

KeizerCommunity

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Student newspaper going online

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Located on a wall in journalism teacher Ryan Somerville's classroom are all 68 issues of *The Piper* he's advised since coming to McNary High School in 2007.

McNary students have begun planning the final edition of its student newspaper as *The Piper* is moving online.

The change came out of a conversation Somerville had with Principal Erik Jespersen on how to make the student newspaper world class.

"This isn't a bad thing," Somerville said. "We want to take the newspaper into the 21st century and get it online and become timely again."

Beginning with the 2018-19 school year, McNary will offer a media productions class, taught by Somerville and Jason Heimerdinger, where students can work on online news but also produce videos and podcasts.

"I'll be in charge of content and he'll (Heimerdinger) be in charge of technology," Somerville said. "My kids can have all of the technology stuff taken off of their plate and focus on the news and making it more timely."

Somerville currently teaches two journalism classes during one period, with 12 students working on *The Piper* and another 18 in Fundamentals of Journalism.

Somerville started the fundamentals class two years ago out of the same conversation with Jespersen.

"I wanted to do that so the kids could enter the publication class having already learned the fundamentals," Somerville. "It gives me the time to really prep them."

The Piper staff has already started posting stories online. When Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore) visited the school last month, McNary had a photo on its Website before he left



Sixty-eight issues of *The Piper*, McNary's student newspaper, dating back to 2007 are on the wall in journalism teacher Ryan Somerville's classroom. *The Piper*, which started in 1965, is printing its final edition this spring, but will still exist online.

Reporter Lauren Murphy wrote a short story after school and then a longer one over the weekend that was on the site Monday.

In the past, the story might not be in *The Piper* paper edition for another month.

"Right now we're not timely at all," Somerville. "I stopped fighting that battle a long time ago. I'd rather put out quality and teach the kids how to do real journalism."

McNary spends about \$3,000 a year printing 2,000 copies of each of its eight is-

sues. But *The Piper* isn't going online to save money.

"Whatever we do it has to be spending neutral," Somerville said. "I haven't been told that the budget is being cut."

Somerville would like to do a magazine each semester so students can learn InDesign and still see their writing in print.

The Piper is currently posting its stories online at mcnary.salkeiz.k12.or.us under announcements but Somerville would like to see a separate space for *The Piper* on McNary's site. Each story is

promoted on the Celtic Territory Twitter and Facebook page.

"Going online, my sense is our readership is going to be wider but thinner," Somerville said. "On paper, every kid in the school has the opportunity to read it. It's handed out in class. When they have the option to look at it on their phone, less kids in the building will read it but more people out in the world will read it."

"Our challenge is going to be marketing it here in the building, making sure every kid in the classroom likes the page and shares it, making sure teachers are liking it and sharing it. And then put out timely material that's good and build the readership that way."

While Somerville believes going online is best for *The Piper*, the former Ohio newspaper man who has put out student newspapers for the past 21 years as an advisor will miss seeing the physical paper each month.

"It's been difficult for me to let go. I plan to keep those up for a while just to show

kids how it used to be done and hopefully I'll grow it there with the magazine," he said looking at the wall of past issues. "There's a lot of history up there. I think the goal of the newspaper is to tell the rough draft of history at McNary High School and we've done that."

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