

## SHAPING THE FUTURE CONFERENCE 2015

### PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT: Healthy Relationships in School Communities

#### Presentation by Bill Gordon, Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities

#### ASSIGNMENT: AN "EDUCATOR" WHOSE POSITIVE INFLUENCE STILL HAS AN IMPACT ON YOU

#### ANSWERS FROM SOME OF THE ATTENDEES AT THE WORKSHOP:

1. Gentle manner. Genuine concern and interest in me. Supportive when I needed it; believed in me and my ability to succeed.
2. Educator was Donna Schneider (positive, motivator, gave me confidence): She was a "gymnastics mom". She always told me I would be a great teacher. Starting at age 12 when I was a "junior" coach at my gymnastics club. I went on to university, but did not go into Education (BSc in Kinesiology). After a few years of working as a kinesiologist, I realized that I should be working with kids. I thought about this mom and how she was always telling me I was so good with kids. She was one of the main reasons I went back to university to become a teacher. I don't think she even knows I became a teacher. I should try to connect with her I guess. Thanks.
3. I don't remember a single thing I learned in Social Studies 7, but what I do remember was the way Mrs. Egert made me feel important and interesting. She was a kind and caring teacher who encouraged the same from her students. I got the opportunity to work with her in my professional life years later and I modeled my own teaching after her with the goal of making my students feel important and interesting like she did.
4. Wendae Grover, former teacher at St. Francis Xavier High School. She was a PE teacher. She was positive, supportive, calm and created an environment that was unconditional! She was the reason I became an educator and is the reason I strive to create the same type of environment in my classroom.
5. I would choose Mrs. Gaydosh. She taught me grade 8, high school PE and Social Studies. I loved her most because of her teaching style and personal attributes. She was personable and fun, but could be a hard ass and held us accountable if we needed it. She coached and went above and beyond to get to know her students. She role modeled what a strong, confident but loving woman looked like. Awesome Role model whom I love to meet up with still today.
6. He would let you know when you needed to work harder, but he would also celebrate your achievements along with you. He had a way to get you to understand things no matter how long it took. He could control a class, shut down disruptions and sometimes cause them!! :-). One of the things I remember most is that he would often try to relate class to his own experiences by telling stories. He also seemed to have a three or four word description/representation for every skill he would try to teach. (i.e. in PEd, "smell the roses" = shooting a basketball.) I work with him now, but will always remember those experiences.
7. Mr. Osborne (University Anatomy): "Look to your left, look to your right. Now you need to know two of you will not pass this course." He was negative but honest. He was rough but intelligent. Behind the rough exterior, he was a teacher/instructor that truly cared and wanted you to work, learn and reach your full potential. He taught me to give and love whatever you choose to do. I chose to teach, give and love. because of Mr. Osborne. Reality and honesty are OK! :-)

8. When I started my first year of university, I found myself in a completely different world. I was 21 years old and surrounded by 17 and 18 year olds in my first year courses. I was very intimidated by these young students and was convinced I was going to flunk out of university (I had had a very poor high school experience.) I had English 103 with Dr. Harry Prest at Augustana. I stressed out for weeks before I handed in my first paper, fully expecting an “F” when it was handed back. Dr. Prest gave me an 85% on my paper, but far more importantly, he wrote that it was “very good work.”. He instilled a belief in myself and my abilities with his comments. I realized that I was smart enough to be there with the young kids and helped me discover how important it is to be a positive role model in my own students’ lives.
9. My grade five teacher was a powerful influence in my life. The single factor I can identify as the reason for her success in connecting with me was how caring and student centered she was. She would do anything for her students. As I have grown up, we have connected every few years and she amazed me again when I looked up from the podium where I was delivering the eulogy for my mother and saw her face in the crowd. All those years later she still found a way to make a huge impact on me.
10. Dr. Patricia Makokis has had a huge positive influence and still continues to do so through her gentle compassionate and caring persona by providing ongoing support and encouragement. Her large knowledge base and expertise in many areas, most importantly indigenous culture, leadership, values and beliefs has helped me shape, grow and rediscover my own values and beliefs. Her natural teaching style and wealth of knowledge for the Aboriginal Health Promotion Citation Training Program through First Nations and Inuit health partnership with the U of A is very impactful on the students and communities that participated in the training program so far.

My grade seven teacher, Debbie Pennyfeather, also had a huge influence on my life. In a time of adolescence, she was there as more than a teacher. She was always inclusive and persistent with her students and provided many leadership opportunities within the school and community. I feel like she accepted us and allowed us to be free with providing ongoing support in our learning and initiatives (not quite community norms)> She spent more than regular school time with students. She also trusted myself and my cousin to babysit her two year old daughter. It became a regular job within the community. I think at that time in my life, it was a well needed support and had a huge influence in my life.

11. My mother provided the most influential impact on my life as an educator. She taught in a junior high for 25 years and also raised four children. As I reflect on the compassion she displayed and shared with all youth, I truly understand why students found success in her Social class. It was because she “took care of kids.” She expected much from students regardless of their socioeconomic status or their backgrounds. She assisted students by bringing them winter jackets when they needed them, or lunch when they didn’t have one. This was all at a time where not much of this type of compassion was seen in schools. She was never punitive; she was what I call “firm but always fair”!
12. Joanne Cruikshank: Grade 11 English teacher influenced me to become an English teacher. Two or three years ago she filled a short term contract at Ardrossan. When we saw each other, she said “you look so familiar.” It slowly dawned on me why, and it was her voice I recognized, not her married name.
13. Mr Newman because he made us feel that our ideas mattered. He encouraged us to think deeply and from different perspectives. He made me feel important and smart. As you can tell from my poor spelling, I struggled with academics because of a learning disability. Mr. Newman believed in me and made me believe in myself. He also made me feel like I had a lot to offer the world. I always think of him when I think of an educator.

