

# Montessori Guides' and Administrators' Experiences Supporting Students with Developmental Delays or Disabilities: Lessons Learned

Elyse L. Postlewaite, M.Ed., Ph.D.

"Many defects which became permanent, such as speech defects, the child acquires through *being neglected* during the most important period of his age, the period between three and six, at which time he forms and establishes his principal functions."

DR. MARIA MONTESSORI (1912)

## Evaluation Questions

**EQ1:** What are the realities and needs of Montessori community members who serve students with developmental disabilities or delays?

**EQ2:** What are the perceptions and experiences of Montessori guides and administrators before and after completing the ASQ in a Montessori Setting training?

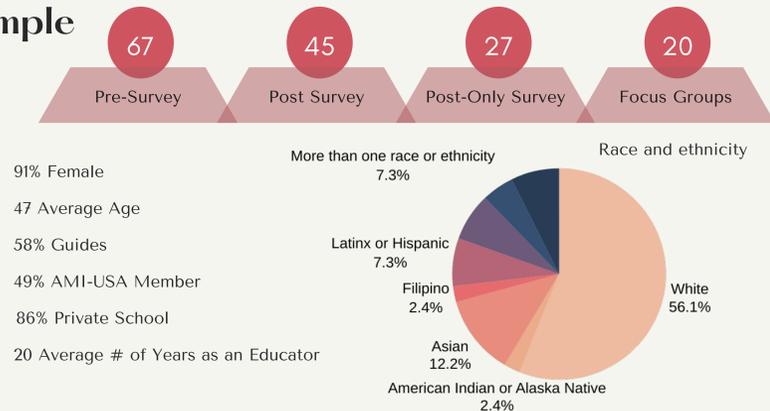
- Attitudes and beliefs
- Knowledge and skills
- Confidence and self-efficacy
- Available resources and supports

**EQ3:** What are the perceived benefits and challenges of implementing and using the ASQ?

## Evaluation Design and Methods

Evaluation Activity	Timeline (2022-23)
Measurement development & recruitment	Sep-Dec
ASQ pre-survey administration	January
ASQ virtual training	January
4 to 6 weeks	Feb/Mar
ASQ post-survey administration	Mar/Apr
Post-only survey data collection	Dec-Mar
Guide & Administrator focus groups	Apr/May

## Sample



## The ASQ Questionnaires

Developmental Screening Tools that parents complete can indicate who is at risk for a developmental delay for children aged 1 month to 66/72 months.

- Self-regulation
- Compliance
- Adaptive functioning
- Autonomy
- Affect
- Social communication

- Fine Motor Skills
- Gross Motor Skills
- Communication
- Personal Social
- Problem-Solving

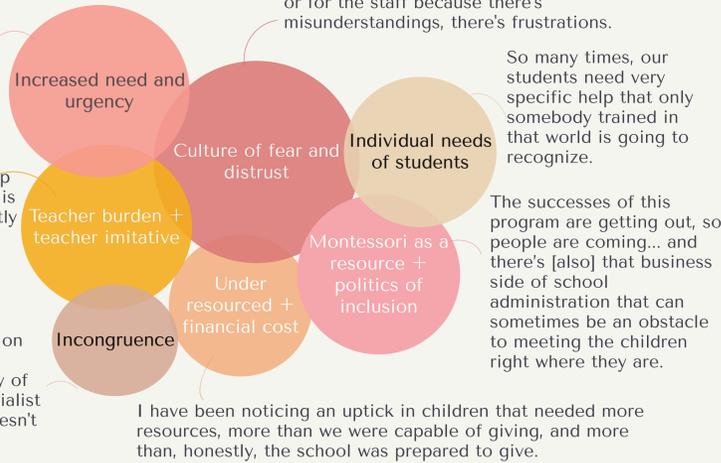
## Results and Findings

### EQ 4: The Realities

I've been teaching for [35] years... And I have never had so many challenges as I have had in these past two, three, four years.

Am I going to be able to keep up at this pace because it is really hard?... and constantly trying to find new resources... to help the students.

Every time we have a consultation, it dings us on having the pullout... we haven't figured out a way of having... a language specialist in the classroom that doesn't upset the court.



Some parents get upset because the teacher said that they thought maybe something was going on... for the children or for the staff because there's misunderstandings, there's frustrations.

So many times, our students need very specific help that only somebody trained in that world is going to recognize.

The successes of this program are getting out, so people are coming... and there's [also] that business side of school administration that can sometimes be an obstacle to meeting the children right where they are.

I have been noticing an uptick in children that needed more resources, more than we were capable of giving, and more than, honestly, the school was prepared to give.

### EQ 4: The Needs

We appreciate that we always have more to learn... How we can... educate ourselves and understand the child better. So definitely more educating across the board.

One of the big things I'm hoping for is that to create and be a part of more of a community that's sharing these things.



I appreciate where AMI is coming from and there are certain core tenants that we have to stick to but also the world is changing and we have to have more tools to help us.

We could always use more help... I think having somebody on staff who is dedicated to being that support person.

