



JERRY JACKSON : SUN STAFF

Teacher Milton Dave goes over some final pointers for adult students in his class at George Washington Elementary School who are taking the GED test this weekend.

Literacy Works expands its reach

Adult education program establishes new centers, with child-care provided

By ALYSON KLEIN
SUN STAFF

When it began four years ago, Literacy Works, an adult education program, served 166 students in Baltimore County. Today, thanks to a new grant, that number has grown to more than 500 in the county and in Baltimore City.

The expansion in February to two sites in the city — George Washington Elementary School and Paul's Place Outreach Center — seems a natural step for Literacy Works, a nonprofit organization that helps adults prepare for high school diplomas and reach other educational goals, said Helene Waranch, the program's executive director.

A \$24,000 grant from Twenty-First Century Threshold Project, a national organization that supports after-school programs, made the expansion into Baltimore possible.

"With knowledge and literacy, community residents can pull themselves up by their bootstraps and get on with the busi-

ness of bettering their situations and becoming viable citizens, parents and human beings," said Vonita Townes, the director of the threshold project, which is federally funded.

The grant, which targets innovative after-school efforts, enables Literacy Works to hold a program where children can reinforce basic skills through play while their parents are in class.

Studies have shown that children whose parents participate in adult learning programs do better in school themselves, said Caryn Sagal, a spokeswoman for Literacy Works.

The experiences of the students in Milton Dave's class at George Washington Elementary School support that notion.

"My son was having problems in school," said Tamara James, 33, of Baltimore, who is a maintenance worker at Ravens Stadium. "I asked him if he would be more motivated if I would go back to school and he said he would. He's doing better now and we support each other."

"They are really proud of me. They know that I want to be a paramedic and they support me," said Lakecha Richardson, a 27-year-old mother of four who also is a maintenance worker.

"My oldest daughter, at first she wasn't really into school. Now she looks at my books, she sees what I'm doing. She's getting to like school and she wants to go to college."

Although many of the students in the program are working toward their General Education Development certificate, others simply want to improve their computer skills or learn to manage their finances better.

"Many adult education programs teach toward the middle and miss many of the students. We have been successful at putting individuals at different levels with different interests in the same classroom and meeting their needs," said Waranch.

Some students become part of the program so they can be more helpful to their child with school work.

"I taught kids for a long, long time," said Dave, who was once named teacher of the year in Ohio. "My frustration in working in public schools is that the kids would go home to people who didn't know how to help their kids."

"When you educate adults, you can have a greater impact on a family's immediate situation. This is a mission for me."