

EAST BRIDGEWATER

School puts smile on student's face

High Road School approaches teaching and learning differently

By Paula Vogler
ENTERPRISE CORRESPONDENT

EAST BRIDGEWATER — It wasn't that long ago when Buddy Carpeno, 15, was a quiet kid who rarely smiled or looked people in the eye.

But his time at the High Road School in East Bridgewater has changed all that, his mother, Lynn Carpeno of Norton, said. The school has turned the once-shy young man into an honors student and mentor to his peers.

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"I can't get the smile off his face," Carpeno said. "Everyone has noticed a change in him."

Carpeno said Buddy has social and emotional problems that include attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and bipolar disorder. Two-and-a-half years ago, she sent him to the school, formerly Metro South Academy, and he made progress.

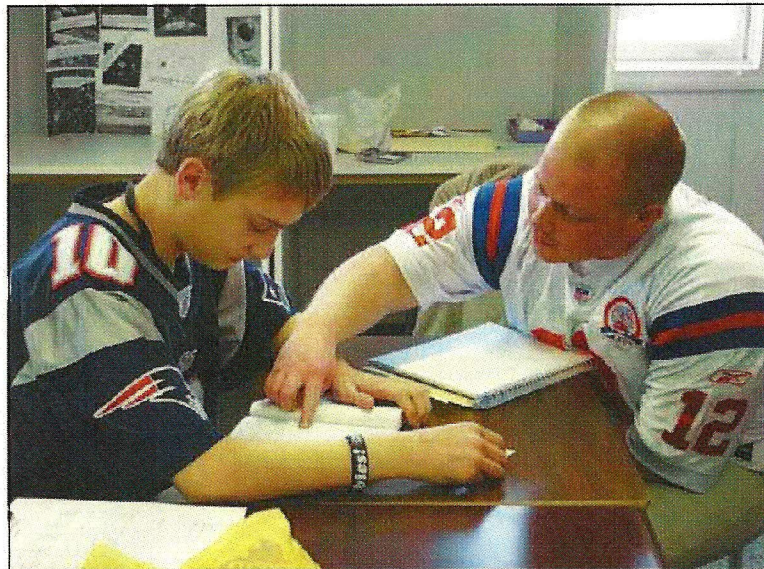
Specialized Education Services, Inc. of Yardley, Penn., took over management of Metro South Academy in October. The school approaches teaching and learning differently than a traditional school setting, with that approach tailored to students with emotional disturbances.

Students rotate in 20-minute segments, moving from teacher instruction to independent study to computer work to collaborating with a teaching assistant.

The rotating schedule varies for each student based on his or her individual education plan, school director Anthony Clancy said.

Rather than separating students based on grade level, academic level or any number of other factors, Clancy said the school looks for ways students can work together.

"No student has to wait for



HIGH ROAD SCHOOL

■ Buddy Carpeno, left, is engaged in an active reading session with teacher Jason Baldeck on Team Spirit day at the High Road School in East Bridgewater.

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Lynn Carpeno
Buddy's mother

other students to catch up and no student gets left behind," Clancy said. "The evidence shows students learn better when they are working collaboratively."

The school also offers a transition program where students learn life lessons such as how to write a resume and complete a job application.

Each student also has a job at the school earning him or her special in-school currency to spend at the school store, which sells items as small as snacks and as coveted as mp3 players.

The school uses a color-coded behavior system that rewards good choices with credit to the school store. Academic progress also boosts a student's behavioral score.

High Road School is considered "non-public," meaning it is managed privately but receives public money for student tuition and "is regulated more like a public," Clancy said.

Local school departments pay each student's tuition to a point, with the state paying the additional costs, he said.

The cost of educating a student there is about \$200 a day, Clancy said.

Carpeno said Buddy is on the brink of reaching the highest behavior rank of gold.

She said the teachers and staff take special interest in each student, expanding on the good they see in each and encouraging that student's areas of interest.

Buddy, now a scholar-athlete with Pop Warner Football in his hometown, can sometimes be found outside at recess throwing a football around with Jason Baldeck, one of his teachers.

"He's actually talking to other kids," Carpeno said. "He's full of self-confidence now. He goes to school with a smile and he comes home with a smile."

The school has only five students. Clancy said there is room for approximately 40 with the current format of one teacher, one teaching assistant, and a minimum of four computers in each classroom.

Students are referred to the school by local districts and individualized-education-plan teams. Students go to High Road when those officials decide their district does not meet the student's needs.

Clancy would like to open a fully functional restaurant at the school, similar to the program at the High Road School in Providence. Clancy said students cook, clean, take orders, and interact with approximately 160-170 external customers a week while being supervised by a restaurant manager and a chef.

Once they do well in the sheltered school environment, they work at internships in the community.

Students from Brockton, Norton, Norwood and Carver currently attend the school. Specialized Education Services, Inc., operates 44 schools nationwide.