

## Thoughts on Leadership from SSHS Project Directors - Anne

Jean: Anne Katona Lynn has overseen the Pennsylvania Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative since 2014, supporting mental health and youth violence prevention in the Penn Crest, Lehigh, and Northeastern school districts. It's so great to talk with you Anne. Thanks for joining us.

Anne: Thanks for having me. Great to be here.

Jean: So as you know Safe Schools, Healthy Students is essentially a school based initiative that provides programs and services to youth where they learn. As a state project director, however, you're not necessarily on the ground at these schools to see how the work is being implemented. So would you mind sharing some thoughts with us about how you keep those lines of communication going with local staff to provide the support they need to help them overcome roadblocks, to identify success stories and more?

Anne: Well, I think actually the way our role was set up was that we were connected to the state and my co-director and I both divided up the ... I was at two of the sites, and she was at one of the sites, so we were actually able to be on site locally maybe a little bit more than some other state directors had been able to do, just based on their role? So we really did provide a lot of training and technical assistance to the local sites. And that was a key piece. And I think the other piece is having regular communication with them. We have weekly phone calls with our local program managers every Thursday morning, and then once a month, we had our SAMSA partners join the call.

Anne: So I think that was a big piece, as well as having our local program managers and other key people coming to the state leadership and management teams and presenting different successes, being on some work groups at the state level, so one example, we had a cross systems training work group at the state level and all three of the local program managers were participating on that group.

Anne: So we've created some communities of practice I would say to help ensure that the local sites are really connecting with the state leads and just state partners in general so that it's not just different layers making decisions or developing plans. So I think those were huge pieces, as well as my co-director and I, Deanna, we both would attend a lot of the local meetings. So we were able to really be on the ground, which was kind of a nice thing.

Jean: It is a nice thing. And I'd love to ask you a little bit more about the communities of practice. What areas of practice are you establishing or have you established those communities in and how did you choose those?

Anne: The way the communities of practice, really they're in the process of developing and expanding, but they've been based on topics of interest. And one thing that at the state level, at the local level, all of us agreed that trauma was a huge need and a topic that crossed all layers of our support and just from down to the kids, all the way up to the staff, through systems, all of those pieces. So we really prioritized trauma, and so we started a trauma community of practice. And again as I said, those are state level

## Thoughts on Leadership from SSHS Project Directors - Anne

people, they're local people, there are people from just private organizations that aren't necessarily state government.

Anne: But for the most part they are state government and so we're all working around developing kind of a common vision and mission and purpose for our groups so that we know what it is that we're going to be doing. Some of the other groups that have now sense developed, we have an evaluation community of practice. So evaluators from all the different state grants, state and local grants, are all coming together to work on what are the things that we can all do that are common for all of us, how can we share information, how can we share resources and not remain in our silos?

Anne: We've identified different key topics. Some additional ones, peer supports. Certified peer supports are coming for specifically for families, as well as for youth. They're a variety of, I know of different ideas that are coming out. It's based on a need, you know? Somebody identifies, hey, let's develop a community of practice for this, so it's exciting, I'm very excited for that work.

Jean: And I just want to acknowledge that I really appreciate that you described this as a response to need and that the needs been expressed. You guys have really figured out how you want to collaboratively fill that need. So I'm wondering Anne, when you think back over the years that you've spent with Safe Schools, Healthy Students, whether it's at the local level, or the state level, what might be one or two of the most rewarding outcomes that you saw in this work?

Anne: I think one of the keys for me is being able to connect the dots with so many things that are happening, and just really having the permission to break down the silos. I think we almost created them unintentionally, and now just having the permission to say, well, let's figure out how to work together. And just having that commitment, and then obviously the funds to support it, but really just having the leadership commitment to break down the silos and to change how we do business. I think that was a huge piece for me, because I've been able to see how that same concept can be carried out in anything.

Anne: We have a local coalition around suicide that that same concept of let's connect the dots and let's not just stay in our silo, saying, oh, well this is a human service role, this is a drug and alcohol role, how can we figure it out to do that? So that for me is the connect the dots. By co-director calls me Spider-woman because I like to create webs, so me that was very rewarding and I love that work and I love just the public health model.

Anne: I think the other piece is really being able to make a change in schools that is really completely systematic and that it is a public health model, that it's all three tiers of support and doing it in a way that we really had to engage the local people and make sure that they had buy in and they really owned it, and so the fact that they didn't really like data in the beginning but then as we went on, they really appreciated data and then they got to a point we're like, "Well, we're not collecting enough data."

## Thoughts on Leadership from SSHS Project Directors - Anne

Anne: So it was nice to see the evolution of data collection and analysis and to see that with educators and them not be freaked out by data. Again, they initially were, but we held their hand and made sure that they had all the tools that they needed and tried to create success as much as possible. So for me that was extremely powerful as well.

Jean: Anne, that's a beautiful way of describing it, connecting the dots, de-siloing so that you can connect those dots, and then creating this powerful systems change that's not going to go anywhere, it's really now the way business is done in Pennsylvania. So I just want to take a moment to thank you so much for sharing that insight for our Safe Schools, Healthy Students Project Director podcast. Thank you Anne.

Anne: Thank you very much.