

# The OHS AIAN CLASS® Field Guide FY25



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## **AIAN CLASS® Self-Review Field Guide Introduction**

This field guide was developed as a resource for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) programs participating in the fiscal year 2025 (FY25) AIAN Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) self-review. The guide is provided to assist Grant Recipients with organizing and conducting self-reviews of their programs using the CLASS® tool. Grant Recipients also receive guidance and support from the AIAN CLASS® Lead throughout the self-review process.

The CLASS® tool is an observation tool used to analyze and assess the effectiveness of interactions between children and teachers in center-based classrooms. Data from CLASS® observations can be used for various purposes, including professional development and program improvement. The Office of Head Start (OHS) began using the CLASS® Pre-K tool in FY10 to collect information about the experiences of children in Head Start programs.

## **AIAN CLASS® Self-Review**

All Grant Recipients participating in the AIAN CLASS® self-review were initially scheduled for a FY25 CLASS® review and have at least one CLASS® Pre-K certified staff member.

Each Grant Recipient will have a scheduled 30-day review period in which to have their CLASS® Pre-K certified staff conduct CLASS® observations in each observable classroom of the provided CLASS® sample. For those classrooms in the sample that are not observable, the Grant Recipient will work with the AIAN CLASS® Lead to receive a replacement and/or skip the classroom as applicable.

The Grant Recipient will submit scores for two cycles (see CLASS® Observation Cycles) for entry into the aligned monitoring system (IT-AMS) by the AIAN CLASS® Lead. The Grant Recipient will also keep a copy of each set of scores to use for program professional development purposes.

## **AIAN CLASS® Self-Review Planning and Communication**

The Grant Recipient and AIAN CLASS® Lead will maintain communication throughout the planning and review period. The AIAN CLASS® Lead will work with the Grant Recipient's program specialist, as needed, to facilitate consistent communication.

### **Approximately 45 Days Prior to the Scheduled Review Period**

The AIAN CLASS® Lead will contact the AIAN Head Start Director via email to arrange a planning call to discuss the self-review process and encourage them to develop a CLASS® self-review team (made up of Grant Recipient staff) that will support organizing the self-review and completing the CLASS® observations. The AIAN CLASS® Self-Review Field Guide will be attached to this email.

During the initial planning call, the AIAN CLASS® Lead will share information about organizing and conducting a self-review, forms and communication, and the responsibilities of the Grant Recipient and of the AIAN CLASS® Lead.

The AIAN CLASS® Lead will also discuss:

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- Plans for opening and closing meetings,
- Plans for communication prior to and during the review period,
- Enrollment,
- Accuracy of information on the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES),
- Classroom daily activity schedules,
- Student arrival/departure times,
- Program locations and contact information,
- Names of teaching staff,
- Language of instruction,
- Grant Recipient plans for the development of an observation schedule, and
- Planned schedule for submitting scores to the AIAN CLASS® Lead.

## **Approximately 30 Days Prior to the Scheduled Review Period**

The AIAN CLASS® Lead will provide the Grant Recipient with the sample list of classrooms for their self-review (see [CLASS® Sample and Scheduling](#)). The Grant Recipient will confirm the classroom information and identify any classrooms that are not observable. The AIAN CLASS® Lead will obtain replacement classrooms from IT-AMS for those that are not observable.

The AIAN CLASS® Lead will support the Grant Recipient in the development of the CLASS® observation schedule to ensure all classrooms from the sample are scheduled for the applicable number of cycles and within the scheduled review period.

## **Approximately 15 Days Prior to the Scheduled Review Period**

The AIAN CLASS® Lead will provide a packet of supporting materials to assist with the self-review. The Grant Recipient and AIAN CLASS® Lead will discuss the forms and any remaining questions related to the self-review.

