



VISION STATEMENT

Through literacy, every child will be poised to reach their full potential.

MISSION STATEMENT

Connecting elementary school children with caring and dedicated tutors, our one-on-one tutoring program enhances literacy, fosters creativity, and supplements classroom learning in the South End of Albany.

VALUES STATEMENT

Reading is Essential

One-on-one Tutoring Works

Every Child has Worth

We connect elementary school children with caring and dedicated one-on-one tutors to support literacy development so every child living in Albany's South End reaches their full potential.

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Alarmingly Low Literacy Rates Lead to Negative Outcomes

- Reading proficiency of students in Albany's South End is extremely low.
- ONLY 13% of students, grades 3-8, read proficiently in Albany's South End community school, Giffen Memorial Elementary.
- A student who finishes second grade without being able to read has only a 1 in 4 chance of reading at grade level by the end of elementary school.
- Students who are not developing fundamental academic skills are not only at greater risk of dropping out, but are more likely to end up on government assistance, stay unemployed, and struggle with incarceration.
- Often insurmountable challenges will face struggling readers as they become adolescents. An inability to read proficiently adds to the symptoms of low academic achievement: unsafe behaviors including poor mental health and depression, lower self-worth and life satisfaction, increased use of alcohol and other substances, and difficulties with peers and family systems.

The Wizard's Wardrobe Invites Students to Read and Learn.

- Our students are young readers living in Albany's South End. They all come to the program reading below grade level.
- Some students are eager to read, some are emerging as readers, and many are struggling. ALL are capable of learning to read. ALL are given the confidence to practice and improve reading skills.
- As 1st and 2nd graders, students can enroll in the Wizard's Wardrobe from whatever school they are attending, as long as they live in the 12202 zip code.
- 90 percent of enrolled 1st and 2nd graders have continued to attend. We encourage them to stay until they graduate from elementary school.
- In 2-1/2 years, our student retention is over 90%.

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Why The Wizard's Wardrobe One-to-One Tutoring Program WORKS!

- Research shows that tutoring programs have substantial positive effects on the academic performance and attitudes of students.
- Regular, weekly tutoring sessions generate the most consistent positive gains.
- Gains occur for students who are tutored one-on-one for one hour twice weekly by university students, retirees, and community members.
- Our free program gives parents an equitable opportunity in supporting their child to learn when extra help is needed.
- Our trained tutors are provided best-practice support and guided carefully for each student's needs.
- There is careful monitoring and reinforcement of student progress with pre- and post-assessments.
- Regular tutoring sessions are planned, twice a week, with each session 1-1/2 hours to generate the most positive gains.
- Tutoring sessions are well-structured and tutors follow lesson routines.
- There is communication and sharing of information with classroom teachers.
- There is ongoing, monthly supplemental training for tutors.
- Every tutor is guided in learning effective instructional strategies, AND also connect with their student and build a respectful, caring relationship.
- Tutors are trained in cultural competency to heighten their awareness of the strengths and needs of their students.

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Student Achievement at the Wizard's Wardrobe

- ALL students progress in reading. They also hone their skills in writing, and problem-solving through STEM activities.
- Two students moved from our program into their school's (GMES) Young Scholar's Program.
- Five students became "published authors," with their writings printed in Scribblers' Magazine, and they appeared and read at the *2nd Annual Writers Institute Book Festival's Young Writer's Open Mic*, on the campus of U-Albany.
- Two students had their story and poem published in the South End's *New Scene*, an on-line and print publication by and about South End community members.

A Day in the Life of A Student *Where Reading is Magic!*

- Students arrive and step into a castle-like space and are greeted by their tutor.
- They pass through the "wardrobe," into a creatively designed learning space.
- With a healthy snack, they settle down with their tutor and catch up on the day.
- For 1-1/2 hours, student and tutor read, write, explore a STEM activity, engage in a fun learning activity.
- Students and tutors have over 2,100 hundred high-interest, culturally diverse fiction and non-fiction books to choose from.
- Students and tutors learn from each other — how to read, think, and share ideas, engage in respectful talk, encourage each other to imagine and dream, strive to be successful in every task.

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Who are Our Magical Volunteers?

- Our volunteers tutor because they believe reading is essential to the success of a child in school and in life, and they believe every child has worth.
- Our tutors are committed to building one-to-one relationships, the cornerstone of building confidence that leads to success.
- Our volunteers include a Program Director and Librarian, and 30+ trained tutors.
- Helper volunteers maintain our gift shop and keep our program clean and welcoming.
- Our volunteer community includes senior members of the community, young professionals, college students, and retired teachers and professionals.

Volunteer Testimonials

"...my job is to help her believe in herself and what she can accomplish."

"They [the children] inspire me again to experience the world through their young eyes."

