

The California Early Childhood Mentor Program



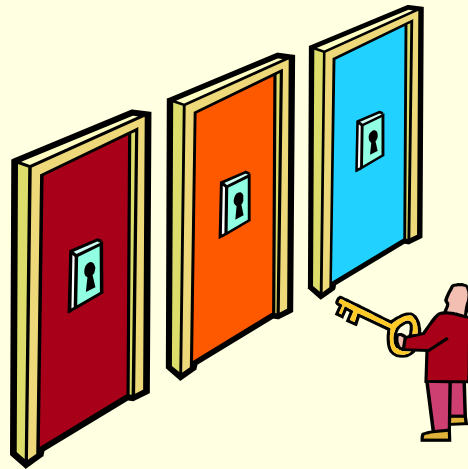
A Quality Improvement Initiative

Working to Improve Early Childhood Education since 1988

The California Early Childhood Mentor Program is funded by the California Department of Education, Child Development Division, with Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds.

The Dilemma

- How many of you attended last year?



- Door #1: Talk = “This is the Mentor Program”
- Door #2: Talk \neq “This is the Mentor Program”
- Door #3: Talk = “This is something incredibly cool happening at the Mentor Program that you can use in your own life, but it won’t tell you how to become a Director Mentor”

Lucky you! It's Door #3!



Lessons from an Incredible Journey:
A Mentor Program Experiment in Advocacy
Becomes a Framework for Tackling Complex Issues

Ellen Morrison
Seminar at the Sea
March 4, 2011

Ready or Not: The Challenge

- Much progress
- Much more to go
- Funding/scrutiny increasing
- If people **IN** the field don't take the lead, people **AROUND** the field will



Who among you will take the lead?

Leadership through Knowledge: The Challenge

Getting from . . .



By doing just a little every day,
you can gradually let the task
completely overwhelm you.
- Ashleigh Brilliant

Source: Ashleighbrilliant.com

. . . to

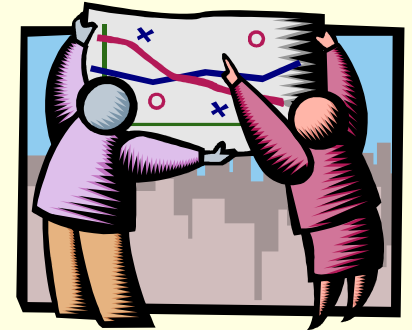


Unless you move, the place where you are
is the place where you will always be.
- Ashleigh Brilliant

The Strategy

Who should take the lead? **Mentors!**

- All Mentors work with children full-time
- All Mentors qualify as Master Teacher or above
- Selection process requires motivation and insight
- Mentors meet once a month in their communities



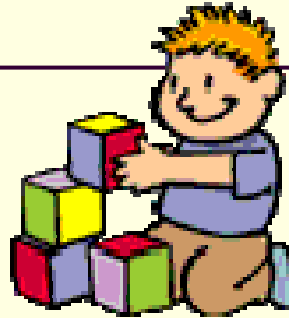
How can such HUGE issues be addressed? **One at a time**

- Focus on a **hypothetical assumption**: “If this were true, then . . .”
- Identify priorities from reflection on your education and experience
- Work back toward the real world

What process can we use? **Iterative**



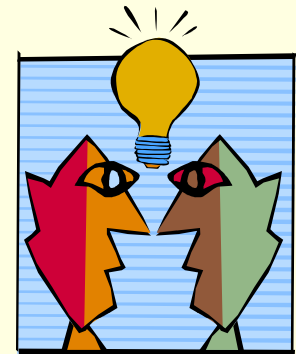
What is an Iterative Process?



A process for arriving at a decision or a desired result by repeating rounds of analysis or a cycle of operations. The objective is to bring the desired decision or result closer to discovery with each repetition (iteration).

What was OUR Iterative Process?

- Provide a discussion format
 - Hypothetical
 - Tap into education & experience
 - Adaptive Leadership discussions
- Learn as we go, requesting feedback and notes
- Review notes & draft synthesis
- Request feedback on synthesis
- Review comments on synthesis & re-review first-round notes
- Draft “FINAL” synthesis
- Request ratification



Sign here _____

Looking back, it all makes sense now

In reality, after Step 1, we were just hoping for the best.
Life makes much more sense in retrospect.



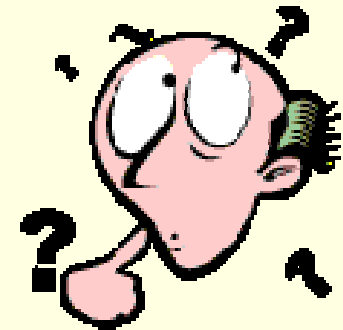
Leap, and the net will appear.

-John Burroughs

The Hypothetical Question

What if . . . The defining intent of ECE were:

- *Social & Cultural Competence? . . . OR . . .*
- *Nurturing, Loving Care? . . . OR . . .*
- *Family Support? . . . OR . . .*
- *Social Justice ? . . . OR . . .*
- *School Readiness?*



What competencies would teachers need to be able to provide the children and their families with a high quality program?

