Taking a Snapshot of Early Childhood Response to Intervention Across the United States: 2009 and 2010

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Abstract

The Response to Intervention (RTI) approach to assessment and service delivery is becoming common in elementary schools nationally and its prevalence is increasing nationwide. Less common however, is an RTI approach to early childhood education and early intervention. This study examines the extent to which states have begun to implement practices related to RTI in early childhood programs. This study reports findings from national surveys in 2009 and 2010 regarding states' interest in and implementation of preschool RTI.

Introduction

The RTI approach in elementary schools nationally is increasing common (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009). They reported that 15 states have adopted an RTI model with 9 implementing on a large scale, 6 on a small scale, and twenty-two in development phases. Similar knowledge regarding the status of RTI implementation in early childhood programs (e.g., Pre-K, Head Start, etc) is unknown. A potentially valuable resource for educators and policymakers, the purpose of this investigation is to add to this knowledge by examining the implementation status of RTI in Early Childhood settings across US states and territories.

Research Questions

- 1.What is the extent to which the RTI approach is being implemented nationally in 2009?
- 2.What is the extent to which the RTI approach is being implemented nationally in 2010 compared to 2009? 3.In what program types is RTI currently implemented?
- 4.What are the challenges in implementing RTI in early childhood setting as perceived by early childhood professionals?

Methods

The 2009 population of knowledgeable state early childhood special education leaders who were surveyed included IDEA-Part B [619] directors, and state PreK directors. In all, 57 responded. The 2010 population of knowledgeable state early childhood special education leaders included IDEA-Part B [619] directors, State Head Start Collaboration Office Directors, and state PreK directors who responded in 2009. All were surveyed in order to generalize findings to the USA. A listing of these leaders in each state and territory and their contact information was obtained from the NECTAC website (online at htttp://www.nectac.org/contact/619coord.asp). In 2010, a Senior Advisor in the Head Collaboration Office and a search of previous respondents were included. In all 73 responded.

Measurement and Procedures

An 8-item survey (2009) and two 14-item surveys (2010) were developed based on brief reviews of the literature, expert feedback, discussions among colleagues, and analysis of 2009 survey responses (2010) to determine relevant questions. The first 2010 survey was sent to 619 coordinators; the second included a very brief discussion of RTI, was more directly focused on Head Start implementation status, and was sent to Head Start State Collaboration Office Directors. Items from both surveys collected the same information.

Methods (Continued)

