

Bay Area Quality Rating and Improvement System ERS and CLASS Assessment Protocol

Background

Earlier this year, the Coordinating Council charged the Assessment Task Group with drafting a Regional Assessment Protocol. This document is the result of 6 months of committee meetings and protocol reviews. Upon review, the Coordinating Council Members unanimously adopted the protocol for recommendation to the Executive Cabinet on September 18th, 2013. Contributing members are listed on page 9.

Introduction

The following protocols govern the use of the ERS and CLASS for the purposes of QRIS rating. Where the California Race to the Top Early Learning Consortia Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System Consortia Implementation Guide (Consortia Implementation Guide) has dictated assessment protocol, this document does not repeat that protocol.

The purpose of using common Bay Area Quality Rating and Improvement System Partnership (BAQRISP) assessment protocols is to ensure that ERS and CLASS scores that are used for QRIS ratings are valid and reliable across the region. Common regional protocols resulting in regionally reliable scores will allow early care and education providers and families to understand that a given score means the same quality standard in each of the participating Bay Area counties. Valid and reliable assessment data will also enable the BAQRISP counties to tell a regional story about early care and education service quality and the impact of our efforts.

Where neither the Consortia Implementation Guide nor this document guides practice, local county protocol may exist. BAQRISP ERS and CLASS assessors must therefore also consult the Consortia Implementation Guide and any local QRIS assessment protocols.

Limitations of this document

The BAQRISP assessment work group only developed protocols in those areas that were determined to impact cross county reliability. Assessment practices addressed by the Consortia Implementation Guide are not duplicated. Local QRIS' may wish to establish additional protocols and may exercise local control in any area where these or the State protocols do not govern practice. The document is outlined as follows:

- 1) Qualifications and Requirements of Assessors
- 2) Establishing and Maintaining Assessor Reliability
- 3) Scheduling Observations
- 4) Site Orientation and Preparation for the Site Visit
- 5) Classroom Observation and Methodology
- 6) Calculating Substantial Portion of the Day (SPD) for ERS
- 7) Scoring Modifications
- 8) Sample Materials

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1) Qualifications and Requirements of Assessors

- a) All assessors retained to conduct BAQRISP ERS and CLASS assessments must meet the training and certification (if applicable) and calibration qualifications specified by the authors of the tool and the Consortia Implementation Guide.
- b) All assessors will be familiar with and follow protocols described by this document and the Consortia Implementation Guide.
- c) Assessor qualifications should include cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Sites should be matched to assessors with the appropriate language capacity. During the scheduling process, the administrators should be asked to identify the primary language of instruction and any dominant cultural norms of staff and enrolled families.
- d) Assessor qualifications should include an understanding of the intent of the tool items so that the assessor can use well-informed judgment and appropriate flexibility when assessing programs with various philosophies and curriculums.

2) Establishing and Maintaining Assessor Reliability

CLASS

- a) Each CLASS assessor must maintain annual Teachstone certification for the relevant version of CLASS (Toddler, Preschool)

ERS

- b) Each ERS assessor must establish and maintain reliability per the protocols below in each ERS tool with which they assess (ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS)
- c) An ERS Regional “Master” Anchor is reliable to the authors per ERSI standards (ERSI Level 7 Observer). San Francisco Quality Connections will provide Regional Master Anchor.
- d) Each county may establish a “Local” Anchor who is reliable with a Master Anchor at 85% across 3 consecutive assessments at separate sites (ERSI Level 3 Observer).
- e) All BAQRISP ERS assessors must achieve an initial reliability of 85% across 3 consecutive assessments at separate sites with the Master or Local Anchor.
- f) After the initial rating, ERS assessors must re-establish a reliability of 85% across 3 separate assessments at least annually. Where assessors are completing large numbers of assessments annually, QRIS administrators should be aware that there is a risk of “drift” ¹. Counties may require a paper review of assessment scores by local anchor to control for drift every 10-12 assessments.

1) ¹ Re-calibration every 10 assessments is recommended by Frank Porter Graham and is the standard used by some counties in the region. This exceeds the state requirement. Issues of cost are prohibitive and

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3) Scheduling Observations

To the extent possible, observations are scheduled at least two weeks in advance. The observation is scheduled with the Provider/Director/Site Supervisor. The Consortia Implementation Guide requires that scheduling be for the site and that the classroom(s) selected is/are not shared with the site until the day of observation. The following information needs to be verified for all assessments at the site when scheduling the observations:

