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**SCHOOL CLOSINGS:** Many Quad-City area schools are closed or delayed today due to the weather.

## In the classroom: Equipping students

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By Sheena Dooley | Monday, February 04, 2008 | [1 comment\(s\)](#)

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Teacher Allison Jones shares a smile with her students at Davenport's alternative high school, Kimberly Center East. (Larry Fisher/QUAD-CITY TIMES)

Allison Jones stands before students in her advisory class, reading a short story about a child who has lived his entire life at a space station and never been to Earth.

The boy's family is moving to Texas, and he talks excitedly about the things he's never experienced: snow, rain and eating fresh food. Jones finishes the story and starts running through a set of multiple choice questions with her students at the Davenport School District's alternative high school, or Kimberly Center East.

"How does he feel at the end of the story?" Jones asks before rattling off a list of possible answers. A girl in the class answers the question, explaining that she arrived at it by eliminating the answers that didn't fit.

"You take out what doesn't make sense and look at what's being talked about," Jones says.

It's part of a push by the school to equip its students, many of whom struggle to read and write, with better test-taking skills. Most of them went to the school because the traditional high school setting didn't work for them. They range in age from teenagers to adults. Some are transitioning from residential treatment programs back to high school.

The alternative high school offers them smaller class sizes that are capped at 15 to 20 students and, often times, a closer relationship with teachers. However, classes follow the same curriculum as the school district's traditional high schools, and students must meet the same achievement goals on state reading and math tests.

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“There’s all different (ability) levels among students,” Jones said. “That’s a challenge. You have to be flexible.

You just try to push them as much as you can. The relationships between teachers and students here are close. Because of that, I feel like you can reach them better.”

School leaders also hold their students more responsible than their peers at other Davenport high schools when it comes to attendance. Jones said it can be a problem for students, which is why if a student misses eight classes, they are dropped from it.

“If you come to class, you will pass,” she said. “It’s pretty much impossible not to pass. Almost everything is done in class. There is little homework.”

After Jones finishes the lesson with students in her advisory class, they each pull out books and spend the remainder of the 45 minutes reading. When students are done, they write a summary of what they read. They do the exercise three days every week.

“It’s like a homeroom that was created to improve reading scores because reading comprehension is a huge problem,” Jones said. “We keep them together and make it a family-type atmosphere. For the majority of students here, they stick with it and pass.”

In the classroom

If you know of a classroom that has something interesting going on in it and should be featured, contact Sheena Dooley by calling (563) 383-2363 or e-mailing at [sdooley@qctimes.com](mailto:sdooley@qctimes.com).

Kimberly Center East Alternative High School

District: Davenport School District

Address: 1002 W. Kimberly Road, Davenport

Enrollment: 257 students

Student breakdown: 63 percent white, 37 percent minority and 67 percent low-income.

Sheena Dooley can be contacted at (563) 383-2363 or [sdooley@qctimes.com](mailto:sdooley@qctimes.com).

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