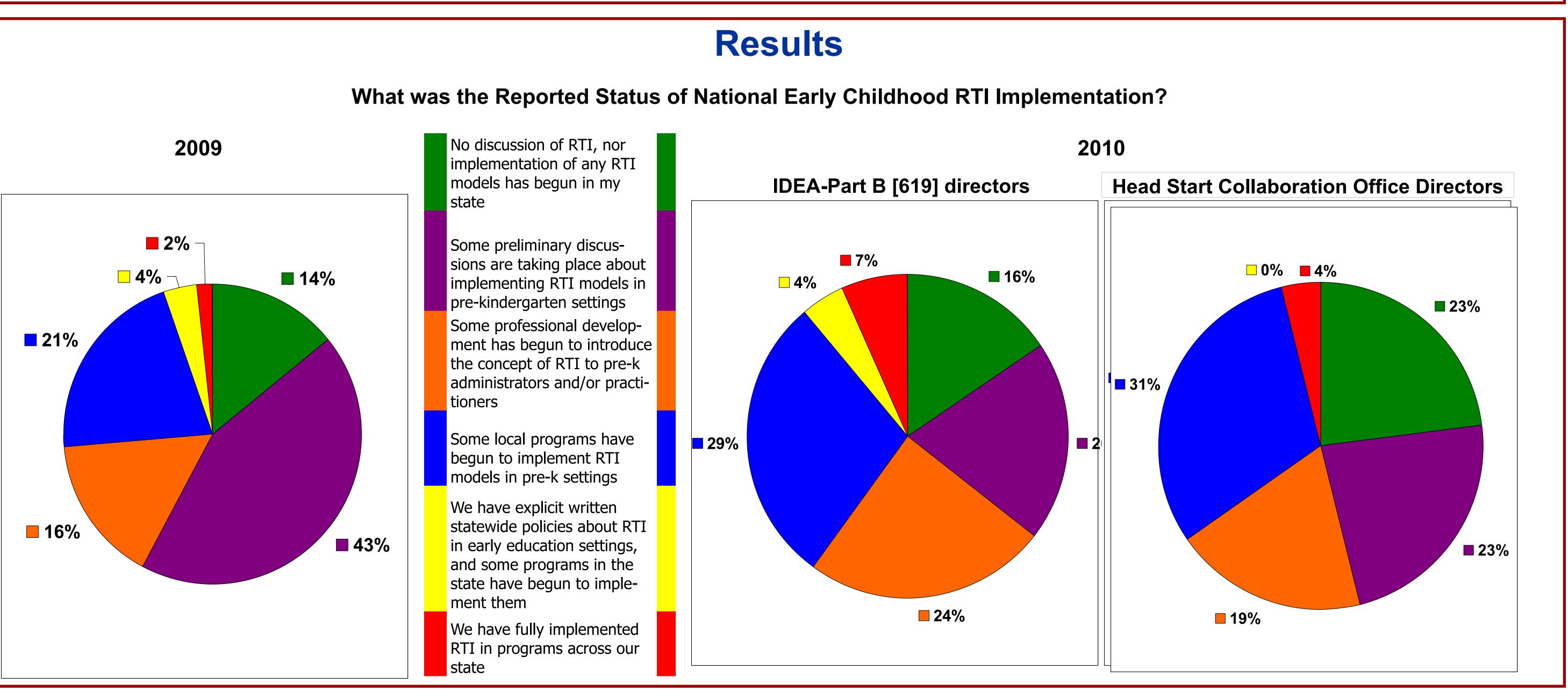
Measurement and Procedures

Following items requesting demographic information (name, state, role/position), the first item on all surveys was a multiple choice question where choices were ordered ranging from "No Implementation" to "Full Implementation in my state." If a respondent indicated any type of RTI implementation, questions followed asking in which early learning settings implementation was taking place, in what areas of curriculum it was focused, which RTI components were included, and which curriculum, progress monitoring tools, instructional decision-making models were being used. If a respondent indicated that no RTI activities were occurring, the respondent was directed to a question near the end of the survey regarding challenges, skipping the intervening items.

That survey question (2009 & 2010) contained 9 statements reflecting challenges to RTI implementation. Each was evaluated on a 4-level Likert scale ranging from "Little/No Challenge" to "Significant Challenge." Separating these two extremes were "Some Challenge" and "Moderate Challenge" values. The final survey question (2010 only) asked respondents to indicate concerns about the implementation of RTI in early education settings and included options such as a "lack of professional development, lack of staffing, unclear policy, delay in services, lack of funding, infrastructure or state standards," as well as offering the option of open ended comments.

Surveys were accessed by respondents through a link in the email that delivered the survey form ready for completing. Following this first email, 619 coordinators received 4 subsequent email reminders at approximately 2 week intervals followed by individual phone contact. In the case of the Head Start survey, following the initial email, a subsequent email that requested participation and included the survey link was sent out by the Senior Advisor in the Head Collaboration Office.

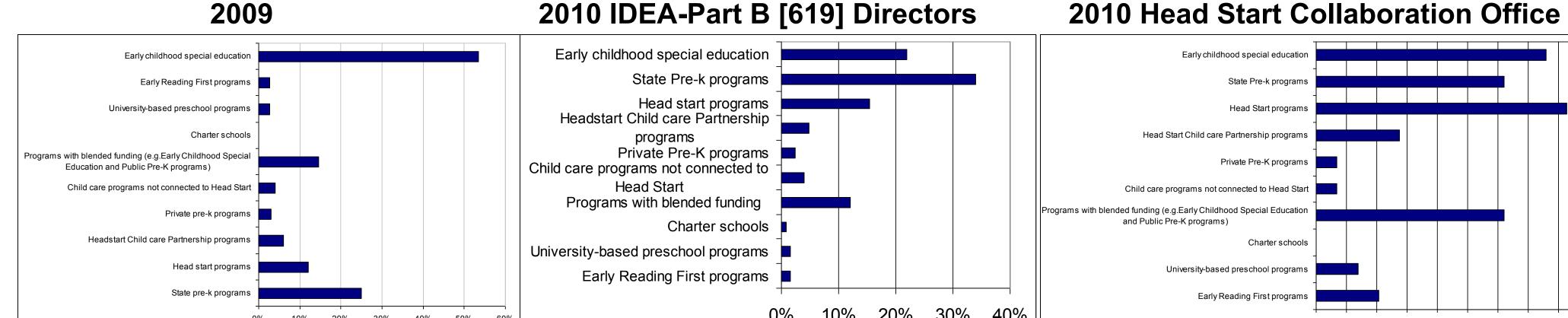
In all, 2009 data was received representing 44 entities (40 states and Washington, DC, 3 territories, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs). 2010 data was received representing 49 entities (46 states and Washington, DC, and 2 territories. A MS-EXCEL dataset containing the set respondents records including written comments was downloaded from the website and analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and graphical displays.

