

# Needs Analysis Results

Examining Challenges and Opportunities in  
Student Achievement Management



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## Overview

For an organization to continually improve, it must rationally set about to be systematic in its approach to improvement. All functions of the organization need to focus on the district's mission and work in an integrated way for the success of all students in the district. Sound, efficient management and organization of business processes within or across departments set the stage to focus on student achievement.

Spectrum K12 School Solutions is pleased to present this proposal to conduct a unique Needs Analysis of your school district's Special Education process at no charge to the school district. The Needs Analysis is designed to increase productivity and to better articulate business processes in managing effectiveness of services, programs and personnel by exploring the use of management tools. Our objective is help you determine what is and is not working, and whether available resources can be used more efficiently and effectively to achieve the optimum return on investment.

In so doing, Spectrum K12 will assist the district in developing workable solutions and action plans. Our recommendations will enable the district to maintain district-wide compliance with today's complex regulatory requirements and legal challenges while maximizing the use of current technological tools and professional development services for managing the Special Education process. The Needs Analysis will be grouped into four core areas:

- Process Management
- Information/Data Management
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Change Management

## Response to Intervention

The Reauthorization of IDEA 2004 brought a new and innovative change, referred as the Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative, to the education of students that affects both general and special education. Since IDEA 2004 offers only a global description of RTI, it is open to interpretation by states and districts. The early prevention/intervention focus for students requires special education and general education administrators to facilitate the collaboration of all teachers and service providers so that struggling students receive specialized interventions in the general education environment. Data from progress monitoring will be combined with formalized assessments. Both special education and general education administrators are struggling with decisions in interpreting, developing, implementing, and managing an RTI process. Thus, the Needs Analysis can assist districts in determining resources and action plans needed to effectively manage the myriad responsibilities and functions critical to the seamless operation of an RTI initiative.

## Scope of Work

First, SpectrumK12 will work with the district to design the conceptual framework for conducting the analysis with initial thought questions, such as the following:

- What do you want to achieve?
- What is **not** happening that you want to happen?
- What **is happening** that you want to eliminate?
- What **barriers** are in the way of success?

The first phase of the Spectrum K12 Needs Analysis is the review of pertinent information about compliance issues, information management practices and data control and technology infrastructure. Major areas proposed for review are the evaluation of special education processes, review of service delivery models, staffing, communication within the special education department, collaborate with other departments, funding, and professional development. Spectrum K12 will also incorporate questions about the district's student information systems and student achievement data.

The second phase of the analysis is the interviews of district personnel that have significant responsibilities with the four core areas. To complete a comprehensive review of the issues and to include the RTI components of the Needs Analysis, Spectrum K12 will also need access to staff and data in areas outside of Special Education, such as information/technology services, business support services, legal services, pupil personnel, and school administration, and general instruction.

The third Phase of the analysis is the written report. After the information review and interviews are completed, Spectrum K12 will develop a written report for the district that will outline key findings in core areas, as well as district challenges, and will propose solutions for improvement and strategies to increase return on investment.

### Examples of key questions:

- Do principals have readily available data that allow them to be accountable for the implementation of Special Education at their schools?
- Can the district immediately identify compliance problems in order to correct or prevent them?
- Can provider caseloads be balanced?
- Are there under-utilized resources in district-wide services?
- Are all funding sources and grants being utilized?
- Does the district have easy access to data and reports to monitor effectiveness and efficiency?

- Are there observable links among planning, services and programs, budgets, and student outcomes?
- Does the district have standardized and automated business processes?
- What is the knowledge level of the district and/or school in understanding and implementing the RTI process?
- How are roles and responsibilities defined for administrative, support, and teaching staff involved in the RTI process?
- How are written guidelines and procedures transformed into implementation of tiered interventions?
- What is the level of collaboration and continuity of critical steps in the RTI process for:
  - Tiered Interventions
  - Fidelity assurance
  - Problem-solving meetings
  - Professional Development
  - Progress monitoring
  - Data analysis

## Key Elements for Review - IEP

Spectrum K12 proposes to structure our comprehensive Needs Analysis to include (but not be limited to) four core areas. These areas, and the key elements within each area, are outlined below:

### OVERVIEW

- Definition of Needs
- District Vision and Mission statements, District Goals
- Compliance Status Review
- Policies and Procedures

### PROCESS MANAGEMENT

- Organizational
  - Hierarchical structure and assigned position responsibilities
  - Service delivery models and staffing, (including instructional, related services & behavioral supports)
  - Center-based programs or separate classrooms
  - Early Childhood services
  - Students served in non-public schools
  - Extended School Year
  - Monitoring and accountability of service delivery models & staffing
- Professional Development
- IEP Process
  - Development, Notification & Monitoring
  - Modifications & Accommodations
  - Duration & interruptions of services
  - Goals/Objectives, including transition
- Communication and Collaboration
  - Intra-Departmental
  - Across Departments
  - Legal challenges (complaints, mediations, due process)

### INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- Management information infrastructure
  - Information management issues
  - Policy and procedure issues
  - Database structure(s) – Special Education-specific
  - Data access, availability (input/forms and output)
  - Data quality
  - Training and support
  - Medicaid tracking & reimbursement recovery

