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00:19	Hi, and welcome back to the Lansing USD 469 Lion Pridecast. I'm Sharon Burns, Director of Communications and Marketing. And I'm Miles Azzeh, Director of Teaching and Learning. And we've got a few really cool things to talk about today, don't we, Sharon?
00:29	Yes, we do, as always. We're going to start with something that's kind of happening behind the scenes, and talk about how it's going to be helping to support our students. And then we're going to talk about something that makes Lansing pretty special, which is the community. Our community, that's right. And of course, we have Veterans Day this week, so we want to take some time to recognize the incredible military families and Veterans who are such an important part of Lansing USD 469. Absolutely, we do. I know you've been spending quite a bit of time working on our district's At Risk Accountability Plan, which is something the state of Kansas is asking districts to do.
00:58	I think for a lot of our listeners, that's probably something they've never heard of, because I was very unfamiliar with it before you started talking a lot about it. So what exactly is the At Risk Accountability Plan, and what is the state hoping districts accomplish through this process? Yeah, and I'm pretty sure I'm seeing, like, At Risk Accountability Plan templates and example plans, like, in my sleep. Exactly. Because I've been working on it so much.
01:20	To put it in layman's terms, for all the people that are cooler than I am, that aren't nerds like me, essentially what it's saying is the state has asked school districts to come up with two cohorts, At Risk cohorts, that they will track students of these cohorts, to see if the At Risk Accountability Plans-- excuse me, the At Risk supports that we give, whether that be intervention, the different resources and programs we use-- if they're paying off and improving student achievement. And I really like that. I think it's great.
01:48	We already do that here in our system, so we're really just reporting it specifically to the state. There's two cohorts. One was a required cohort. They're fourth graders this year, with the end goal being their seventh grade state assessment. And then the next cohort was one that we got to choose. And I was excited because I was able to sit down with our district leadership team, and it took a little bit of time. It took a lot of conversation about picking that second cohort, but also the measures that we would use to track them, and then how we are going to report to the state, which we'll have to do annually, and then, of course, at the end.
02:21	Right, yeah. And that's one of the things I found interesting was when we started talking about this, was the process of identifying those students we're going to follow. So I know there's been a lot of thought behind that. Can you walk us through how we selected our student cohorts? What information did we look at, and what were we trying to accomplish with those selections? Yeah. So I really liked, during the few trainings I did, I made sure to jump into all the trainings for the At Risk Accountability

Plan, with other directors, assistant superintendents, people at the district level like myself.

02:49 And I really liked the idea of what I heard from the state and from other districts of, "Get more people involved in your district." There are some-- I'm sure there's a district out there that a principal or an interventionist or somebody like me just made the decision on what the cohort would be, the second cohort. I instead brought it to the district leadership team, and we had a deep conversation about, number one, what are the guidelines and expectations. We looked at examples of the Accountability Plan. We talked about what we already do and things that we can highlight.

03:19 And that really helped us. And as far as the data, I love-- it's been something I've been so proud of since I've got here-- is that we have our FastBridge screener that we use, EC through 12. We don't split it up at different grade levels. Everybody takes it fall, winter, and spring. So we knew we had the data, and then it was a matter of jumping in and identifying the groups that needed the most help, and then what we were going to do and how we were going to track that for four years, which ultimately will fall, of course, on the interventionists and teachers, but myself specifically, as I report that to the state every year.

03:51 Right, yeah. It's not that we're just identifying students and tracking numbers. The whole point is figuring out how we can better support them, which is pretty cool. So what does that support actually look like? Yeah. What's really cool, like I said, is we already do so much of it. We've talked before about our MTSS structure, our multi - tier system of supports. Tier 1, everybody gets the same education. Everybody gets access to core curriculum. Everybody has an opportunity to learn from our GVC and the curriculum resource that we use. But then there are students that maybe need that little bit of extra help.

04:19 They're not quite getting it, especially if they're consistently showing it or we see it in our screener that we do three times a year. We take that data, and we take classroom data, and we start having tier 2 instruction for them, which is just intervention to make sure that they're filling in those gaps. And then for some students that are pretty behind, we have tier 3, and that's where they're going to get a little bit more focused support. A lot of times that could be one - on - one to, once again, move them and help fill up the gaps. We already have that system in place. We've been lauded about our MTSS system, and so I'm proud of it.

