

The alternative school was created in the fall of 2003 to meet the needs of Tippecanoe Valley High School students that were not successful in a traditional classroom setting. Average class sizes at Burket range from 22 to 28 students and graduating classes usually have 16 to 24 students.

"One of the goals at Burket is to help students find their path to graduation and beyond to the next part of their life," said Jon Hutton, assistant principal at Tippecanoe Valley High School.

Burket Educational Center students are there for a variety of reasons that kept them from attending high school on a regular basis. Some of those reasons may include being behind in credits, having difficulty learning in a traditional classroom setting, needing specific tutoring in a difficult subject, disciplinary problems, pregnancy and health issues.

"Because of these issues, many of our students struggle to succeed at the high school, or have issues that prevented them from continuing to go to school there," said Micah Lukens, an instructor who has been at Burket since its inception.

The graduation ceremony was also a time to recognize a milestone in the school's history - surpassing 300 graduates. Additional programs were added to the Burket Educational Center this year including small-instruction mathematics classes and a new series featuring guest speakers that would come in and talk to students about post-graduation topics such as renting an apartment or buying a car.

14 students held jobs while attending school at Burket and 13 of the 17 graduates plan on attending college or furthering their education in some way. 14 of them also earned Core 40 diplomas and one earned a technical honors diploma.

"This is a group that I would say definitely holds a lot of promise for the future," said Lukens.

The entire staff at Burket was also recognized at the ceremony. Lukens, who just earned a master's degree, was presented with an outstanding teacher award.

"We're very proud of him. He's still striving to be better and to grow. He is one of the reasons we have a lot of success here," said Hutton.