## **Throughout the Review Period**

The AIAN CLASS® Lead will support the Grant Recipient to:

- Maintain and adjust the developed CLASS® observation schedule.
- Determine if a classroom needs to be replaced and/or skipped. If a classroom needs to be replaced, the AIAN CLASS® Lead will obtain the replacement classroom from IT-AMS.
- Submit CLASS® scores to be entered into IT-AMS by the AIAN CLASS® Lead.
- Submit applicable documentation related to the self-review and CLASS® observations.

## **AIAN CLASS® Observations**

AIAN CLASS® observations are conducted in Head Start classrooms serving preschool children. Observations should never be made using the CLASS® Pre-K tool in family childcare or home-based settings, including socializations. Sometimes there are classrooms that include preschool-age children as well as infants and toddlers. If it is identified by the Grant Recipient as a preschool class in the HSES, the classroom may be observed.



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## CLASS® Observation Cycles

**In each classroom selected for observation, CLASS® observers conduct two observation cycles.** A minimum of two observation cycles must be completed for the classroom to count toward the self-review.

Each observation cycle should include a 20-minute observation followed immediately by 10 minutes of scoring and up to 5 minutes of answering background questions. If an observation cycle is shortened but lasts at least 10 minutes, the CLASS® observer should score the observation. If the observation lasts fewer than 10 minutes, it should not be scored and does not count as part of the self-review. Once an observer begins an observation cycle, it should never be paused and continued later. Scoring must occur immediately after each observation cycle and must be conducted outside the classroom.

CLASS® observers should not observe more than eight classroom observation cycles per day. Observers will use the provided notes and score sheet to record their notes and reference the Pre-K CLASS® Observation Manual while coding. CLASS® observers should score while outside of the classroom to avoid distraction and the influence of classroom observation beyond the 20-minute time frame.

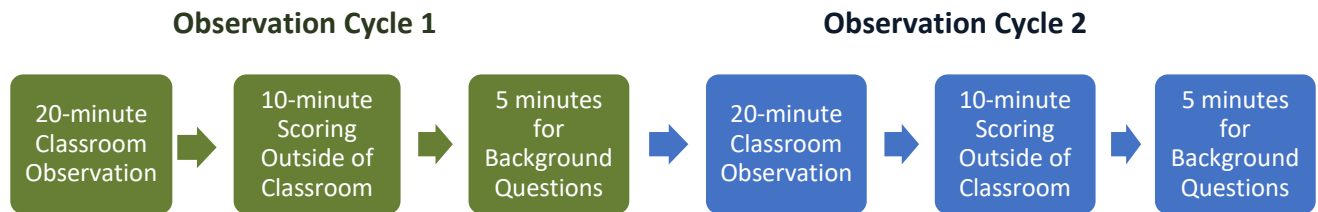
**The observation cycles within each class must be consecutive.** The CLASS® observer must complete all observation cycles for a given classroom before moving to observe another classroom. The observation cycles ideally should occur on the same day and should be back-to-back, with a break only for an unobservable activity. For example, if a CLASS® observer conducts one observation cycle in classroom A and the children transition to nap time, the observer may not observe another classroom while waiting for nap time to end. Instead, the observer must wait until the children wake up and then complete the next observation cycle. Only after all observation cycles have been conducted in classroom A may the observer move to another classroom. It is acceptable, however, for an observer to conduct an observation in a classroom at the end of the school day and return to conduct the next observation in the same classroom the following morning.

**Once all observations are complete, the CLASS® observers will send their observation information to the AIAN CLASS® Lead.** The CLASS® observers will scan/take photos of the completed observation forms, complete the summary sheet, and share them with the AIAN CLASS® Lead, who will enter the scores into IT-AMS. The timeline for sharing observation information will be discussed during the initial planning call with the Grant Recipient.

**CLASS® observers should also share any changes to the methodology with the AIAN CLASS® Lead.**

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Exhibit 1: AIAN CLASS® Observation Cycles Diagram



## When to Conduct a CLASS® Observation Cycle

CLASS® observers must observe only at appropriate times to ensure the CLASS® tool is used in a valid and consistent manner across all classes. This section provides more detail about observable activities.

