

Whiz Kids ‘a blessing’ for Little Miami students and tutors

By [Richard Wilson](#), Staff Writer 4:16 PM Wednesday, February 23, 2011

HAMILTON TWP. — When Brian Deaton’s daughter Kayla struggled with reading last year as a second-grader, her teacher suggested Whiz Kids, a volunteer tutoring program that was just getting started in the Little Miami community.



Volunteer tutor David Hennig listens as Little Miami third-grader Laine Deaton practices reading during a recent Whiz Kids session at the Park at Zoar Church. Staff photo by Richard Wilson.

Kayla, who has caught up with her classmates’ reading skills, continues to receive help one hour a week in math and reading through the program, while her father is volunteering to be a tutor.

“Kayla has been looking forward to it ever since she started. She loves it,” Deaton said after a recent after-school session at The Park @ Zoar church.

“When it’s the parent trying to help, they fight you. They don’t want your help,” he said.

But something else happens when a student is paired with a Whiz Kids volunteer. The program, a subsidiary of the nonprofit City Gospel Mission, pairs one tutor with one student and bonds are formed as the tutor works with the same child throughout the year, said Regional Director Dale Ann Watkins.



Little Miami third-grader Damien Lloyd listens intently as Little Miami junior Eric Bower helps him with reading and math. Bower is one of three high school students who volunteer as tutors through Whiz Kids. Staff photo by Richard Wilson

“Tutors work one-on-one with the same student all year long. That can continue year after year,” Watkins said. “It’s one of the most effective pieces in the program.”

Ken Lowrey is a retired college professor and one of several members of Christ Fellowship church on Ohio 48 who volunteers as a Whiz Kids tutor.

“I find that the kids become more motivated to read. They want to impress their tutor,” he said.

The rewards go both ways. Lowrey said despite his experience teaching college students, he was nervous during his first tutoring session. Seeing the child improve and brighten up every time he saw his tutor, Lowrey said, “you think you come here to give a blessing, and you end up getting one.”

“The kids really love the one-on-one attention. A lot of times they don’t get enough of that if parents are busy,” Lowrey said.

So far there are 15 tutors, including three Little Miami High School students, working with 15 students from three Little Miami schools. In the Greater Cincinnati region, there are 46 Whiz Kids sites with students in 60 school districts receiving help.

Watkins said the program is only limited by the number of people who volunteer.



Lillian, a Little Miami third-grader, listens to guidance from Nicole Niemeyer, a Little Miami sophomore and volunteer tutor through Whiz Kids, at a recent tutoring session at The Park @ Zoar Church. Staff photo by Richard Wilson

“You don’t have to be able to teach,” she said. “You only need the heart and one hour a week.”

Tutors are screened and undergo a background check and receive training. If interested, call Chris Brown at (513) 899-9947 or e-mail Chris@browncowtech.com.

Contact this reporter at (513) 696-4542 or rwilson@coxohio.com.

www.citygospelmission.org/whizkids.html