

[Send to Printer](#)[<< Back to Article](#)

Local

Teach for America expands with Baltimore City grants

Mike Silvestri, The Examiner

2008-08-03 07:00:00.0

Current rank: # 148 of 7,260

BALTIMORE -

When the basketball program ended for [Derek Davidson](#)'s class, his students lost their reason to attend school.

So he started another team and joined a league that was not affiliated with the school. He even played pickup games with his students.

It isn't a typical strategy for engaging students, but for Davidson, a teacher at the [Maryland Academy of Technology and Health Sciences](#) in Northwest Baltimore, he said it worked because he was able to connect with his eighth- and ninth-grade students.

"One of the biggest things about being successful as a teacher is just putting a body on kids — being with them," Davidson said.

The 25-year-old from [Houston](#) is a teacher for the two-year [Teach for America](#) program, which places recent college graduates in schools in low-income urban and rural communities.

The teachers are paid the same as other new teachers, but Teach for America helps pay their undergraduate student loans.

The program is expanding this year in Baltimore City to the largest it's been since starting here 16 years ago, said [Omari Todd](#), executive director of Teach for America, [Baltimore](#). About 75 teachers in city public schools are entering their second year in the program, and another 100 will join them this year.

"What really brings us all together is this commitment that everyone in our country, no matter where they're born, should have an equal opportunity in life," said [Wendy Kopp](#), founder and chief executive officer of Teach for America.

"Far too many kids don't have that equal chance, and it's the problem that we see as our generation's civil rights issue."

The city announced Friday that, for the first time, it will help fund the program. [City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake](#) delivered a \$50,000 grant to Teach for America officials.

The money, part of a \$3 million budget for the program in Baltimore, including \$325,000 from the city school system and \$336,000 from the governor's office, will be used to help recruit and train more teachers.

[Jace Goodier](#), 23, was recruited last year. He left his job as an accountant to work for Teach for America. After six months crunching numbers at an accounting firm, he decided he wanted to make more of a difference in people's lives, and he became a teacher at [Cherry Hill Elementary/Middle School](#) in [South Baltimore](#).

"It's one thing to sit at a desk all day and do calculations for a Fortune 500 company," Goodier said. "It's another thing to look out over a class of 7-year-olds."

msilvestri@baltimoreexaminer.com

Examiner