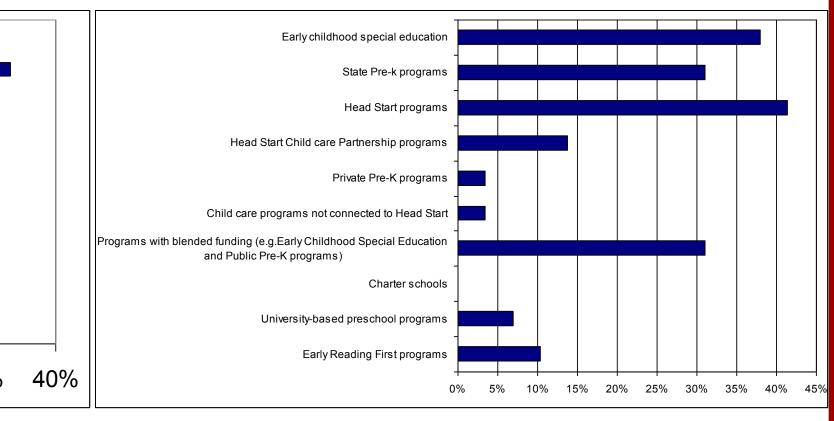


Results (Continued)

What are the Challenges to RTI Implementation?

In which program types is RTI being implemented in Early Childhood Settings?





6% | 18% | 15% | 38% | 44% | 41% | 43% | 20% | 33% | 14% | 13% | 0%

7% 11% 31% 22% 41% 27% 24% 19% 25% 42% 19%

Level of Challenge Significant Insufficient trained personnel to implement RTI 0% 7% 7% 14% 18% 30% 25% 27% 33% 61% Lack of knowledge in how to create an early child- 2% 7% 7% 25% 16% 33% 20% 42% 26% 53% 31% 22% hood RTI model. 0% | 11% | 11% | 25% | 40% | 48% | 35% | 24% | 19% | 41% | 20% | 11% Lack of evidence-based Tier 1 programs. 6% | 11% | 15% | 25% | 38% | 26% | 31% | 31% | 33% | 39% | Lack of administrative support and leadership. 6% 7% 7% 27% 20% 41% 31% 31% 22% 38% 38% 19% Lack of Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention strategies. 10% | 20% | 11% | 39% | 27% | 48% | 27% | 36% | 26% | 25% | Lack of progress monitoring measures.

Discussion

implement a RTI model.

Difficulty in establishing collaborative relation-

ships between early and special education sys-

Lack of resources to develop the infrastructure to

The purpose of this investigation was to assess the implementation status of RTI in Early Childhood nationally. Results indicated that states are beginning to have discussions about RTI and are introducing RTI concepts in professional development. Programs most likely to be implementing RTI are early childhood special education and state-funded pre-k programs targeting language/early literacy and social/behavioral outcomes. The greatest challenges reported were untrained staff, limited resources, lack of knowledge, and lack of Tier 2 and 3 interventions. Most states report implementing evidence-based Tier 1. The vast majority of states report not yet hezzysrsaving RTI models that can be shared with others. Clearly, early childhood RTI is of interest by only just beginning to be considered

References

Berkeley, S., Bender, W. N., Peaster, L. G., & Saunders, L. (2009). Implementation of response to intervention: A snapshot of progress. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 42(1), 85-95.

