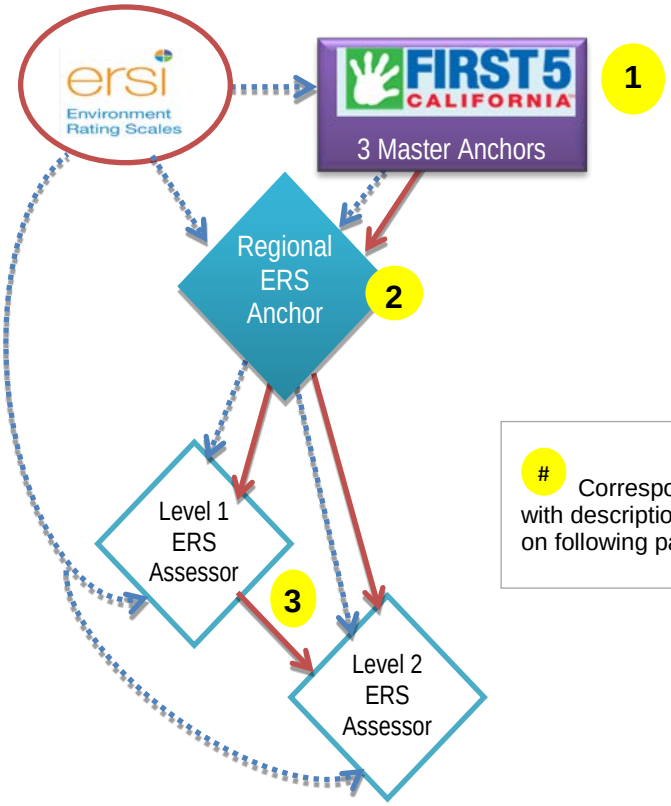
California Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Consortia Assessor Management System Structure

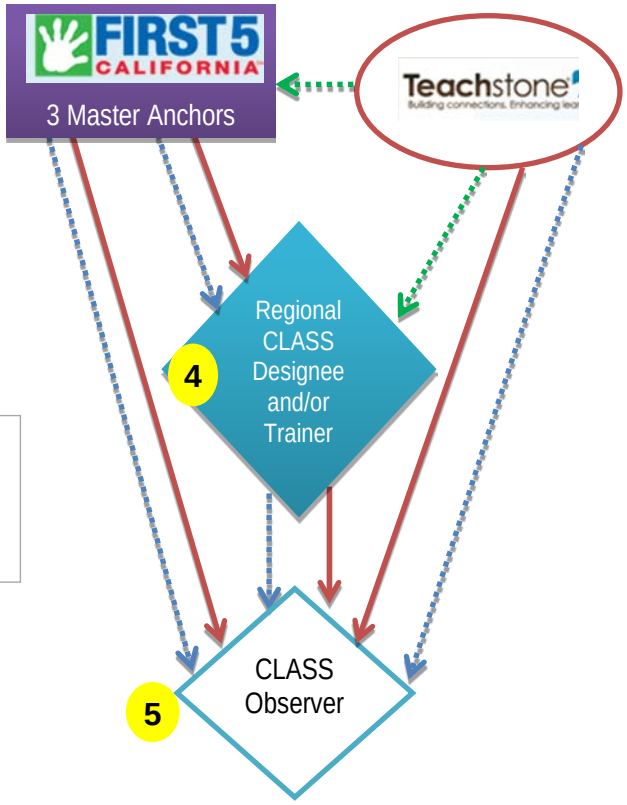
(This document is taken from the RTT-ELC Implementation Guide, pages 18 – 21; last updated June 2014)

The First 5 California Master Anchors are the same individuals in both graphics. The Assessor Management System flow is divided by tool because of the training and technical assistance supports available for each tool. In some consortia, the Regional Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Anchor and Regional Classroom Assessment and Scoring System™ (CLASS™) Designee and/or Trainer may be the same person. In other consortia, different people may take each role.

ERS Tools



CLASS ® Tools



Corresponds with descriptions on following pages

KEY to ERS

- Blue dotted arrow indicates ability to certify reliability of level below
- Red solid arrow indicates ability to lead drift testing for level below

KEY to CLASS

- Green dotted arrow indicates ability to offer Trainer certification
- Blue dotted arrow indicates ability to offer *CLASS* Observation trainings
- Red solid arrow indicates ability to lead drift testing for level below (online at Teachstone/Master Anchor level or live double-coding at regional level)

1. Master Anchors Employed by First 5 California

a) Role: Carry out contract duties, including helping to build capacity of consortia-appointed Anchors and CLASS Designees, developing resources, and carrying out process to control drift. In addition, Master Anchors check in with ERSI and Teachstone about consortia questions and disseminate details regarding consortia information, agreements, and clarifications.

b) Certification: State Master Anchors are certified by ERSI at 90 percent or higher reliability on each of the three ERS tools, and to 80 percent by Teachstone for each of the CLASS tools.

c) Responsibilities in State Assessor Management System: State Master Anchors will work with regional ERS Anchors and CLASS Designees to conduct training, support drift testing, and manage development and dissemination of resources.

