

# At Sage Day High School, a respite from bullying

It offers therapeutic education to help emotionally vulnerable youths

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Greg Hiserodt, principal at Sage Day School, with seniors Alex North and Kristen Wright, who both happen to live in Roxbury. / Karen Fucito/ Special to the Daily Record

**BOONTON** — In addition to receiving their high school diplomas Friday, 11 Sage Day High School graduates will share how the school's blend of academic training and therapeutic education has had an impact on their lives.

Sage Day High School's Boonton campus is part of a

network of three private schools for students who suffer from depression, school phobia, anxiety disorder and other issues, according to Gregory Hiserodt, the school's principal. Some have come to the school as a result of bullying, he said.

"Our target population is those students who are emotionally fragile and trying to develop a stronger sense of self," Hiserodt said. "Something is getting in their way; our goal is to identify the barriers and help them work through the difficulties."

The ceremony Friday marks the Boonton school's fifth graduating class. Located at 215 Hill St., the school serves about 45 students in grades 9 to 12.

Academic education at Sage follows New Jersey's core curriculum of courses in math, science, world languages, social science, art, visual and performing arts as well as physical education, Hiserodt said.

"Within the scholastic program, we create situations here at Sage where it is safe for students to take charge, innovate and take risks," Hiserodt said. "Recently they worked together to prepare and stage an art show for the community with our staff of teachers and therapists available for guidance and support."

The school environment is such that individual therapy sessions are part of the daily schedule.

"Adolescents can see their actions and results immediately," Hiserodt said. "This makes it easier to begin understanding themselves better and to gain insights into their behavior."

Graduating senior Kristen Wright of Roxbury, who will pursue nursing next year at County College of Morris, said she feels safe and that she can be herself at the school.

“In a regular high school I felt like I was different and not welcomed,” she said. “A school environment should be safe like it is here at Sage.”

“Most therapists just listen, but my therapist here at Sage will tell me when I’m wrong, when I should have done something else. She’s one of the most honest people I’ve ever met. They have brought out the best — I want to work harder and do better.”

Roxbury resident Alex North, who plans to study communications at CCM, said that when he first came to Sage Day he expected to get all A’s and quickly return to his school district.

“I was very closed-minded and my resentment created frictions with the other students,” he said on a recent visit to the school. “Here at Sage I’ve been getting better at managing my feelings. I think most of what I have learned from Sage Day comes from the social interactions — they really teach you about people and what type of person you want to be.”