

McNary. “Just meeting with them face-to-face was much better than a phone call.”

“It involved a lot of problem solving. There were some kids that didn't have access to the internet, so we would get them a mobile hotspot. Others just needed a place to charge their Chromebook. For those that didn't like working on a computer, we would provide them with printed out assignments. It was a team effort. Everyone was so supportive and flexible,” added Claudia Rios, a graduation coach at McNary.

As a freshman, each student at McNary gets assigned a teacher who serves as their advisor for all four years of high school. Having an advisor be one of the main points of contact worked well for the school during distance learning.

“We are a large high school, but we are trying to make it as relational as possible,” Jespersen said. “I am so proud of our staff. They cared about kids and made sure that they had what they needed.”

Over the last few years, Jespersen's effort to hire teachers that are bilingual in Spanish and English has resulted in increased graduation rates for the school's Latino population.

When Jespersen took over as principal in 2014-15, Latino students, which represent approximately one-third of the McNary student body, had a graduation rate of 73%. The 2019-20 Latino cohort improved on that mark by nearly 20 percentage points (91.25%).

That number increased once again



Abbi Covalt was the student speaker for McNary's 57th commencement ceremony in 2021.

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last year as Latino students in the class of 2021 graduated at a 95.32% rate.

“A lot of our Spanish-speaking staff members have been really good at creating relationships with our Spanish-speaking parents, so that when those parents call the school, they can ask for a specific person. I feel like that has played a big part in the grad rate. They have someone at the school they can connect with,” Astorga said. “Everyone is looking out for our kids and people

are going above and beyond to help them. That is the reason they are succeeding,”

Two of McNary's additional sub-groups also saw jumps in graduation rate. Special education students, or students on an individualized learning plan, graduated at a 96.34% clip, a jump of nearly 14 percentage points from last year. Economically disadvantaged students, on the other hand, crossed the podium at a 95.44% clip, an increase

of four percentage points from 2020.

“We have been committed to closing all achievement gaps at McNary High School. We have really been intentional about working with families to make sure every student receives a great education,” Jespersen said. “We look at our framework/data and make adjustments to fit the needs of our kids. That's our formula. We know our data really well and so does our staff.”

Missing cat returned to Friends of Felines

Chedderman, a 2-year-old cat from Salem Friends of Felines, was recently found after running away on January 9th. He ran away in the parking lot of the shelter soon after being adopted by Brian Butler.

The orange tabby was then found by 12-year-old Neftali Romero who first noticed Chedderman hiding under houses in his neighborhood.

Romero stepped up and brought the cat inside to be taken care of. A week later, while out on a walk, he noticed the photo of Chedderman on a missing cat poster and returned him to the shelter.

Butler and Chedderman were reunited on Tuesday, Jan. 25th. Butler also had the opportunity to thank Members of the community came together to give Romero \$150 in cash and a \$50 Nike gift card as a thank you for his good deed.



Brian Butler (left) and Neftali Romero snap a photo with Chedderman.

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