All Chicago: Dan Basili reported the sixth Tutor/Mentor leadership conference last weekend at Malcolm X College drew nearly 200 participants. Basili, president of Cabrini Kids' Connections and of Tutor/Mentor Connection, estimated about 18,000 Chicago students are covered by after-school mentoring programs. He said more businesses are needed to help reach students. Call (312) 467-2888.

Alberta Duff, a student at Cabrini Connections tutoring program, and her tutor, Audrey Glover.

Tutors need assistance too

Who tutors the tutor? Tutors and mentors in neighborhood programs give their time to help children grow, and for some boys and girls, these volunteers may be the most important people in their lives.

But where do the volunteers and programs turn for help and support? On Friday and Saturday the Tutor/Mentor Connection is holding a Leadership Conference for program leaders and volunteers. It is an opportunity for those who help children to help each other.

The Tutor/Mentor Connection is a network for community tutoring and mentoring programs. It inventories existing programs, sharing resources and ideas so current programs can grow and expand and new programs can fill the need in neighborhoods that have no such services.

"We're in the business of helping kids grow up and become successful adults," said Dan Bassili, president of Tutor/Mentor Connection. "We want to help programs be as successful as a for profit business."

Among the challenges facing tutoring programs are communicating, fundraising, planning and recruiting and retaining people. These will be the subjects of Friday's workshops, designed primarily for program administrators and leaders. Participants will also have a chance to share problems and solutions.

Most of the workshops on Saturday are for volunteers. In addition, there will be a program on combating volunteer burnout.

"For kids, the most important thing is a long-term commitment, which builds trust," Bassili said. "So programs must tend to the people-side of their business so that volunteers will stay longer than they wanted to."

The conference will be from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday and from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Saturday at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Behavioral Sciences Building, Morgan and Harrison Streets.

The cost will be $50 for Friday, $10 for Saturday or $65 for both days. For reservations call 312-467-2888.