

Introduction

- Children ages two to five years of age, enrolled in Head Start programs, frequently present with fine motor, visual motor, sensory, and emotional regulation challenges that impact classroom participation (Center on the Developing Child, 2025).
- Evidence supports early identification and classroom-embedded interventions to improve school-readiness skills in preschool children (Mailloux et al., 2025)
- Developmental screenings at the Head Start programs in Houston, Texas have found that preschool age children have consistent delays on the Developmental Assessment of Young Children (DAYC-2).
- Head Start teachers report difficulty identifying developmental red flags and selecting supportive strategies including when to refer to occupational therapy (OT).
- There is a need to support Head Start staff through the development of easy access, evidence-based resources which can guide the early detection of preschool age children who would benefit from therapy services.

Project Description

This capstone project was in partnership with Houston Pediatric Therapy, a privately owned pediatric therapy clinic. The focus included curation of resources for Houston Head Start teachers to improve the early identification and classroom support for children ages two to five years of age who present with fine motor, visual motor, sensory processing, behavioral, and emotional regulation challenges as identified on the DAYC-2.

This project reflects the HPU values of:

- PONO through ethical, evidence-informed decision making.
- KULEANA through responsibility to address community-identified needs and elevate teacher capacity.
- ALOHA through compassionate collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and strengthening supportive relationships within early childhood learning environments.

Purpose/Aims

The **purpose** of this capstone experience and project were to enhance teacher confidence, support early intervention pathways, and promote improved participation, and school-readiness outcomes for young children.

The aims included:

- To enhance teacher confidence and identification skills in recognizing fine motor, visual motor, sensory, behavioral, and emotional regulation challenges.
- To provide actionable classroom strategies that support participation, self-regulation, and school readiness.
- To strengthen collaboration between the Houston Head Start teachers and the therapist at the Houston Pediatric Therapy.

References



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Methods

A systematic, multi-phase approach guided the development of this project.

