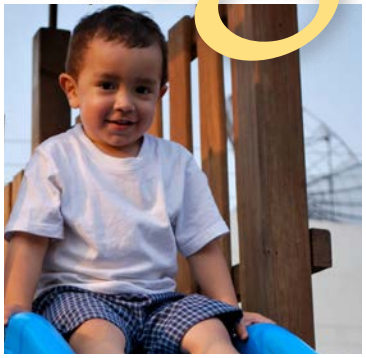
Bridges

e-journal



A Message from
the California Head Start State Collaboration Office

Marguerite Ries, *Director*
Stephanie Myers, *Coordinator*

The **California Head Start State Collaboration Office (CHSSCO)** exists to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low-income children from birth to school entry, and their families (Head Start Act, Section 642(B)(a)(2)(A)). The CHSSCO also provides a structure and a process for the Office of Head Start to partner with state agencies. Head Start and Early Head Start programs support the mental, social, and emotional development of children from birth to age five from low-income families so that children will be ready for school (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs).

The CHSSCO coordinator works in partnership as a member of Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge grant (RTT–ELC) Implementation Team and as a part of the RTT–ELC Integrated Action Team. The RTT–ELC Implementation Team meets and provides direction for grant activities, ensures federal reporting requirements are met, and supports the Consortia in their work. The Consortia consists of 17 regional leadership agencies in various regions throughout California that carry out the same goals of improving quality in early programs and working to mentor other communities. Work at the state level to support the Consortia is accomplished through meetings (in-person and through teleconference calls), workgroups, and quarterly statewide meetings. The Integrated Action Team is composed of various participating state

(Continued on page 2)

In This Issue

The *Bridges* e-journal is available exclusively online. With input from the California Department of Education (CDE), the California Head Start–State Collaboration Office Advisory Committee, and Head Start Programs across California, the *Bridges* e-journal provides Web links, photographs, diagrams, and resources to share with staff members and colleagues.

CALIFORNIA HEAD START–STATE COLLABORATION OFFICE

Bridges is produced by the California Head Start—State Collaboration Office (CHSSCO), which was created to promote partnerships between Head Start and the larger child care and development community at the state and local levels. *Bridges* is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, and the California Department of Education. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department. CHSSCO is located in the Early Education and Support Division, 1430 N Street. Suite 3410, Sacramento, CA 95814.

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ORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

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CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES

California Head Start Association

Pamm Shaw, President

This issue of *Bridges* focuses on California's RTT–ELC programs. Race to the Top builds upon local and statewide successes to create sustainable capacity at the local level and addresses the geographic and cultural diversity of California. This approach best meets the needs of our early learners, especially those with the highest needs. To achieve its ambitious goal, California is using most of the funding to support successful local efforts aimed at improved outcomes for children with high needs by implementing local quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs). California is working on five federal RTT–ELC reform areas:

- Successful State Systems
- High-Quality, Accountable Programs (e.g., the QRIS)
- Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children
- A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce
- Measuring Outcomes and Progress Accomplishments

We hope all of your programs are participating in local consortia, the QRIS, or the myriad of opportunities this funding and support bring.

A Message from ... *(Continued from page 1)*

agencies and meets quarterly. The CHSSCO will continue to support and work with the state agency team as it moves forward with statewide initiatives related to quality rating and improvement for all programs, including Head Start programs.

This issue focuses on the RTT–ELC funding for partners throughout California, and it introduces the new opportunities for ongoing quality and improvement in state early education.

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS
CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

A Message from . . . the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge State Leadership Team

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The Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) initiative was announced on May 25, 2011, by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. State-level grants worth a total of $500 million are awarded to states that create comprehensive plans to transform early learning systems for children, birth to age five, with better coordination and assessment mechanisms, clearer learning standards, and meaningful workforce development and family engagement initiatives.

California was originally awarded $52.6 million and (in July 2013) received a supplemental award of $22.4 million, bringing the total award amount to $75 million, the largest award of any state. Approximately 77 percent of California's RTT–ELC grant funding is spent at the local level to support a voluntary network of early learning programs.

California's RTT–ELC grant takes a unique approach that builds upon the state's local and statewide successes to create sustainable capacity at the local level to meet the needs of our early learners (from birth to age five), especially those with the highest needs. California's plan supports a locally driven quality improvement process that builds on existing successes and investment while creating sustainable capacity at the local level.

The California Department of Education (CDE) is the lead agency for California's RTT–ELC grant and is responsible for overall grant administration and project monitoring. Staff members from the CDE's Early Education and Support Division (formerly the Child Development Division) and First 5 California (F5CA) serve as the RTT–ELC State Implementation Team. Together they provide facilitation of state-level workgroup meetings, local technical assistance and support, and fiscal and programmatic oversight of the Regional Leadership Consortia (Consortia).

The objective of the RTT–ELC grant is to improve the quality of early learning programs and close the achievement gap for children with high needs . . .

The Consortia membership covers 16 counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Ventura, and Yolo. Approximately 2.3 million children under five years of age are in these counties, which represents almost 95 percent of the total number of children from birth to age five in California. With the supplemental funds, the Consortia extended support to 14 mentee counties: Imperial, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Nevada, Placer, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Sierra, Stanislaus, and Tulare.

