NEXT School Eagle Ridge unveils faculty

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
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SALEM — With the first day of school just around the corner, NEXT School Eagle Ridge has named its founding faculty.

"I feel very fortunate and proud of the the strong instructional and support team joining together to be part of the design and development of our learning framework and community culture," principal Joe Greenberg said. "All knew they were being asked to be part of creating something new and different, and are aware that the professional expectations of a school like NEXT are greater than what is typically asked of educators."

NEXT School Eagle Ridge serves young people entering grades 6-12 and is a fully approved tuition-free public school. The school will operate on the former Tamassee-Salem Middle and High School campus, which became available following the decision late in 2015 by the School District of Oconee County to close the community school.

The school will be hosting two family orientation forums, one on Friday evening at 6:30

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p.m. and another on Saturday at 10 a.m. The events will be focused on sharing a comprehensive program overview with key information about the school.

The school year will officially begin Aug. 15. The forums are also open to students and families who are still considering NEXT School Eagle Ridge and may be ready to start or finish an enrollment application.

Kristy Williams joined the NEXT team as a member of the science faculty. Williams earned a Bachelor of Science degree in cross-cultural studies. She holds an additional degree in biological studies from Western Governors University.

She will teach a beginner-level science class, as well as biology and an Upstate ecology class at NEXT.

"I'm really excited about the real-world connections that we'll make with our curriculum — how the students will make connections with what they're learning now to how they view the world and how they can impact their world," Williams said.

Chris McCarrell brings eight years of educational experience and two years of business management experience with him to NEXT. Most of McCarrell's experience is at the middle school level, but he has taught older grades as well. In addition, he has also coached both basketball and soccer and served as an athletic director.

McCarrell completed his Bachelor of Arts in history at the College of Charleston, with a focus on secondary education, and holds a Master of Arts in educational administration from Furman University.

He will join the NEXT faculty as a social studies instructor, teaching world culture, U.S. history and South Carolina history.

"I hope to bring some real-world experience to the table, so students will learn more skills that will help prepare them for life after NEXT — whether that's college or going into the workforce," McCarrell said.

After eight years in the public school system, he believes NEXT's model provides an education for students that's a better fit for today's society.

The school will use a corps of diverse and talented part-time and adjunct faculty to complement its program of studies, and extended learning options will also be afforded to students through approved community academic, career and service learning placements such as Hamilton Career Center and field-based internships with regional professionals and businesses, as well as dual enrollment/credit courses through Tri-County Technical College.

"Everyone on our support team has been embracing the opportunity and rising to the ambitious challenge of creating from the foundation up a robust and impact-driven model that engages young people purposefully in being co-creators of their educational experience, not merely consumers of a prescribed curriculum," Greenberg said. "Together, along with our students and families, the faculty are eager to be the pioneers that get to chart the course for this new school of choice in our region."

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