### Observable Activities

Observations can and should be conducted during any of the following:

- ✓ **Teacher-directed activities**
- ✓ **Child-initiated activities**
- ✓ **Large-group, small-group, and individual settings**
- ✓ **Meals or snacks:** Mealtimes are acceptable observation times if they take place within the classroom.
- ✓ **Transitions:** Observations should continue (or may begin) during and through transitions. If the children transition from participating in center activities to handwashing and then to receiving snacks during an observation cycle, observers should continue to observe throughout those activities and transitions. Other examples of transitions include children selecting center activities at the end of circle time and getting ready to go outside.
- ✓ **Arrival or departure times:** Observers should plan to begin observations at least 30 minutes after the classroom opens, or end observations 30 minutes before the classroom closes to allow for late arriving children and early departing children.
- ✓ **Structured gross-motor activities (indoor or outdoor):** Gross-motor activities that are part of the instructional day should be observed. Examples may include a nature walk or teacher-led activities and games played outside or in a gym area.
- ✓ **Outdoors or indoors:** If the activities are conducted outdoors and are comparable to activities that would be observed indoors, then the time is observable. For example, in warmer climates, the class may be conducted in an outdoor “classroom.”

Observations are **not** to be conducted during any of the following scenarios:

- ✗ **Naptime**

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- ✗ **Classroom is under-attended:** If the classroom is experiencing low attendance, then it cannot be observed. Attendance is based on the number of children currently enrolled on the day observations begin and present, regardless of a child's funding source (e.g., Head Start program, state pre-K). The OHS needs to monitor the quality of classes in which Head Start-funded children are enrolled, regardless of which program's children are present at any given time. If a CLASS® observer is unsure if there are enough children in attendance for an assigned classroom they should contact the AIAN CLASS® Lead.
- ✗ **During unstructured gross-motor activity (indoor or outdoor):** If the class is engaged in gross-motor activity without teacher-led structured activities, then the observer should not conduct an observation.
- ✗ **Special events:** Observations should not be conducted during special, atypical events. Examples of atypical events include fire drills, Grandparents' Day lunch, and other special events. If the special event is finished and classroom activities resume as usual, the observation can be made. Please consult the AIAN CLASS® Lead in these situations.
- ✗ **When class is not led by regular primary teaching staff:** Classrooms should not be observed when the class is led by additional staff such as support staff or volunteers. Examples of unobservable activities include the Nutrition Coordinator leading a lesson on healthy eating, firefighters teaching a safety lesson, or other non-regular classroom staff leading a lesson.
- ✗ **When the CLASS® observer is not fluent in the primary language(s) of instruction:** The observer must be able to understand the interactions between teachers and children. Therefore, observers cannot observe if they do not fully understand the primary language of instruction spoken in the classroom during any given observation cycle.

## Presence of Teaching Staff/Substitutes

CLASS® observations should be conducted when the lead teacher is present and engaging with the class. The lead teacher must be present for at least one complete observation cycle. Observers may observe the entire classroom environment and any teacher-student interactions. They do not need to focus exclusively on the interactions of the lead teacher. To be observed, teachers must be in the position for more than 10 consecutive school days. The following are clarifications to this guidance:

### New teachers:

- ✓ A new teacher who will be a permanent teacher with this classroom group may be observed after being in the position and completing more than 10 consecutive school days.
- ✗ A new teacher who has been with this classroom group fewer than 11 consecutive school days should not be observed.

### Substitutes for lead teacher (long-term):

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- ✓ When the lead teacher is absent and the same substitute has been with the classroom group and completed more than 10 consecutive school days, the class may be observed.
- ✗ When a substitute teacher has been with this classroom group fewer than 11 consecutive school days, the class should not be observed.

