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- 00:18 Hi everybody. Welcome back to our returning listeners and welcome if this is your first time listening. We're so happy to have you all with us today. Thank you for joining us for season two, episode eight of the Lion Pride cast, a podcast created by the Lansing Unified School District 469 located in Lansing, Kansas.
- 00:33 The purpose of this podcast is to inform our Lansing stakeholders being our community members, students and staff about all things education. We are your hosts. I am Miles Azzeh, Director of Teaching and Learning in Lansing USD 469. And I am Sharon Burns, the Director of Communications and Marketing. So today, this is the first time this season we've not had a guest. I am shocked that it's taken this long for us just to have our own episode. I know. I'm sorry. I know this is exciting. You're going to have to put up with me, and it's going to be difficult to put up with me today of all these. Trust me.
- 01:02 Do you want to say why? Well, we are recording this on the day of the Super Bowl, yeah the morning of because we've been very busy with our career fairs and all that. So we haven't been able to record and we're a little bit behind. So we decided to come in and knock it out. And you know it sounded like a great idea before, but now that we're on Super Bowl Sunday, I'm like, I am going to do my very best to get through this episode. And I think we can. I think we can. We're going to be awesome. And then maybe we can talk some predictions at the end. Yes.
- 01:32 We did that last year. No, you're not going to bet this year? OK, well, we know what happened last year. And if you don't know, listen to the Bart Schwartz episode all the way to the end. You don't have to. Yeah, I would. I would. I would. All right, so today we are going to be talking and focusing on the strategic plan, correct? Yes. So you have been instrumental in spearheading that for our district. So can you talk to us a little bit, maybe give a quick recap about the work we've done to get the strategic plan going and really honestly to the place where we are now.
- 02:04 Absolutely. So yes, and if you know me, you've heard me say this, that this is the most important thing. I think our district did last year, and I was really, really proud to be a part of it, which is developing the strategic plan. So I'll just give a quick recap. A lot of our listeners probably already know because the district talks about it all the time. But we did develop it last year. We had 77 volunteers from our community. Those volunteers were board members, certified staff, classified staff. We had students on there who did an amazing job.
- 02:34 We had just regular community members on there. So it was a great opportunity for everybody to come together and set the future of our district in motion. So we partnered with Greenbush, so big shout out to Bart Schwartz. We got to know him through the process. They were amazing to work with. We had two meetings that we held to develop it. One was to develop large goal areas. That was back in September of 2022.
- 03:02 And then we met again in January of 2023 to create action steps for those goal areas. Once we had that done, we created a draft. We sent it out as a survey to all of our volunteers and made sure that they all felt like their ideas were represented in the plan. Took that feedback, developed the final one. Again, you and I met with Bart to do that. And then thanks to the board who approved it in April of 2023. So that was the way we developed it.
- 03:31 And it was a great process. I'm very, very proud and very, very grateful to everybody who stepped up and helped develop it. And you know, you brought up earlier about how like, you know, we talk about it all the time and we do all that. You've also worked on a tracking document for it, correct? Right, right. You talked to us a little bit about how that's been going. Right. Because then once we have these goal areas and these action steps, and there's a lot of people involved, a lot of responsible parties. You know, we have our admin, we have our Director of Student Services, Asendra, we have myself, we have you, we have our building leadership teams, we have our PLCs, professional learning communities.
- 04:03 So we have lots of parties that are responsible for it, and we needed to be able to make sure that everybody knew what they needed to be working on and where we were going. So we created a tracking document last summer, summer of 2023, just in Google Sheets, free, easy to use document. We have tabs for each responsible party. And then we talk about it at every admin meeting. We talk about it during our building leadership team meetings. We talk about it at the district leadership team meetings, and we make sure that we're staying on track on those.
- 04:32 And that's kind of recently you also presented to the school board about it. And I think that was a big part, right? Talking about the tracking documents, showing off some of it. Overall, how did you think that went? What did you update them on? And I'm just curious, because I think a couple years ago, you didn't present to the board a lot, did you? How do you feel? Do you get nervous? Yes. I've kind of got used to it at this point. I have to do it every couple of months. So you are naturally good, you know, speaking in front of people. That is not my strong suit. I get very nervous to do it.
- 05:01 But I was proud to be able to do it, to be able to showcase all of the things that we were working on. So we knew that was coming. So we came to our admin and said, let us know the things that you're most proud of, because we couldn't cover everything we've been doing in that meeting. You know, I couldn't do it. We've been there all night and everybody would have

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been bored out of their minds. But we asked the admin, what are you the most proud of on the strategic plan on the progress? And so they gave us feedback. And so then I was able to put that into a PowerPoint and share that with the board and the community. Hopefully people watched it.

