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The Leadership through Knowledge Project

The *Leadership through Knowledge* project began in the fall of 2008, when the Mentor Program's Director, Linda Olivenbaum, and I heard a presentation about and subsequently read Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education (Goffin and Washington, 2007). The authors document the recent growth in funding and support for Early Care and Education, as well as increasing scrutiny and control by individuals and groups with little understanding of the field. The book is primarily a call to action to the field, encouraging the Early Care and Education field to engage in *adaptive leadership*, a leadership activity that mobilizes people to tackle difficult problems.

The Director and I heard that call to action and believed that there could hardly be a better venue for engaging in adaptive leadership than monthly Mentor Seminars that are convened by local Mentor Programs across the state. We knew that Mentors already tackle difficult problems in their Seminars, for example when they discuss challenges with the student teachers they mentor, challenging behavior in their classrooms, and the challenges of being a high quality teacher in environments where their quality is unappreciated. So we challenged ourselves and co-author Stacie Goffin to figure out how to tap into the wisdom of Mentors' collective thousands of years of education and experience. Together, we came up with a process, tested it out at the June 2009 Mentor Institute, and introduced it in the Fall of 2009 to Seminar Facilitators.

During the 2009-10 academic year, we conducted web conferences with Seminar Facilitators, worked closely with the Mentor Caucus Steering Committee, and encouraged Mentor Program Coordinators to embrace the adaptive leadership challenge. Some Mentor Seminars chose not to or were not able to participate in the discussion and framework we provided. However, Seminars across the state submitted notes to us on their challenging task of reflection, discussion, and debate.

During the summer of 2010, I synthesized the notes using a methodology I developed while completing my doctoral thesis in Sociology, an integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. Based on that synthesis, I drafted a "Mentor Manifesto," and sent it back out to all Mentors for review and comment. The comments submitted were both rich and passionate, leading me to circle back to another review of the 2009-10 notes to create a completely revised document:

Characteristics of High Quality Teachers of Young Children:

The Unified Voice of California Early Childhood Mentors