

GRAD, continued from Page A1

placed in special education class regardless of what their individual needs were.

Since McNary moved to a co-teaching model in 2014, teachers have been able to support not just kids with an IEP, but any student that is on the verge of falling behind.

"We do everything we can to put all of our students with special needs into as many regular-ed classes as possible, and then we provide support for them when they are in the regular-ed classes," Jespersen said. "It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for the kids. We have high expectations for them and we are here to support them."

"We are very lucky at McNary to have such a supportive group of teachers

who go above and beyond to not only make sure our special education students feel successful in their classes, but also supported and welcomed," added special education instructor Nicole De Blasi.

While De Blasi is pleased with the progress that has been made with special education at McNary, her goal is to make sure that graduation number continues to grow in the coming years.

"Our goal is always to have all our students graduate on time with their cohort. We are always changing our strategies and programs to meet the individual needs of our students. As we continue to move forward, we are looking at new ways to keep students in school and on track for graduation," De Blasi said.

McNary also graduated 84.68 percent of their Hispanic/Latino population

in 2019, which was an 11 percent increase from 2015 and 8 percent over the state average. Additionally, 88.48 percent of students in the 2019 senior class that are considered economically disadvantaged received their diplomas — 14 percent higher than the state average.

According to Jespersen, nearly all of the teachers at McNary have received AVID training and the school is on the verge of becoming a national demonstration school. In 2018, McNary became the third high school in the state to be considered an AVID Schoolwide Site of Distinction.

"Generally speaking, we are trying to provide instruction in all of our classes that is engaging instruction that promotes kids knowing how to be good students," Jespersen said.

Jespersen also credits the school mantra of encouraging students to participate in one sport, one club and one activity every year.

"A big part of that is more kids feel an attachment to McNary High School. That matters a ton," Jespersen said. "When people feel attached to

a family, which is what we are trying to create here, they are going to give greater effort, and that's what we are seeing across the board."

The connection between high school athletics and graduation has been well documented. Every McNary senior that participated in a sport during the 2018-19 school year received their diploma.

But Jespersen also acknowledged the importance of the growth of McNary's school clubs.

Just six years ago, there were only four after-school clubs at the school. Currently, there are 36 clubs, ranging from the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) to Font Club.

"It doesn't matter what the club is to me. It's about kids getting together after school and having fellowship with one another and finding positive things to connect with. That is what really matters," Jespersen said.

Jespersen plans for McNary's graduation rate to continue to trend upward as the school prepares for the next decade.

"I want us to be a different

high school than everyone else. We have big plans moving forward. We're not going to stop, we're going to keep plugging away. This is an exciting time at McNary, but there is more work to come," Jespersen said. "The thing that is most encouraging is that this year isn't a blip. This has been a consistent year-in and year-out increase in achievement, which is really exciting."

CHARTER, continued from Page A1

Seven other states still have "no promotion clauses" in effect. Studies in those states found: LGBTQ+ students are less accepted by their peers; there fewer positive representations are present in schools and less access to supportive learning materials; teachers were less likely to display visual support for LGBTQ+ students; and less than one percent of teachers in those states were willing to serve as advisors to groups and clubs supporting LGBTQ+ students.

Salem library main branch closes Feb. 2

On Sunday, Feb. 2, the main Salem Public Library will close for construction. The library, library parkade, and Peace Plaza will all be closed during construction to and used for sorting and staging the project.

A new temporary location will be opened at 1400 Broadway St. N.E., and it will open Tuesday, Feb. 18.

The library is set to re-open in the summer of 2021.

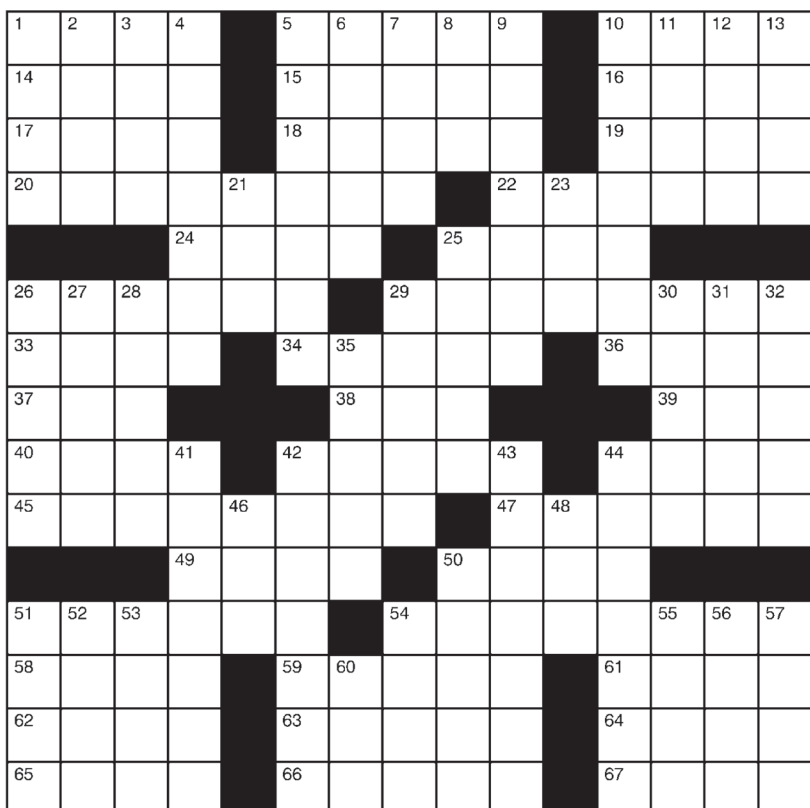
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By Charles Preston

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