



Education Data Management Solutions

News Release
For Immediate Release

STI AND ALABAMA COMPLETE FIRST STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF WEB-BASED SPECIAL EDUCATION TRACKING SYSTEM

STI SETS mandated in Ala. Schools to more efficiently track progress and monitor services

MOBILE, ALA. (May 12, 2005) – STI, the nation’s leading provider of education data management solutions for K-12 schools, today announces the completion of the STI *Special Education Tracking System (SETS)* implementation in Alabama, the first statewide Web-based special education data management system.

Leading the way for other states, Alabama chose STI’s Web-based system to more effectively and efficiently collect, store and analyze special education data, critical in pinpointing areas for improvement. “With STI *SETS* we can get accurate data, quickly,” explained Dr. Mabrey Whetstone, director of special education services for the Alabama Department of Education. “From the data and reports, we can clearly identify benefits and results of special education services at the school, district and state level to measure quality and proficiency.”

As student enrollment in special education programs has increased, so has the amount of paperwork. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) stipulates the type and amount of reporting for each student. Educators must develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that sets personalized goals for every special needs student tailored to the student’s learning style and ability as well as transition goals to prepare the student for the next stage in his or her life. Tracking student progress and monitoring the quality and outcomes of special education services has become an onerous and complex task.

Previously, Alabama’s special education tracking system was mostly paper-based and its network of local education agencies (LEAs) had various computerized data management systems. This arrangement didn’t allow for comparison among the LEAs and across programs. STI *SETS* enables consistency in data collection to facilitate closer monitoring of local school systems from the state offices and ensures more accurate reporting statewide. “More importantly, local coordinators will be much more aware of what is going on,” stated Dr. Whetstone. “Through this product [STI *SETS*] they can see how they are doing with the execution of federal and state programs.”

The implementation began in 2003 when the state of Alabama selected STI to provide a student information data management system and a special education tracking system to all LEAs in the state for seamless integration. After four months of piloting in 12 LEAs, the system was implemented in the remaining 119 LEAs in three months. STI stayed on budget while rolling out the system to 131 LEAs.

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Now, more than 6,300 special education teachers will utilize STI's system to track the 93,406 students with special needs in Alabama, which is 12 percent of the state's K-12 student population. In addition, the system tracks the 32,391 gifted students in the state. STI *SETS* captures child count data, referrals, eligibility reports, IEPs, conference summaries, evaluations, psychological and speech screenings as well as a multitude of other data elements.

To complete the implementation, STI provided professional development to Alabama educators in each school district to train them in using the system for accurate data collection, reporting and analysis. Since many special education educators have had little experience with technology, they needed comprehensive training to learn to shift to a new program paradigm in which they must enter data on a daily basis. But STI's support doesn't end there.

Dr. Whetstone envisions this system as a flexible tool that can continue to change to meet the needs of each school district and be as teacher-friendly as possible. STI will continue to support the system as it has during the implementation. When IDEA was reauthorized in December 2004, STI worked with the state to modify all of the forms in the system to reflect new regulations. All of the state mandated forms are also included in the Web-based platform. Together, STI and state officials drilled down in the system to determine the data elements needed to meet the unique needs of certain counties and ensure accurate reporting of individual student data.

Alabama is one of the few states that follows students' progress after they have moved through the special education program. The state plans in the future to use STI *SETS* to examine what was done for one student that made him or her successful following graduation that was not done for other students who were not as successful.

For more information, visit www.sti-k12.com or phone 800-844-0884.

About STI

STI is a leading provider of *Education Data Management* solutions to the K-12 market. STI's fully integrated suite of products addresses attendance, scheduling, special education, assessment, discipline, grade reporting, professional development, fund accounting, health, and parent/teacher communications. More than 5,000 schools in 28 states use STI solutions. The company was founded in 1982 and is headquartered in Mobile, Ala. For more information, phone 800-844-0884 or visit www.sti-k12.com.

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