- State Master Anchors will reduce consortia costs associated with ERSI and Teachstone reliability training by:
  - Certifying, and annually recertifying, reliability of regional ERS Anchors on ERS family of tools in lieu of ERSI/authors, as needed
  - Providing advice and support for regional ERS Anchors as they train and certify local assessors
  - Providing observation training to regional CLASS Designees on Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K tools as needed
- State Master Anchors will reduce assessor drift by:
  - Organizing ERS drift testing with regional ERS Anchors
  - Coordinating CLASS online calibration for regional CLASS Designees, at a minimum
  - Providing information and support to regional ERS Anchors and CLASS Designees to carry out drift testing activities with consortia assessors
- State Master Anchors will conduct in-person and web-based trainings and meetings with regional ERS Anchors and CLASS Designees to support capacity building and consensus building on conducting observations and use of tools. As a result of these and other Consortia communications, resources and other written guidance will be developed and distributed to the Consortia.

2. Regional ERS Anchor

The regional Anchor is the consortium-designated individual who is authorized to certify reliability of ERS assessors at level one and level two.

a. Role: Each consortium may have its own person/people in this role, or several consortia may elect to share a regional ERS Anchor. They may have one Anchor for all three ERS tools or three different Anchors – one for each tool.

   The regional ERS Anchor will work with State Master Anchor on ERS-related clarifications, policies, etc. The regional Anchor may also conduct assessments.

b. Certification: Regional ERS Anchors must be certified "reliable" at the Anchor level achieving at least 90 percent reliability (average) over three consecutive assessments with ERSI or a State Master Anchor.

   Local consortia determine required skills and experience of the regional ERS Anchor. Assessor Management Workgroup members suggested the Regional Anchor should have soft skills and cultural competence. Consortia suggest experiences include evidence of ability to assess in different types of sites and multiple years of ERS assessment experience.

c. Responsibilities in Statewide Anchor Management System:

   - Participate in Consortia-wide Anchor Learning Communities held via conference call. (Regional Anchor or consortia Designee)

   - Participate in regularly scheduled training workshops. These meetings may be statewide or regional at the discretion of the Master Anchors and will be held no more frequently than quarterly. (Regional Anchor or consortia Designee)

   Consortia may give the regional ERS Anchor authority to:

   - Train and certify level one assessors to 90 percent reliability and level two assessors to 85 percent reliability

   - Coordinate ERS drift testing for level one and level two ERS assessors

   - Review reports written by level one and two assessors

   - Train classroom staff based on ERS-related items in the Quality Improvement Plan

   - Train coaches on ERS

ERS Drift Testing is one-day, live double coding led by an ERS Anchor or level one ERS assessor. Drift testing includes one site visit and the minimum frequency of drift testing is every six months, or at least once between annual recertification.

Maximum group size for drift testing is:

- ITERS-R – Anchor plus three assessors
- ECERS-R – Anchor plus three assessors
- FCCERS-R – Anchor plus two assessors

Assessors must demonstrate reliability (local Anchors and level one assessors – 90 percent; assessors – 85 percent) during drift testing to continue to assess using the ERS tool. Assessors have up to three opportunities to pass drift testing. Between drift tests, assessors may receive technical assistance from Master Anchor or local Anchor to support success. Local consortia determine next steps after third failed attempt at reliability during drift testing.

3. Level One and Level Two ERS Assessors

All assessors must be external (or independent), and have certification showing reliability to assess or other such documentation, and experience (see CLASS and ERS for specific definitions).

- An independent assessor is a trained and reliable person or entity who is not part of the program being assessed.
- A reliable assessor is a person with experience in the child development field who is trained to evaluate child care programs using the particular instrument.

Assessors attend thorough trainings to learn about using the scales/instrument to measure the quality of child care programs and complete multiple practice observations. Initial training of assessors must be by an author or an Anchor. Assessors are deemed reliable when they closely match scores of an Anchor (experience reliable "expert" assessor responsible for score interpretation) and must maintain their reliability in accordance with the tools' authors.

