



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 health care.



Outstanding Junior Scholar Williams balances work and school life

Facing life’s challenges amid a pandemic, junior Tamarria Williams is focused on navigating a path to a future career.

Williams is currently interested in the business industry with the Avenue Scholars Program.

“Tamarria is overcoming barriers while going to school remotely and working part time at WalMart,” High School Career Coach Fred Starks says.



“While Tamarria is making adjustments with remote learning she understands the importance of balancing work, school and making time for herself during a pandemic.”

Williams, who likes to write poetry and spend time with family in her down time, will continue to explore the different opportunities Avenue Scholars has to offer during the junior year experience.

Outstanding Senior Scholar Edwards pursues career in healthcare field

Senior Krista Edwards is setting a precedent for a rewarding future, based on excellent work habits inside and outside the classroom.

“During her junior year Krista attended a 100% of Avenue Scholars career awareness and career exposure events,” High School Career Coach Fred Starks said. “Krista wants to continue her perfect attendance throughout her senior year.”

Edwards is pursuing a career in the healthcare field as a nurse with the Avenue Scholars Program.



“Krista is a very hard worker inside and outside of the classroom,” Starks said. “Krista has maintained a part-time job throughout her junior year and will continue to work during senior year.”

Edwards is looking to receive her CNA certification during the first semester of her senior year.

“I have enjoyed getting to know and work with Krista as her high school career coach,” Starks said. “There is no doubt in my mind Krista will be successful in her next journey on becoming a nurse.”

UPDATE

Avenue Scholars is well into the 2020-2021 school year here at Omaha North High School. With 65 active juniors and seniors this year, the Avenue Scholars program is growing and thriving.



This year’s students have already proven themselves to be an excellent group of hard working, committed students through remote learning. Many Scholars 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 some sort of work experience by graduation, as we know this is the best way for students to gain work-ready skills.

In the classroom, the juniors have learned about their individual Gallup Strengths, prepared for and attended the one-day Career Awareness Event, 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 thorough answers to interview questions.

The seniors have been enrolled in my section of Avenue Scholars program at Omaha North. They’ve transitioned to following a syllabus and rising to the demands of a college course, maintaining strong attendance and moving through material at a more intense pace than we did last year. It’s been an adjustment for them to see me as their college instructor, but most students are moving in the right direction, and I’m hopeful they’ll be ready to participate in Senior Academy this spring.

Fred Starks
High School Career Coach
402-547-0230
fstarks@avescholars.org