

Homeless students' tutor doesn't mind 'dropouts'

By Anthony Gottschlich
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DAYTON — He's taught in Dayton Public Schools for 20 years, molding youngsters into thinkers and building character in the workers and leaders of tomorrow.

But there's one classroom where Anthony Graham doesn't mind students dropping out. It's in a

corner of a family recreation area at the St. Vincent de Paul Hotel, a shelter for 220 homeless men, women and children on West Apple Street.

"Sometimes blessings just happen to people and they find a stable situation," said Graham, lead tutor for the shelter's first-year tutoring program, a joint effort with Dayton Public Schools. "To me, that's the most satisfying, when they're not here. They've packed up and they're gone."

On a typical day, up to 10 students from preschool to grade eight in Dayton and surrounding schools attend the after-school program. They're among 200 homeless schoolchildren who live in a Dayton shelter on any given day, Dayton school officials say.

In the 2007-08 school year, 615 Dayton students lived in a shelter at some point, and another 111 "doubled up" with family and friends, the school district's reports to the Ohio Department of Education show.

Graham, his fellow tutors and the school officials involved in the program hope to lower those numbers.

"These are kids who are starting life with two strikes already," Graham said. "And this is just their first pitch."



Dayton Public Schools teacher Anthony Graham tutors Darnell Berry after school at the St. Vincent de Paul homeless shelter on Apple Street. According to school officials, on any given day, there are 200 homeless schoolchildren who live in a Dayton shelter. Staff photo by Jim Noelker