Each county-level consortium[1] is led by an established organization that already operates or is developing a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). The local QRIS model has three common tiers across the Consortia. The federal application defines a tiered QRIS as:

> The system through which the State uses a set of progressively higher Program Standards to evaluate the quality of an Early Learning and Development Program and to support program improvement. A Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System consists of four components: (a) tiered Program Standards with multiple rating categories that clearly and meaningfully differentiate program quality levels; (b) monitoring to evaluate program quality based on the Program Standards; (c) supports to help programs meet progressively higher standards (e.g., through training, technical assistance, financial support); and (d) program quality ratings that are publicly available; and includes a process for validating the system.

1. When reference is made to a single county QRIS consortium or several of them, *consortium* or *consortia* is used. When the entire Regional Leadership Consortia is referenced, *Consortia* is used.

(Continued on page 4)

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC) CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

the Race to the Top… *(Continued from page 3)*

The objective of the RTT–ELC grant is to improve the quality of early learning programs and close the achievement gap for children with high needs, as defined in the federal application:

> Children from birth through kindergarten entry who are from low-income families or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, including children who have disabilities or developmental delays; who are English learners; who reside on "Indian lands" as that term is defined by Section 8013(6) of the ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act]; who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care; and other children as identified by the State.

To address this school-readiness gap, the RTT–ELC grant identified high priorities for both strengthening the quality of early learning and development programs and increasing access to them, especially for children with high needs.

Some areas of reform are being addressed by participating state agencies in the following ways:

- The California Department of Social Services is using RTT–ELC funds to enhance the Community Care Licensing Web site to include educational and training materials for consumers (families) and child care providers.
- The California Department of Developmental Services is using RTT–ELC funds to support the coordination of training for early intervention program staff and the implementation of best practices in developmental and health screening at the local level in collaboration with the Consortia.
- F5CA is using RTT–ELC funds to ensure that each consortium has a comprehensive system for rating and monitoring participant early learning sites by providing increased support for assessments, cross-Consortia assessor reliability training for Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™)[2] and ERS[3] assessors.

> *. . . the RTT–ELC grant identified high priorities for both strengthening the quality of early learning and development programs and increasing access to them, especially for children with high needs.*

In other instances, the CDE has established a contract for specific services. For example, the WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention provides training for Consortia members on the use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the questionnaire for the social–emotional domain, and appropriate referral follow-up. The WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies created the Web site California Early Childhood Online (https://www.caearlychildhoodonline.org) and developed online overviews of the California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, the Preschool Learning Foundations and respective Frameworks, the Desired Results Developmental Profile, and overview of the CCSEFEL[4] Teaching Pyramid.

WestEd also built a network of regional CCSEFEL trainers and coaches and is supporting the faithful implementation of the CCSEFEL Teaching Pyramid with interested sites in each local consortium. The Curriculum Alignment Project, managed by the Child Development Training Consortium (CDTC), is expanding the Early Learning core curricula at California community colleges by facilitating and coordinating unit-based course alignment for three child development content areas: infant/toddler, children with special needs, and program administration. The University of California, Berkeley, collects kindergarten entry assessment information: namely, the Desired Results Developmental Profile–Kindergarten (DRDP–K) results, ensuring that the data can be connected to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS).

Lastly, the American Institutes of Research conducted a validation evaluation of the Consortia's local QRISs (http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/rt/documents/airhalftermreport.pdf) and is assessing the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children's learning, development, and school readiness. All of these projects, including the evaluation, help to build California's system of high-quality early learning programs and its workforce.

The RTT–ELC Implementation Team is now engaging the Consortia in addressing sustainability. All counties

2. Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™) family of tools.
3. Environment Rating Scales (ERS) family of tools.
4. California Collaborative for the Social–Emotional Foundations of Early Learning.

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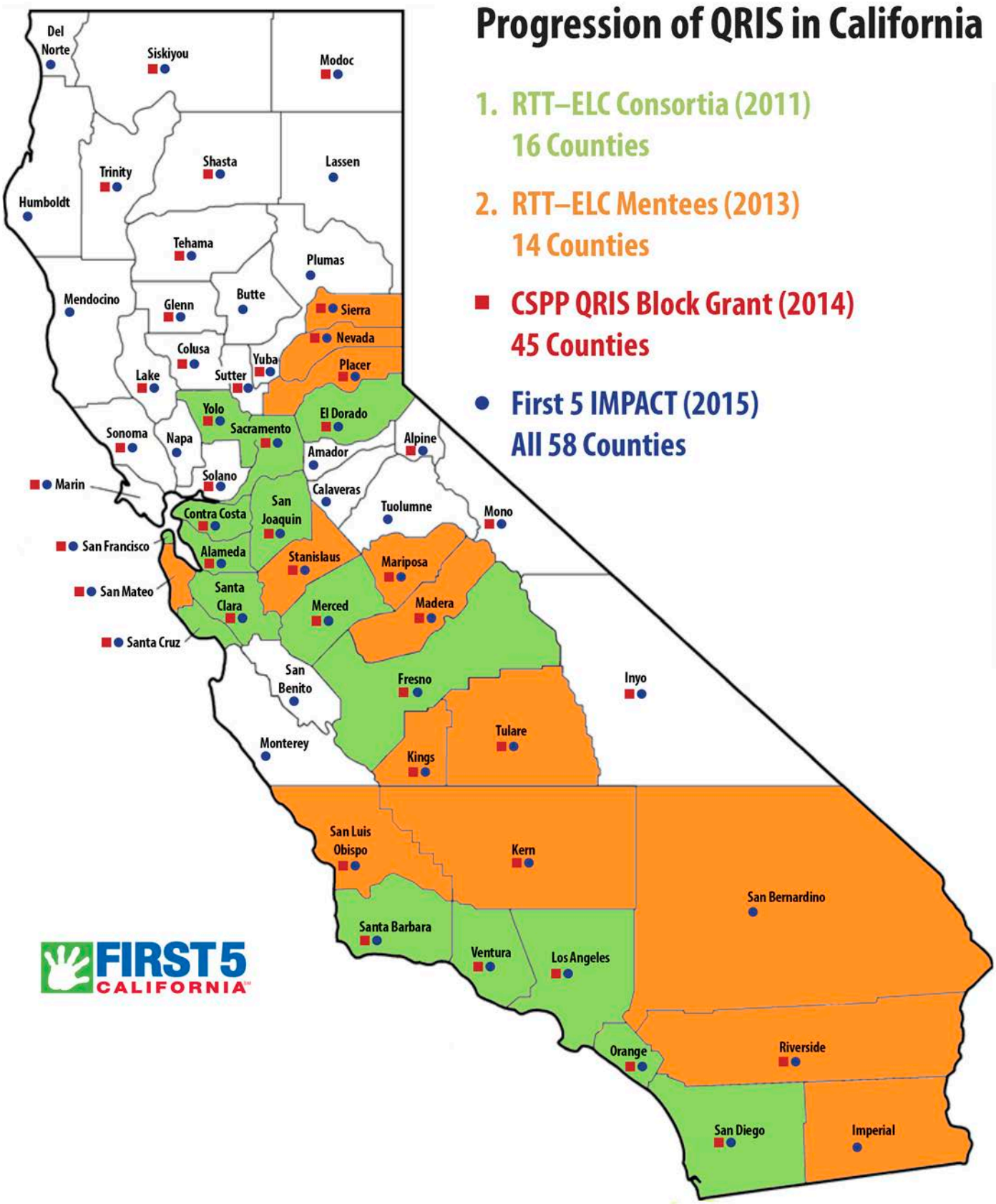
CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)



