



Investigating the Preschool Curriculum

Stephanie Rucker
Educ 400 - Senior Research Seminar
Educational Studies Program
Trinity College, Hartford, CT
Fall 2010

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

Purpose of Study

- To examine and analyze the amount of work that goes into constructing a preschool curriculum
- To understand why the preschool curriculum is important in itself

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

Research Question(s)

- What measures do preschool teachers take in constructing a rich preschool curriculum?
- What challenges do teachers face when preparing their lesson plans?

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

Literature

- Cassidy, Mims, Rucker & Boone (2003)
 - Child-centered
 - Based on the child's interest
 - Developmentally appropriate
- Vartuli & Rohs (2008)
 - Relevant
 - Meaningful

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

Setting

- Discovery Daycare - *pseudonym
 - Serves children from infants to preschool
 - Open to all members of the community
 - 2 preschool classrooms
 - 21 children currently enrolled

*All names (teachers and daycare) used throughout this study are pseudonyms.

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

Methods

- Qualitative Research Design
 - Formal Interviews (3)
 - 2 preschool lead teachers
 - 1 joint interview with director and head teacher
 - Observations (3)
 - 3 hours total

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

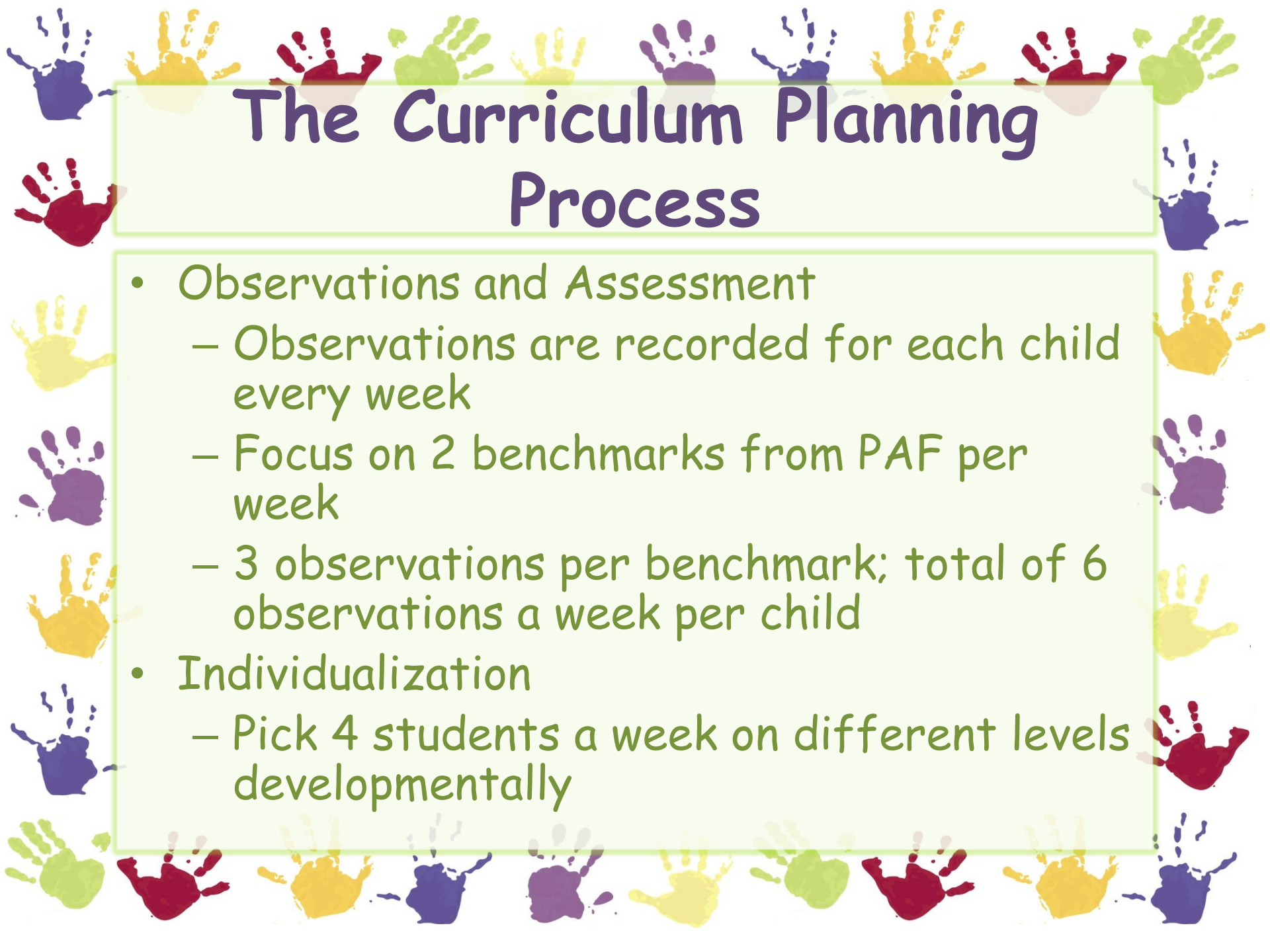
Thesis

- The preschool teachers implement a child-centered approach
- Two curriculum tools
 - Developmentally appropriate
 - Building on the child's interest
 - Individualized
- However, using two curriculum tools proved to be the most challenging aspect of putting the lesson plan together
- Teachers were also concerned about the issue of parental involvement

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

The Two Curriculum Models

- Teaching Strategies Gold
 - Made up of levels 0 to 8
 - Children can fall anywhere within this range based on developmental needs
- Preschool Assessment Framework (PAF)
 - Consists of four domains: cognitive, creative, physical, social-emotional
 - Multiple levels (benchmarks) for each domain
 - Child is either emerging or mastered for each level

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, red, yellow, and green surrounds the text. The handprints are of various sizes and orientations, creating a playful and child-friendly frame.

The Curriculum Planning Process

- Observations and Assessment
 - Observations are recorded for each child every week
 - Focus on 2 benchmarks from PAF per week
 - 3 observations per benchmark; total of 6 observations a week per child
- Individualization
 - Pick 4 students a week on different levels developmentally

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, red, yellow, and green surrounds the text. The handprints are of various sizes and are arranged in a circular pattern around the central text area.

