

NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF MEDIA SERVICES

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Dr. Alayne Zimmerly Becomes A Warren Sixth Grader For A Day (10/27/08)

MONTICELLO, AR — “I wonder if I can find my classes?”

“Where’s the restroom?”

“How do I get lunch?”

Typical questions for a child attending a new school for the first time, but the person asking these questions was no child. Dr. Alayne Zimmerly is an assistant professor in the University of Arkansas at Monticello’s School of Education, and recently, she decided to spend the day as a “sixth grade student” at Warren Middle School.

Zimmerly is UAM’s liaison to the Warren Public Schools as part of an ongoing partnership created through the university’s School of Education and the Southeast Arkansas Education Renewal Zone.

She decided to become a sixth grader for a day to “get a snapshot of the world a sixth grader lives in,” Zimmerly explained.

“As educators who are preparing students to become teachers, it’s important to step back and take a good look at a classroom from the perspective of a student,” said Dr. Peggy Doss. “I think Dr. Zimmerly’s experience at Warren Middle School, interacting so closely with students, is a wonderful way to gain insight into the needs and wants of the young people we’re trying to educate. It can be an eye-opening experience.”

Zimmerly admits she was curious to find out “what it’s really like” to be a sixth grader. “How hard can the life of an eleven year old be?” she said. “Well, I was about to find out.”

Zimmerly arrived at Warren Middle School a few minutes before 8 a.m. and followed her new friend, William, to his locker, where he grabbed a math book and headed for his first class with Zimmerly in tow.

Zimmerly sat through classes in math, English, art and band, navigating the crowded hallways during the three-minute breaks between classes. Band class was particularly exciting. This

was the day the students got their instruments.

“Most of them weren’t sure how to put their instruments together, but that didn’t stop them from trying,” said Zimmerly. “The director was very patient as he went from student to student, helping them assemble their instruments. But imagine 20 sixth graders waiting for the director to get to them.”

The students who figured out how to assemble their instruments on their own began to make sounds that only a beginning band student can make. “They were fun to watch,” said Zimmerly.

Lunch consisted of a chili dog with cheese, a salad, and pickles, followed by a 20-minute recess outdoors. The afternoon consisted of more math and a science class.

“By seventh period, I have to admit, I was beginning to get a little tired,” Zimmerly admitted. “I noticed the students were getting tired and I saw some eyes glazed over. The teacher seemed to expect this and planned activities that provided opportunities to move around.”

Next up was social studies, followed by reading. By now, Zimmerly was having trouble focusing on the teacher as she read excerpts from a book. “My eyes kept straying to the clock and counting the minutes until 3:15,” Zimmerly said. “When 3:15 finally came, I was ready for a nap.”

Zimmerly called the day “a great experience, and surprisingly, it was so much fun. I think this was a great opportunity to see the classroom through the eyes of a child. This experience goes along with one of my favorite quotes: Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner, put yourself in his place, so that you may understand what he is learning and the way he understands it.”

PHOTO CAPTION

Dr. Alayne Zimmerly with her new friend, William, a student at Warren

Middle School.