Community and Provider Capacity Building

ARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

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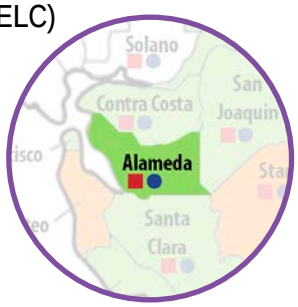
ALAMEDA



YMCA of the Central Bay Area and RTT–ELC
Pamm Shaw, *Executive Director*
YMCA of the Central Bay Area Early Childhood Services
Malia Ramler, *Senior Administrator*
First 5 Alameda County

We are fortunate to be in a county that participates in the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (RTT–ELC) grant. One of our centers participated in the pilot project to implement a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) two years ago. This past year, the rest of our centers joined in. We learned a lot in the two years of the pilot. Although Head Start centers, in general, tend to score higher than most programs, there was still a lot to improve upon.

Independent assessments of the centers were conducted. Although staff members complete the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale/Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) as well as ongoing monitoring and self-assessment activities each year, an independent assessment brought a new and different perspective to the program. It was wonderful to be validated for the good work staff is doing, but also important to keep ourselves open to critical improvements needed—especially with the Head Start monitoring process so focused on health and safety.

Although our program complies with Head Start Performance Standards, CDE Funding Terms and Conditions, and Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements, the assessors found some areas related to health and safety that could still be improved. Coaches were assigned to work with the staff, developing individual classroom and center level plans focusing on health, safety and environmental improvements. A small amount of funding was available to help.

Staff members have attended trainings and received on-site coaching. The coaches work closely with site staff as well as our administrative staff to ensure timely follow-up and appropriate expenditure of the funds as indicated in the plan.

As a full-day, full-year program, it is always challenging to find time to train staff members and infuse the RTT–ELC components into the existing structure. A good match with the coach is important to ensure the plan really reflects what is needed in the center. The benefits of QRIS are as follows:

- It allowed the teaching staff members time and space to think together about their strengths and areas of growth and come up with plans for improvement.
- It raised awareness of resources and networks in the county that staff can obtain.
- It helped make improvements to our program, big and small. Teachers have reported that CLASS videotaping and coaching have been a valuable experience.

Because of our participation in this system and our state preschool funding, we look forward to additional funding this year for staff support and training. Staff members are proud of the work they do and deservedly so!

the Race to the Top ... *(Continued from page 4)*

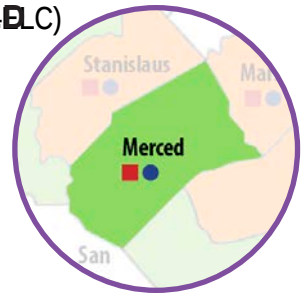
(except for San Diego County) have extended their grants until June 2016. Additionally, all counties participating as an RTT–ELC consortium are recipients of the California State Preschool Program QRIS Block Grant, although the lead agencies are often different entities from those leading the RTT–ELC. This block grant allows local consortia to transition more easily from the sunsetting of the RTT–ELC grant and the F5CA Child Signature Program to QRISs that have California State Preschool Program QRIS Block Grant funding and F5CA's IMPACT (Improve and Maximize Programs so All Children Thrive) funding.

The decisions regarding the QRIS Rating Matrix and the Continuous Quality Improvement Pathways resources and tools will inform California's efforts moving forward. The team knows that change takes time and in order to make the changes, trust and relationships at all levels need to be built. The team also realized the vibrancy of the local QRISs, their engagement of providers, and that the development of assessor and technical assistance/coaches would not have been as robust in the last four years if it had been a top-down process. Rather, the exchange between local leaders and the state team has created a dynamic model for future implementation of new ideas. California now has a common understanding of what constitutes quality early learning based on a collective of invested individuals and agencies that seek to improve the outcomes for California's youngest learners rather than the result of one organization or department.