### EQ2A: Perceptions and Experiences Before and After Completing the ASQ Training

Pre, Post, and Post-Only Mean Scores for Attitudes and Beliefs toward Universal Screeners for ASQ Trained Participants



Attitudes & Beliefs toward Universal Screeners Survey Items
Using them is essential for the detection of developmental delays in young children
They should be a requirement in early childhood school settings
They are a waste of resources (reverse scored)
They are effective at detecting students' developmental delays
Using them leads to harmful labeling of students (reverse scored)
They ensure more students get the support that they need
They ensure equitable access to developmental resources
They are useful for having conversations with caregivers about their child's developmental delays

Pre, Post, and Post-Only Mean Scores in Skills and Knowledge for ASQ Trained Participants



Skills & Knowledge Survey Items
I know what universal developmental screening is
I can digest technical information (e.g., research articles) about child development outside of the Montessori context
I regularly use my skills to talk to caregivers about their child's developmental delays
I have a strong understanding of the types of developmental delays that can exist for children
I have the knowledge I need to be able to detect developmental delays within all my students
I have the skills I need to talk to caregivers about their child's developmental delays
I can explain to others the types of developmental delays that can exist for children
I regularly apply my knowledge to detect developmental delays within all my students

Note: \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001.

Pre, Post, and Post-Only Mean Scores in Confidence and Self-efficacy for ASQ Trained Participants



Confidence & Self-Efficacy Survey Items
I feel I can always identify all of the students in my school setting who have developmental delays
I am always confident in my ability to have conversations with caregivers about their child's developmental delays
I feel I can effectively support the needs of all my students who have developmental delays
I am confident I can appropriately refer all my students who may be in need of a disability diagnoses
I believe I can always identify difficult-to-detect developmental delays in my students

Pre, Post, and Post-Only Mean Scores in Having the Tools and Resources they Need for ASQ Trained Participants



Tools & Resources Survey Items
I have a clear process for having conversations with caregivers about their child's developmental delays
I have the tools I need to provide appropriate interventions for students in need
I am supported by my colleagues in helping my students with developmental delays
I know the appropriate next steps to take after detecting developmental delays within my students
My school administration supports me in helping my students with developmental delays
I feel supported by Montessori leadership in helping my students with developmental delays

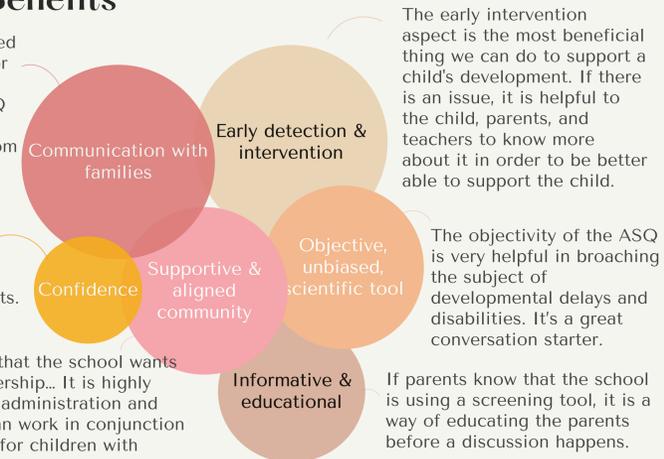
Note: \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001. For all quantitative comparisons, a paired-sample significance test was calculated between the ASQ Pre-Survey mean scores and ASQ Post-Survey mean scores, and an independent samples significance test was calculated between the ASQ Post-Survey mean score and Post-Only Survey mean score.

### EQ3: Perceived Benefits

Using a screening tool completed by caregivers opens the door for conversations about potential delays... Since adopting the ASQ questionnaires school-wide, we have had more collaboration from parents and less hesitation to reach out and get support.

I noticed things that I didn't notice before and I feel more confident in talking with parents.

It gives a message to the families that the school wants their input and for it to be a partnership... It is highly efficient and beneficial if a school administration and special needs instruction/model can work in conjunction to provide accessibility and needs for children with special needs.



The early intervention aspect is the most beneficial thing we can do to support a child's development. If there is an issue, it is helpful to the child, parents, and teachers to know more about it in order to be better able to support the child.

The objectivity of the ASQ is very helpful in broaching the subject of developmental delays and disabilities. It's a great conversation starter.

If parents know that the school is using a screening tool, it is a way of educating the parents before a discussion happens.

### EQ3: Perceived Challenges

It certainly requires a commitment of time and some costs for materials and staff time to prepare screening materials to go to parents, scoring and tracking them... but it was worth it.

And we're trying to kind of normalize all of this so that people don't feel so offended, because right now what we're getting is some families are okay with having these conversations and then we have a few who they become offended and they leave.



The biggest challenge is having families complete and return the forms... Not all families want to or are able to fill it out... Some families have a difficult time following the entire process, following instructions.

We still have work to do to encourage our teachers and help them feel confident in using the tools.

To contact the author:



Scan Me!

For additional information and access to the full report:

