

# DC

## Tutoring & Mentoring Initiative INITIATIVE

*A tutor or mentor for each of the 40,000+ students in DC reading below grade level or with other academic or non-academic needs*

The idea is simple: Provide a tutor or mentor for the more than 40,000 students reading below grade level or in need of extra academic or non-academic support in the District of Columbia. Add in extra classroom and after-school support and extra mentoring or support for other family members and we could transform educational outcomes in the city, develop our workforce, end intergenerational poverty, and create a vibrant, welcoming and safe city for all people. In short, this is the key to both transforming educational outcomes AND the civic life or culture of the city.

There are no panaceas when it comes to transforming urban education. Neither public nor charter schools, neither improved nor eliminated testing... The list of proposed reforms goes on and on. What we do know is that a sustainable approach needs a stronger foundation than we have today, a foundation rooted in a commitment by all of us to take more responsibility for the community as a whole and action to back it up. Done well, the benefits of tutoring and mentoring extend far beyond academic improvement for the students: Volunteers develop



### Two Mutually Reinforcing Goals



new capacities and confidence in their ability to be a positive force in their communities. They also become informal ambassadors throughout the city and suburbs advocating and

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*We must work passionately and indefatigably to bridge the gulf between our scientific progress and our moral progress. - Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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educating on the transformative power of one-on-one relationships across class boundaries. Such relationships have the power to change the public mindset from, "There's a problem in someone else's neighborhood and we can't do anything about it" to "By helping one kid in need, I'm building bridges and good will in our city. I'm changing lives for the better -- even if it takes time and perseverance and even if the working as a team with people can be frustrating at times."

**Evidence shows that tutoring and mentoring work:** Thirty years ago, Lisbeth Schorr reviewed the literature in *Within Our Reach*, and found that "intensive, comprehensive, individualized services with aggressive attention to outreach and to maintaining relationships over time... are what works..." for helping at-risk families and children. And numerous more recent studies have confirmed that mentoring and tutoring as well as extra classroom and after-school support are effective.

**The numbers work:** There are more than 540,000 people over 18 in DC and 80,000 college students. Forty thousand tutors and mentors seems like a modest number by comparison. And there are several million potential volunteers if we include adjacent counties as well.

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### Our "Matchmaking Service"

DC has 90 tutoring and mentoring organizations. Thirty of them are partnering with us. The organizations range from school-based programs tutoring elementary school students during the school day to mentoring programs working with older adolescents on the weekends to weekday evening programs that combine both tutoring and mentoring activities. If you are available at a regular time each week, the odds are that we can match you to a program based on the neighborhoods where you're willing to work, the age ranges of the students you'd like to work with, and the times during the week when you are available. If your schedule varies, we may still be able to use your help as a substitute tutor, canvassing volunteer, or site coordinator.

### Help Support our Work!

It can cost \$1,000 or more per year per student to support a high-quality program. Both our partners and DCTMI welcome your financial support, too. For our partners, costs include volunteer coordination, training & regular check-ins, criminal background checks, reading & math assessments, student & volunteer recruitment, and much more.

Go to <http://www.dcTutorMentor.org> to find our list of partners or sign up to volunteer.

### What does the tutoring & mentoring gap look like on the ground?

A DC man who has made his life's work helping kids escape the cycle of gang violence describes a group of young men that he was talking to in a classroom one summer day. They all wanted to go back out into the sweltering heat, to do anything to avoid the exercise he asked them to do on a classroom chalkboard because they didn't want their peers to know that they couldn't read or write.

A master 10th grade English teacher at a high-performing charter school who works 70 hours a week could put 30 volunteers to work in her classes to help work one-on-one with the many kids that are struggling to keep up.

**No Simple Solutions, but Progress Is Possible.** The road ahead for many young people in our city is likely to be hard. Even with better technical and soft skills or a college education, the likelihood of young people today finding jobs that promise a comfortable middle class life are diminished. Automation, globalization, instability from climate change, social unrest and the threat of terrorism will not be disappearing anytime soon.

There are no simple answers but sometimes we simply have to make a decision to hope, to have faith that we'll find a way, if we make the right decision and organize our lives accordingly — turn off the TV, perhaps, but find deeper satisfaction in making a better world. We have to believe that we **can** create a community in which people feel bound together by their shared efforts, common vision and civic friendship to unlock the creativity, compassion, and courage that will be needed by all of us.

### Why The Initiative Can Succeed

**A simple civic and moral vision** that resonates with people — even if there are barriers to overcome like “I’m too busy.” We focus on both the big long-term vision and the modest actions that make a difference now.

**Leadership** matters enormously. We believe in the value of *servant leadership*: leading by example, moderate compensation, finding people who combine passion with a thoughtful, creative and intelligent approach to their work to make the vision a reality.

**A holistic approach** to building community and organizing our personal lives by creating a civic culture based on all of us taking more responsibility for others and the community as a whole, rather than focus on “problem” students or neighborhoods or quick fixes.

**Partner with existing organizations & institutions**, including congregations, colleges, civic ass’s, nonprofit organizations, and businesses with employee volunteer programs, so we don’t have to “reinvent the wheel.” Look deep enough and we are all working toward similar goals; but sometimes we need to remind each other of this.

**The rule of seven touches.** Marketers say, personally “touch” someone seven times, and they will come to know you; if they know you, they might trust you; and, if they trust you, they will change. We use one-on-one canvassing, social media, mass media and outreach to civic groups to slowly but methodically recruit volunteers and change the civic mindset.

*The future is not a gift: it is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future. This is the essential challenge of the present. – Robt. F. Kennedy*  
*Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have. - Margaret Mead*

## The Two Goals: *Student Success* ↔ *A Good Community*