## **Substitutes for assistant teacher:**

- ✓ If the lead teacher—either the permanent teacher or a substitute—has been with the classroom group and completed more than 10 consecutive school days, the presence of a substitute assistant teacher should not affect an observation.
- ✓ A substitute assistant teacher may be observed even if they have been in the classroom fewer than 11 consecutive school days, as long as the lead teacher is observable (see Substitutes for lead teacher (long-term) bullet for more information).

## **Assistant taking lead teacher role (short-term):**

- ✓ If the regular assistant teacher is acting as the substitute lead teacher due to the lead teacher's absence or involvement elsewhere, an observation can be conducted if the assistant teacher has been with this classroom group and completed more than 10 consecutive school days.
- ✗ An assistant teacher taking the role of the lead teacher (short-term) who has been with the classroom group fewer than 11 consecutive school days should not be observed.

To determine whether a classroom can be observed with the present teaching staff, CLASS® observers should go through the questions presented in **Exhibit 2**. Exhibit 2 (CLASS® Observation Decision Tree: Teaching Staff/Substitutes) is a resource for CLASS® observers that should be referenced during each observation to ensure eligible teaching staff are observed.

First, determine if the permanent or regular lead teacher is teaching the class. If yes, consider whether the lead teacher has been in their position for more than 10 consecutive school days. If the answer to that question is yes, then the room is okay to observe. If the answer is no, the observer should not observe.

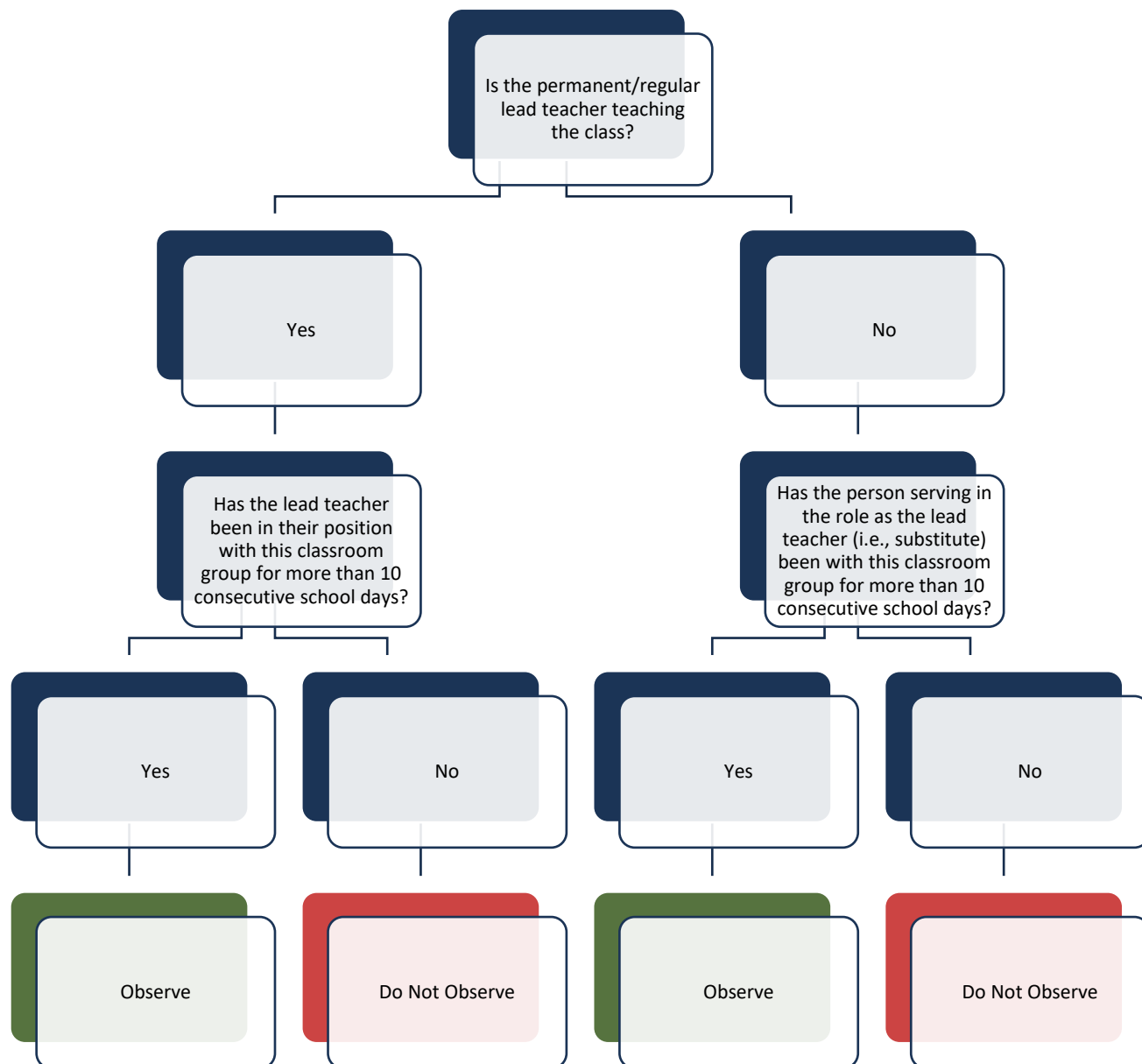
If the permanent or regular lead teacher is not teaching the class, the observer must determine if the substitute has been with this classroom group for more than 10 consecutive school days. If yes, then the classroom is okay to observe. If no, do not observe.