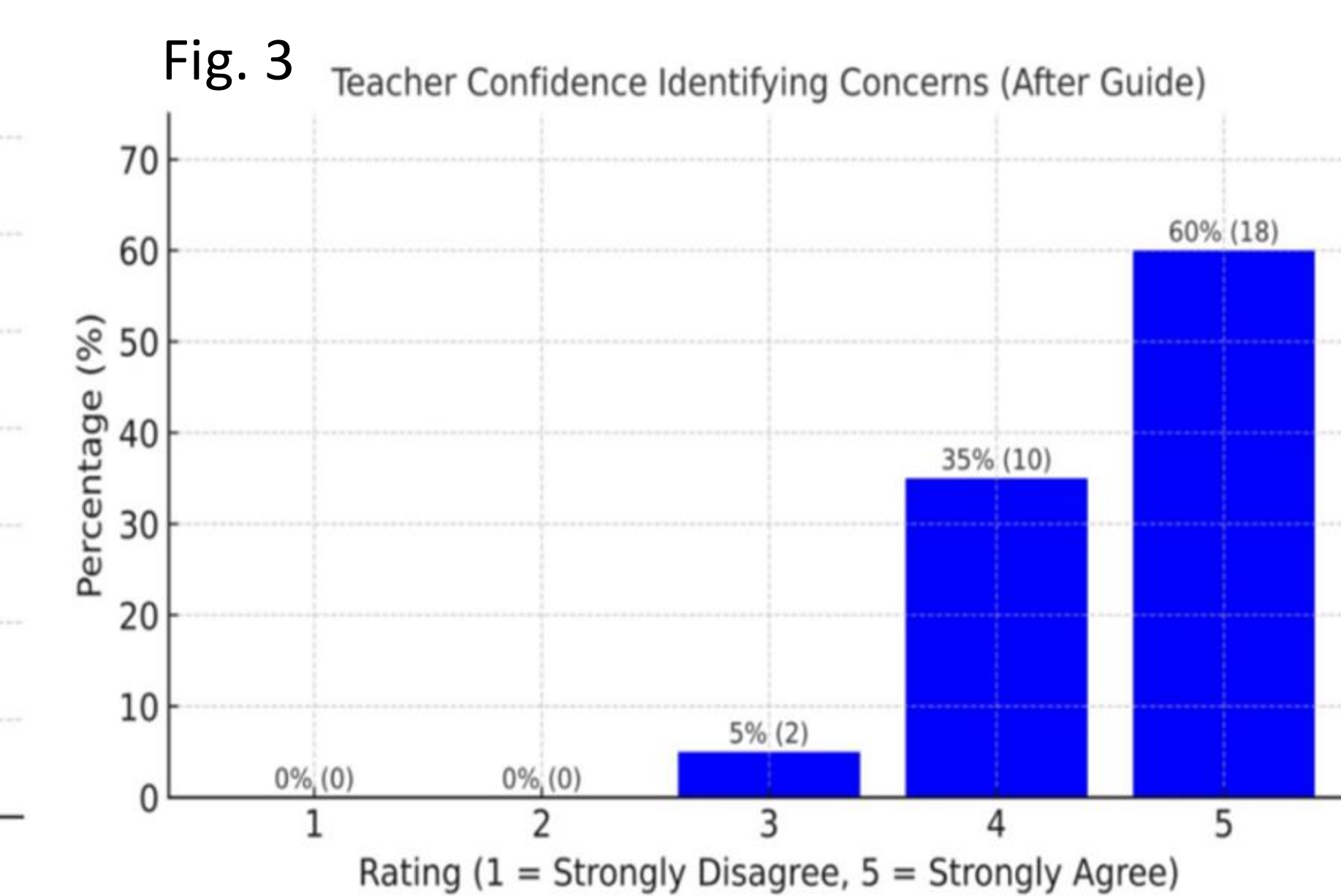
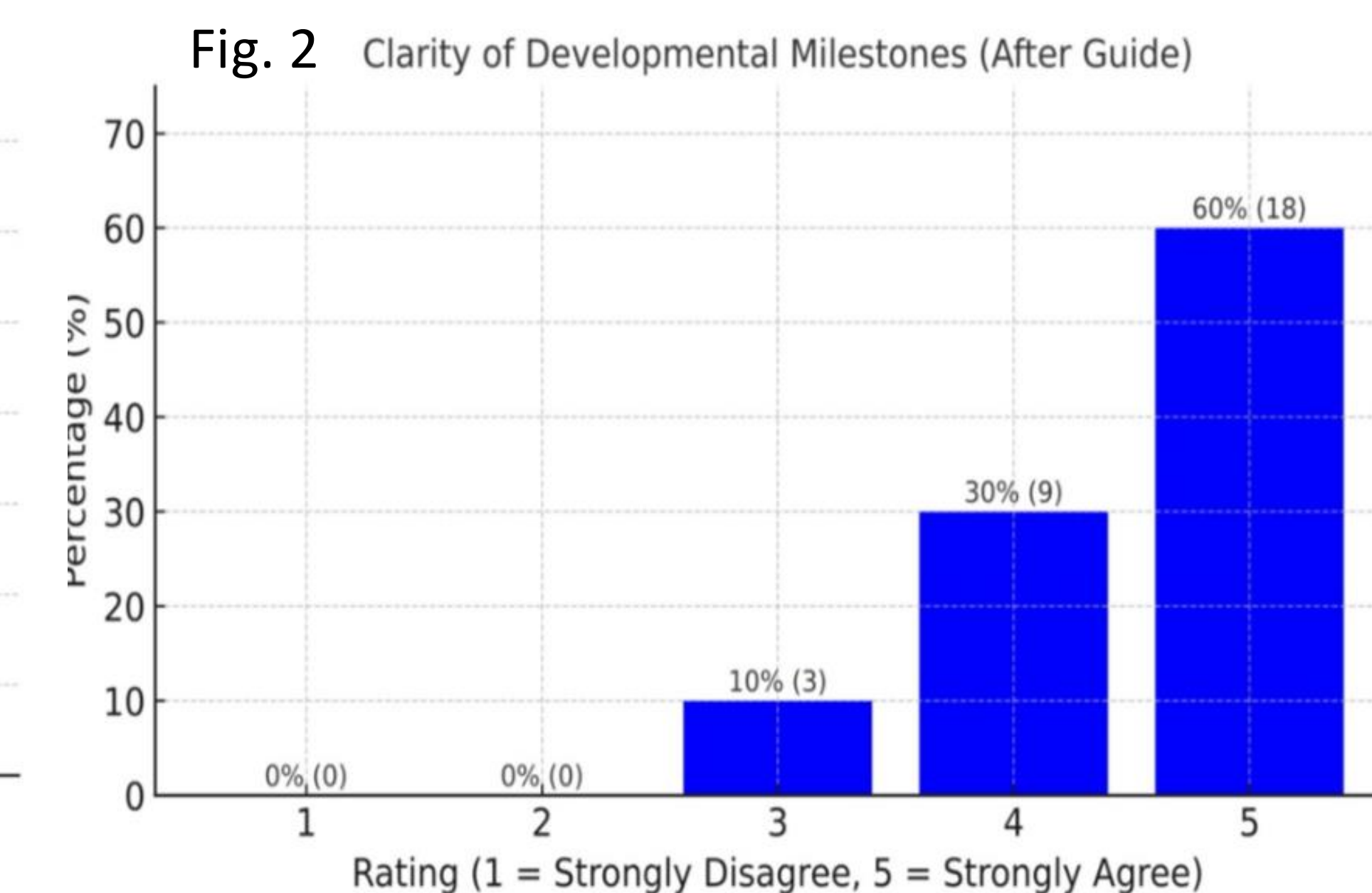
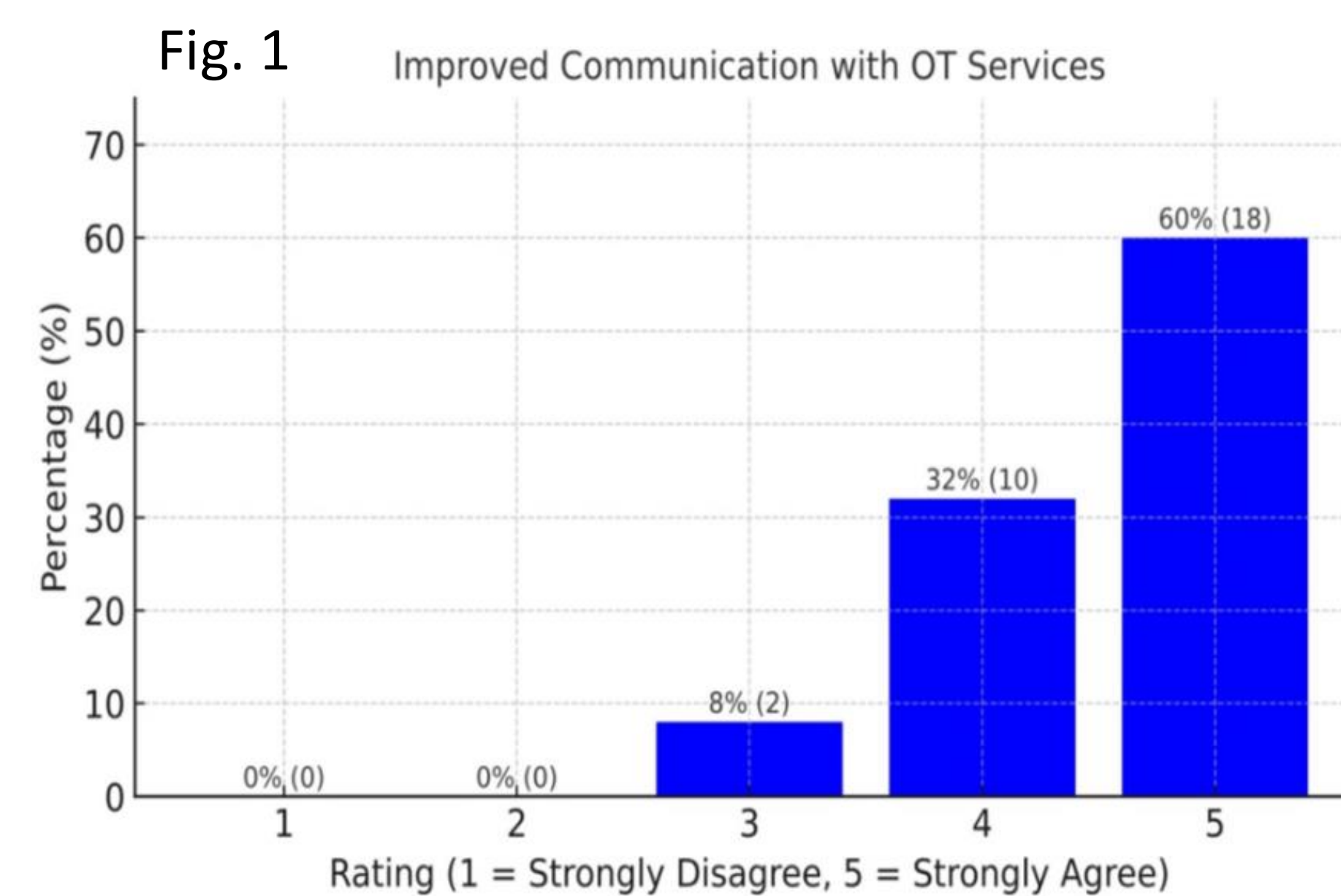
- A comprehensive needs assessment that included classroom observations, review of DAYC-2 assessment outcomes, teacher surveys, and discussions with my site mentor/staff.
- Needs assessment findings created the core focus areas for the Quick Reference Guide and classroom resources.
- Evidence from scholarly resources was synthesized to create a draft of the project using teacher friendly language and visuals, then refined through feedback from site mentor/teachers during on-site visits to the Head Start centers.

