

Thoughts on Leadership from SSHS Project Directors - Pat

- Jean: Pat Sanborn is the project director for the Nevada Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative. While Pat is based in the state's capital of Carson City, the grant supports programs in Washoe, Lyon, and Nye Counties. Prior to overseeing the Nevada initiative, Pat was a local Safe Schools/Healthy Students Project Director at the Willits Unified School District in Willits, California.
- Jean: Thank you for joining us on the podcast today, Pat.
- Pat: Oh, well thank you for having me. I'm very happy to be here.
- Jean: Pat, you've seen the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative evolve over time from a grant that was originally delivered directly to school districts, like Willits, to a state-based model. Having served as a project director at both the local and the state level, I wonder if you could share your thoughts on the similarities and the differences of leading this kind of project at both the state and local levels.
- Pat: Sure, I'd be happy to. The first similarity that I would say is that at the Willits School District level, even though it was granted to a specific district, Willits, it was also composed of a consortium of three districts, very similar to the way the state grant is structured. Two of them were rural communities, and the third was a frontier district, which had about a 75%, 75 to 80% population of Native Americans. So, there are cultural differences as well. And I have the same thing at the state level. There is districts that have more Native American composition in their student population than the other two, and they are also three communities within the state of Nevada that are striving for the same outcomes.
- Pat: Another similarity would be that we each had a partnership group to manage and to guide the outcomes at the district level in Willits. We had a community management team, and we had partners that were composed from leaders of a school district, of a juvenile justice, of law enforcement, mental health. So, those leaders were all at the table at both the district level and at the state level, more or less.
- Jean: Pat, those are some really interesting similarities between state and local work. What about those differences, though?
- Pat: Yeah, they were quite a few differences, and it took me a while to kind of figure those out, but the first thing I noticed is that at the state level, it's much more complicated and time-consuming to navigate the system. I had much closer connection with the state leaders at the community level in Willits, but it was more difficult to get those higher level people into our state management team.
- Pat: In Nevada, the difference is that the grant funding goes to community-based coalitions, and so because Nevada is such a rural state, there are community-focused coalition all over the state that are brought together with a state coalition team. So, we have executive directors of these different coalitions.

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- Jean: Pat, one of the things that's really central to the success of any Safe Schools initiative, either at the local level or the state level, is that ability to look at data, to assess it, to use data to help you drive decisions, see what's working, make mid-course corrections as needed. I'm wondering, at the local level in Willits, how you collected your data, looked at your data, and how that might be different in Nevada, especially, which is a Safe School state, where the school district isn't funded. The LEA isn't funded. But community organizations are funded.
- Pat: Yes. That's a pretty big difference. In California, we were able to use California Healthy Kids survey, and it happened in every school district, within the grant, and it happened annually. We had really great data across all the years. We were able to make comparisons within each school district, because within the consortium, they all used the same student information system, and so we were able to input data as well as collect it out of there. And then through our evaluator, we were able to have quarterly PowerPoint presentations about what we're seeing in the data, and what direction we might need to go in the coming months. So, that was really joyful to be part of, to be able to see that change as it was happening.
- Pat: Whereas at the state level, here in Nevada, we collect data every other year through the Youth Risk Behavior survey. Because all of the districts are wide and spread apart, and teachers are ... there's short-staffing in teachers. It's very difficult to get every student in grades five, seven, nine, and 11 to collect that annual data. So, that was a bit of a barrier.
- Pat: But we are building our systems here within the State Department of Education to include more data collection through the student information system that the state uses. So, soon, we're really looking forward to it, we'll have different tabs on the data collection system called Infinite Campus, that we'll be able to collect data and use it on a regular basis, more like we were in the local level.
- Jean: Just one more question for you today, Pat. In your work, how have you brought Nevada state agencies together in what we've heard called The Collaboratory? We love this word so much. Could you talk about that for a minute?
- Pat: Yeah, I'd love to. You know, it just came as ... I was reading through a journal, and I'm sorry, I don't remember the name of the journal. But I saw the word and I thought, That is such a great word. I really love the concept of blending collaboration with laboratory. We're talking about science-based and evidence-based decision-making, and we're collaborating at the table when we all come together.
- Pat: It's grown to be much more of a place, a physical space, where connection and collaboration on different projects, different thoughts, centered around bringing out the best from all of our partners, because we all want to produce the best possible result. And so, we talk through some of these things, with intentionality and recognition that we all have different perspectives.

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Pat: The laboratory piece has a deeper meaning, in that not only is it a place where we discuss evidence, practices, and social relationships, but it also follows the concept of a science lab, where it's okay to make mistakes, because that is where you learn. So, that freedom allows people to express themselves and to come up with ideas that may or may not work, but with an intention of working and with an intention of success, we can all be successful.

Pat: I think that kind of covers most of it, but it's a much deeper level. You become part of it as opposed to participating in it.

Jean: Pat, that was a great explanation for The Collaboratory. Thank you so much for clarifying that beautiful word. And thank you so much for participating in the Safe Schools/Healthy Students podcast today. We really appreciated your time, and all the years you've spent making lives for children and youth and families better in California, and now Nevada.

Pat: Oh, thank you for having me. This has been a joy. Thanks, Jean.

Jean: Thanks, Pat.