04:51 Our interventionists do a fantastic job, and we already look at data constantly. We have our MTSS meetings three times a year. We present data to the board. So really, it's not as if this is something new. It's just a little bit more of, like, maybe tracking specific groups, at-risk subgroups, and then obviously reporting to the state. But I'm actually kind of excited about how this could help us even be better than we already are, because now we'll have this experience that maybe we can start doing with all of our subgroups.

05:20 And I imagine that's what the state was thinking too and hoping that they'd move to. Right. I know I always love the meetings where we have those student achievement updates, where you all get to come up and present all the work you've done behind the scenes and then how it actually plays out with our students, which is very, very rewarding to hear. It makes us proud to be a part of the district. But looking a little further down the road, what are you hoping we learn from this? Like, when we look back at this process from a year from now, what would you consider a success? Yeah. I think that-- and you know, it might sound a little bit like pie in the sky, but you know me, like, Mr.

05:50 Optimism. But I think that the idea of what the state was thinking, and I can see where they're coming from, is that we make this a regular practice, even if there's not a mandate for it, that we start looking at specific subgroups and tracking how they're doing and tracking how we're doing when it comes to them improving. Like I said, we do a really good job right now. It's why our students can read so well. We've talked about how there was a time here in Lansing where fluency was a struggle in those middle primary elementary grades, I mean, third, fourth, fifth, sixth.

06:20 So we had to keep working on fluency. Our students are fluent now, and that's because of the work that we've done with structured literacy, phonics instruction, phonemic awareness, making sure that they can read well. So the next step is comprehension. We want to make sure that they really get and understand everything. So what I'm hoping is the same thing happens here, is that we realize, like, "Wow, we really helped these couple cohorts out. We're doing something well. Let's start stretching this out to all of our subgroups." So it's not going to really be cohorts or subgroups. It's going to be all our kids, which I don't think we're far from now.

06:50 It just gives us another data point. Right, yeah. You know, I know our parents, our families see what's happening in the classroom every day, but there is so much that goes on behind the scenes that make us, you know, who we are, and our kids are benefiting from it. Yeah. I bring it up every time, you know, when we present to the board or anything that ever happens, you know, "Hey, great job," you know, and it's the team. It's our DLT, it's our MTSS, it's our interventionists, it's our teachers, it's our admin. It's all of us. We work so hard toward making our students reach their potential, and they do.

07:22 Okay, now we're going to shift gears a little bit, but not really. It's another reason it makes our district so successful, is our community, which you kind of talked about a little bit earlier. Last week, we were at Emporia State University interviewing prospective teachers, and several of the students, which I loved, they asked about community engagement. And I love that question because I feel like that's one of the easiest things for us to talk about, especially me. We're incredibly fortunate to be in a community that really shows up for our schools.

07:51 You've been in education for a long time. You've been with several other districts. You know, I'm a Lansing through and through. I've been here for, seems like, forever, with my own kids. What, to you, makes Lansing stand out? I think you hit the nail on the head. Ever since I got here, I noticed that there was a lot of people in the community that really just want to support our schools, like you said. I'd get random emails about, like, "Hey, I'd like to come and drop off some school supplies," or, "We see local community churches that give breakfast to staff ." And I think that that's wonderful.

08:20 We've got our LEF, obviously. But even more than that is just the amount of times that I've gone to events and seen just how well attended they are, whether it be one of our more fine arts events, whether it be, you know, something like a back - to - school night, pop schools with parents, whatever it may be. Just really, really impressed with the community. Sporting events, obviously. We are very good at the fine arts as well. Like, I'm super proud of that. And you can just tell that people know that we are, and they attend those events.

08:48 So yeah, as far as districts go in terms of communities, this is one of the best I've ever been around / worked in. So I had the pleasure of attending our Fairy Tale STEM Night last week, and it was such a pleasure to get to see all the kids enjoying it, all the parents, and then all the volunteers, like I said, that were there to help. We had a retired teacher there. We had our K students there. We had our principal at the

elementary school's wife there helping. And I really want to give a shout - out to Suzanne Phillips, who's our STEM teacher, and then one of our registered teacher apprentices who works alongside Suzanne and Ingrid Murphy.

