



## 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](http://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](http://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](http://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 Senior Scholar*

**English pursues career in healthcare field**

Senior Akhia English is seriously dedicated to pursuing a career in the health-care field.

“Akhia is a leader in class and values her education,” High School Career Coach Taleya Broadway said. “She has a GPA of 3.28 and is very active in the Avenue Scholars Foundation program.

English is interested in Health Services. In the summer English

finished CNA training and passed her test for CNA certification.

She is currently working as a CNA at New Cassel. She also works at Walmart where she has been employed for nearly two years.

“Akhia participates in the Avenue Scholars Foundation Savings Program and other ASF programs,” Broadway said. “Akhia is serious about her career pathway and works hard to reach goals she has set for herself.”



*Outstanding Junior Scholar*

**Harper demonstrates leadership skills**

High School Career Coach says junior Carmesha Harper “is a leader in the Avenue Scholars junior class.”

She is clearly a leader in the academics arena, currently maintaining a 3.58 GPA.

“Carmesha is very helpful and consistent in participation and helping ASF Career Coach troubleshoot the Omaha Public School Teams System,” Broadway

said. “She always has a positive attitude and an open mind. Carmesha completes all of her assignments and communicates with Career Coach if she has any concerns.”

At this time Harper is uncertain about her career pathway but has a heart to help people. According to Broadway, Harper is eager to learn more about all of the pathways that Avenue Scholars offers.



**UPDATE**

Staff personnel at Omaha Northwest High School are working tirelessly to ensure staff and students are safe and up to date with the changes associated with COVID-19.



All students have had a very supportive transition to virtual learning and continue to be supported during this unpredictable time.

In the classroom, the juniors have learned the background of Avenue Scholars and the benefits that come with hard work and commitment.

The seniors’ semester started by spending time reviewing the commitments required to earn the full scholarship. These tasks include strong attendance, part-time work experience, strong soft skills both in school and at their place of employment, and ultimately graduation.

Principal Tom Lee and staff have worked hard to ensure students have required textbooks, supplies, and technology.

Northwest is also the Omaha Public School employee COVID testing site. This measure has been put in place to ensure the safety of staff and students with the return of in-person instruction.

In my opinion, Northwest High has been a rock star during all of the transitions. The positive atmosphere and willingness to pivot during this time have been outstanding. Great job Huskies!

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