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Speaker shares value of connection with Minot-area educators



Jill Schramm/MDN Julie Rohlk, a teacher at Central High and Jim Hill and Erik Ramstad middle schools, accepts an autographed copy of "Nice Bike" from author Mark Scharenbroich at the Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative conference in Minot Monday.

Teachers who develop connections with kids have an increased ability to influence classroom learning and improve student test scores, according to Mark Scharenbroich, an author and speaker who addressed area educators in Minot Monday.

“If you ask most adults, ‘Tell me about a teacher that had an impact,’ what you will find are teachers who really connected with that student,” he said. “The stronger connections we can build within the teaching community in that building – either as educators, cooks, custodians, bus drivers – with those kids, the more we grow and the more kids grow and do better on tests.”

Scharenbroich and Heather Simonich, creator of *“Trauma Sensitive Schools: A New Perspective on Behavior and Learning,”* led sessions at the Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative’s *“Chasing What Matters”* conference for more than 1,400 educators, held at Minot State University and Our Redeemer’s Christian School campuses.

Scharenbroich, author of *“Nice Bike: Making Meaningful Connections on the Road of Life,”* spoke about the need to acknowledge, honor and connect with students. Acknowledge means to be fully present in the lives of others, he said.

“You must be present to win,” he said.

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Jill Schramm/MDN Area educators listen to Mark Scharenbroich speak at the Mid-Dakota Education Cooperative conference Monday in Ann Nicole Nelson Hall.

Honor means to create a meaningful experience for others, which teachers do every day in the classroom, he said. Connecting makes it personal.

How a coach relates to a team can influence whether they have a winning season. Looking at workers who leave their jobs dissatisfied, about half are unhappy with their managers or the work culture. Again, it comes down to connection, Scharenbroich said.

“It’s a universal concept,” he said.

Colette Cunningham, an educator at Dakota Elementary, said Scharenbroich’s message brought teachers back to the basics in reminding them how important connections are.

“You kind of get in a rut. It’s good to have these things to get you back

on track,” she said.

“Everything that he was talking about just rings true with my personal connections,” said Tasha Hanson, a middle school physical educator teacher in Minot. Her comment was interrupted by a former student who was at the event to help her employer serve coffee during a break. The young woman was pleased to be able to greet her former teacher, and Hanson explained those encounters with previous students happen because of the classroom connections that Scharenbroich talks about.

Scharenbroich, who speaks to educators and business people, had started out as a member of a comedy group in St. Cloud, Minn. He later became a solo speaker, combining his comedy with leadership training and messages about making connections.

Having spoken at high school assemblies for 20 years, Scharenbroich said he asked questions about what schools were doing to enhance student success. What he learned helped shape the message he shares with educators today.

He and his wife founded Scharenbroich and Associates, a motivational speaking and leadership training video production company. He won an Emmy Award as writer/producer for an ABC TV special and is the recipient of several international film awards.

Attending MDEC’s conference were educators from Minot Public Schools, Bishop Ryan, Our Redeemer’s, Bowbells, Glenburn, Kenmare, Lewis & Clark, Max, Nedrose, Sawyer, South Prairie, Surrey, Velva, United and Souris Valley Special Services. The conference provided professional development opportunities to assist educators in strengthening their school cultures and climates for learning while also providing a portion of the legislatively mandated mental health and suicide prevention training.