



Scholars Preparing to Join Workforce

Avenue Scholars (AS) has a clear mission. That mission is to ensure careers for committed students of hope and need through education/training and supportive relationships. Furthermore, AS aspires for each student it serves to complete our program having satisfied the following guarantees: education/training, work experience, work-ready skills, attendance, and financial and personal wellbeing.

We define work ready habits and skills in a committed Avenue Scholar as an ability to demonstrate responsibility, work ethic, communication, positive attitude, professionalism, teamwork and problem solving. Sometimes, these skills are called 'soft' skills in the workplace, in contrast to the 'hard' skills of experience, education, and training.

Why is it important to be able to demonstrate this readiness for work? Employers have long touted the importance of soft skill development in hiring. According to P. Loretto (2019) at balancecareers.com, "Employers value these types of skills because they demonstrate the internal thought processes of a person and how effective they will be in the organization." In fact, according to J. Bauer-Wolf (2019), writing for inside-highered.com, "...employers emphasized leadership and ability to work in a team as the most desirable attributes when recruiting ... ahead of analytical and quantitative skills."

High school is a perfect place to develop and hone these work ready skills. The Nebraska Department of Education created the Nebraska's Standards of Career Readiness (adopted in 2011), available online at this site, which guide our work with students. <https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/careerreadinessstandards/>.

The Avenue Scholars program builds work-ready skill development into its curriculum and activities from day one. One example is the use of a text, called *Bring Your A Game to Work*, by E. Chester (2012). It involves activities and discussions around developing a work ethic that focus on attitude, attendance, appearance, ambition, accountability, acceptance, and appreciation. Our curriculum engages students in problem solving and critical thinking about appropriate work behaviors, coaches students on employability, and monitors and supports growth in transferable job skills. The first measure of demonstration of developing work ready skills is completion of the Avenue Scholars' career ready curriculum.

The second measure used to monitor and support growth in students' work ready skill development is through the experience of part-time work and employer feedback. All Avenue Scholars complete part-time work during their junior and senior years, a perfect training ground for practicing those work ready skills. To build a successful work history, Avenue Scholars' coaches assist students in finding those part-time jobs, monitor work hours, complete employee feedback forms, and facilitate student self-evaluation and progress evaluations. Students are expected to meet or exceed standards on the employer feedback form.

The Employee Feedback Form that we use in the program represents what employers value in work ready skills. Employers rate students in a variety of categories as proficient, progressing or not progressing. In the area of responsibility and work ethic, we look at reliability and dependability. Communication includes both oral and written communication and timeliness. Positive attitude is

reflected as respect for others, confidence, and environmental awareness. Professionalism is measured as carrying oneself with confidence in one's behaviors and attitudes. Teamwork looks at working collaboratively with others. Problem solving includes decision-making, adaptability, initiative, and conflict resolution. Coaches then support

the student in the application of strengths and development of weaknesses in these areas.

We know that employers strive to find workers with valuable work readiness skills. They believe those skills are likely to influence retention and satisfaction on the job. According to B. Bean-Mellinger (2019) at smallbusiness-chron.com, "Candidates with workplace skills are employable because they make sound decisions, have the capacity to acquire new knowledge and easily adapt to various work situations."

What can parents do to help their students? The development of work-ready skills are mirrored in the behaviors and attitudes you expect of your teens at home. Help your student with etiquette and manners. Practice listening and having conversations face to face. Review their digital footprint and social media accounts. Practice time management and goal setting. Expect responsibility and dependability of your teen in everyday life. Any practice at home will help to hone the skills that will benefit a teen for a lifetime.





Avenue Scholars students are given opportunities to explore jobs in various career fields, such as the auto service industry.

Outstanding Senior Scholar **Intern Omaha helps Jack determine career**

Senior Mostafa Jack foresees a future in helping people maintain their physical health, or in maintenance of a building's physical structure.

Students in the Avenue Scholars program are expected to gain experience in the work force by working part-time during the school year. Scholars are also mentored and encouraged to choose a career field to explore and pursue early in the program.

Jack is currently interning at Clearway as a maintenance tech intern, a position he obtained through Intern Omaha. At Clearway Jack does maintenance on the boilers and chillers. At Benson High School he is a student council member, and holds a position with Nebraska Hosa.

Jack plans to study EMT or HVAC at Metro Community College.

Outstanding Junior Scholar **Hartman plans for future in automotive field**

Junior Mikey Hartman "really enjoys working with cars," says High School Career Coach Terrence Gillian.

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Hartman plans to go into the automotive field when he graduates from Benson. He is currently employed at Symphony of Suds Carwash.



UPDATE

Benson's Avenue Scholars program has a total of 25 juniors and 20 seniors. Students have been working hard remotely to keep up with their classes. Most students were given iPads at the beginning of September by the school district.



Students are excited to return to class, with school with in-person classes beginning Oct. 19. OPS is using the 3/2 model of students attending school three days in person and two days remotely. Currently, approximately 380 students will continue school remote. We should have approximately 500 students in the building each day.

Between both junior and senior class, 8-10 students are continuing remote learning. Both junior and senior classes are finishing the Strengthsfinder assessment. Now we are focusing on understanding the Strengthsfinder results and creating resumes.

In terms of career focus among seniors, we have seven student' interested in pursuing healthcare, five trades and manufacturing students, four IT students, two business students, and one auto student. Juniors' career interests consist of five business students, 4 trades students, four auto students, four healthcare students, one IT student, and three undecided students. Students are excited about returning to the classroom.

Recruitment for the 2023 Cohort is starting up, and we are looking for 25 to 30 students who fit the criteria of attending Metropolitan Community College for an Associate's Degree or less.

We hope to gain candidates that are looking to go into high demand, high wage, and high skill careers in the Omaha area.

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