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

Quality Counts!



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Early Head Start/Head Start

In 2005, Merced County participated in the Power of Preschool Program (PoP), which was funded by First 5 California/First 5 Merced County and was administered by First 5 Merced County. In 2010, Merced County extended its participation in the initiative through the PoP bridge by adding infants and toddlers to a model that previously had been focused on children three and four years old. This work began the early phases of a QRIS infrastructure in Merced County where the County Office of Education's Early Head Start program was one of the seven early education programs to participate.

Since December 2011, when Merced County Office of Education was selected as the lead agency for the RTT–ELC grant and First 5 Merced County's implementation of the Child Signature Program, the QRIS has changed and has propelled the Merced County early learning community to grapple with the development of a comprehensive system for all licensed settings, including Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Merced County has branded its RTT–ELC and all QRIS initiatives as *Quality Counts!*

The developmental process for a QRIS has been intellectually and complicated because of the various program requirements in a diverse delivery system in Merced County. Because of the ambitious targets required in the implementation of RTT–ELC at the county level, it was essential that:

- all state- and federally funded and family child care providers participate;
- there would be intentional efforts to align the activities of RTT–ELC and the California Signature Program wherever possible;
- the collective intent of these initiatives would complement program requirements and goals of the participating programs.

Here is where challenges were identified for Early Head Start/Head Start participation and where also great opportunities arose for growth in areas of quality.

The *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) and collaboration of Early Head Start/Head Start resulted in challenges that were typical for most, if not all of the participating programs. The reluctance of teaching staff members to have a coach working with them was an initial challenge. Teachers were nervous about the process of having someone observe their teaching and that they would be told they were "doing wrong." As a result, teachers would cancel meetings or not show up at coaching sessions. Coaches needed several sessions to begin building trust and to gain "buy-in" of the coaching process. The behaviors identified another challenge: the need for supervisors to also approve of the process and encourage teachers to actively participate, support teachers with schedule modifications (when possible), and facilitate classroom coverage for teachers. A culture of quality needed to be created throughout the program.

Teachers were also concerned about the breach of confidentiality during coaching sessions, which required coaches to, yet again, evaluate the culture of quality Early Head Start/Head Start, the purpose for coaching, and the role of the coach through participation in *Quality Counts!* Teaching staff members understood this was not an evaluative process, but rather an improvement process.

In addition to the teaching staff members who were reluctant to accept coaching, there were teachers who were actively engaged and desired to improve their teaching techniques. They wanted more time for coaching sessions, and meeting that demand was also difficult. The range of engagement by teachers suggested that no two teachers were alike, and it was essential that teachers were comfortable with the process. Given the high numbers of staff in the Early Head Start/Head Start program, supporting individual understanding on tools such as CLASS, which is used programwide and is an element in the *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) quality continuum framework, required creative approaches to ensure all staff members have

(Continued on page 8)

Merced/Quality Counts!... *(Continued from page 7)*

a comprehensive understanding of the tool and the competencies to implement it with fidelity.

At this point, challenges were identified related to the requirements for highly qualified staff. Because of the mandated qualifications for Early Head Start/Head Start staff and those defined in the *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) framework, training and technical assistance activities had to be creative in supporting professional growth of existing staff.

Early Head Start/Head Start supports the teaching staff by providing assistance with tuition fees to complete child development units. Early Head Start/Head Start and *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) are both committed to supporting the high standard of teacher qualifications and promoting recruitment efforts that increase the number of teachers entering the early education field with bachelor degrees concentrated in early education/child development.

Since the collaborative efforts between *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) and Early Head Start/Head Start, there has been substantial growth in many areas of the comprehensive services delivered to children and families in our community. Such efforts support each service area in Early Head Start/Head Start and are not limited to health, nutrition, education, disabilities, and parental involvement. *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) has allowed Early Head Start/Head Start to go deeper to analyze specific areas necessary to improve quality in preschool and infant/toddler settings. Early Head Start/Head Start program requirements are aligned with the *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) framework.

The implementation of improvement measures in the Early Head Start/Head Start program has resulted in growth in many areas. There have been increases in meaningful interactions, as measured through the CLASS tool. *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) has provided individualized coaching for teachers, resulting in improved knowledge of the CLASS tool overall. Early Head Start/Head Start and *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) have partnered in developing and delivering professional development opportunities with a focus on the CLASS tool. RTT–ELC has further supported the professional growth of Early Head Start/Head Start teaching staff through other professional development activities. These activities have not been targeted to teacher staff members only to increase their skills and expertise in early education.

Another effect has been the partnership with other community organizations and participating programs to create continuity among the early education programs in Merced County and among the staff members within those programs. The end result is a culture of quality across all program types. *Quality Counts!* (RTT–ELC) has created capacity to build reliable ERS and CLASS assessors who make up the teaching staff and management staff within Early Head Start/Head Start. Capacity-building efforts of this nature allows for a higher pool of reliable observers who can be used to conduct assessments in other program sites and enhances the knowledge of the tool to improve practices in the Early Head Start/Head Start program.