- All names of lead teachers and regular staff for each classroom including their title/role (for example, Brenda Smith, Lead teacher, Juan Corlado, other teacher);
 - Enrollment numbers (number of children enrolled per classroom, and number of children in each of the applicable age categories) and the birth date of the oldest and youngest child enrolled;
 - The program cycle/ year and operating hours;
 - Languages spoken in the program (For a language other than English, what percentage of time is the language spoken in the classroom?)
 - Any dominant cultural norms of staff or enrolled families;
 - Any special circumstances impacting the classroom(s);
 - Daily routine/schedule (When selecting the observation day with the site, please remind them that the day of observation should be as “typical” as possible to avoid special events, holidays, and field trips). The observer may request an emailed copy of the classroom schedules;
 - The mailing address (for orientation information), site address (for observation day), report address (for sending the final report), phone number (person available on the day of observation), fax, email;
 - Any special parking and location instructions.
- a)** Decide with the provider what date or in what scheduling window the observation will take place. The time of the observation should be based on their schedule. Prior to finalizing an assessment date, ask, “On the day or in the window we have selected for the observation, how many children are typically present?” Note: If fewer than half (51%) of the children enrolled are not scheduled to be present on any given day, do not schedule the observation for that day.
- b)** Inform the provider of the type of assessment (ITERS, FCCERS, ECERS, Toddler CLASS, Pre-K CLASS) to be conducted. For sites with mixed-age classrooms, the

therefore this has not been adopted as the regional standard; however the assessment subcommittee realizes that differences in calibration practice will diminish inter-county reliability. Given that the Consortia Implementation Guide allows for the use of assessments conducted by others BAQRISP does not have the ability to completely control reliability.

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process by which the assessment type is determined should be explained. For mixed-age classrooms, the specific assessment to be conducted will be determined by the age group of the majority of students present on the day of the assessment.

CLASS

If the majority of students present are 15-36 months, the Toddler CLASS assessment will be used. If the majority of students present are 3-5 years old, the Pre-K CLASS assessment will be used.

ERS

If the majority of students present are birth to 2.5 years, the ITERS assessment will be used. If the majority of students present are 2 to 5 years old, the ECERS will be used.

- c) Share the following information with the site director.
- The Observer will be at the site 20 minutes prior to the start of the observation time.
 - All classrooms at the site should understand that they might be selected for observation on the agreed upon date.
 - The observation will last 3 to 4 hours.
 - After the observation, the Observer will interview the lead teacher for 30-40 minutes, if he or she is available (if not, schedule a time to do the interview).
 - The Site will receive a confirmation letter, *interview questions, hand washing, table washing, and sanitation procedures, meal and playground guidelines*² and templates for parent and teacher notification for review and distribution to staff.
 - The Site Contact will receive a call or email 2 days prior to the observation date to confirm the appointment.
- d) Observers will know which randomly selected classroom has been chosen for observation and will have a randomly selected back up classroom. An observer will move from the selected classroom to the back up, if any of the following circumstances occur:
- The lead teacher of record is absent
 - The majority of the usual teaching team is absent (check against information collected when scheduling the observation)

² Items in italics for ERS observations only

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- Fewer than 51% of enrolled children or fewer than 7 children (whichever is greater) are present in a center-based classroom. (Check against information collected when scheduling the observation)
- Fewer than 3 children are present in a small family child care program if at least 3 are enrolled or fewer than 5 in a large family child care program are present if at least 5 children are enrolled
- Field trip, other school event, or unusual circumstance (for example power failure, broken pipes, severe weather, emergency or illness causing observer or provider/lead teacher to leave etc.) disrupts the usual classroom routine

4) Site Orientation and Preparation for the Site Visit

a) Prior to the program observation:

- Visit is scheduled per Consortia Implementation Guide (scheduled visit, classrooms not specified to program until assessor is on site)
- Local QRIS will send preparation materials to site director and include confirmation and informational handouts as follows: (see attachments as models, local QRIS may modify but the core content should remain consistent)

CLASS

- Confirmation Letter
- Timeline
- Your Classroom Assessment Scoring System Review and Next Steps
- Family Notification (form of notification is local decision i.e.: letter or conspicuous poster)
- Staff Notification Template
- Interview Questions
- Assessor accountability/ staff verification form

ERS

- Confirmation Letter
- Timeline
- Your Environment Rating Scale Review and Next Steps
- Hand Washing Procedures
- Diapering Procedures
- Table Washing Procedures
- Meal Guidelines and Playground Guidelines
- Interview Questions

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- Family Notification (form of notification is local decision i.e.: letter or conspicuous poster)
 - Staff Notification template
 - Assessor accountability/ staff verification form
- b) Two days prior:**
- Observer will contact the site to confirm their appointment and confirm lead teachers and permanent staff by phone or email
 - Observer will obtain map/directions and confirm any special parking and location instructions
- c) Day of observation:**
- Allow plenty of time to arrive 20 minutes early
 - **Remember:**
 - Clipboard with materials (i.e., ID badge, tape measure, probe, pencils, erasers, etc.)
 - RATING TOOL (CLASS or ERS)
 - Feedback Forms and return envelope (remember to complete the top portion of the form and note the type of scales in the top corner of the form)
 - ERS or CLASS Guide for Providers and Next Steps fact sheet
 - Wear comfortable attire
 - *For ERS Observations only:*
 - *Interview Questions*
 - *Playground checklist*
- d) The program observation:**
- ERS and CLASS observations should be conducted separately. The same observer may conduct them on the same day if the schedule allows the necessary activities to be observed for each tool.
 - Once on the premises, the Observer will wear their ID badge at all times.
 - Upon arrival, the Observer will locate the primary contact, identify themselves, provide their ID badge, and briefly reconfirm the details of the visit, specifically:
 - Review staff names and roles asking site staff to verify Observer's visit by signing the assessor accountability form. Compare staff present with the names of staff furnished previously by site.

