

## **Graduation season begins early for Step-Up Mentorship**

Spring brings endings and new beginnings. For twenty-four students across the Northwest Suburban Integration School District (NWSISD) consortium, graduation happened early this year - thus ending their tenure in the Step-Up Mentorship Program.

On May 2, 2017, this group graduating Step-Up students were brought together one last time for lunch at NWSISD along with their mentors and district superintendents. The program included a video from across the years, testimonials, and comments from Step-Up team leaders, student statements, and a recognition of graduates. The prevailing theme among the students was how the Step-Up program impacted their lives.

Students said that this program ...

“...focused me on different career paths, gave me a foundation.”

“...help me accomplish it, I did make it!”

“...taught me I could do it! Taught me to take risks!”

“...showed me the way and to realize that I’ve worked hard and that hard work won’t stop me.”

“...helped me to develop as a person.”

“...helped me to get through high school. I wouldn’t have been as mature as I am right now without Step-Up.”

“...showed me that it’s all about perspective and how you attack it.”

“...all the best things in life are placed behind fear.”

“...you guys are my brothers; we are boys to men - different people.”

“...pushed us to be someone different.”

“...you can accomplish whatever, you don’t have to be scared.”

The Step-Up Mentorship Program was created to support young men throughout their high school career. The program begins with the week long Summer Summit held at University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis Campus. The Summer Summit is intended to prepare students for the increased rigor they will encounter in high school. Participants are identified by their school district as potentially benefiting from additional academic and social support and guidance. Students who participate in the Summer Summit receive additional guidance and are involved in mentorship activities throughout their high school careers.

This year, the Cannon Family Scholarship was established to recognize an outstanding Step-Up Mentorship graduate. An application and specific requirements are required to be considered for the \$1,000 scholarship. Myles Okusanya from Champlin Park High School in the Anoka-Hennepin school district was this year’s recipient.

And for new beginnings? After high school graduation, almost all the young men plan to continue their education at a post-secondary school of choice and/or military. Congratulations Class of 2017!