



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.



<http://dm.greenville.edu/2019/05/soft-skills-9/>



Avenue Scholars students are given opportunities to explore jobs in various career fields, such as automotive technology.

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

When not studying or attending classes, the most likely place to find junior Mason Peters is around an automobile — either performing some maintenance updates on the car, or in the driver’s seat heading to school, to work, or home.



“Mason is my ‘Outstanding Junior Avenue Scholar’ this semester,” says High School Career Coach Allison Goff. “Mason loves all things auto and can be found during his spare

time watching tutorials on how to perform mechanical tasks.”

Avenue Scholars encourages students to focus on pursuing careers in fields that match their interests, and the program will help students through mentorship or financial resources.

“Mason earned his driver’s license through Driver’s Education with Avenue Scholars over the summer,” Goff said.

“He recently started working at Bucky’s and is excited about his new job.”

**Outstanding Senior Scholar
Valle working hard toward career in business**

High School Career Coach Allison Goff sees senior Abraham Valle as an outstanding Avenue Scholar because he’s always looking for ways to improve himself.

“Abraham is setting goals and taking action,” Goff said.

Valle has been working at Krispy Kreme since his freshman year and is saving his money for a car.

“Abraham works hard in class and is always ready for “what’s next,” Goff said.

Valle plans to attend Metropolitan Community College and earn his Associate’s Degree in business.

UPDATE



Avenue Scholars is well into its first year at Millard North. With 42 active juniors and seniors this year, the Avenue Scholars program is growing and thriving. The students are actively reflecting on past job and classroom performance, and setting goals for the future.

All Avenue Scholars students started the semester by enrolling in our Avenue Scholars class. The content of this course allows students opportunities to learn about a variety of topics related to improving personal, job, and career effectiveness, including but not limited to stress management, goal setting, ethics and diversity in the workplace, and preparing for a professional interview. Through this experience, students are gaining exposure to the demands and expectations of a college class while still in the comfort of their home school with their Career Coach as their instructor.

This year’s group of students has already proven themselves to be an excellent group of hard working, committed students. Many of these students brought with them a wealth of part-time job experience, and several others have worked to secure employment this fall. Our goal is that ALL students have at least 150 hours of work experience by graduation, as we know this is the best way for students to gain work-ready skills.

In the classroom, the students have learned about their individual Gallup Strengths, and have researched their careers of interest. We’ll round out the semester by discussing the best ways to prepare for a professional interview, including drafting a resume, and developing specific and thorough answers to interview questions.

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