- 05:31 And we're going to talk about some of those things today. So in case you didn't watch the meeting, you can kind of know where we are and some things that I'm proud of. And that's what I thought we'd focus on. Since you're the Director of Communications and Marketing, can you tell us a little bit about some of the things in the tracking document in the strategic plan that you feel most excited about? We have an actual, one of the goal areas is collaboration and communication. So can you talk a little bit about things that you're not only excited about, but things that you're doing for maybe staff, students, the board and then community members to know since you do so much behind the scenes with this?
- 06:04 Absolutely. So yeah, that that large goal area, you know, there's different. So I'm just going to talk about the large goal areas really quick just in case people aren't aware. So we have the operations budget management, we have whole child approach to learning, like you said, collaboration and communication, positive culture, which has to do with our staff and students making sure they're happy and want to be here. And then we have successful graduates. So those are the five large goal areas. And you're right, my largest focus is going to be on that collaboration and communication just because of my role.
- 06:33 And so I'll touch on a couple things that I'm really proud of that we're making great progress on. The first being developing a streamlined communication plan for pre-K through 12. That's something that I heard time and time again during those strategic planning meetings is that we parents sometimes actually were getting too much information and communication, which I'd rather it be that way than the other because we're all about transparency. But we really are looking at ways to which we can streamline to where parents aren't having to get hit with all these different types of communication.
- 07:05 They can go to one place and know where they're getting it. So we're switching our web hosting service to App to G. And so I've been going through some trainings on that and getting that up and running. Our website will look different. And then we'll have people in each of our buildings who will be able to access it and be able to get information out easier. We'll have that our attendance, our nutrition services, everything will go through that platform. So there's not gonna be all these different ways in which parents have to go or things to download or app will change, but it'll be, it'll be nice.
- 07:36 It'll be a really good change. And I think people will love it. There may be some growing pains at first, but that should happen before the end of the school year. Oh, wow. So yeah. And we're still going to have the app though, right? You said we're still going to be an app. It'll just be a little bit different. OK. It'll be better. It'll be better. It'll be better. I'm very proud of things about Aptige. Multiple districts around us even use it, right? OK, that's gonna be nice. You can lean on them too if you have any questions. Yes. What are some other things? Yes, so the other one I wanted to highlight today is enhancing partnerships with city county media to enhance collaboration and communication.
- 08:06 So that action step, which is again under that collaboration and communication on their strategic plan, is something that we've really hit hard and I'm incredibly excited about. The first one I wanted to talk about, the first thing we're doing is something called a Community Connect program. It's a volunteer program where we are wanting to bring people, our community members, parents, grandparents into our schools because we do amazing things here. And my job is, you know, sharing those things on the website and, you know, various different channels, but to really feel it is to be in the buildings and to see it.
- 08:39 So we're trying to get people in so they can see all the neat things that they're doing and be able to touch on different departments. So being able to see what an admin, you know, does during the day, what a secretary does, what's, you know, the lunchroom looks like, what car riders look like, the line there, which is fun, and getting them in and seeing it. And I think it'll, I think people will be happily surprised at all of the moving parts that take place to keep us moving the right direction each day. So that's gonna be like a volunteer program.
- 09:10 So you sent out something, right? And then do people go through, like I guess I imagine. Yes, we had them go through a Google form. We put it on our website, we put it on social media, send it out. And we had a really good turnout of people, almost too much because we really wanted to get as many people who volunteered in the buildings and were hoping to do that by the end of the year. We had them select if they had a preference of what building they were in. And so we're working on that now. We have a couple set up. So that's something we're going to be sharing on the website.
- 09:39 We're going to highlight them, tell them thank you. And just, you know, they'll be announced in the morning in their building so people will know they're there and it's going to be really cool. Yeah, I'm excited about that. You know, pre COVID, parents used to come in all the time, family members, volunteers, and then with COVID, with everything that happened, you know, we essentially shut down our schools. I mean, we did shut down the schools, but I mean, like when we reopen, it was very much like, let's just keep our people in the building. So I'm really happy to see that districts are starting to reopen their doors. Right. And this is a great way to do it.
- 10:09 Right. So, okay, so you've got that going on. What else? Yes, this will be kind of the pilot year for that. And we plan on continuing that throughout the year. Something else we're really excited about, and I want to give a huge shout out to Suzanne Phillips for this. We had a STEM night that was for pre-K through 12th grades this year at our high school. This is the second year we've done it. Last year we did it mainly focused on those younger grades, but this year she did a great job of bringing in trade professionals. So we had like platinum automotive. We had different, we had HVAC professionals, we had home improvement people.
- 10:39 It was really cool to see so those older kids could see what it was like to different career paths that were out there and get to talk to them and see it firsthand. Oh man, that's great. And we did that pre-K through 12. Pre-K through 12 kids and middle school

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kids. Yes, yes, yes. That's wonderful. Shout out to her, yeah. Yeah, so we had make it, break it stations, make it and take it stations. So those were the littler kids where there were hands-on activities that were all STEM related. It was fun. It was a great time.

