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Retiring principal more than a leader

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It's the stuff of movies and novels: An educator with a tough-love approach who inspires students to reach for their best.



For some students at Omaha Northwest High School, Principal Bernice Nared is that character: the one who showed them who they could be.

She'll retire at the close of the school year confident that the students she has worked with will keep the positive culture going at the high school at 82nd Street and Crown Point Avenue.

Abraham Mora-Becerra is one of those students. The junior said word of Nared's retirement has made its way through the student body, and he and others are hopeful the next principal has the same passion for the school — and for each of them.

"She's put so much blood and sweat into it," Mora-Becerra said. "Northwest is a family. We'll try to keep it that way."

Nared said it will be up to the next principal to build that feeling among students to come.

"For eight years now we've done this. It's hug them . . . cry with them, always 'What can I do to get them to the next level?'"

At Northwest, three in five students are ethnic minorities. Just as many of the students come from low-income families.

One of the last — and lasting — things Nared has done for her students is to collaborate with the Bright Futures Foundation to identify 52 Northwest students who will be among the first to participate in the new Avenue Scholars program.

The program will provide support in high school, in the search for college financial aid and scholarships and tutoring, mentoring and emotional support once they get to campus. The relationship won't stop until well after the students navigate the job market after graduating.

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So long, farewell

Other Omaha Public Schools principals retiring with the close of the school year:

Patricia Frampton, Parrish Alternative

Jerome Meyer, Field Club Elementary

Emily Miller, Dodge Elementary

Christy Payne, Mount View Elementary