The RTT–ELC has established regular stakeholders meetings, where program directors come to the table to meet and intentionally discuss quality in a community and across program types. Together we have become a stronger community of early childhood education (ECE) professionals and while the work of *Quality Counts!* continues to be organic in nature, the ECE community remains excited about its potential for promoting quality as well as the potential for fostering a better understanding of what quality looks and sounds like in in our early education settings. Although Early Head Start/Head Start is not a direct participant of this California QRIS State Preschool Block Grant initiative that will continue the work of RTT in Merced County, there is an eagerness to see the direction of these efforts and the continued alignment between QRIS and First 5's IMPACT initiative. Early Head Start/Head Start will continue to sit at the table and be part of the conversations and remain engaged in the work of QRIS activities. Early Head Start/Head Start is invested in activities that improve experiences for children. Continuing to sit at the table with early education partners and supporting our community's implementation of a QRIS represents a small contribution in the formation of a culture of quality in early education settings in Merced County.

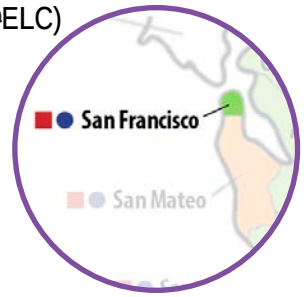
CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC) CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT-ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

SAN FRANCISCO



The "I" in QRIS

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Children Services Division

Ingrid Z. Mezquita, *Senior Program Officer*
First 5 San Francisco

The quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) has grown to include our entire Golden State. The initial federal grant Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge is winding down. It will be replaced with California's QRIS State Block Grant and First 5 California's IMPACT as a system driver for counties to adopt the QRIS. Before the QRIS, San Francisco's journey started over a decade ago. San Francisco's Preschool for All initiative was enacted in 2004 from a local ballot initiative and designed with quality benchmarks similar to what is now called the QRIS.

We understood that a strong foundation must be in place for early learning programs to have a meaningful experience with the QRIS. Preschool for All, locally resourced, provided that strong foundation and led the way for the QRIS to be the organizing framework in our county. Working on quality indicators that were benchmarked would require an approach that would support our systems of early learning and organizations that operated child development programs. Professional development, instructional coaching, and leadership development were part of the early groundwork, which later served as a catalyst to the current state of San Francisco's QRIS.

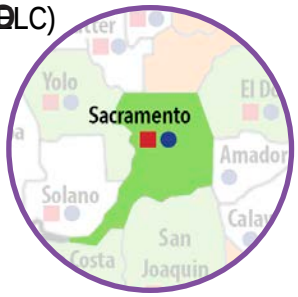
As part of this investment of resources and relationship building, First 5 San Francisco worked closely with its local Head Start community. We are proud of our Head Start grantees, Mission Neighborhood Centers, Kai Ming and Wu Yee Children Services. With all Head Start sites participating in the QRIS, we have been able to boast Tier 4 ratings or higher for all of them. The QRIS matrix is aligned with the Head Start Performance Standards, and it was not surprising when all San Francisco Head Start sites met the higher tier levels. The QRIS framework alone did not influence these changes. San Francisco is committed to better outcomes for children and has made significant investments in Head Start for the past decade. Funding to support continuous quality improvement and a rating system requires a long view. Sustained public investment, beyond what limited federal and/or state resources are able to provide at this time, is needed.

The San Francisco Head Start grantees' mission is to promote school readiness of young children from low-income households. Although Head Start and Early Head Start programs support the whole child from birth to age five, the leveraging of local resources for quality improvement and shared policy direction for these investments in San Francisco's Head Start community yielded high results. Success for our Head Start community resulted from a focus on creating (a) successful systems and high-quality and accountable programs, (b) promoting early learning outcomes for children, (c) investing in a committed early childhood education workforce, and (d) measuring outcomes.

The QRIS is an important vehicle for us to show our capacity to improve quality practices. However, to do this successfully, we want to make sure a strong foundation is in place beneath the programs serving children and families. San Francisco sees the QRIS as an opportunity for all of us in the field to move the needle on quality early learning for young children and to go from good to great.

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS
CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

SACRAMENTO



Race to the Top *Raises Quality* Together with SETA Head Start

Denise Lee, *Deputy Director*
Children and Family Services with the SETA Head Start/Early Head Start Program
Sacramento Employment and Training Agency

The Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) Head Start/Early Head Start proudly serves more than 7,000 families and their children, from birth to age five, each year. As providers of quality child development programs, SETA continues to seek exemplary practices and creative approaches to keep pace with the growing demands of accountability and evidential data. To do this, we are often faced with balancing the need for increased capacity within staff members and the need for keeping their sanity in the midst of change.

One way SETA continues to grow is by partnering with other agencies in the community. When the opportunity arose to participate in the countywide campaign for higher quality, SETA eagerly got in line.

In 2014, SETA registered 17 of its child development centers to participate in the RTT–ELC project. In partnership with the Sacramento County Office of Education, the SETA Head Start staff members embarked on a journey that would forever change the way they implemented curriculum and received feedback. As part of the project, RTT–ELC provided on-site professional development through observation and coaching. Staff members were able to obtain valuable feedback and resources to increase their teacher–child interactions and approaches to education and school readiness. Many Head Start staff members reported that they felt supported and built a strong, collaborative relationship with their coach consultant. Of course, the more that visits occurred consistently with a coach, the higher the outcome for the teacher.

In addition to individualized coaching, many Head Start staff members received access to professional development opportunities outside their regular work hours: workshops, conferences, reimbursement for college course work, and online resources. These opportunities assisted teachers in attaining professional growth hours to meet California Teacher Credentialing permit requirements. Staff members were also excited about the new knowledge and skills acquired through these activities. Teachers reported, “It was a great opportunity to participate in a professional development program that focused on raising program quality and access to college classes without out-of-pocket tuition.” Another shared, “The workshops were very informative, hands-on, and fun. I enjoyed how they shared their ideas on how to incorporate and improve science in the classroom.”

