Creating a Network of Purpose: The Tutor/Mentor Connection

A Networking Strategy
The goal of the Tutor/Mentor Connection is to connect inner city teens with adults who will act as tutors, mentors, coaches, advocates and friends in structured programs that encourages many of these adults to stay involved in the lives of kids for many years.

The long term goal is that our teens finish high school and that our volunteers help open doors to advanced learning, jobs and careers. In such programs, volunteers also must learn to take on roles of leaders, fund raisers, advocates, etc. so that programs constantly expand the resources available to them.

The T/MC has operated a Cabrini Connections tutor/mentor program in Chicago for more than 15 years. 520 teens and 700 volunteers have participated for 1 to 7 full years since 1993. On this page are some of our alumni. Visit www.cabriniconnections.net to learn more.

“Cabrini Connections played a major role in my life during my high school years.”
Marquita Hall (l) 2004 college graduate; with sister, Alicia Hall, who attends Northeastern Illinois University.

“Monique left for Howard University last week, where she has a FULL RIDE SCHOLARSHIP.”
Message from Joey Molenda who was Monique’s tutor/mentor for six years.

Willie was recently informed that he was accepted at Morgan State in Baltimore. He is also receiving a very generous scholarship. We owe an awful lot to your program and to your staff for providing such a great place to foster a relationship and afforded us so many great opportunities. I honestly believe none of this would have been possible without you providing such a great environment for us to meet each week.

“Maurice has his GED and now works in construction...”
thanks to Mike Mazucca who has been part of his life for more than 10 years, and to Tom Li, another CC volunteer who helped set up a job interview for Maurice at a company where he now works.
We use maps and charts to create visual understanding

- The light blue shaded areas have poverty rates of 20% and above.
- Poverty rates in the dark blue areas are 40% and above.
- The dots on this map are schools placed on the Illinois State Warning list in November 2001.
- Children growing up in these neighborhoods need extra adults to help them reach careers.
We created the Tutor/Mentor Connection (T/MC) in 1993 to help programs like Cabrini Connections grow in every poverty area of the city and suburbs of Chicago.

While we operate one program, our goal is to help all neighborhoods have comprehensive, volunteer-based programs.

Using the Internet, the T/MC is now connected to organizations throughout the world, and is helping tutor/mentor programs, and citywide networks grow in Chicago and other cities.
The Tutor/Mentor Connection focuses daily on one big question:

What will it take to assure that all youth born in poverty are entering careers by age 25?

What does it take to make programs like Cabrini Connections available to more youth, in more places?
We know others are asking the same question....

The T/MC seeks to connect people and groups who are already spending many hours doing research and innovating ways to help kids to careers, into one ongoing tutor/mentor learning network.

In such a network people and organizations can share ideas, learn from others, create collaborations, and can apply new ideas and resources at any time to their own efforts to help kids in their own community.
All kids grow on the same 25 year timeline:

The purpose of this chart is to encourage people to think about ways to keep kids consistently involved with tutoring/mentoring, for many years, with business using its resources to PULL kids toward careers.
While tutor/mentor programs can operate in any time frame, we focus on non-school hours, when youth have too few safe places to go for learning, networking, mentoring:

- **School-Time Programs** – 9am to 3pm in most places
  - Pre-K
  - K - 5th
  - 5th - 6th
  - 6th - 8th
  - High School
  - Career Track

- **3-5 PM Non-School Programs**

- **After 5 PM and Weekend Programs**

These are hours when volunteers can meet on a weekly basis with inner-city kids.
These are just a few of the questions that need to be answered to achieve this goal:

How do we help good programs be in more of the places where they are needed?

How do we help each program have effective, long-term leaders?

How do we increase the number of volunteers from different work backgrounds who get involved, and stay involved for many years?

How do we provide consistent, flexible, multi-year funding in all locations, not just a few?
How do we get individuals, and teams of people from colleges, business, media, education, arts, etc. thinking about this every day?

How do we connect those who are already deliberating and discussing these questions in ways that share knowledge and good ideas and encourage others to be involved?
What are the ways students in service learning programs can lead this discussion?

In the following slides, I’ll show how the Tutor/Mentor Connection works. I invite you to think of what ways a team of students at your school might provide this same form of leadership, focused on the neighborhood and community surrounding the school.

This full presentation is available at http://www.tutormentorexchange.net/
Tutor/Mentor Learning Network

Since 1993 we have been building a Chicago area network of programs and supporters and a nationwide network of knowledge centers.

The following slides show the steps we’ve taken to create this network.

As you view these, think of the skills students might learn by taking on the role of the T/MC in their own community.
Step 1: Build and Maintain knowledge base

Information Collection
Prior to 1993, no organization was attempting to maintain a comprehensive database of non-school tutor/mentor programs.

The T/MC Program Locator at http://www.tutormentorconnection.org now includes most tutor/mentor programs in the Chicago area.

The T/MC web library includes LINKS to hundreds of other organizations working to help kids succeed in school and move to careers.

Database
(see Program Locator at www.tutormentorexchange.net)
Each of these boxes represent **HUBS**: Organizations working to help kids.

What services are in your city? What are the programs? Where are they? What do they do? What age do they serve? What are the barriers to success? Which programs need volunteers? Which need fund raising help? This is the type of information a community needs to know.
What could students do?

• A team of students could build and maintain a list of local service agencies, foundations, support groups, etc.

