

Examples of Observation

What's different between these two examples?

High quality observation:

A 5th grade girl entered the room a minute late, and took a seat adjacent to three 6th grade girls; all were dressed in t-shirts and blue jeans. All four girls then leaned forward and began to plant seeds, having a conversation about a previous planting activity as they did so. All four were laughing and talking (about equal in the degree to which they were talking/interacting), and two of them had soil on their clothing. One girl asked a question about the earlier activity, and two of them responded at the same time with the answer, laughing as they did so. They completed the planting and cleaned up without being asked by the leader. They ended by asking the leader what next week's activity would be.

The leader set up the planting activity before the girls entered the room. During the activity, the leader periodically asked questions, began to set up for an activity with another group, and conversed with the girls about a community event. She also offered a snack, and left the room for a short while to take a phone call. She closed by asking the girls what they wanted to do next week, when the girls asked her what next week's activity would be. The leader and three of the girls decided to clean up the courtyard during the time they would be meeting next; one girl indicated she would be at softball practice the following week.

Poor quality observation:

The girls were fully engaged. The leader trusted the girls to let them work on their own.