

McNary opens college and career center

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

With bright green walls, stone countertops, large television screens and black couches, McNary's new college and career center doesn't look like any other room in the high school.

And that's exactly what Principal Erik Jespersen wanted.

"I think it's amazing," Jespersen said at an open house on Thursday, Oct. 13. "What we were shooting for when we started this project is we wanted to create a space that didn't look like a classroom, that didn't look like any other part of the school because we want people to come in with a totally different mindset."

The college and career center, which was rebuilt with \$20,000 from the NIKE Innovation Fund, has 12 Google Chromebooks as well as other technology that is so new that MHS Assistant Principal Susanne Stefani said the school's top tech guy is not able to find solutions on a few bugs that have been spotted.

"The whole district is watching how we handle the technology and how we deal with it," Stefani said.

Jespersen noted the center will help McNary in its goal of becoming an AVID demonstration school by 2020.

"AVID is about taking a group of kids and providing some pathways for them to get to college but we didn't really have the space to support that," Jespersen said.

"So we wanted an interactive space for people to come



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

A group of McNary High School students work in the new college and career center, which opened Monday, Oct. 17.

into and really have the rubber meet the road, which is what's going to happen in here."

On Monday, Oct. 17, students began using the center to get help with college and job applications as well as resumes. Every Tuesday, beginning in November, there will be AVID tutorials.

"Our school district's mission is to prepare all kids to be college and career ready," Jespersen said.

"We want to be really aggressive in that pursuit. I think this is a good first step."

Rochelle Farris, a former financial aid counselor at Western Oregon University, has been hired as a college and career center assistant, which is a new position at McNary.

"She is going to be the smiling face and organizer that makes this space work and that's something that we haven't had, a dedicated position exclusively for this," Jespersen said.

As a student at Western Oregon, Farris changed her major five times so she knows firsthand how difficult it can be to get on the right career path.

"This is what I'm passionate about, to start working with kids," Farris said. "Every student here has a path and they might not know what that path is. They don't know what it's going to be like when they walk out the doors and I think it's really important to give

kids a plan and to help them with that plan so they know what's going to happen after high school."

McNary is bringing in colleges, trade schools, different branches of the military and local businesses to give presentations.

"By working with students on college applications, determining what colleges they want to go to, giving them the opportunity to explore different careers, giving them volunteer opportunities so they can dabble in and experience what it's like in certain areas, then they figure out that passion," Farris said.

"Doing things like that, they are going to have a clearer picture of what their future is going to look like and that's what I'm really excited to help them

on their journey and help guide them in that direction. We need to support both types of kids (college and career) and give them experiences to make sure that they have a plan when they walk out the doors of McNary High School."



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Rochelle Farris is the new college and career center assistant at McNary High School.

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