The minimum required reliability and annual re-certification for ERS assessors is 85 percent agreement (within one point) with the consensus scores of an Anchor or Level one observer across three consecutive ratings.

a. Role: Level one and level two ERS assessors carry out assessment on appropriate tool(s) and complete reports, as applicable for each consortium.

b. Certification: Level one and level two ERS assessors may be trained by ERSI or by the regional ERS Anchor.

- Level one ERS assessors must achieve 90 percent reliability across three consecutive assessments, and complete drift testing with regional Anchor.

- Level two ERS assessors must achieve 85 percent reliability across three consecutive assessments, and complete drift testing with regional Anchor or level one assessor.

c. Responsibilities: In Statewide Anchor Management System, local consortia may authorize assessors to carryout responsibilities based on their level.

- Level one ERS assessors the authority to:

  - Complete ERS assessments

  - Carry out drift testing with level two ERS assessors

  - Review reports written by level two ERS assessors

- Level two ERS assessors the authority to:

  - Complete ERS assessments

  - Create observation reports, as directed by local consortia

Level one ERS assessor is an optional role in this system; some consortia may choose to not distinguish between level one and level two ERS assessors.

4. County Consortia/Regional CLASS Designee

a. Role: The regional CLASS Designee will work with State Master Anchors on CLASS-related clarifications, policies, etc. The regional CLASS Designee may conduct drift testing by live double coding and conduct training for other CLASS observers if certified by Teachstone as an Affiliate Trainer.
Each consortium may have its own person/people in this role, or several consortia may share a regional CLASS Designee. Different people may fill the roles of Designee and trainer.

b. Certification: At a minimum, the consortia/regional CLASS Designee should be a reliable CLASS observer and maintain annual certification through Teachstone.

c. Responsibilities in Statewide Anchor Management System (if authorized by local consortia):

- Conduct observer trainings and introduction to CLASS® trainings according to Teachstone affiliate agreement if certified by Teachstone as an Affiliate Trainer

- Review reports written by CLASS observers

5. CLASS Observers

a. Role: Carry out assessment on applicable age-level tool(s) and complete report, as applicable for each consortium.

b. Certification: Proof of valid certification from Teachstone demonstrating current reliability on applicable tool. In addition, CLASS observers must participate in CLASS drift testing (calibration) either through live double coding or online calibration.

c. Responsibilities in Statewide Anchor Management System:

- Complete CLASS observations

- Create observation reports, as directed by consortium

CLASS Drift Testing is conducted every six months, or one time between annual recertification. CLASS drift testing may be carried in one of two ways:

- Online calibration during assigned period of time, code one 20-minute video and achieve at least 80 percent reliability. If applicable, must also participate in a one-hour webinar debrief.

- Live Double-Code with an experienced CLASS-certified assessor identified by consortium.

Observers must demonstrate reliability during drift testing to continue to observe using the CLASS tool. Observers have up to three opportunities to meet 80 percent reliability during drift testing. Between drift tests, observers may receive technical assistance from State Master Anchor or local CLASS Designee to support success. Local consortia determine next steps after third failed attempt at drift test reliability.

Recommended Protocol for Conducting Live Observations in California's Quality Rating and Improvement System

(Updated November 2015)

This document is a compilation of best and promising practices in conducting Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) observations from California's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Consortia and other states implementing Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).

The information contained in this document is recommended for use with the ERS and CLASS for the purposes of QRIS rating, and is intended to support information in the RTT–ELC Consortia Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) Consortia Implementation Guide (RTT–ELC Implementation Guide). Please review the RTT–ELC Implementation Guide for assessor qualification requirements.

This protocol includes recommendations for:

I. Scheduling the Observation

II. Getting Ready for the Observation

III. Tips for a Successful Observation

IV. Tool-Specific Scoring Tips

V. At the End of the Observation

Always check with the county/agency that hired you to conduct the observation about local guidelines and practices for setting up observations and communicating with early learning settings (e.g., confirmation letter, interview questions, tip sheets, parent information/consent forms)

Acronyms used in this document:

CLASS – Classroom Assessment Scoring System ECERS – Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale ERS – Environment Rating Scale
FCCERS – Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale FCCH – Family Child Care Home

ITERS – Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale

I. Scheduling the Observation

To the extent possible, schedule observations at least two weeks in advance. Schedule the observation with the Center Director or Family Child Care Owner. Please note, the RTT-ELC Implementation Guide requires scheduling be at the program (site) level and that randomly selected classrooms are not notified until the day of observation.

a. Collect the following information for the early learning setting and every classroom in advance of the visit. Confirm information for selected classrooms on the day of the visit.