"Reading is the foundation of education. I love the children's enthusiasm, dedication, and perseverance."

"Throughout my career, I have been an active voice and volunteer in my community. So, when I learned that the Wizard's Wardrobe was being established, I was anxious to become involved because I believe in being a part of the solutions that encourage our youth to succeed, so I offered to serve as a volunteer tutor. It was a joy and a blessing!"

"I work at the Wizard's Wardrobe because I love children. I love their fresh point of view, their playfulness, their curiosity, and their big hearts. I see children as being smart on so many different levels. They tend to bring joy to the people around them with their spontaneity and the pleasure they get from being alive. They remind us who we really are."

"I chose to tutor at The Wizards Wardrobe for two main reasons. First, their program focuses specifically on understanding how youth are affected by race and class, and they create an environment where students are inspired by historical figures and modern actors of their own race. The second reason I chose to tutor at The Wizard's Wardrobe is because of their connectedness to the community they serve. Their dedication to the families they work with is inspiring, and it is definitely an experience I will take with me into the future."

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Why the Wizard's Wardrobe Leads to Success — Tutors and Students Learning Together

- Our one-to-one tutoring model enables a strong bond between student and tutor, creating a calm, safe, and encouraging environment for learning and for developing non-cognitive skills such as self-control, self-motivation, and confidence that can have positive long-lasting influence in later life.
- Tutors initially participate in a two-day training in cultural competency, social/emotional learning, the effects of stress and poverty on the developing brain, the fundamentals of early literacy development, and planning a lesson.
- Tutors are offered monthly supplemental training to support their work with students, and individually address a student's learning needs.
- Tutors commit to at least two hours per day, one or two days per week, to ensure they're present for their student.
- Tutors commit to the same student for at least one full year.
- A Program Director is on site during tutor times to support tutors with preparing activities and lessons, and preparing for a student's individual needs.
- Students' spelling, reading skills, and comprehension are assessed by the Program Director at the beginning and end of each academic year.
- Best practice education assessment tools are used. (*Words Their Way* for spelling; Fountas & Pinnell for reading.)
- Over 2,100 high-interest, culturally diverse fiction and non-fiction books, along with interactive games, puzzles, and instructional materials are integrated into lessons planned with each student's learning style, developmental readiness, and interests in mind.

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Student and Parent Testimonials and Stories

“I am so, so happy to have found the Wizard’s Wardrobe for my daughter. M. was somewhat resistant to reading and writing in the preschool years and as a result was a tad behind once she arrived in elementary school. Her confidence was lacking and I found that she would shy away more than she ever did. The Wizard’s Wardrobe allowed her to find the fun in learning and she is a stronger student now as a result. Not only does she read and write much, better but she LIKES it! Her confidence and curiosity are through the roof now and I don’t think the outcome would have been the same without this program. Thank you all for your time and diligence. It is clear that it pays off. I don’t think I have said thank you enough!” — from a parent of a child in her second year attending The Wizard’s Wardrobe

“I fixed my day!” — from a student who was able to overcome significant anger impulses after many self-care strategies were taught to him during his time at The Wizard’s Wardrobe, and he was able to use them *on his own*.

“Z. loves coming!” — from a parent who brought another family member to see the wonderful program her son was attending at The Wizard’s Wardrobe. Z. came to our program *“not wanting anything to do with books, not even wanting to be read to,”* said Noelene Smith, E.D. of The Baby Institute, where she first met Z. who is the older brother of a sibling. Then, one day she saw Z. *“actually picking up a book at the Baby Institute and read to a younger child.”* It blew her mind to see the progress.

“I feel safe here.” — confided one student to a tutor.

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History of The Wizard's Wardrobe

- September 2011: Over 20 members and friends of First Presbyterian Church, in Albany, NY, began tutoring in Giffen Elementary School.
- June 2014: A subset of that group established a one-to-one after-school tutoring program, incorporating one year later as the *South End Neighborhood Tutors, Inc. (S.E.N.T.)*.
- October 2016: a \$50,000 renovation at 20 Rensselaer St. (Steamboat 20) began.
- February 2017: The Wizard's Wardrobe opened its doors to seven (7) students for one-to-one tutoring.
- Sept. 2017 - May 2018: Twenty (20) trained tutors provided individualized tutoring to 10 students.
- Sept. 2018 - May 19: Twenty-three (23) trained tutors provided individual training to 16 students, and we hired our first part-time Executive Director.
- Sept. 2019-20: Thirty (30) trained tutors provided individualized tutoring to 17 students.

How We Are Funded

- Approximately 75% of our total revenue comes from the donations of our caring, individual supporters, the generosity of our volunteers and Board of Director members.
- Our federal and New York State tax returns can be found on the NYS Attorney General's charity registry, www.ag.ny.gov under our corporate name: South End Neighborhood Tutors, Inc.

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