



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/>

Outstanding Scholar Adoko displays 'exceptional leadership'

Junior Elda Flore Adoko exhibits her measured strengths throughout her life, whether that be in the classroom, on the job, or while planning for the future.

"Elda is an exceptional leader in our program," says Ralston High School Career Coach Beth Leach. "She is a member of Ralston's Medical Academy and works very hard in her coursework."

According to Leach, Adoko's career goal is to become a Psych Nurse.

"Her Gallup strengths are Empathy, Includer, Positivity, Developer, and Activator," Leach said. "We know she will work hard towards her career goals. While Elda is busy studying and focusing on school, she looks forward to obtaining employment as a CNA when she earns that certification next May through Ralston High School."



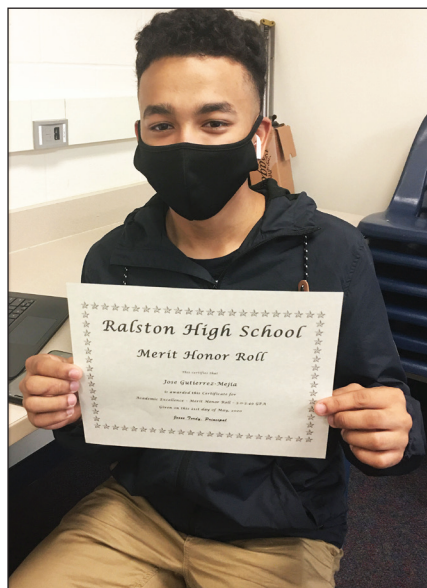
Outstanding Scholar Mejia 'outstanding student & employee'

Junior Jose Gutierrez-Mejia has demonstrated his leadership skills in the classroom and on the job.

"Jose is an outstanding student and employee," says Ralston High School Career Coach Beth Leach. "Jose was recently acknowledged as a merit honor roll student. He is enrolled in Auto Academy at Ralston and for three months he works as a bilingual sales representative at O'Reilly Auto Parts."

Previously, Gutierrez-Mejia worked at QuickTrip. According to Leach, he plans to start the Diesel Technology Academy next year at Metropolitan Community College.

"Jose has shown incredible



leadership in the program not only by his work and academic success, but by keeping his peers engaged as well," Leach said.

UPDATE

I have been very busy here at Ralston kicking off a less-than-normal school year. During this term I have been working with students in class and remotely to help them identify and make steps to pursue their career goals. Our Business Outreach Team is working to provide career awareness exposure so students can finalize their career goals and plans.



We have also spent time learning about ourselves through the Gallup Strengthsfinder assessment and working through curriculum offered by the Nebraska Department of Education. Most Ralston students have committed to an industry and are working to start meeting their goals. We look forward to Intern Omaha applications opening up next month. On Sept. 28, I was able to speak at the Ralston School Board meeting about our program. I feel incredibly blessed to work in a community that prioritizes learning and helping students take steps toward their future goals.

Starting next week we will explore careers at local businesses while keeping proper social distancing measures in place. Seniors will start their dual-enrollment class, RDLS 1200, during term 2. As we navigate this school year, we are learning how to balance school and work in a new environment that is requiring us to be better managers of our time and energy.

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