

Understanding the Role of the LEA Representative in IEP Meetings

Purpose of the Independent Activity

The Solution-Based Learning Series Independent Activity is designed to help participants apply the statutory role, decision-making authority and leadership responsibilities of an local educational agency (LEA) representative in an individualized education program (IEP) meeting. Participants will analyze a realistic scenario, using the readiness checklist to guide preparation and participation, and practice making compliant, student-centered, and implementable decisions aligned with IDEA requirements.

Putting Knowledge to Practice

By completing this activity, participants will be able to:

- Apply IDEA requirements for the LEA representative role to a real-world IEP scenario
- Identify decision points that require LEA authority, not facilitation alone
- Develop feasible support options that align with FAPE, LRE, and available resources
- Reflect on before, during, and after practices that strengthen implementation and compliance

Step 1. Review and Analyze the Scenario Using and LEA Representative Lens

Begin by reviewing the scenario below.

While reviewing the scenario:

- Use the readiness checklist (found in Step 2) to identify preparation activities required *before* the meeting.
- Note where **you, as the LEA representative**, must make decisions rather than defer them.
- Referring back to the readiness checklist, identify any additional information or resources you would need to participate effectively *during* the meeting.
 - **Your Role:** You are serving as the LEA representative in an annual IEP meeting.

Scenario: Ella Jones

Student: Ella Jones is a 1st-grader with an intellectual disability associated with Down syndrome. This is Ella's first annual IEP review at the elementary level. Ella is described as warm, social, and eager to please. She is a strong visual learner who benefits from predictable routines, hands-on activities, and meaningful inclusion with peers. Her primary needs include receptive and expressive language development, foundational academic skills, and support for inclusion with classmates.

Family Request: Ella's parents are requesting full inclusive setting, with same-aged nondisabled peers supported by a 1:1 paraprofessional for academics, communication, and transitions. They are also requesting increased speech and occupational therapy services.

General Education Teacher Input: The general education teacher notes Ella's friendliness and enjoyment of group activities. The teacher also reports that Ella needs significant prompting to follow multistep directions and becomes frustrated when tasks are too complex or paced too quickly.

Special Educator Input: The special educator shares that Ella requires a modified curriculum and explicit and systematic instruction in foundational skills. According to the data, Ella responds well to visual schedules, repetition, modeling, and small-group instruction. Additional support may be needed during transitions, fine-motor activities, and when communication issues arise. However, given the extent of the adaptations required, the special educator believes some supports would be most effectively delivered in a special education setting. The special educator recommends goals that focus on communication, functional academics, and adaptive skills.

System Context: Meeting Ella's needs is a top priority. The district is committed to inclusive practices and uses evidence-based decision-making rather than preference-based supports. There is limited availability of 1:1 paraprofessionals, and balancing family expectations with feasible staffing models is a consideration for the IEP team.

Meeting Outcomes: The IEP team conducted a comprehensive review of the data gathered throughout Ella's initial year at the elementary level, carefully considering the family's request for full inclusion and dedicated 1:1 support. With input from educators and related service providers, the team reached a consensus to prioritize peer inclusion during nonacademic activities and established updated goals in the domains of communication, foundational academics, and adaptive skills. It was decided that targeted support would be implemented during transitions, fine-motor tasks, and instances of communication breakdowns, as opposed to continuous 1:1 support. Additionally, the IEP reflects recommendations for additional speech and occupational therapy services.

LEA Decision-Making Pause

As the LEA representative, identify at least three points in this scenario where your decision is required to:

- Bring knowledge of general education curriculum.
- Approve the allocation of the LEA's resources.
- Ensure the implementation of the services and supports within the IEP.

Step 2. Review the Readiness Checklist

Instructions

Review the readiness checklist on the next page and **highlight** the strategies you will prioritize as you prepare for and participate in this IEP meeting.

LEA Representative Readiness Checklist

Before

- ☐ Complete premeeting checklists (confirm that team members are in attendance, meeting materials are prepared, an agenda is drafted, IEP elements are drafted, and team members have reviewed student data).
- ☐ Complete premeeting check-ins with special education case managers and teachers.
- ☐ Ensure that an IEP team member reaches out to the family before the meeting to set the tone for collaboration and to build connection.
- ☐ Consult with district staff to prepare yourself for decision-making in the IEP meeting as needed.
- ☐ Review the draft IEP (seek input from the team, include recommended services to support FAPE, and ensure awareness of district resources to support services).

During

- ☐ Model strength-based and people-forward language.
- ☐ Support the IEP team in engaging family members in the IEP development process.
- ☐ Be transparent and responsive to team members' feedback and requests.
- ☐ Keep the discussion anchored in student data.
- ☐ When necessary, utilize best practices for conflict management (e.g., redirect the team, manage disagreement).
- ☐ Approve resource allocation.
- ☐ Support the case manager in following the agenda, monitoring time, summarizing information, and outlining action steps.

After

- ☐ Confirm service implementation plans with the case manager.
- ☐ Confirm that the case manager has communicated IEP services and supports with staff.
- ☐ Ensure that the IEP implementation plan has been communicated with the family.
- ☐ Meet regularly with the case manager to review IEP implementation and the student's progress.

Step 3. Develop Feasible and Compliant Support Options

- Create **two realistic, feasible, and compliant support options** for Ella that do **not** require assigning a full-time 1:1 paraprofessional in the general education setting.

Support Option 1:

Description	
Staff Responsible:	

Support Option 2:

Description	
Staff Responsible:	

Step 4. Reflect on Your Practices

Respond to the prompts below

- One leadership strategy I used effectively was....
- One challenge this scenario surfaced in my current LEA practice is ...
- One specific action I will take to strengthen my effectiveness as the LEA representative before my next IEP meeting is...
- One “after the meeting” responsibility I need to prioritize or monitor more closely is...
- How does strong follow-through by the LEA representative strengthen family trust and implementation fidelity?

Additional thoughts that I had while engaging in this activity are...