

KICKSTART COLLEGE GETS EIGHTH GRADERS THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

By Eryn Cooper

TUSCALOOSA, AL (BAMA) - Each Friday, dozens of middle schoolers get a private tour of the university of Alabama. And it's all with one main goal in mind.

“The importance of this day is for them to learn things about scholarships, and financial aid, and just how real and accessible college can be to them,” says Carl A. Elliott Society President Cailyn Thompson, who organizes the weekly “Kickstart College” tours.

Thompson says the tours help decrease the large percentage of young students who don't continue school past the 8th grade.

“If they do pass eighth grade and attend high school, there's about 40% of them who will actually attend college. So just knowing there are options and resources for you are so important for them to know and realize.”

Westlawn Middle School PE teacher Coach Char-Lette Jones-Pruitt sees huge benefits of exposing students to college this early.

“Right now I think it's great because they also get that chance, like, they can say what am I gonna do in the next four years? I got four years of high school and I want to know what is ahead of me right now,” Coach Jones-Pruitt explained.

Eighth grade student Chris D. already has an idea of what's ahead of him.

“I want to study music and psychiatry. Music because, I really really love music. It's also something I want to do. And psychiatry because I also want to help people.”

And it's not just the adults who think this experience is important—Chris is clued in, too.

“The most important part of this experience is, is these people need to know what's coming in the future and they need to prepare for it. So that's why I think they should think about what they want to do now instead of trying to struggle to figure it out later,” Chris urged.

For any instructors who are interested in setting up a Kickstart College visit for their schools, they can contact The Elliott Society through the University of Alabama's website.