- Discipline Tracking
- Miscellaneous Issues
  - Transportation support

#### DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

- Referral and Identification Data
  - Disproportionality
  - Tiered Interventions
  - Average Yearly Progress
  - Fidelity Assurance
  - 504
- Management of Data and Meetings
- ESL – English as a Second Language

#### CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- Funding analysis
- Revenue enhancement possibilities
- Litigation costs
- Business processes
  - Efficiency
  - Effectiveness
  - Consistency
- Link to planning & programming
- Implementation & Support

## Key Elements for Review - RTI

Key elements will include (but not be limited to) the following core areas and key elements:

### PROCESSES IN PLACE FOR IMPLEMENTING RTI

- Tier model; problem solving model; combination model
- Benefits derived from interventions
- Patterns in district/school data
- Participation in general education curricula through the appropriate continuum of interventions and services
- Processes in place that determine:
  - Types of small group interventions that support general education curriculum
  - How often and for how long is each intervention given each week
  - Duration and number of interventions to be tried before moving through the Tiers
  - Demonstration of comprehensive data considerations for movement through Tiers
  - Review of referral and identification process for special education

### UNDERSTANDING ADMINISTRATION/STAFF KNOWLEDGE LEVELS

- Understanding of purpose/benefits of RTI
- Working together as a collaborative team/ roles and responsibilities
- Teaching curriculum to fidelity
- Using data to guide instruction and quality of student learning
- Using data to determine necessary interventions
- Implementing appropriate research-based interventions
- Monitoring progress at all levels
- Collecting data
- Using disaggregated data by schools and student subgroups to monitor equity and representation of subgroups
- Using data in special education evaluations

### MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Determining most effective use of resources
- Developing an action plan
- Developing a professional development plan
- Informing and involving parents

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## Conducting the Needs Analysis – District and Spectrum K12 Costs and Responsibilities

Spectrum K12 realizes that being under scrutiny can be an intimidating process. We will employ professional evaluation practices and experienced evaluators so that district staff feel comfortable and Spectrum K12 evaluators can quickly identify the essential information. For your districts' proposed *Needs Analysis*, SpectrumK12 anticipates requiring one to two days of on-site interviews and data review at the district, and possibly half a day in conference calls. In addition, time will be required for preparation of the report and recommendations that will be delivered at a mutually agreed upon date.

The district will be asked to complete pre-interview rubrics, provide an appropriate location for the interviews, assist the Spectrum K12 evaluator in the data review during and after the on-site visit, and make available the necessary staff for interviews.

Spectrum K12 will be responsible for the total cost—inclusive of travel, staff time and materials. In summary, the Needs Analysis is provided at no charge to the school district.

## The Benefits of a Needs Analysis from Spectrum K12

The Needs Analysis provides great benefits to both the district and to Spectrum K12. The district benefits from an objective analysis of its processes performed by a company with significant experience in the market and broad knowledge of best practices being used by special education departments nationwide. Spectrum K12 benefits from using its knowledge base of the issues currently facing special educators in districts large and small, urban and rural, resource-rich and poor to ensure that our products and services remain the best in the market by reflecting the needs of those in the field.

The Spectrum K12 Needs Analysis uses a “critical friend” approach in our work with districts. Evaluators with expertise in educational leadership, special services, and business process management gather data, make observations, and provide judgment and analysis based on evidence and best practices. It sometimes takes “fresh eyes and thoughts” to identify the steps necessary for a district to move forward in the continuous improvement cycle and confront factors that may be affecting the district's performance.

What sets SpectrumK12 apart is a proven implementation, training and project management process that helps the school district achieve success over the long term. Spectrum K12 begins by helping the district develop and articulate its business process for managing all aspects of Special Education. Spectrum K12 then configures proprietary, software-driven tools and to mirror the district's agreed-upon business process while meeting state and

federal standards (such as IDEA regulations). Finally, Spectrum K12 coordinates with each school system on their desired goals (e.g. data accuracy, revenue recovery) and the staffing and professional development needed to reach those goals.

## Why Spectrum K12 is Your Best Choice

As the leader in administrative systems for special education and at-risk students, Spectrum K12 combines innovative, patented technology with a wide array of consulting, implementation, and professional development services to provide cost-effective, proven solutions—solutions that allow education professionals to refocus on strategies that generate better instructional outcomes.

Best Practices. Proven Results. Here are four reasons why Spectrum K12 is your most qualified partner to conduct a Needs Analysis for your district.

**Professional Experience.** The Spectrum K12 team consists of over 40 former K-12 educators and administrators – many of whom spent as many as 30 years educating special education and at-risk students. Their experience represents over 900 years in education and continues to be a major reason Spectrum K12 has built successful partnerships with districts as large as 300,000 students.

**Special Education and At-Risk Population Focus.** With our exclusive focus on special education and at-risk administrators and educators, we understand the unique challenges of educating those student populations.

**Tenure.** Spectrum K12 School Solutions is the leading provider of individualized learning, special education and IEP software serving 11% of the U.S. K-12 student population including 20 of the top 100 school districts in the United States. Our patented software and professional development has influenced the learning of over 5 million students in 29 states.

**Category Recognition.** In May, Spectrum K12 received the CODiE Award for “Best Education Solution” from the Software Information and Industry Association. Our Encore IEP product suite is the first to be endorsed by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and serves both special education and at-risk children.

Ultimately, our goal is the same as yours: to lift the administrative burdens so teachers can focus on the most important part of their work: educating children and improving student achievement.