CLASS® observers who have questions or are unsure about observing a classroom should contact the AIAN CLASS® Lead.



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Exhibit 2: CLASS® Observation Decision Tree: Teaching Staff/Substitutes



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## CLASS® Sample and Scheduling

The Grant Recipient and AIAN CLASS® Lead will develop a daily observation schedule using the list of classrooms in the sample list. The Grant Recipient will maintain the schedule throughout the self-review process and make adjustments as needed.

### How Classrooms Are Selected for Observation

The OHS has implemented a random-sampling procedure to ensure an adequate representative sample of classrooms is observed and forms the basis of the CLASS® score. The sample size, or number of classrooms, to be observed is a statistically driven calculation based on the Grant Recipient's total number of eligible classrooms; it is not a percentage. Samples range in size and may be as large as 74 classes.

The list of classes in the sample will identify the exact classrooms that must be observed, background information about the classrooms (e.g., schedule, type of program), and the center in which each classroom is located.<sup>1,2</sup> The sample is based on HSES data.

The list of classrooms in the sample will be obtained by the AIAN CLASS® Lead from IT-AMS and shared with the Grant Recipient 30 days prior to the scheduled review period to ensure accuracy of the class information.

The Grant Recipient staff conducting the CLASS® observations should do everything possible to observe all classrooms in the sample—both in terms of the number of classrooms identified and the precise classrooms selected to be observed.

### Scheduling Observations from the Sample List

The daily observation schedule will identify the days and times for each observation throughout the 30-day review period. The schedule should allow for travel time between sites, programmatic “special events,” such as library visits or professional development days, and non-observable activities.

During the review period, the Grant Recipient can adjust the schedule for any scheduling challenges, teacher absences, etc., that impact the ability to conduct the CLASS® observation. The Grant Recipient should keep the AIAN CLASS® Lead informed of any needed schedule adjustments.

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<sup>1</sup> When the sample includes a double session, the CLASS® observer should make sure they go to the correct session by looking at the program variation for the class on the sample list. It is possible for both the morning and afternoon sessions of a double-session class to be included in the sample. In this case, both sessions should be observed.

<sup>2</sup> When the sample includes combination-option classes, the CLASS® observer should observe during the center-based segment. The class schedule on the sample list should indicate the days on which the center-based segment is held; however, the AIAN CLASS® Lead should confirm this with the Grant Recipient when developing the schedule.