09:22 They did an incredible job of decorating it, setting up stations. The kids loved it. I was so proud to be a part of just being able to be there to take pictures. Yeah, I've been super proud of the work that Suzanne and Ingrid have done when it comes to STEM. We launched this a few years back, you know, to give students an opportunity to have access to science, technology, engineering, and math in a different way than they normally would. They've really just ran with it. I'm so proud of Suzanne and Ingrid, and so I know it was a great success.

09:53 Just like it's a great success every year. And yeah, the community involvement and volunteers, like, once again, speaks to how great of a community we have. Right, yeah. And another example of that, last night after the board meeting, we had a community member who came up to the district office and delivered a ton of food for our holiday. He unloaded it today. It was a lot. Yeah, it was incredible. It was about $450 worth. He has asked to be anonymous, so he's doing this just out of the goodness of his heart. Was here last night at 8:45, literally.

10:24 That's when I met him because our board meeting had ended, and he had come off of a second job. So anyway, it's people like that who make Lansing so amazing. So if this person is listening, thank you very much. And the people at the intermediate school who handle our food pantry are incredibly, incredibly thankful for this, so. Yeah. And the families who are going to-- I mean, I think that person, I think it's so honorable that he doesn't want to be recognized. But I just have to say thank you. Thank you to him.

10:50 Thank you, because it's not the only donation I'm sure we'll get, but the difference that he and they all are making in families this year, especially during the holiday season. So thank you so much. Yeah. And while we're talking about community. Yep. Keep going. Keep the community chain going. There's another group that is such an important part of who we are in Lansing, and that's our military families. You know, being close to the fort, we do have a large military component here, and it's what makes us so special. So this week, being Veterans Day, we are super happy to be able to recognize them.

11:20 Yeah, I think it's really cool. You know, I didn't make this connection. I didn't really-- I grew up, I lived overseas for a little while, and I met a lot of people from different cultures and different communities. My family wasn't military. But, like, I look back on that, and I know that that's made me a more empathetic person. I think it's made me a more well - rounded cultural person. And I love the idea that our kids get that here, because you wouldn't necessarily get that in a lot of districts. But they will get to meet people that are from-- even if it's just from another state, but they don't.

11:51 They meet literally people from other countries. And I just think that that's fantastic. Like I said, build empathy, understanding, a little bit more awareness of what's going on in the world, that people, you know, sound different, look different, speak different than you do. And that's the best thing you can have for someone growing up. Yeah, my one son, our neighbors across the street were from Australia. Yeah, that's okay. And it was really sad when they left because, you know, they weren't going back to Australia. But it was really cool for him to be so close to him and get to learn the other culture. Did they ever put a couple shrimp on a bob or anything like that?

12:22 I think we made that joke multiple times. Yeah, they were probably like, "Oh, never heard that one." That was my Australian accent. That's not good. I would stop. Yeah. I

would stop. Ouch. Okay, moving on. No, actually, it wasn't bad. No, but that is one of the things that our students and our staff are really good at welcoming people. They're used to kids coming in and out, and that's another reason why, you know, we have an open door. Like, come in, you know, we accept. And yeah, it's cool. Yeah.

12:50 I want to recognize it is wonderful for that, and that's why I do want to say, once again, community is kind of the main point of this-- I almost call it a TED Talk, this podcast. But what I'm really excited about is talking about our community and that this does make us unique than a lot of other communities. And so, first of all, I'm proud that we have that, but I also want to say thank you, of course, to our veterans, also thinking about the families that serve alongside them in so many different ways, and then how amazing it is that these military children get to experience our school and our community, and our kids get to as well.

13:28 And thank you to all of them. Yep, I agree. This has been a very feel-good episode. We need feel-good. We need more feel-good in the world. We do. Yeah. And I think that's a great way to wrap it up. For more updates and stories on Lansing USD 469, you can visit us at www.usd469. net. And if you don't already have it, download the free Lansing USD 469 mobile app on Apple and Android. That app allows you to be the first to know about all the fantastic things happening in our district.

13:53 And if you like our content, want to stay up to date on the latest episodes, please follow us wherever you're listening and leave a review to help others find us and learn more about our great district. And that is a wrap on episode 3 of season 5. Woo! Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening. Bye.