DRAFT

Response-to-Intervention Adoption and Implementation Continues to Increase With Majority of Districts Planning to Spend Education Stimulus Funding on Further RTI Expansion

A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)

<u>*SPECIAL REPORT*</u>

Prepared by:

Education TURNKEY Systems, Inc.
256 North Washington Street
Falls Church, Virginia 22046-4549
(703) 536-2310 / (703) 536-3225 FAX

June 9, 2009

Over the last four years, Response-to-Intervention (RTI) adoption and implementation levels have increased significantly, with over 70 percent of districts indicating current pilot testing or district-wide implementation compared to 44 percent in 2007. The 2009 RTI Adoption Survey, supported by Spectrum K-12 and several associations including State Title I Directors, also found that almost 80 percent of districts reported they were planning to use Title I stimulus funds to support RTI, a surprisingly significant portion; not so surprisingly, 90 percent reported planning to use IDEA stimulus funds to pilot or implement RTI. Districts with significant disproportionality (i.e., overrepresentation of minorities in special education) have to set aside 15 percent on their IDEA funds for Early Intervening Services/RTI; the survey found that 30 percent of districts reported doing so, an increase from 26 percent a year earlier. On the other hand, Title I legislation does not require the use of its stimulus funds for Early Intervening Services/RTI. Beginning about two years ago, however, Title I guidance began to strongly "encourage" RTI use, especially in districts identified for improvement or in corrective action/restructuring and in school wide programs. The recent stimulus guidance cites in numerous areas, "interventions," "response-to-intervention," or "intervening services" as examples of allowable uses of Title I stimulus funding.

It appears that RTI implementation is expanding beyond pilot stages within districts. In 2009, 40 percent of respondents reported they were in the process of district-wide implementation or had used RTI district-wide for more than one year, while 31 percent were piloting RTI in a limited number of schools or grades. The TURNKEY Survey of Technology Use in Special Education (2006-07) found that the vast majority of large districts reported RTI use in selected schools, but seldom district-wide. In the Spectrum K-12 recent survey, 32 percent of districts felt that RTI would be "fully implemented" and "in daily use district-wide" by school year 2010-2011, which indicates continued growth within districts over the next two years. One of the largest impediments to RTI expansion and opportunities for firms with appropriate professional

development services and products is the lack of district staff who have been trained to use RTI approaches. In 2009, only six percent of district respondents indicating that all of their staff have been adequately trained in the use of RTI; 42 percent said that less than 25 percent of district staff has been so trained. Based upon the 2006-07 TURNKEY survey and the first year Spectrum K-12 (2007-08) survey, the amount of funds allocated for staff development doubled to almost 40 percent of the estimated $1.3-1.5 billion allocated to RTI. During the 2006-07 timeframe, about 40 percent of early intervening services/RTI funds were used to hire additional staff. The most current survey found that only about 25 percent of the districts reporting having to increase staff to implement RTI.

Also suggested by the 2009 survey findings are priority needs for which there could be a high pent-up demand. One such area is software to collect student assessment and related achievement data; 60 percent of the districts reported low levels of use. The need for software to collect data on the use of behavioral interventions was used by about slightly over 30 percent of district respondents. Discussions with individuals who have reviewed the survey's "raw data" suggested that much of the current software that is used is of a "homegrown nature" or is very limited and not comprehensive. While almost 80 percent of districts felt progress-monitoring tools have been effective in mediating or eliminating RTI implementation obstacles, only 60 percent felt the same way about tools to manage student achievement data to help in data-driven decision-making. In the 2006-07 TURNKEY survey, large district respondents also felt a great need for administrative software and data-driven decision-making tools to effectively implement RTI, which apparently continues to be a high-demand area. In terms of perceived priority solutions to eliminate implementation barriers, the survey found student achievement management and progress monitoring tools were high on district respondents' lists, along with initial RTI training, interventions that address academic concerns, and the use of data to guide decisions for instruction and interventions.

Regarding the use of behavioral interventions, in addition to the need for tools to assist in collecting student data for decision making on the effectiveness of these interventions, the survey findings also suggest the need for "screening assessments" which can be used to identify the nature and extent of behavioral problems and interventions that address behavioral concerns. This is particularly true at the middle school and high school levels. The survey found a significant increase in the level of implementation of RTI in 2009 with 51 percent reporting some implementation activities in high schools compared to 16 percent in 2008. At the middle school level, the implementation of RTI with math and behavioral interventions was about equal at about 25 percent of district respondents. However, the area in which districts plan to implement RTI that showed the greatest gains are expected in math interventions at the middle school level which could increase from 26 percent this year to 52 percent next year, with a similar increase from 25 percent to 48 percent in behavioral middle school interventions.

In terms of the "major initiator" of RTI implementation in districts, the special education director was reported to be that person by 42 percent of the respondents, even though the actual implementation was felt to be a "unified effort" (59 percent) between special education and general education. It is important to note that only two percent of district respondents indicated that the lead initiator was the Title I director; of the respondents who knew how stimulus money

would be used to support RTI, 78 percent indicated that they plan to use a portion of the district's Title I funds to support RTI. This is most likely occurring in districts where both special education and Title I are under a director or an assistant superintendent for Federal programs or where a good long-term relationship exists between special education and Title I district coordinators, especially in districts which have to set aside the 15 percent of their IDEA allocation for early intervening services, which usually ends up in the hands of the Title I office for implementation.

For a copy of the report go to:
www.spectrumk12.com/uploads/file/RTI%202009%20Adoption%20Survey%20Final%20Report.pdf