Evaluation Procedures: Data was collected through teacher surveys, informal interviews, and verbal feedback obtained during on-site visits, and collaborative feedback sessions.

Results/Outcomes

- Provided five in person training sessions to 30 Houston Head Start teachers.
- Created a comprehensive digital Quick Reference Guide which was provided to all Houston Head Start programs.
- 92% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that training and resources improved communication with OTs (Fig. 1).
- 90% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed to a better understanding of dev. milestones after reviewing guide (Fig.2).
- 95% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed to having increased confidence identifying concerns after reviewing guide (Fig. 3).

“After reviewing the guide, I experienced increased clarity and confidence in recognizing concerns, understanding milestones, and implementing evidence-based classroom strategies.” -Houston Head Start teacher



Note: Portions of this data analysis were developed with the assistance of artificial intelligence (i.e., [Microsoft, Copilot]). The results have been reviewed, edited, and verified by the researcher for accuracy and alignment with data collected

Discussion

- The Quick Reference Guide for Houston Head Start teachers improved teacher's ability to identify developmental and behavioral concerns and apply evidence-based strategies in the classroom.
- Limitations include a short implementation window, which limited opportunities for broader feedback and long-term outcome results of the Quick Reference Guide.
- Future use of the Quick Reference Guide should expand on the teacher training, gather data across additional Head Start sites in the Houston area, consider translation of the guide in different languages for non-english speaking Head Start staff.