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## When to Rearrange the Schedule or Select Replacement Classrooms

During the review period, CLASS® observers are likely to encounter situations in which they must make decisions around whether to observe a classroom or rearrange the observation schedule. The CLASS® observation should occur when the class is experiencing its typical scheduled activities.

CLASS® observers should keep the following guiding principles in mind when making the decision to rearrange the schedule or request a replacement classroom:

1. **Preservation of the original classrooms sampled:** It is better to observe classrooms listed in the original sample list than to select replacement classrooms.
2. **Preservation of the original sample size:** It is better to observe a replacement classroom than to skip a classroom altogether and not achieve the original sample size.

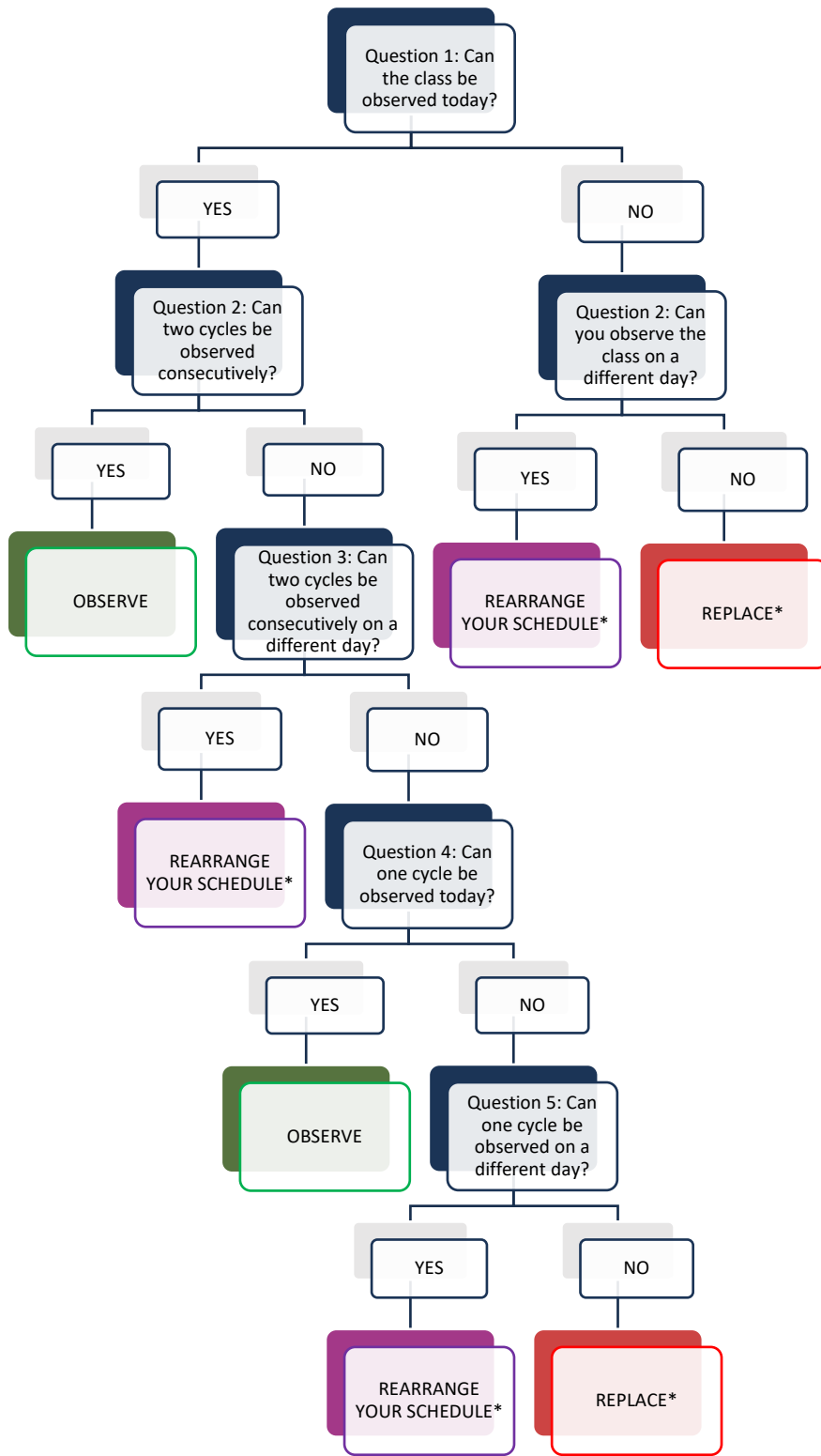
## Determining Whether a Classroom Can Be Observed on Its Scheduled Day