- Early Learning Setting:
  - The address, name of center director or family child care owner/operator, phone number, fax, and contact e-mail
  - The program cycle/year and operating hours
  - Parking and other logistics
- Every Classroom:
  - Names (first and last) of lead teachers and regular staff, including their title or role (for example, Brenda Smith, lead teacher; Juan Corlado, assistant teacher)
  - Number of children enrolled in each classroom and the birth date of the oldest and youngest child enrolled in each classroom
  - Language(s) spoken in each classroom (if language other than English, ask, “What percentage of time is the language spoken in the classroom?”)
  - Any special circumstances impacting the classroom(s)
  - Daily routine/schedule (request schedule be e-mailed or faxed to you, if possible)

b. Agree upon a date or scheduling window for the observation. Base the arrival and departure time on the site schedule. Prior to finalizing an assessment date, confirm the following information:

- The date of scheduled observation or assessment window will be a “typical work day” (e.g., not a holiday celebration, field trip, special event)
- Most of the children (more than half) enrolled are likely to be present

c. Confirm the type of assessment to be conducted (ERS or CLASS®) and age level(s) as they relate to the specific tool. ERS and CLASS observations should be conducted separately. Explain the specific assessment conducted is based on the age group of children present.

- CLASS:
  - Infant CLASS is used if the majority of children present are 15 months or younger (but can be used in classrooms with children up to 18 months)
  - Toddler CLASS is used if the majority of children present are 15 – 36 months
  - Pre-K CLASS is used if the majority of children present are 3 – 5 years old.
  - In classrooms with mixed ages, refer to the RTT–ELC Implementation Guide for CLASS observation protocol.
- ERS:
  - Use ITERS if the majority of children present are birth to 2.5 years.
  - Use ECERS if the majority of children present are 2–5 years old.
  - Always use FCCERS in family child care home settings.

d. Explain the observation timeframe and expectations:

- The observer will be at the site at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the observation time.

  Because the RTT–ELC Implementation Guidelines require random selection of classrooms, 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 if an ERS observation and between 2-½ and 3 hours if a CLASS observation.

- During an ERS visit, the observer will interview the lead teacher for 30–40 minutes after the observation, if available (if not available, schedule a time to do the interview).

- Let the director/owner know about additional information that may be sent ahead of time, such as a confirmation letter, interview questions, tip sheets, parent information/consent forms, or other information).

e. Confirm the appointment. Many counties have letters or other information about what to send to confirm the appointment. If none exist, at minimum, send a confirmation letter or e-mail including:

- Your contact information along with date and time of scheduled observation
- Reminder to contact you in case of a last minute conflict or illness that might prevent you from observing on the scheduled day/time
- Reminder to maintain a typical day

II. Getting Ready for the Observation

a. Approximately two days in advance, contact the site to confirm observation appointments and verify participants will be present.

b. Print map and directions.

c. Gather materials to take notes and score accurately, including:

- Clipboard with materials (i.e., pencils, erasers, notepaper, stopwatch); if ERS observation, also bring tape measure, circle templates, and probe.
- Tool-specific books and materials:
  - CLASS – Age appropriate CLASS manual and score sheets
  - ERS – Score Book, score sheets, and *All About*… book. Also bring:
    - Up-to-date clarifications (should be taped into score book)
    - Hand Washing Procedures
    - Diapering Procedures
    - Table Washing Procedures
    - Meal Guidelines
    - Playground Guidelines
- Other observer/consortium-specific tools such as interview questions, checklists, or other guides.

d. Review your CLASS Manual or ERS Score Book and All About ECERS/ITERS.

III. Tips for a Successful Observation

- Travel light. Bring as little as possible into the environment. Programs are already stretched for space. The goal is to be as unobtrusive as possible. Consider leaving valuables at home or locked in a trunk.

- Dress appropriately. Dress in a way that does not draw undue attention. Dress professionally, but comfortably. Don't wear anything that could be considered provocative, such as a low cut top or clothing that reveal undergarments. Simple, modest, and comfortable clothing is best.

- Allow plenty of time to arrive at least 15 minutes early. Verify the information (from section I. a.) about the classrooms selected for the observation with the office administrator, director, or teacher/provider. If conducting an ERS observation, confirm when teachers will be available after the observation for your questions.

- Verify the dominant language of classroom instruction. The observer for both ERS and CLASS® must speak the dominant language of classroom instruction.