At the agency level, benefits included the provision of independent ratings on the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). These scores were integrated into the overall agency profiles and ratings. Because more than 200 preschool classrooms are in Sacramento County Head Start/Early Head Start programs, completing pre- and post-CLASS scores for each classroom can be a daunting task. Having data for the RTT centers allowed SETA to easily schedule internal and external CLASS observers in the rest of the program.

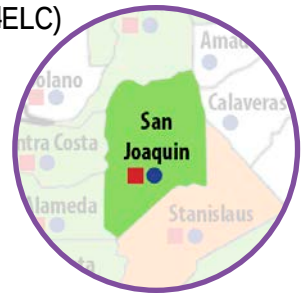
The quality rating improvement system (QRIS) funds were also leveraged to provide a countywide approach to implement the Teaching Pyramid. With the support of WestEd, SETA was able to train more than 300 grantee and delegate staff members through intensive cohorts, including coaching resources provided to all participants. SETA was also able to send two education leadership staff members through the certification process to become authorized Teaching Pyramid trainers. This allows SETA to sustain the training series and expand the number of cohorts for future staff. Participation in Race to the Top has definitely added value to the SETA Head Start program, its teachers, and ultimately the children and families. Together, we raise quality.

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT-ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

Quality Together

Lani Schiff-Ross, *Executive Director*
First 5 San Joaquin



During 2014 I had the amazing opportunity to serve as the interim delegate director of Head Start Child Development Council (HSCDC) in Stockton. After six months, I returned to my other job full-time as the First 5 San Joaquin executive director. One of my goals at the HSCDC was to promote the benefits of greater involvement with our Race to the Top/*Raising Quality! (RQ!)* program. Although Head Start programs were involved in our consortium meetings, due to various issues, they had not yet enrolled in our program.

> *I know that books seem like the ultimate thing that's made by one person, but that's not true. Every reading of a book is collaboration between the reader and the writer, who are making the story up together.*
> –John Green

In October 2014, bit by bit, sites started enrolling in *RQ!*, and soon we had 28 sites enrolled in *RQ!* Cathy Sprints, former HSCDC program supervisor and now First 5 San Joaquin contracts analyst, shared the following:

> *As a program supervisor for Head Start Child Development Center, Inc., one of my responsibilities was to monitor and enhance program quality. Once I knew more about the intention and support that Race to the Top/***Raising Quality!** *offered to programs, I put together a plan to bring* RQ! *to our programs. First, I met with program leadership, including program managers and the executive director, and explained how* RQ! *would help Head Start increase the quality of the program and received their commitment and support. Each program manager selected five programs they felt would receive the most benefit from* RQ! *(three sites had already enrolled in* RQ!*).*
>
> *Once enrollment was complete, I developed a schedule of monthly meetings for the cohort of 25 programs participating. The focus of the initial meeting with the program staff was to provide an overview of* RQ! *and to create timelines. The topics of the remaining meetings focused on the tools used in the Quality Continuum Matrix, including the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and CLASS. The ECERS was not an instrument that most staff members were familiar with, so several meetings focused on this tool. In these meetings, we looked at specific subscales and items in the scale and worked to better understand the intent and what/how they would be observed in the programs. Once ECERS observations had been conducted, we had a consultant come to meetings to discuss specifics about how the ECERS observation scores were achieved.*
>
> *Once programs received results of the ECERS and CLASS observations, as well as their overall tier rating, Quality Improvement Plans were developed for each site. Monthly updates were provided to the agency through e-mail communication and presentations at operations meetings and delegate policy council meetings.*

Because of the Designation Renewal System, the HSCDC no longer exists, but staff members have moved to various other partner agencies under two new Head Start grantees for the county. A former HSCDC program supervisor and now program administrator of one new grantee, Christina Short, Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK), shared the following:

> *Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other." This promise of community action is embedded in every Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK) program. San Joaquin County Early Head Start is the newest program to be administered by CAPK as the new grantee. Faced with a set of unique circumstances in taking over as grantee in an*

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San Juaquin/Quality Together … (Continued from page 11)

unfamiliar place, CAPK has the opportunity to re-invent a high-quality program for San Joaquin County. We are committed to promoting early learning and development outcomes for infants and toddlers by building on the strengths and capacity of our early childhood education workforce and strengthening our community partnerships.

We are interested in developing a strong partnership with First 5 San Joaquin and Race to the Top in order to coordinate efforts and have access to tools and resources necessary to raise quality in our center- and home-based programs. Through this partnership, we hope to support staff members who are in pursuit of degrees in child development/early childhood education as well as those in need of additional classes or training pertaining to infants and toddlers.

We also hope to invite fresh sets of eyes into our programs to offer feedback on the environment as well as the teacher–child interactions. This partnership will be a key component as we develop our school-readiness goals and work toward re-establishing Early Head Start in San Joaquin County as a high-quality program, accountable to its community and to its partners.

Our "book" on raising quality is truly a collaboration of people willing to start new chapters to promote quality for children and families.

