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## THE LAST FRONTIER

# Law students wow prepsters

NICHOLE MONROE BELL

The Charlotte School of Law's new campus on Wilkinson Boulevard is months from completion, but some of its students are already becoming part of the community.

During the past semester, nine law students volunteered to teach law to students at West Charlotte High School and Harding University High School. An additional four law students are trained to teach in future programs.

Teachers say the classes have created a new crop of students whose grades have improved and who are interested in participating in the schools' mock trial teams.

That was the goal, said Alonzo Alston, a second-year law student who organized the program.

"A lot of these kids have never come into contact with black, Hispanic or female law students," he said. "A lot of these kids don't have role models ... and we felt they would benefit from coming in contact with us and seeing that many come from similar backgrounds."

The Charlotte School of Law, currently in Dilworth, is building a permanent campus on Wilkinson Boulevard just past Interstate 77. The building is expected to be ready for move-in by Aug. 1.

Meanwhile, the law students are already in western Mecklenburg, teaching three classes at each school, with about 180 high school students participating. The teachers rotate between the classes.

The classes are held as part of the high school's civics curriculum and include constitutional law lessons and discussions about how the law applies to current events, Alston said. Recent classes have included discussions of police shootings, the national credit crunch and privacy rights.

Applying lessons to current events has helped hold the students' interest, teachers said. Some students have seen their grades rise from D's to B's.

In a letter to the program organizers, Harding social studies department chair Marilyn Bowker said the students look forward to Alston's weekly visit.

"He works hard to provide them with a lesson plan that fits into our curriculum as well as keeps their attention," she wrote. "He has made civics and economics come alive as he explains the law in real-world scenarios."

In a goodbye card at the end of the program's semester last week, students expressed similar sentiment, thanking Alston for being their teacher.

Alston said he has enjoyed his time.

"A lot of these students could be A and B students, but they just don't have the motivation," he said. "Their grades go up because this class makes them feel better about school and better about learning."

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*Nichole Monroe Bell writes about the people and places of Western Mecklenburg. Have a story idea? Reach her at 704-358-5103 or [nbell@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:nbell@charlotteobserver.com).*

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