- Respect program expectations. Programs have different rules and expectations such as washing hands upon entering or taking shoes off inside. Be mindful of these expectations and follow them when asked.

- Remind teachers to maintain a typical day. Stress it is important they not try to show you specific content or activities as this will no longer be a typical day and the children's behaviors will not be typical.

- Limit your interaction with staff and children during the observation. The less the assessor disturbs the classroom, the better they can observe a typical day.

- Invite open communication. Observing some interactions requires close proximity to see and hear. This can be interpreted as invasive at times, unless you discuss this need with participants and work out an arrangement that meets both your needs. At the beginning of the observation, invite staff to give you feedback about your placement. If you are told that you are too close, do your best to reposition yourself where you are still able to capture the interactions.

- Remember to silence your cell phone.

- Remain polite and courteous throughout the visit. Be sure to document the observation date and the beginning and end times of each observation period on the score sheets.

- If children approach you during the observation, be kind but limit your interaction.

You might say, “It is my job to write notes about what I see.” Tell children you cannot play with them.

- Keep notes close to you at all times. Turn your notepad over when necessary and be sure to take everything with you if using the restroom**.** Do not allow the participant or any other adults in the classroom to view your notes.

- Please remember you are a mandated reporter. Report signs of child abuse or neglect to the site director and the agency for which you are observing. Seek guidance about next steps.

- The following are possible reasons a randomly selected classroom may either need to be rescheduled or a back-up may need to be used (check local consortium guidelines and practices to verify these and other exceptions):

    - The lead teacher of record is absent.

    - The majority of the usual teaching team is absent (Check against information collected when scheduling the observation).

    - Fewer than half of enrolled children are present. (Check against information collected when scheduling the observation.)

    - Field trip, other school event, or unusual circumstance (e.g.,. power failure, broken pipes, severe weather, emergency or illness causing observer or provider/ lead teacher to leave, etc.) disrupts the usual classroom routine.

    - An emergency or illness that prevents you from conducting the observation.

IV. Tool-Specific Scoring Tips CLASS Observation

- Schedule observations for the morning hours, beginning after most children have arrived. If a participant works in an afternoon only preschool, schedule the observation at the beginning of the children’s day.

- 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.

- Begin the first cycle when regular teachers and most of the children are present. (In some programs, different staff cares for children prior to the start of the “school day.”)

- Code all types of interactions, including transition in the classroom, small group, large group, choice time, snack, lunch, and outdoor time (as long as it is not supervised “free play”). Remain objective, do not let personal experiences or values influence coding, and be careful not to be influenced by prior cycles.

- Provide specific examples from the CLASS manual to support your codes using the language of the indicators.

- If children go outside during the observation period, continue observing. Outdoor environments are as important to learning as indoor classrooms and teacher-child interactions should be observed.

- Refer to your CLASS manual about coding in classrooms with more than one teacher/adult and how to weigh contributions of each adult when assigning scores.

ERS Scoring Tips

- During the observation, remember to:

  - Closely observe each handwashing event.

  - Closely observe each toileting and diapering procedure.

  - Look through and count materials accessible to children.

  - Closely observe interactions between teachers and children.

  - Take notes on your score sheet.

  - Observe all indoor and outdoor spaces accessible to children.

- Use a chart to keep fairly accurate count of certain ongoing events such as greeting and departures or handwashing. For example, a chart for handwashing after toileting might look like this:

1	×	*Water only*
2	✓	*Thorough*
3	×	*T doesn't check*
4	×	*Same sink*

- Interview the lead teacher immediately following the observation to answer any questions required of the classroom observation tools. An alternate teacher may be interviewed, if the lead teacher is not available. Check local county/consortia guidelines about post-observation interviews. Unless otherwise directed by local guidelines, the observer may:

  - Conduct an interview with the program director or site supervisor.

  - Conduct interviews at another time, on another day, or by phone to allow flexibility.

V. At the End of the Observation

- At the conclusion of your observation, thank participants for allowing you to observe the classroom.

- Do not share any information about the observation. Please inform participants you were able to gather the information you needed for the observation. Do not offer suggestions for improvement or other comments, whether positive or negative.

- If participants ask any questions about the observation, the report, coaching and training, etc., refer them to their California's Quality Rating and Improvement System Lead Agency.

Appreciate all program staff. Remember, teachers are made anxious by having an observer in their environment. At the end of your observation, make sure to use polite language and thank them for allowing you to visit and let them know you enjoyed the time you spent in their classroom. Your statement can be made to each participant without revealing any of the scores assigned.

- Ensure no personal belongings or data are left behind.