



*Principal Gene Haynes*

## Avenue Scholars ‘explore beyond high school’

Gene Haynes, “Mr. North High,” greets guests, reporters, and faculty as “brother” or “sister” — as if all who enter the halls of Omaha North High School are instantly part of his family, welcome in the building that has been his home away from home for 40 years.

In his 18th year as principal, Haynes is clearly focused on the largest component of the North family — the student population.

“As principals we have to step back and look at students as a whole,” Haynes says. “We need to keep words soft and tender because tomorrow we may have to eat them. Once a decision is made, it has to be in best interest of the students and parents.”

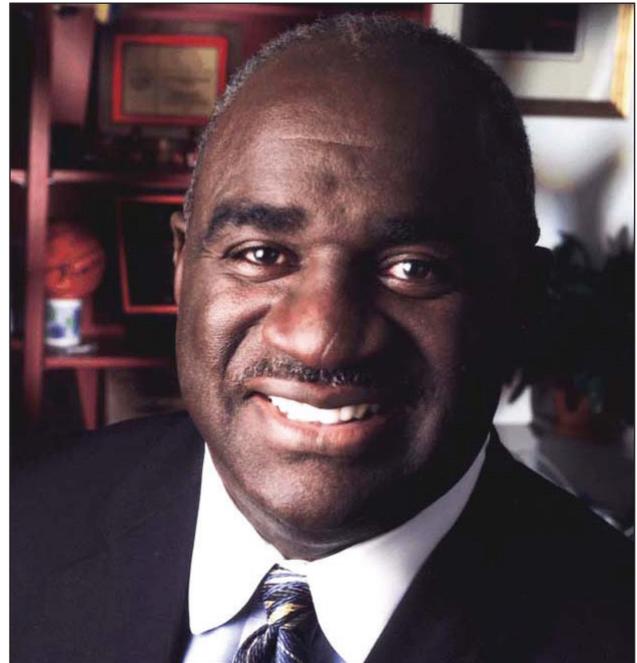
Once of those decisions was to welcome the Avenue Scholars Foundation program to North High.

“It was starting from scratch,” he says. “Community leaders saw a need not being met between students and metropolitan Omaha area. They put together plan and a team that have stuck together and provided a program that is focused on betterment for all students.

“By covering all corners of this city, bringing in students from all areas, they are providing an opportunity to explore beyond high school.”

Facets of the program have developed to include mentoring, career exploration, college activities and classes that prepare students for college, counseling, life skills instruction, and financial support.

A key leader and connector to the high school principals has been Jamar Dorsey, the Director of High School Programs, whom



Haynes proudly notes “is a product of Omaha Public Schools.”

“He is a bonafide leader,” Haynes says. “That has been the flavor of their program — to identify those leaders and make it happen.”

“My piece has been to provide the support and service that those students and the program need,” he said. “I have been so impressed with the success of Avenue Scholars. The retention rate has been great. Students and parents alike understand the mission of preparing students for lifelong learning and careers.”

Haynes has enjoyed being a teacher, coach and administrator in Omaha Public Schools for 52 years.

“Someone took the time to get me to the next level and got me to where I am today,” he says. “I feel obligated to give back.”

## Seniors prep for college experience

The Seniors started the semester by enrolling in Human Relations 1010, a dual enrollment course through Metropolitan Community College. In this class students are earning credits in both their home high school and at MCC, which will allow them to gain early credits towards their Associates Degree.

The content of this course allows students opportunities to learn about a variety of human behavior 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.

In addition to their Human Relations course, students have also recently

prepared for and taken the placement exam, the Accuplacer, at MCC. The results of this test determine the level of English, Math, and, if necessary, Reading, students will be placed in when they begin taking classes on MCC's campus, possibly as soon as next semester for some students. In addition, the information helped students to begin plotting out their class progression in college.

Meanwhile, outside of both of these experiences, the Seniors are working diligently on their grades, attendance, work ready skills and behavior to ensure they are eligible to attend Senior Academy and/or participate in another approved Senior Experience next semester. They are also working to remain excellent candidates for the Avenue Horatio Alger Career Scholarship, which will be awarded this spring to active Avenue Scholars who are in good standing with the program.

## Juniors plan for college and careers

The juniors are busy exploring their strengths so they can make informed decisions about their career choices. The students are working through career-readiness curriculum to help them learn about how to obtain a job and show up to show up to the job with the skills to be successful. Career coaches are working with students to write a resume and cover letter, and they are practicing interview skills.

During the first semester, students also focus on their transferring skills as students in a work setting as well as the classroom. Career coaches work with students on how to improve their academic skills to ensure they are ready for Metropolitan Community College courses.

Juniors take an in-depth look at the high-demand career areas in Omaha: Medical Sciences, Business, Trades and Manufacturing, Industrial Technology, and Automotive Technology. Students recently attended a Career Exploration Day at Metro's Fort Campus. During this day they were able to explore each

industry area. Businesses graciously took time out of their schedules to teach students about entry-level positions within their industry areas and career advancement opportunities within the industry.

Businesses provided hands-on activities for the students to get the feel of what a career would be like within that industry. Highlights of the day included repairing a car bumper at CARSTAR, driving a truck simulator with Werner Trucking, practicing basic welding techniques with Drake Williams Steel, and experiencing a 3D printed engine replica created by prototype students at MCC. Students left the event with more clarity about what they want to pursue in the future.

Juniors Career Coaches will teach students about the career plan. Both student and coach will create a plan together, including proper steps to achieve their goal. This career planning process will continue beyond the high school program into their education and training at MCC.

## UPDATE

Avenue Scholars is well into the 2018-2019 school year here at Omaha North High School. With 51 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. 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 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 Juniors have learned about their individual Gallup Strengths, prepared for and attended the one-day Career Exploration 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 Human Relations 1010 at Omaha North. They've transitioned to following a syllabus and rising to the demands of a college class, including reading from their textbook on a regular basis, 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 take classes on campus from other MCC Instructors this spring.

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