STEPS FOR BUILDING YEAR-ROUND SUPPORT FOR A TUTOR/MENTOR PROGRAM

PLANNING CALENDAR

September
Launch programs for the new school year and begin cycle over. Your mentees are just a year older, and may need your help for many years to get through school and into jobs and careers.

Review “Steps to Start and Sustain a Program” and “Operating Principles” before launching this planning cycle.

ANNUAL PLANNING CALENDAR

Planning is a cycle of constant improvement

September
August
June - July
May - June
April - May
Jan – March
October - May
Start program in Sept

Annual Planning

Copywrite 2011, Tutor/Mentor Institute, LLC, Tutor/Mentor Connection, Merchandise Mart PO Box 3303, Chicago, IL 60654 tutormentor2@earthlink.net
The Tutor/Mentor Connection* goal is that comprehensive, mentor-rich tutor/mentor programs be operating in every poverty neighborhood of the Chicago region.

In the following pages we’ll illustrate a planning cycle that can help this vision become a reality in your organization.

Review other essays on www.tutormentorexchange.net as you develop your own planning cycle.

* As of July 2011 the Tutor/Mentor Connection is a program of Tutor/Mentor Institute, LLC. 
http://www.tutormentorexchange.net
Although many organizations do budgets on a calendar year basis, most tutor/mentor programs operate on a school-year calendar, starting in September and ending in June.

Staff time in most programs is usually limited, with many staff members and leaders serving multiple roles as volunteers, fundraisers, administrators, event coordinators, etc. Much time is spent tracking participation and producing reports for donors.

Therefore, the annual planning cycle must be one that is entrepreneurial and flexible. It should provide as much structure and lead time as possible to allow to be broad contribution from all stakeholders.
Each week that a volunteer spends with a child adds to that adult’s understanding of the challenges of growing up in a poverty neighborhood.

Volunteers take this understanding back to their BUSINESS, CHURCH AND COMMUNITY.
Your ability to convert volunteers into leaders and resource providers is critical to your long-term success. There are few forms of civic engagement as powerful as mentoring, where the act of service to a youth educates the volunteer to the issues of poverty and the help needed for that youth to reach a career.

As volunteers become committed to the needs of kids, convert them to leaders who help your program serve the needs of all members of your organization.

Over 30 years of experience leading a volunteer-based tutor/mentor program, we’ve found the following planning calendar to be effective.
Review “Steps to Start and Sustain a Program” and “Operating Principles” before launching this planning cycle.

These are also available in the Tutor/Mentor Institute web site at

http://www.tutormentorexchange.net

Invite Dan Bassill of Tutor/Mentor Institute, LLC to speak to your planning team and help you understand and apply the ideas in this and other essays on this web site. Email tutormentor2@earthlink.net to discuss options.
In the initial stages of organizing a tutor/mentor program, the planning steps are in sequential order. The more you know about tutor/mentor programs and how other programs operate, for instance, should help you with every other stage of developing your own program. The more people you have to help you, the more you can accomplish.

However, once you have launched your program, these steps begin to run concurrently. You don't stop doing research or team building once you have started your program. Continuous process improvement means that you are always looking for ways to get better. You’re always looking for resources and more people to help you get better, etc. Programs which are able to incorporate these steps into their operating philosophy stand a greater chance of long-term success.
Once a year's programs have been launched in September....

October - May

Collect participation and enrollment data. Conduct on-going evaluation of programs against stated objectives, along with review of new ideas that can be considered as add-ons and/or improvements to current activities.
January - March

By January your program has been operating for a few months and your new volunteers are beginning to realize how challenging this work is and what some of the needs of the program are.

This is a time to begin to think of how you’d improve the program in the coming year and how your volunteers can help you.
January - March

Begin an on-going informal discussion and review of your programs, with speculation and brainstorming of new programs, enhancements and/or replacements which might be incorporated as you begin the next school year.

Engage volunteers. Use social outings, Internet forums, events, weekly sessions as opportunities to draw volunteers into the “vision” and “leadership” of your program. Begin process of locating funds for new or enhanced activities and/or staffing.
April - May

Hold structured meetings between staff, board members, volunteers, students, parents and management. Review ideas, critique programs, postulate new strategies and absorb suggestions from as broad a spectrum of the program's membership as possible.
RECRUITING OTHER LEADERS

Building a Team of Tutor/Mentor Leaders

You cannot do it alone. While one person can, and must, provide the leadership, and often, the vision, it takes a team to build a program that will last long enough to do any good.

You must be able to recruit people and organizations to help, and find ways to share your vision and delegate responsibility. If you recruit from business, colleges, churches and hospitals, your team can be people who have access to the resources you need to succeed.