And another, and so on . . .

*If the competencies we just decided on
were required of all teachers . . .*

- How would teachers acquire these competencies?

. . . Classes? On-the-job training? Mentoring?

- How would they document them?

. . . Diploma? Certificate? Testing?

- What would the impact be?

. . . On the teachers of the future? On current workforce?



First Iteration Findings

- Needed competencies bridge all defining intents
- It's more than “competence” ~ high quality ECE requires a set of necessary characteristics of the teacher, the program, and the classroom environment
- First synthesis: **The Mentor Manifesto!**



Second/Final Iteration: A Unified Voice

A high quality teacher of young children . . .

- Develops & maintain trusting relationships
- Develops & implements an integrated curriculum:
 - Unstructured Play
 - Teacher-Directed Learning
 - Discovery-Based/Child-Directed Learning
 - Sensory-Based Learning
 - Individualized Developmental Support
- Creates a safe, healthy environment
- Celebrates diversity
- Facilitates partnerships with families
- Continually learns

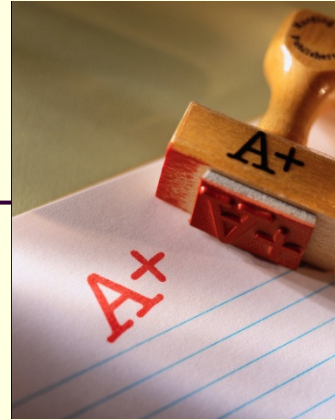


The Recommendation



Let the characteristics of the highest quality teachers of young children be used as benchmarks to guide policies developed to educate and assess professionals in the field of Early Care and Education.

Lessons Learned



1. Presenting a new challenge to a group with established relationships can work really well or really badly, but you will know which immediately~
Doing it wrong fast is at least better than doing it wrong slowly ~Ashleigh Brilliant
2. Approaches to a new challenge differ . . . in similar ways~
Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You ~Dr. Seuss
3. Celebrating differences makes more sense than ignoring them~
It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences ~Audre Lorde

Lesson 1. The power of group cohesion

A well-oiled machine



- Members have developed trust in one another
- Process in place for meeting challenges, responding to immediate needs
- No start-up time

OR Quick, fill the moat!



- Group mission narrowly defined
- Meeting goals determined long in advance; spontaneity discouraged
- Informal leaders can sway opinion

Applying Lesson 1

- When you have a challenge, first try taking it to an established group rather than reinventing the wheel



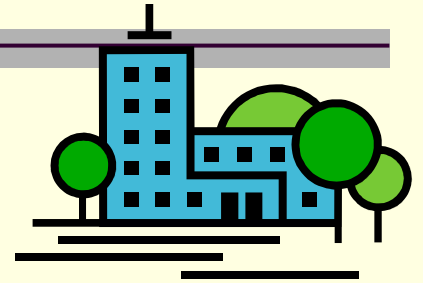
- When you find yourself in the moat . . .
get out, dry off, and move on



Lesson 2: Approaches to Change

Organizations facing changes fit into four categories:

- ❖ Prospectors: First out with new products
- ❖ Defenders: Stick to what you know approach
- ❖ Analyzers: Cautious, but will make changes after research
- ❖ Reactors: All over the map



Maybe people facing a change do too?

- ❖ Prospectors: An opportunity to have a voice? Let's GO!
- ❖ Defenders: Just leave me alone & let me be with the kids;
How can we have a voice? THEY won't let us!
- ❖ Analyzers: I'll play along and tell you what I know, but
I won't get my hopes up.
- ❖ Reactors: AHHHHHHHHHHHHH! How long before retirement????



Applying Lesson 2

- Think of your “Approach to Change Type” as you do an MBTI type—as part of what makes you YOU
- Identify yourself & encourage others to do so WITHOUT JUDGMENT—which is the best fit?
 - Prospector: Change is exciting!
 - Defender: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* ~ the more things change, the more they stay the same
 - Analyzer: Change is inevitable, but a challenge
 - Reactor: I react to change differently based on the specific situation

Lesson 3. Don't Cogitate, Celebrate!

The Inevitables

- Wherever you go, whatever you do, you will face change and challenging situations
- You will always be right
- So will everyone else
- So, be right together



Applying Lesson 3

- Ask **Prospectors** to speak first
- Let **Defenders** provide pins & anchors for the Prospectors' balloons, leaving real alternatives
- Provide real alternatives to **Analyzers**
- Bring **Reactors** into the discussion; their responses will vary by situation



Breakout Sessions

Your Mission: A Viable Solution

1. **Prospectors:** “Blue sky” solutions
2. **Defenders:** Do you see patterns? Has this been tried before and failed? Give the solutions a dose of reality.
3. **Analyzers:** After listening to both sides, what do you think?
4. **Reactors:** Jump in whenever you think an important point has not been made

Go Forth and Err!

Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err. It passes my comprehension how human beings, be they ever so experienced and able, can delight in depriving other human beings of that precious right.

- Mahatma Gandhi