

## A POSITIVE EFFECT

At Rosebank Elementary, a magnet school focused on math, science and technology, Centerstone therapist Laurie Jackson serves around 25 students on a regular basis. She's enthusiastic about the advantages of being "enmeshed" in campus life.

"One thing that's helpful is the kids are already familiar with your face," she says. "All the students know me even if we don't directly work together. I'm not a stranger because I'm seen in the halls."

Her steady presence makes the process of client assessment, diagnosis and treatment more comfortable and likely to yield quicker progress. Ms. Jackson sits in on classes to observe her students before one-on-one sessions begin. During early visits, they may sit at a table with art supplies or fidget toys, simply building rapport as she asks questions and determines a care plan.

That's how it happened with Rosebank kindergartener Johnathan, a shy kid who would disrupt class by acting out. Once unable to use his words effectively, he was nonetheless quite capable of doing dramatic things to get attention when he felt frustrated.

His mom, Shaunqueen Leatherman, explains, "I don't think anybody believed how bad his behaviors were

until one day he refused to get on the bus and he started throwing chairs. So we asked for extra help at school, and Johnathan has been in love with Ms. Laurie ever since. She gained his trust—and he really does not trust a whole lot of people with his feelings."

Laurie says, "He's using his words more than his behaviors now. It's different with every child because they're individuals, but with Jonathan in particular he wants to know what's expected of him and for things to be consistent. He has a tendency to experience anxiety, so we work on how to address anxious thoughts. I've taught him skills like deep breathing and cognitive techniques to change his behavior. He caught on pretty quick."

"Jonathan, he's a whole new person," says his mom. "And what he gets at school via Centerstone is definitely helping us at home. He thinks he's a therapist now and tries to help his little brother!"

Rosebank principal Kellee Akers is grateful for how school-based therapy "has a positive effect on the entire school. You can imagine 20 kids in a classroom, and using Johnathan's example, if a child is throwing chairs then there's an impact on everybody. Such externalized behaviors disrupt the learning environment. When we can settle those things in students here on-site it tends to lift the whole boat."

Centerstone's Laurie Jackson, Rosebank principal Kellee Akers and parent Shaunqueen Leatherman read with Johnathan



*Johnathan,  
he's a whole new  
person.*