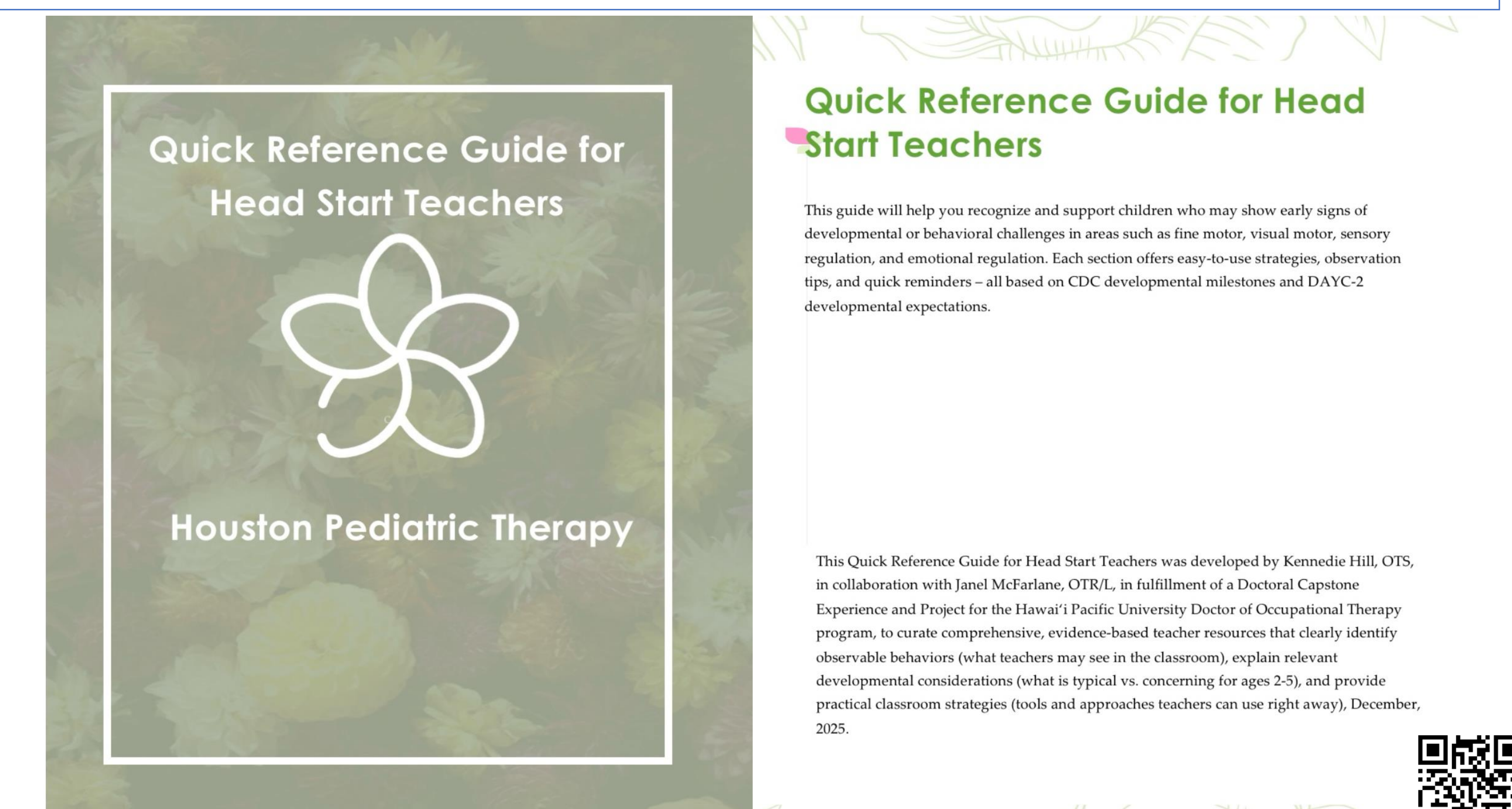


Image of the Quick Reference Guide for Head Start Teachers