Hawkinsville High School students tour Lamar Dodd School of Art

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On a recent March afternoon, professors at the Lamar Dodd School of Art gave a rare presentation.

Walking and talking through the fabric design studios, live drawing classes and rooms of the Lamar Dodd School of Art, they explained the inside workings of the institution to about 35 students from Hawkinsville High School in Pulaski County, one of the university’s Archway Partnership counties.

“I got interested when we took the tour. This facility is so much above and beyond what they had when I went to art school that I wanted the students to get a chance to experience it themselves,” said Randolph Colesman, the art teacher at Hawkinsville High.

That kind of community spirit is what Mary Beth Bass, Archway Professional for Hawkinsville and Pulaski County, hopes spreads throughout the middle Georgia county.

Working together, Archway professionals and community leaders have designated six areas of interest for their county: Economic development, public education, leadership, housing, public health and local government services. Exposing students to career options and fostering an interest in higher education can go a long way toward helping strengthen public education efforts, Bass said.

And if the students’ reactions were any indication, the campus visit was a success.

“We went to a talk about the school and why it was started, and then we came here to look at the students’ art,” said Carlicia Hall, a high school senior. “Art’s always been something I like, stuff like fabric design.”

The visit marked the first time that this kind of tour happened for the school, although its art
education program routinely visits local schools and brings their students to campus.

The school wants to create a culture around art that doesn’t exist yet, Kirin said. “We want to serve not only art students, but all students and the community in general,” Kirin said. “We want to make sure people know about the world-class lecturers and visitors we have that come to this school. And we want them to know that they’re invited to come to their talks and all of our exhibitions that are open to the public. And doing things like this is a way to start students out thinking that way before they even get to campus.”

The visit also serves as a recruitment tool. Showing off the state-of-the-art facility helps to broaden the school’s image to potential art students, he said.