- 11:05 I brought my son Brooks there who's sixth grade and he got to drive a robot from the robotics team at the high school. Dr. Anne Krebs was there. Huge shout out to her and some students who were there. The kids loved it. I bet. They loved it. They had raffles. So yeah, that was, again, bringing those community members, those trade professionals in and letting kids see what, you know, see some things, real world experiences and talk to people who are living those jobs. Love it. Yeah.
- 11:33 Any other things, any other identifier, anything else that you're working on? Yes, so we had a meeting last week with Whitney from Zeck Ford. So we're partnering with various businesses too, and Zeck is amazing. They are actually, they wanted to do more community outreach. So they're gonna be highlighting or sponsoring a grade level, excuse me, each, you know, periodically between now and the end of the school year, doing like an Amazon wish list for teachers so that teachers who are, you know, we know that teachers sometimes go out and have to buy their own supplies.
- 12:07 You know, we try to, I feel like we're really good about providing resources. But I know some teachers are like, you know, I really want this for my classroom, but I don't wanna touch my budget. So they'll go out and do it. So Zeck has been amazing. They are going to go and they're going to purchase things for classrooms. So we'll have wish lists. And again, we'll start with the pre-K building and then wave up. So I was super excited to talk to Winnie there. And that's just one company. I mean, that's one organization. Yeah, yeah.
- 12:35 And so we're hoping to reach out to more, maybe, you know, doing, we really want to, at some point, I want to start sending out a regular mailer, hard copy mailer to all of our community members. Right now we do the Lansing Connection and we're very thankful to the city for letting us be a part of that, but we want to have our own mailer. It is expensive. You know, we try to be fiscally responsible, but I think it's important for us to do that. So that's another way we're going to partner with Zeck and I'm going to reach out to some other businesses about potentially advertising in it to help us to absorb some of those costs.
- 13:07 So we can, again, another way to share, and these are a lot of times our older community members who don't follow the website. Getting a mailer is nice for them, you know? And they said that during the strategic planning. There are many people that said I don't have kids, but I want to know what the school's up to. I want to, you know, I wanna be a part of it all. And we had had discussions prior to that. But again, looking at the cost of it, it's like, okay, do we, is that going to be beneficial? And so we decided maybe not. And then after strategic plan, it was like, okay, yeah, we definitely need to do that. And that's when we partnered with the city to get the mailer out.
- 13:37 So we do have a little bit now, but we'd like to do something on our own on a more regular basis. So again, looking at partners to be able to kind of absorb those costs. So everything you're saying that you've done, you've essentially done in the last eight or nine months, correct? Yes. When it comes down to me because we got this kicked off in April, approved. And so really since the summer, that's really impressive. Yeah, and that's just scratching the surface. And I think the one thing about my room, the collaboration and communication room for the strategic plan is, you know, you were a part of the room, and yours was what?
- 14:07 Yours was accreditation. Yeah, it was accreditation and assessment and stuff. And I think it landed on a lot of the whole child approach or the portrait of a graduate. Where you were hearing things that were you know over large areas and a lot of different people were responsible for those. My room, a lot of the stuff that we talked about was directly related to things that I did, not a group of people, but me. So I had a hard time like, okay, not taking things personally, but I really like the weeks after that, my brain was just lit up like, okay, how are we gonna do this, this, this, it was, I loved it.
- 14:39 I loved getting the feedback. You know, first it kind of took, I took pause a little bit like, oh gosh, am I doing a good job? But, you know, I'm always trying to get better as the district is as well. And so it was a great learning opportunity and hearing, you know, feedback from people. And there were great things that we heard too. That was the other thing. It was like, okay, good, we're doing this right. We're doing it well, but there's always room for improvement. And that's the beauty of the strategic plan. Always room for improvement. Well, I have to tell you, I'm really excited. I love all of the work that you're doing.
- 15:08 And honestly, as a person that, you know, at the district level, in the DLTs and everything in our admin AT meeting, I give credit to Marty. He always brings up the strategic plan and we track in there as well. So I love, I know I've said this many times, we both have said it, but I love we're not just creating this and then putting it on a shelf. Right. Like we are. No, we are not. You brought up earlier. I know we talk about it a lot, but like honestly, you'd rather be talking about it a lot instead of just once again doing all the legwork and putting it up. And we're looking at potentially switching from the Google Sheets, which is the beauty of it is it's free.
- 15:40 Yeah. But I'm looking at a new program or a program to be able to track it to where it's more like visually appealing to the community and we can have like a progress percentage-wise on the website. So we are going to look into that as well. Again, it's looking at the cost of it. We don't want to spend a lot of money. We are, again, fiscally responsible, but it would be nice for people to see it. You know I can talk about it and do some graphics, but being able for us to look at it percentage-wise would be nice too. And so we're looking at that.