The Curriculum Planning Process

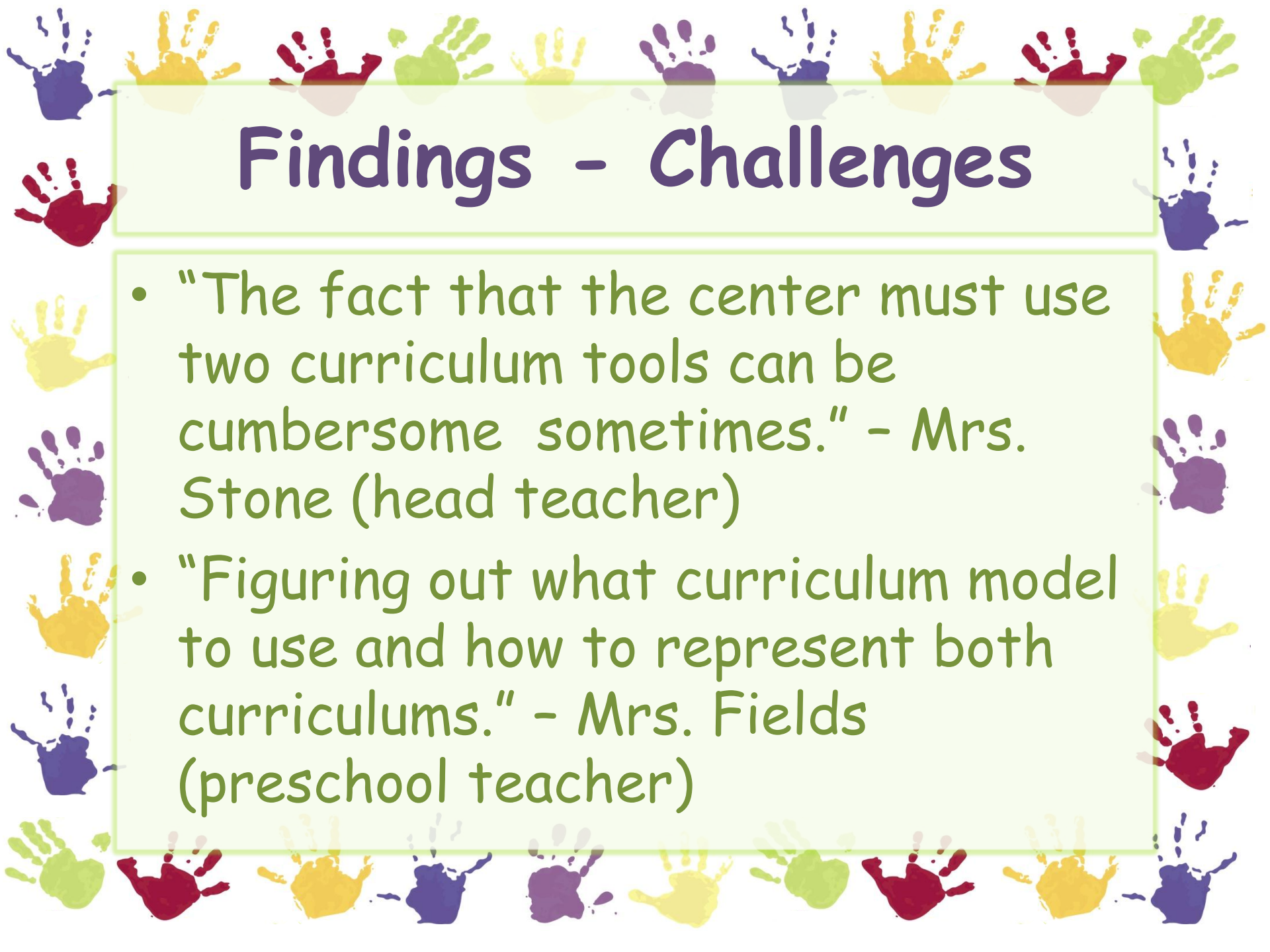
"It is just not that we put out play dough on the table and it's for all children. Then there is no purpose to it. It is really that intentionally teaching with the activities. What we are doing? Why are we putting it out; and why is it important for that individual child?"

- Mrs. Jennings (director)



Findings - The Child-Centered Approach

- "...We are observing the children and creating all of our activities and goals for them according to that. It is the foundation, the building blocks of it." - Mrs. Stone (head teacher)
- Detailed, objective observations specifically looking at:
 - What the child is interested in
 - The child's abilities
 - What the child is lacking

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

Findings - Challenges

- "The fact that the center must use two curriculum tools can be cumbersome sometimes." - Mrs. Stone (head teacher)
- "Figuring out what curriculum model to use and how to represent both curriculums." - Mrs. Fields (preschool teacher)

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the text. The handprints are of various sizes and are arranged in a circular pattern around the central text area.

Findings - Parental Involvement

"With preschool, it's really preparing them for the fact that we really are preparing them for kindergarten. And that when they leave our program and go into kindergarten, they are already doing assessment in kindergarten within the first days of school...

...So if our children are leaving our program without a firm foundation in that we are already setting them up to fail within that first month of school."

- Mrs. Jennings (director)

A decorative border of colorful handprints in shades of blue, yellow, red, and green surrounds the central text area.

Conclusions

- Preschool teachers take great responsibility in adequately preparing their students for kindergarten
- They are looking for a way to make the curriculum planning process more manageable while simultaneously enhancing the development of the child



References

- Cassidy, D. J., Mims, S., Rucker, L., & Boone, S. (2003). Emergent Curriculum and Kindergarten Readiness. *Childhood Education* , 194-199.
- Vartuli, S. A., & Rohs, J. (2008). Selecting Curriculum Content that Stimulates Thought. *Early Childhood Education* , 393-396.