching students with multiple disabilities. I believe that students learn best when they feel a sense of worth and importance and when they feel like their teacher believes that they are capable. My personal teaching style has developed out of my belief that nothing is impossible for my students no matter what their diagnosis may be or what doctors may have said in the past. My students may not learn to do things in the same way as their typically developing peers, but I am committed to figuring out a way for them to be involved and a way for them to learn.”   Mrs. Scheidt formerly taught Special Education in Gwinnett County for 7 years, where she earned the title of Gwinnett’s 2017 Teacher of the Year and went on to be a finalist for the 2018 Georgia Teacher of the Year. Recently Mrs. Scheidt got married and moved to Statham, GA just outside of Athens to take on a fixer upper with her husband, Isaac. She is now in her first year teaching students with severe and profound intellectual disabilities at the middle school level in Barrow County. Mrs. Scheidt earned her bachelor’s degree in Special Education from the University of Georgia.