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS
CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES[1]

CORE I: CHILD DEVELOPMENT & SCHOOL READINESS	
School Readiness	
Goal (Pathway)	All children receive individualized instruction and support for optimal learning and development informed by child observation and assessment data.
Related Element(s)	CORE I.1 Child Observation and Assessment
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	• CA Foundations and Frameworks: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp • Preschool English Learner Guide: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psenglearnersed2.pdf • Desired Results Developmental Profile Assessment (DRDP) Tools: http://desiredresults.us/ • National Data Quality Campaign's Framework: http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/ • Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ): http://agesandstages.com/
Social-Emotional Development	
Goal (Pathway)	Children receive support to develop healthy social and emotional concepts, skills, and strategies.
Related Element(s)	CORE I.2 Developmental and Health Screenings
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	• CA CSEFEL Teaching Pyramid Overview and Tiers 1-4 (Modules 1-3): • CA Foundations and Frameworks - Social-Emotional Development: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp • Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social Emotional (ASQ-SE): http://agesandstages.com/asq-products/asqse/
Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity	
Goal (Pathway)	• Children receive support for optimal physical development, including health, nutrition, and physical activity.
Related Element(s)	• CORE I.1 Child Observation and Assessment and Core 1.2 Developmental and Health Screenings
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	• CA Preschool Foundations and Frameworks– Health and Physical Development: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp • Infant/Toddler Program Guidelines: • CA Infant/Toddler Foundations and Frameworks-Perceptual/ Motor: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/cddpublications.asp • USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program Guidelines:
CORE II: Teachers and Teaching	
Effective Teacher-Child Interactions	
Goal (Pathway)	Teachers are prepared to implement effective interactions in the classroom.
Related Element(s)	CORE II.4 Effective Teacher-Child Interactions
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	• Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) for relevant age grouping: http://www.teachstone.com/the-class-system/ • Program for Infant-Toddler Care (PITC): http://www.pitc.org/pub/pitc_docs/home.csp. Program Assessment Rating Scale (PARS), as applicable and available * No current source Web page for PARS

[1] *This document accompanies the Hybrid Matrix as part of the Quality Continuum Framework. These are the tools and resources listed in the Federal application that the Consortia are required to include in their Quality Improvement plan. Data will be gathered regarding how these tools and resources are used by the Consortia. Optional companion tools will also be developed, including the Enhanced Pathways Continuum, Pathways Implementation Guide, and Additional Pathways Tools and Resources.*

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CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PATHWAYS

CORE TOOLS & RESOURCES

Professional Development	
Goal (Pathway)	Teachers are life-long learners.
Related Element(s)	Core II.3 Minimum Qualifications and Core II.4 Effective Teacher-Child Interactions
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	• Common Core 8[2]: http://www.childdevelopment.org/cs/cdtc/print/htdocs/services_cap.htm • Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competencies: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/ececomps.asp • ECE Competencies Self-Assessment Tool: http://ececompsat.org/ • Professional Growth Plan
CORE III: PROGRAM AND ENVIRONMENT	
Environment	
Goal (Pathway)	The program indoor and outdoor environments support children's learning and development.
Related Element(s)	CORE III.6 Program Environment Rating Scale(s) (ERS)
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	• Environment Rating Scales: http://www.ersi.info/index.html (Harms, Clifford, Cryer): o Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), o Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), o Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS)
Program Administration	
Goal (Pathway)	The program effectively supports children, teachers, and families.
Related Element(s)	All
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	• Business Administration Scale (Family Child Care) – (BAS): http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/program-evaluation/business-administration-scale-bas/ • Program Administration Scale (Centers) – (PAS): http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/program-evaluation/program-administration-scale-pas/ OR • Self-Assessment using the Office of Head Start (OHS) Monitoring Protocols http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/grants/monitoring/fy-2014-pdfs/fy-2014-ohs-monitoring-protocol.pdf and continuous improvement through a Program Improvement Plan (PIP)
Family Engagement	
Goal (Pathway)	Families receive family-centered, intentional supports framed by the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors to promote family resilience and optimal development of their children.
Related Element(s)	All (III.6 ERS *Provision for Parents* Indicator)
RTT-ELC Core Tool(s) & Resources	Strengthening Families™ Five Protective Factors Framework: http://icfs.org/pdf/FiveProtectiveFactors.pdf

California Department of Education
Adopted by Consortia on October 15, 2013

CALIFORNIA RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT–ELC)
QUALITY CONTINUUM FRAMEWORK –RATING MATRIX WITH ELEMENTS AND POINTS FOR CONSORTIA COMMON TIERS 1, 3, AND 4