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- Determine if sampled classroom(s) meet criteria for assessment that day. If not, Observer will go to previously identified alternate classroom (see protocol for scheduling).
- Prior to beginning the ERS observation, Observers will:
 - Ensure ALL staff names (first and last) are clearly documented on the score sheets.
 - Furnish provider/lead teacher with Feedback Form and return envelope.
 - Arrange a convenient time to interview the provider/lead teacher after the observation is complete.
- During the observation:
 - Observers should follow any suggestions staff may have to remain unobtrusive in the care environment, while remaining polite, and courteous throughout the visit.
 - Observers should not be a participant in classroom activities.
 - If at any time, the Observer is asked to leave the care environment, they will do so (documenting the time they left).
 - In classrooms with more than one teacher/adult, the Observer will follow the guidelines on page 10 of the Teachstone CLASS Pre-K Manual which instruct the Observer on who to code and how to weigh contributions of each adult when assigning scores.
 - If the provider asks any questions about the observation, the report, coaching, training, etc., the Observer will refer them to the local QRIS and provide contact information.
 - Observers should keep notes in possession and close to them at all times. The Observer should make sure that their notepad is not left in plain view or unattended, and turn the notepad over when necessary.
- When the ERS observation is complete:
 - The Observer will interview the provider/lead teacher, to gather information about program policies and any routines not observed during the visit.
 - The Observer will NOT share any information about the observation, whether or not the Observer is asked. The Observer will not offer suggestions for improvement or provide ANY comments. The Observer will write all comments on the score sheet.
 - If the provider has already completed their Feedback Form, the Observer may accept it and submit the form with other hard copy documents. We trust that all Observers will be extremely professional about any of the feedback received, whether the feedback is positive or negative.

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- Prior to departure, the Observer should thank the staff for allowing him/her to observe the classroom.
- e) Following the program observation:**
 - Ensure that no personal belongings or data are left behind.
 - Complete score sheets and summary reports before the next scheduled visit.
 - Submit to QRIS for review, following local protocol for submitting documents and reports.

5) Classroom Observation Methodology:

CLASS and ERS

- a) *Time of Day:*** The time of observation shall be based on the recommendations of the classroom observation tool and scheduled so that activities required for a complete assessment can be observed. For part-day programs, the assessments will be conducted during the hours of operation of that part-day program.
- b) *Language:*** The observer for both ERS and CLASS must speak the dominant language of classroom instruction.
- c) *Use of Photos:*** Use of photos is not required. If photos are taken, proper teacher and child image release forms must be obtained as needed.
- d) *Activities Observed:*** Observation of the classroom's environment and interactions will be based on the recommendations of the observation tool and what must be observed in order to complete the tool (e.g. arrival, meal, free play, circle time, outdoor time, nap time for ERS tools, etc.)
- e)** In programs that provide overnight care, observations will take place during daytime sessions.

CLASS

- f) *Indoor/ Outdoor CLASS Observation:*** The observation protocol for indoor and outdoor CLASS observation will be based on Teachstone observation recommendations. Teachstone recommends that the Pre-k CLASS observations be conducted indoors. If the indoor teaching activity is extended to the outdoors, the CLASS observation may continue outdoors to follow the teaching activity. Observations of toddlers during outdoor time will be based on the recommendation of the updated CLASS Toddler observation tool.
- g) *CLASS in Family Child Care:*** The CLASS tool used (preschool or toddler) in Family Child Care settings will be determined by age of the majority of children present at the time of observation. If the majority of children present are preschoolers, the Pre-k tool will be used. If the majority of children present are toddlers, the toddler tool will be used.

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- h) *CLASS Observation Cycles*: The observer will conduct a minimum of 4 observation cycles. Each CLASS cycle will be based on 20 minutes of observation and/or as recommended by Teachstone. If more than 4 observation cycles occur, the first 4 will be used to derive the assessment score.

ERS

- i) *Time of Day*: For ERS assessments at full day programs, morning hours are preferred for observations.
- j) *Length of ERS Observation*: The length of the ERS observation will be from 3 to 4 hours.
- k) *ERS interviews*: The lead teacher will be interviewed after the observation to answer any questions required of the classroom observation tools. If the lead teacher is not available, the program director or site supervisor or alternate teacher may be interviewed. Interviews should be conducted in person, if the program staff is available. Interviews can be conducted over the phone to allow the program staff the flexibility to schedule the interview.

6) Calculating Substantial Portion of the Day (SPD) for ERS

- a) SPD should be calculated according to ERS guidelines and based on the program's entire operating day.

7) Scoring Modifications

- a) BAQRISP counties may, but are not required, to adopt some or all of the attached (See Attachment B) modifications.
- b) No additional modifications will be made to the ERS

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