**IEA Awesome Podcast**

**Episode 21 – Special Education Committee Update**

00:00 KELSEY: Welcome to the Awesome IEA Podcast brought to you by the Illinois Education Association.

00:05 DIANA: The podcast for curious well-informed association members.

00:09 KELSEY: I’m one of your hosts, Kelsey Harms, a Computer Specialist from the IEA Program Development Department.

00:14 DIANA: And I’m Diana Zaleski, one of your Instructional Resource and Professional Development Directors from IEA Teaching and Learning.

00:20 KELSEY: The goal of this podcast is to educate our members about important new educational policy initiatives in a brief and hopefully entertaining format.

00:29 DIANA: Today we are going to discuss the work of the IEA Special Education Committee.

00:33 KELSEY: Diana, we’re very fortunate to have you with us. I know you’re the staff contact for the IEA Special Education Committee. So, can you start by telling us what the IEA Special Education Committee does for our members?

00:45 DIANA: Certainly! The IEA Special Education Committee advocates for issues concerning special education and works to disseminate special education information to our members.

00:55 KELSEY: Diana, I know that frequently when we talk about special education the acronym IEP is often used. For those of us who aren’t familiar at all, can you help us understand what an IEP is?

01:06 DIANA: I sure can! IEP stands for Individualized Education Program. Every child who receives special education and related services must have an IEP.  Each IEP is designed for one student and creates an opportunity for educators and parents to work together to improve educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

01:27 KELSEY: Thank you for that foundation. Now that we have some common terminology, can you share what work the IEA Special Education Committee has been working on?

01:34 DIANA: For example, one big issue the committee investigated this past school year was the state’s implementation of the 70/30 rule.

01:44 KELSEY: I have never hear do the 70/30 rule. Can you help us understand what that is?

01:48 DIANA: Not very many people have heard of the 70/30 rule. The 70/30 can be found in Illinois Administrative Code and states, that “when a student’s IEP calls for services in a general education classroom, the student must be served in a class that is composed of students of whom at least 70 percent are without IEPs, that utilizes the general curriculum, that is taught by an instructor holding an educator license for general education and who is employed for that purpose, and that is not designated as a general remedial classroom…”

02:24 KELSEY: Wow, I didn’t realize there was rule in place regarding composition of the classroom.

02:29 DIANA: Yes, not all IEPs call for a student who requires special education to be in a separate classroom.

02:34 KELSEY: That’s really helpful to know. So, what was the issue with the implementation of the rule?

02:39 DIANA: The state allows districts to complete 70/30 Class Composition Deviation Applications. It had come to the attention of the IEA Special Education Committee that this rule was being violated by many districts across our state, as reported by our members, and the state was not holding these districts accountable for ensuring this rule was followed.

03:00 KELSEY: What did the committee do with this information?

03:03 DIANA: They’ve been working diligently with the state to determine how the state approves the 70/30 Class Composition Deviation Applications, requesting data from the state on approval rates, and has asked members to report whether their district is in compliance with this rule to advocate for accountability.

03:21 KELSEY: It sounds like really important work. What other things has this committee been working on?

03:25 DIANA: The committee was also interested in learning more about Public Act 099-0456, otherwise known as Senate Bill 100, and how this bill impacts special education. The committee developed a specific guidance document on student discipline for special educators based on the information in this bill as well as federal law. This document includes example local policies and additional resources specifically for special educators.

03:53 KELSEY: That’s excellent! Thanks for sharing. It sounds like the special education committee has been very busy. What other resources have they developed for our members?

04:01 DIANA: Every year the committee works on different issues that are important to our members. The resources they develop and as well as additional resources on topics such as teacher evaluation, co-teaching, transitions, as well as information about new laws and relevant supreme court cases can be found on the IEA Special Education Committee Resources webpage.

04:21 KELSEY: If a member wants to learn more about the work of the Special Education Committee, are there opportunities to do so?

04:27 DIANA: Yes! The committee always presents an open-hearing at the IEA RA with their updated resources and information about changes to relevant rules and laws. Members are invited to attend and ask questions during this session.  You also can reach out to me or Ronn Claussen, IEA Special Education Committee Chair, with any questions, comments, or concerns you have for the committee.

04:49 KELSEY: Excellent, thanks so much Diana. We’ll make sure to put both of your contact information on the podcast page. If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please check out the contact section on the Podcast page on the IEA Website.

04:59 Diana: Special thanks to Mark for the audio help, Amanda for the transcription, and Dan for the website. As always, thank you so much for being a member, and thanks for joining us!

05:08 End

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/226ark.pdf>

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Deviation-Applications.aspx>

<https://ieanea.org/about/leadership/committees/special-education-committee-resources/>

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Individualized-Education-Program.aspx>

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