• A team of students could host this information on a web site as a resource for students and community volunteers.
Step 2: Volunteer Mobilization/Advertising

The T/MC seeks to create a daily call to action that increases the number of times a person is invited to learn more about tutoring/mentoring in Chicago.

a) Using its database, the T/MC is able to lead advertising and public education efforts that recruit volunteers and donors for more than 100 other programs throughout the Chicago region.

b) As these volunteers bond with kids, many will help build better programs, the same way that Cabrini Connections volunteers have helped build the T/MC.

c) This increases the number of adults, businesses and churches that are involved.
A successful collaboration or partnership is built on trust and mutual self-interest.

The T/MC leads an annual sequence of capacity-building actions that draw more than 300 programs together for regular knowledge sharing, resource building.

These actions are essential for building trust and relationships.

No other organization brings so many of the same programs together as often from year to year. Without the regular invitations from the T/MC, and the constant information sharing, most organizations would remain isolated from each other.
Step 4: Information sharing

Building Better Understanding of Needs, Opportunities

By bringing programs together on a regular basis, and by supporting this process with surveys and an Internet library of tutor/mentor information, T/MC seeks to create a better understanding of what works, who/how many are being served, where programs are needed, and what it takes to help good programs be in every place where they are needed.
OUR GOAL: SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF TOTAL QUALITY MENTORING PROGRAMS THAT HELP INNER CITY YOUTH REACH CAREERS

To SUCCEED
We must recruit business leaders who will use their resources in PULLING Youth to Careers

To SUCCEED
We must help tutor/mentor program leaders, volunteers, schools and parents be more effective in PUSHING Youth to Careers

School-Time Programs

Pre-K ➔ K - 5th ➔ 5th - 6th ➔ 6th - 8th ➔ High School ➔ Career Track

3-5 PM Non-School Programs

After 5 PM and Weekend Programs
THE GOAL IS NOT TO FINISH 6TH GRADE. IT’S TO REACH A CAREER.

Every program serving youth on this time line needs volunteers, dollars, technology, etc.

Agencies that help each other do more to help kids stay in school and reach careers.
Instead of competing for resources, the T/MC seeks to help programs work together to increase the availability of resources for all tutor/mentor programs.
Networking Strategy

As a small non profit, T/MC does not have the advertising budgets of large corporations. Thus, it relies on an on-going networking strategy to draw people together, and to build awareness of tutoring/mentoring.

Student teams in dozens of schools could be taking this on-going networking leadership role.
The World’s Largest Ping Pong ball table.

Every action of the T/MC or a member of the T/MC Learning Network, causes a chain reaction that moves every other ball.
Each year the T/MC helps programs recruit volunteers in Aug/Sept. and helps programs train those volunteers and convert them into leaders as each program moves through the School year. As each program ends the year it has more people helping it build capacity and quality for the following year.

By repeating this call to involvement each year for the past 12 years, we create greater public awareness of tutoring/mentoring, and greater traffic to web sites of the Tutor/Mentor Learning Network.
Connecting HUBS: A Blueprint

By listing all of these groups on a web site, we encourage idea sharing and collaboration. We are also inviting leaders, volunteers and donors to come together to solve common problems.
Step 5: Actions that increase flow of resources

Using the map, the database, and networking, leaders can stimulate a flow of resources to all programs, in all neighborhoods of a city.

By working toward common goals, and linking strategies via the Internet, programs generate greater impact than most programs could generate by themselves.

This is intended to draw volunteers, dollars, public attention, technology and training directly to tutor/mentor programs in every neighborhood.

Without a steady flow of these resources no program can succeed.
WE SEEK TO DRAW RESOURCE TO EVERY PROGRAM.

The Tutor/Mentor Connection seeks LEADERS to help raise and distribute needed resources (volunteers, dollars, ideas, etc) to every tutor/mentor program in the city and suburbs of Chicago.
What could students do?

• A team of students could send out a monthly newsletter to other students and community leaders

• A team of students could host meetings and forums to encourage networking and idea sharing, or draw volunteers and donations to programs in the area.

• See work of student class at DePaul University –

• Building leadership in HS & college student groups
  [http://www.tutormentorexchange.net/images/PDF/tmc_leadership_startup.pdf](http://www.tutormentorexchange.net/images/PDF/tmc_leadership_startup.pdf)
Step 6: The result of Steps 1 to 5

Better programs in more places for more age groups

As a result of the previous steps, Chicago, and other major cities, begins to have more effective tutor/mentor programs serving more youth in more neighborhoods.
Step 7: The Result

If Step 1 to 5 are happening in every poverty neighborhood, youth and families will have access to more of the help they need, better programs, and more consistent, longer-term services.

This will begin to achieve the changes in school performance and career preparation that we all want:

- better attendance in school
- lower drop out rates
- less youth violence
- better academic performance
- business reports better prepared workers

More youth stay in school, are safe in non-school hours, graduate, and move to careers

Better programs in more places for more age groups

Actions that increase the flow of resources to each program

Building Better Understanding of Needs, Opportunities

Building a network of tutor/mentor leaders

Volunteer Mobilization

Database
THE RESULT

More youth stay in school, are safe in non-school hours, graduate, and move to careers

Better programs in more places for more age groups

Building Better Understanding of Needs, Opportunities

Actions that increase the flow of resources to each program

Building a network of tutor/mentor leaders

Volunteer Mobilization

Database

Students in Service Learning Programs could be leading a local T/MC effort.

This is T/MC Theory of Change

Learn more at http://www.tutormentorconnection.org
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