To determine whether a classroom can be observed on its scheduled day, CLASS® observers should go through the questions presented in **Exhibit 3**. Exhibit 3 is a decision tree that should be referenced if CLASS® observers are unsure about whether to rearrange the observation schedule.

A classroom should be observed on that day if the decision tree directs an observer to a green “OBSERVE” box. If Exhibit 3 directs an observer to a purple “REARRANGE YOUR SCHEDULE” box in the flow chart, then the CLASS® observer should select another day to observe that classroom. If an observer ends on a red “REPLACE” box in the flow chart, then the observer should request a replacement classroom.

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Exhibit 3: Decision Tree of Determining Whether a Class Can Be Observed on the Day It Is Scheduled



\* Contact your AIAN CLASS® Lead to discuss the flow chart and/or request a replacement classroom.

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## **When a Class Must Be Replaced**

If a situation arises in which a CLASS® observer cannot observe a classroom and must select a replacement, then they need to contact their AIAN CLASS® Lead to request a replacement classroom. The AIAN CLASS® Lead will provide the name of the replacement classroom, and the CLASS® observer will include the new classroom in the observation schedule.

## **When a Class Must Be Skipped**

At the end of the review, if any classrooms in the sample were skipped, then the CLASS® observer must provide written justification as to the reason for skipping the classroom to the AIAN CLASS® Lead.



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## Appendix: Glossary

**Class:** A unique group of children and a teacher

**Classroom:** The physical space used by a class

**CLASS® Pre-K Observation Manual:** Official CLASS® Manual published by Brookes Publishing

**CLASS® Observer:** A Grant Recipient staff member who is a CLASS® certified observer and has been assigned by the Grant Recipient to conduct CLASS® observations for the self-review.

**Cycle or Observation Cycle:** One 20-minute observation followed by a 10-minute scoring period, and then a 5-minute background completion period

**Double Session:** A center-based option using a single teacher to work with one group of children in the morning and a different group in the afternoon

**New Teacher:** A teacher who has been in the class for fewer than 11 consecutive school days and therefore should **not** be observed

**Observation:** See “Cycle or Observation Cycle”

**Preserving the Sample:** There are two ways in which it is important to preserve, keep, or maintain the sample: (1) Observations are conducted in all the classes specified in the sample list; and (2) The quantity or number of CLASS® observation cycles conducted is equal to the original sample, but replacements were made to achieve the exact quantity defined by the original sample

**Primary Teaching Staff:** The teachers assigned to a group of children

**Replacement Classroom:** A classroom that is generated by the monitoring software to replace a classroom from the original sample

**Replacing a Classroom:** When a class selected for the sample cannot be observed, but another class can be observed in its place

**Sample List:** The list of classes to be observed, which is generated by the software and based on a statistical sampling algorithm

**Scoring:** The process of scoring each dimension of the CLASS® instrument, which must occur in the 10 minutes immediately following a 20-minute period of observation

**Skipping a Classroom:** When a class generated for the sample cannot be observed, and no other class can be observed in its place due to logistics or timing