ELEMENT	BLOCK (Common Tier 1) Licensed In-Good Standing	2 POINTS	3 POINTS	4 POINTS	5 POINTS
CORE I: CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL READINESS					
1. Child Observation	☐ Not required	☐ Program uses evidence-based child assessment/observation tool annually that covers all five domains of development	☐ Program uses valid and reliable child assessment/ observation tool aligned with CA *Foundations & Frameworks*[1] twice a year	☐ DRDP (minimum twice a year) and results used to inform curriculum planning	☐ Program uses DRDP twice a year and uploads into DRDP Tech and results used to inform curriculum planning
2. Developmental and Health Screenings	☐ Meets Title 22 Regulations	☐ Health Screening Form (Community Care *Licensing form LIC 701 "Physician's Report - Child Care Centers" or equivalent)* used at entry, then: 1. Annually OR 2. Ensures vision and hearing screenings are conducted annually	☐ Program works with families to ensure screening of all children using a **valid and reliable developmental screening tool** at entry and as indicated by results thereafter AND ☐ Meets Criteria from point level 2	☐ Program works with families to ensure screening of all children using the ASQ at entry and as indicated by results thereafter AND ☐ Meets Criteria from point level 2	☐ Program works with families to ensure screening of all children using the ASQ & ASQ-SE, if indicated, at entry, then as indicated by results thereafter AND ☐ Program staff uses children's screening results to make referrals and implement intervention strategies and adaptations as appropriate AND ☐ Meets Criteria from point level 2
CORE II: TEACHERS AND TEACHING					
3. Minimum Qualifications for Lead Teacher/ Family Child Care Home (FCCH)	☐ Meets Title 22 Regulations [Center: 12 units of Early Childhood Education (ECE)/Child Development (CD) FCCH: 15 hours of training on preventive health practices]	☐ Center: 24 units of ECE/CD[2] OR Associate Teacher Permit ☐ FCCH: 12 units of ECE/CD OR Associate Teacher Permit	☐ 24 units of ECE/CD + 16 units of General Education OR Teacher Permit AND ☐ 21 hours professional development (PD) annually	☐ Associate's degree (AA/AS) in ECE/CD (or closely related field) OR AA/AS in any field plus 24 units of ECE/CD OR Site Supervisor Permit AND ☐ 21 hours PD annually	☐ Bachelor's degree in ECE/CD (or closely related field) OR BA/BS in any field plus/with 24 units of ECE/CD (or Master's degree in ECE/CD) OR Program Director Permit AND ☐ 21 hours PD annually
4. Effective Teacher-Child Interactions: CLASS Assessments (*Use tool for appropriate age group as available)	☐ Not Required	☐ Familiarity with CLASS for appropriate age group as available by one representative from the site	☐ Independent CLASS assessment by reliable observer to inform the program's professional development/improvement plan	☐ Independent CLASS assessment by reliable observer with minimum CLASS scores: Pre-K ▪ Emotional Support - 5 ▪ Instructional Support –3	☐ Independent assessment with CLASS with minimum CLASS scores: Pre-K ▪ Emotional Support – 5.5 ▪ Instructional Support – 3.5 ▪ Classroom Organization – 5.5

[1] Approved assessments are: Creative Curriculum GOLD, Early Learning Scale by National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER), and Brigance Inventory of Early Development III.

[2] For all ECE/CD units, the core 8 are desired but not required.

Note: Point values are not indicative of Tiers 1-5 but reflect a range of points that can be earned toward assigning a tier rating (see Total Point Range).

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ELEMENT	BLOCK (Common Tier 1) Licensed In-Good Standing	2 POINTS	3 POINTS	4 POINTS	5 POINTS
				▪ Classroom Organization – 5 Toddler ▪ Emotional & Behavioral Support – 5 ▪ Engaged Support for Learning – 3.5 Infant ▪ Responsive Caregiving (RC) – 5.0	Toddler ▪ Emotional & Behavioral Support – 5.5 ▪ Engaged Support for Learning – 4 Infant ▪ Responsive Caregiving (RC) – 5.5
CORE III: PROGRAM AND ENVIRONMENT - Administration and Leadership					
5. Ratios and Group Size (Centers Only beyond licensing regulations)	☐ Center: Title 22 Regulations Infant Ratio of 1:4 Toddler Option Ratio of 1:6 Preschool Ratio of 1:12 ☐ FCCH: Title 22 Regulations *(excluded from point values in ratio and group size)*	☐ Center - Ratio: Group Size Infant/Toddler – 4:16 Toddler – 3:18 Preschool – 3:36	☐ Center - Ratio: Group Size Infant/Toddler– 3:12 Toddler – 2:12 Preschool– 2:24	☐ Center - Ratio: Group Size Infant/Toddler – 3:12 or 2:8 Toddler – 2:10 Preschool – 3:24 or 2:20	☐ Center - Ratio: Group Size Infant/Toddler – 3:9 or better Toddler – 3:12 or better Preschool – 1:8 ratio and group size of no more than 20
6. Program Environment Rating Scale(s) (Use tool for appropriate setting: ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R)	☐ Not Required	☐ Familiarity with ERS and every classroom uses ERS as a part of a Quality Improvement Plan	☐ Assessment on the whole tool. Results used to inform the program's Quality Improvement Plan	☐ Independent ERS assessment. All subscales completed and averaged to meet overall score level of 5.0	☐ Independent ERS assessment. All subscales completed and averaged to meet overall score level of 5.5 OR Current National Accreditation approved by the California Department of Education
7. Director Qualifications (Centers Only)	☐ 12 units ECE/CD+ 3 units management/ administration	☐ 24 units ECE/CD + 16 units General Education +/with 3 units management/ administration OR Master Teacher Permit	☐ Associate's degree with 24 units ECE/CD +/with 6 units management/ administration and 2 units supervision OR Site Supervisor Permit AND ☐ 21 hours PD annually	☐ Bachelor's degree with 24 units ECE/CD +/with 8 units management/ administration OR Program Director Permit AND ☐ 21 hours PD annually	☐ Master's degree with 30 units ECE/CD including specialized courses +/with 8 units management/ administration, OR Administrative Credential AND ☐ 21 hours PD annually
TOTAL POINT RANGES					
Program Type	Common-Tier 1	Local-Tier 2[3]	Common-Tier 3	Common-Tier 4	Local-Tier 5[4]
Centers 7 Elements for 35 points	Blocked (No Point Value) – Must Meet All Elements	Point Range 8 to 19	Point Range 20 to 25	Point Range 26 to 31	Point Range 32 and above
FCCHs 5 Elements for 25 points	Blocked (No Point Value) – Must Meet All Elements	Point Range 6 to 13	Point Range 14 to 17	Point Range 18 to 21	Point Range 22 and above

[3]Local-Tier 2: Local decision if Blocked or Points and if there are additional elements
[4] Local-Tier 5: Local decision if there are additional elements included California Department of Education, February 2014 Updated May 28, 2015; Effective July 1, 2015