14. Madame Duguay, grade three French Immersion. She made learning enjoyable. School and curriculum came to life during her lessons, especially when she spent our Science unit teaching in a homemade spider costume. She laughed with us, cried with us, hugged us when we needed it, scolded us when we needed it, and she still remembers our names, our year, our class fifteen years later.
15. My former old high school volleyball coach and physics teacher. He committed his time, and coached with passion and integrity. He gave us rules and guidelines but the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them. His classroom management style: the louder we got, the quieter he talked, a trick I still use today; how to keep classroom control without saying a word--magic!
16. My high school English teacher. Charismatic. Changed up the assignments to make them fresh and different. He also allowed freedom and creativity. He took the time to help and to provide feedback.
17. Able to identify the varying needs within a classroom and teach/speak to them. An ability to “push” when needed and “pull back” when required in terms of working with kids. Took the time to get to know students. Placed as much emphasis on life skills as he did with educational or curricular skills.
18. My high school Biology teacher was amazing. She was very intelligent, she cared about all of us in Biology and in life. She always had a smile and a passion for science, yet she was tough. You could talk to her when ever you needed, and she would seek you out too. She was an amazing person.
19. Had strong principles. Genuine. Lived her life as an example. Encouraging. Helped make connections.
20. Carol Morgan, grade one teacher was my most influential person. She was the kindest, most gentle most caring grade one teacher I ever met. Every answer she spoke was positive. Every word was kind. She also was amazingly strict and had high expectations. I could work within her class with her students doing some preventative education and they were always so well behaved. I always think, “What would Mrs. Morgan say” before I address children.
21. Unfortunately it wasn't a school experience. As a First Nations person, my school experiences were sad, and I was one of those kids that didn't have a person who believed in me. As an adult, it was a native counsellor at post secondary who made me feel I mattered, believed in me and was an excellent listener. NO JUDGEMENT ATTACHED!
22. To be completely honest, other than the teacher who was my neighbour, I cannot even remember a teacher's face before grade eleven. The teachers I can remember from grades eleven and twelve I remember perhaps more from the activities of my friends and my behaviour than anything the teacher did. I would not say, other than maybe my grade twelve French teacher who suggested I apply for a bursary to study in Banff for the summer, that they “influenced” my life.
23. Kind, funny, accessible. Knew my family. Related/succeeded with teaching strategies. Always smiling. Tests and quizzes came with Double Bubble and mint patties. Memorable. One of the reasons I chose to teach and majored in English.
24. She always had time to listen to me, even if it wasn't about the subject area, even If it was personal. She also made me feel valued not only as a student but as a person. Many years later we worked together and she was as kind and gracious as she was when I was a student.

25. Teaching style: room for and encouragement of creativity. Opportunities for passionate projects. Wanted to learn about my personal life through journalling. Supported my activities outside of school through his attendance.
26. Approachable, friendly, smart and professional. Made amazing connections with students and made the effort to get to know and connect with every one of them.
27. Always happy, passionate and with high expectations. Not afraid to admit weaknesses. LOVED HIS JOB! Brought in experts. Believed in me which changed how I viewed myself. Made me better.
28. Fr. R,Wayne Young, OMI: Mentor, professor, friend, Fr. Young taught me that the content is only learned when the experience is meaningful and filled with love. Nothing matters more than teaching the hearts of those you want to affect. My academic career is dedicated to him. Teacher, mentor, priest, scholar, author--but most importantly, he was my friend.
29. My grade five teacher. She showed us that everything was possible. She wasn't afraid of being different and she empowered us to be the leaders we could be. She was caring and passionate!
30. Homeroom teacher, grade 10, 11 and 12, Don Shakotko. He taught in a small town high school and showed us there was a big world out there. It was okay if you didn't conform to small town standards. He gave us the confidence to explore the world. In some ways, he was a visionary. He didn't conform to all standards either. But he believed in all of us. He shared his passion for life and education with us as well.
31. A very significant educator in my life was my grade six teacher Mr. Norman Start. I had not had many male teachers in my elementary years, and wasn't sure what to expect. Mr. Start made an impact on my life, not because of the curriculum he taught, but by the way he interacted with students. I remember him as a very kind, fair and caring person. He inspired me to become a teacher with those qualities--a teacher who really connected meaningfully.

After my first year of teaching I was asked to write an article for the ATA magazine. It was called "You need not be alone," and was about the support I received from colleagues during my first year. As a result of that article, Mr. Start contacted me and expressed his pleasure that I had become a teacher. He was still the kind, caring man, the encourager, that I remembered from my childhood.

**Did I forget your story? Do you have more to add to this list of educators, professional or personal?**

**If so, please feel free to send your story to me at:**

[williamcgordon@shaw.ca](mailto:williamcgordon@shaw.ca)

**It was my pleasure to present at the conference and to read and share your stories.**

**Bill Gordon**