- 16:10 Well, I am excited. Yes. And I am excited that I was able to talk strategic plan with you like eight hours before the Super Bowl. Yes, and I was worried you would be tapping your leg and you know we'd have sound issues because of nerves, but you were doing really well. So props to you, Miles, props to you. Props to me, props to me. And you're not pacing? Yeah, I'm very superstitious, by the way. Okay. And so this is my first time recording a podcast on this chief Super Bowl day. So hopefully it works out in our favor.

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- 16:41 Yes. If not, I'm closing down the podcast. Bring it all down. We're never doing one again. It's over. Oh, it's too funny. I'm just kidding. Okay, so last year we played the Eagles. This year we got the 49ers. Fun fact. I mean, a huge Chiefs fan. But my favorite player growing up was Steve Young. Yeah, who I think you also liked Steve Young. I did. I can't say I had a crush on Steve Young, but I like Steve Young.
- 17:12 And it was awesome. And so I had that little bit of weirdness playing them because we played them a couple of years ago. And then I realized like, Nope, I hate them. I'm a Chiefs fan. So anyway, so my prediction is I think we are going to win. I'm a big Nick Wright fan. I don't know if you know who he is. He used to be a radio announcer here. Now he's on ESPN or Fox Sports with Chris Broussard. Anyway, and I love him. And I feel pretty solid that this is going to be a nice, we're going to win handily.
- 17:41 I'm going to go he said 3113. I like, yeah, I like 2817. Actually, I think Bucker is going to get a couple of field goals. So I'm going to say 2717. Three touchdowns, two field goals. What's your prediction? And you gotta pick Chiefs. I'm telling you, I'll pick Chiefs. Come on, get one. I think it's going to be painful. I do. I think they're going to win, but I don't think it's going to be. I don't know why I'm thinking it's going to be like that kind of game.
- 18:11 It's never that kind of game. Although we beat the Dolphins handily. Yes, yeah we did. But okay, so what do you think in score? So I said 27, 17 Chiefs. What do you get? I think I'm going to go. I don't know. She's going to go like 24/21 or something like that. 27, 24. Oh my god. I feel like I did that last year though. I'm kind of scared. You were close. I mean, you were off by 10 points on each side. It was 37, 34, but what did you lose last year? I'm sorry for not remembering.
- 18:41 What was the bet, just to see who got closer? Yeah, I don't think, yeah, I think it was the spread. I will bet you a coffee from 10 and two. Okay, shout out to Lindsey Conklin at 10 and two. Yep, yep, yep. We like 10 and two. And owner Matt Warner, good guy. I'll bet you a coffee or a drink of some sort from 10 and two that I'm closer in the score. So I'm thinking.
- 19:12 Yeah, we're definitely throwing in cake pops. Yes. So one more time. What's the story? So you're saying 2724. And I'm saying 2710 27 2717 attends points. So we'll see. I feel like you got the heads up the leg up on this bed. I do. You know what? I will buy all the coffees. If the Chiefs win this game, I don't care what the score is. Okay, I'm excited. Yes. I'm very nervous. Like I said, I'm not superstitious.
- 19:40 I'm just a little stitch. Okay, I took that from office. So okay, I think it's a great way to wrap up the episode. I miss trivia though. We're going to have to have a guest next time. Thanks for putting up with me. I appreciate you. You're welcome. And thank you for all the so serious. You're welcome. It was very difficult. I really appreciate all the work that you're doing with communications and marketing. Keep up the great work, okay? And we are headed out. I will give shout outs to UNL, University of Lincoln Nebraska. We're heading out tomorrow to a career fair there and then Fort Hayes.
- 20:08 On Tuesday, we were at Pitts Date on Friday, and that is why we are here on a Sunday working. That's right. That's right. Well, before we wrap up this episode, how about another quick shout out to the great sound quality. Thanks to our LEF Grant. Thank you again. Educational Foundation. Yep, yep, yep. That's another good community collaboration too. I'm not going to go into it because I know we're times up, but yeah. Yeah, time's up. I'm chiefs to back on my mind. We're not doing anymore. But thank you, Ellie. You're wonderful. I'm amazed that I remember the sound.
- 20:34 As always, 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 that free Lansing USD 469 mobile app on Apple and Android. The app allows you to be the first to know all the fantastic things happening in our district. If you like our content and 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. We are available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcast, Amazon Music, YouTube, iHeartRadio, Cast Box, Stitcher, and Pocket Cast.
- 21:07 And if you would like to be a guest on the podcast, please send us an email at Sharon.burns@usd469.net. And that is a wrap on episode eight of season two. And as always. Woo! Thanks for listening, everybody. Go Chiefs. Chiefs.