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Tutoring/Mentoring Model of The Service-Learning Loop

A) Volunteer hears about tutor/mentor program

B) Volunteer meets with youth

C) Volunteer learns from youth and program

D) Volunteer shares with coworkers, friends

A) Volunteer hears about tutor/mentor program
Each week in a tutor/mentor program this model repeats

A) Tutor/mentor program starts

B) Volunteers are recruited

C) Volunteers are trained

D) Volunteers are matched with students

E) Volunteer’s friends become involved

F) Volunteer friends become donors, volunteers, etc.

G) Group of volunteers learn

H) Group of volunteers influence business support of tutor/mentor program
If organizations support group learning….

...volunteers going into programs will be better prepared to contribute to the success of a youth

The learning in a tutor/mentoring program influences the learning and actions at the other end of the service learning loop.

Companies, churches, universities, can support group learning at this stage
Accelerate the learning….increase the resources available to your program

As more volunteers move through this loop we have an opportunity to support what they do with kids, and how they influence what business does to support these programs.

...This is where you convert volunteers into leaders
May - June

Put leadership structure in place. Finalize written draft of programs to be developed for fall program plan.

Use desk-top publishing program for writing your plans. Or use online tools such as wiki’s, Google docs, writeboard.com, etc.

You should never need to rewrite the entire plan during year-to-year planning. You should always be editing and updating what you did from the previous year.
June - July

Development of programs, budgets, policy and structure for fall plan. Begin development of recruitment, orientation and training materials.

May - June

Planning meetings at your tutor/mentor site encourage volunteers and youth to meet over the summer. Helps build “team” and relationships that are essential for program growth.

April - May

Start program in Sept

Jan – March

Annual Planning
Determine Structure

Look for ways volunteers can build student motivation, study skills, reading, writing, vocabulary and speaking skills, etc. These are habits students can take with them into the classroom, or workplace. Look for ways to engage students in this process.

Use the T/MC Links Library, and conferences, to see how other programs provide tutoring, mentoring and learning supports to students. Try to build your programs from “best practices” of other programs.

Use the T/MC Program Locator on-line directory at http://www.tutormentorprogramlocator.net to find contact information for other programs in Chicago. Use search engines like http://www.volunteermatch.org to find youth organizations in other cities. Participate in the November and May T/MC Conferences (http://www.tutormentorconference.org) to network and learn from other program leaders.
August

Final review of fall plan, beginning of recruiting for students and volunteers.

Make sure your organization is active in the Chicagoland Tutor/Mentor Volunteer Recruitment Campaign organized by the Tutor/Mentor Connection.
Planning is a cycle of constant improvement

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Process Improvement

Once your program is started, your job is to sustain and nurture it from year to year, so that it is able to serve children on a continuous basis, for the number of years it takes for students to grow to be productive adults. This involves continuous critical review of your process, your results and your programs, with on-going incremental additions, revisions and deletions, based on your own results, and what you are learning from other tutor/mentor programs throughout the country (and the world).

Each year your review should lead to your plan for the next year’s growth. If you do this you will surprise yourself in a few years as you look back from where you and a small group of people began your program and see the great progress you have accomplished – and the many lives you have affected.

Use the http://www.tutormentorexchange.net web site as a regular resource in this process.
Summary

Children can’t realize personal goals without the necessary skills. They cannot secure rewarding jobs and personal happiness without self-esteem, a good education and good learning habits. They can’t reach their full potential without a network of positive role models who demonstrate these skills, and who expand the experiences and learning opportunities for kids living in areas of highly concentrated poverty.

Tutoring/mentoring programs are infused with these types of role models and learning opportunities. It is up to each of us to provide the leadership and resources needed to build and sustain such programs.

Daniel F. Bassill, President, CEO, Tutor/Mentor Institute, LLC, Tutor/Mentor Connection
Learn More about Starting and Sustaining a Tutor/Mentor Program

Read other T/MC essays in the Tutor/Mentor Institute Section at http://www.tutortorrentorexchange.net

Why Tutor/Mentor Institute, LLC and Tutor/Mentor Connection (T/MC)?
From 1993 to June 2011 the T/MC operated as partner to the Cabrini Connections tutor/mentor program in Chicago, under one 501-c-3 non profit board of directors. Due to financial pressure the T/MC was separated from the Cabrini Connections program in June 2011 and the Tutor/Mentor Institute, LLC was created to provide alternative strategies for generating revenue to continue to operate the Tutor/Mentor Connection in Chicago while helping similar intermediary structures grow in other cities. The names will be used interchangeably in many of our materials since both focus on the same mission.

Become a volunteer, partner, sponsor or investor. Email tutormentor2@earthlink.net

While we operate as a social enterprise and do not have a non-profit tax structure, the money we raise covers the costs of the work we are doing. If you want to support this process with a financial contribution, send your gift to Tutor/Mentor Institute, LLC, Tutor/Mentor Connection, Merchandise Mart PO Box 3303, Chicago, Il. 60654